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doi: 10.1017/S1359135525101073

Exploring spatial constructions of deafness, disability and neurodiversity

Beyond ableism, informing architecture's new disability futures

Deafness, Disability, and Neurodiversity in Architecture: An introduction

Stylianos Giamarelos and Nina Vollenbröker

In her review of David Gissen's *The Architecture of Disability* (2022) for the *Journal of Architectural Education* (*JAE*), architectural and urban historian Wanda Katja Liebermann notes: 'That this is *JAE*'s first review of a book on disability confirms architecture's lag in treating impairment as fundamental to design discourse.'[1] This poignant comment can be extended beyond *JAE*: despite having sporadically featured scholarship that grapples with bodily diversity and impairment,[2] the longest-standing journals of architecture with renowned presence in the field have not yet consistently devoted thematic issues centred on these questions. **arq** does this now, and Liebermann's words have prompted us to reflect on our responsibility and the positionality of this guest-edited special issue on 'Deafness, Disability, and Neurodiversity in Architecture' within the wider ecology of architectural publishing.

Publishing ecologies

The glaring absence of the variability of human bodies from architectural scholarship, highlighted by Liebermann, Gissen, and other scholars, deserves its own historical explication. It is even more striking, when one considers that it is now almost five decades ago that influential twentieth-century figures such as Charles W. Moore highlighted these problems. In the book *Body, Memory, and Architecture* that he co-authored with sculptor Kent C. Bloomer in 1977, the celebrated architect suggested that professional education imbues his peers with abstract values and idealised approaches to design. Young students' resulting reliance on formal norms and universalising stereotypes, Moore argued, in turn distances them from the diverse lived and embodied experiences of the people for whom they supposedly envision their buildings.[3] Within the next two decades, the baton of this crucial insight seemed to have only been picked up by human geographers and sociologists such as Peter Hall and Rob Imrie, who sought to contextualise and document architects' 'professional resistance to responding to the needs of disabled people' through the empirical findings of a survey that they conducted with UK-based design firms in the late 1990s.[4] Meanwhile, the mainstream discussion around the body in architecture, even when it grappled with injury, frailty, impairment, disfigurement, or collapse (as in the work of Deconstructivist practitioners such as Coop Himmelb(l)au) continued to be conducted in abstract, idealised, or metaphorical terms.[5] At the same time, related attempts of feminist collective practices such as the Matrix, who foregrounded architects' reluctance to engage with the embodied ways in which gender, ethnicity, or race diversify the lived experience of the built environment in 1980s Britain, developed at the fringes of professional discourse.[6] This leaves architecture in an awkward position when compared with research undertaken not only in the fields of urban geography and disability studies, from which 'most disability critiques of architecture emerge' as Liebermann rightly notes, but even in closely associated fields such as that of design history. At the time of writing, the *Journal of Design History* published an open call for papers for an upcoming issue on 'Designing for Disability Futures',[7] but no similar call is currently on the horizon of architectural journals.

When one considers the field from the vantage point of recently published monographs and edited volumes, however, the bigger picture becomes notably different. Cultural historian David Serlin's latest book *Window Shopping with Helen Keller* (2025) has just joined Liebermann's *Architecture's Disability Problem* (2024) and Gissen's *The Architecture of Disability* (2022) as the most sustained and direct recent engagements with sensory and bodily diversity from an architectural perspective.[8] These three studies represent long awaited and eagerly anticipated culminations of each author's respective decade-long research projects, fulfilling the particular potential of the monograph to become a work of reference. Refined over the years, each of them represents a sophisticated product of reflective scholarship that engages with a range of contexts to arrive at a wide-ranging yet in-depth account of its topic. Taken together with milestone precedents in this vein, these publications offer a more comprehensive basis for engaging with deafness, disability, and neurodiversity in future scholarship in the field.[9]

Special journal issues – such as this **arq** – have a particular role to

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135525101073 Published online by Cambridge University Press

play within this wider scholarly context. Resulting from shorter production cycles, they comprise heterogeneous sets of articles that advance disciplinary thinking in various directions (often categorised in sections such as design, history, practice, theory, pedagogy, interview, or review). Covering different ground in a more limited and specifically defined territory, each journal article also tends to adopt a comparatively exploratory stance, as opposed to the consolidated thinking that underpins a decade-long book project. This scholarship, which has often either been tangentially developed or constitutes a work-in-progress part of a wider study, keeps the related discussions alive and up to date in the field. Occupying a middle ground between the comprehensive monograph and the more speculative and open-ended research directions of the conference paper, the journal article thus holds a distinctly significant place in the architectural publishing ecology.

This is, at least, how we, as curators, have approached this special issue and its contributions. On one hand, the volume takes guidance from recent inspirational monographs. Like Serlin, we aim to cover topics in a period that spans two centuries to arrive at the present, with the intention to reappraise overlooked moments in the history of architecture – or to reimagine it altogether. Like Gissen, we pursue scholarship that works towards changing existing practices in the discipline. Like Liebermann, we are the nondisabled neurotypical architectural historian relatives of our deaf, disabled, and neurodiverse family members. Following from the above, our approach is advocacy-minded, with a set of interests focusing on questions of cultural imaginaries, empathy, allyship, and activism relating to the built environment. On the other hand, this special issue benefits from **arq** as a publication which bridges academe and practice, reaches across disciplinary and national contexts, and seeks points of contact and dialogue between methods, topics, and epistemologies that are conventionally assumed to be distinct. As such, the volume includes traditional peer-reviewed articles as well as shorter researcher-led enquiries and more experimental, creative practice-focused writing. All contributions respond to contemporary debates but branch out in multiple directions. They foreground provisional findings as springboards for further study or debate in the field as each article continues to push the boundaries of existing knowledge in architectural history, practice, education, imaginaries, curation, or preservation.

A subset of the articles that follow have been assembled in the wake of the session on 'Histories of Deafness and Disability in Architecture' that we chaired in the annual conference of the Society of Architectural Historians in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in April 2024. The conference panel was driven by our conviction that deafness and disability must inform our discipline more thoroughly and meaningfully. Adopting a critical standpoint that considered the imbrication of impairment in the built environment, our conference session highlighted overshadowed histories, designers, and approaches by recentring architectural discourse in relation to diverse embodied experiences. Informed by our engagement with related precedents and definitions, the conference contributors shared a common language of key terms. Drawing on Brenda Jo Brueggemann and Rebecca Sanchez, for example, we use the term 'Deaf' when referring to a cultural minority centred around the use of sign language, and reserve the term 'deaf' for the audiological condition of hearing impairment and for individuals for whom Deaf cultural identity cannot be assumed, mostly because of the historic moment in which they lived (although, as Sanchez also underscores, this is a fine line to be drawing: 'the distinction between deafness as a physical state and deafness as cultural identity is not always (or ever) a clear one').[10] In addition, we avoid using terms that perpetuate a deficit-oriented framing of disability and neurodiversity or imply deviations and divergences from supposedly established norms; rather, we follow science writer Steve Silberman in approaching the related conditions 'as naturally occurring [physical and] cognitive variations with distinctive strengths', which usher in unique contributions to knowledge and culture at large.[11] To highlight them, we resort to the verb 'to crip', which could be used in the context of crip theory to describe claiming a topic for disability studies.[12] Equally constructive, discussions around the 'bodymind' have also enabled us to gather our reflections on deafness, disability, and neurodiversity under a single umbrella term that underscores the neurophysiological intertwinement of embodied lived experiences.[13]

The articles that developed out of the conference, including work by Gail Dubrow and Laura Leppink, Naina Gupta, Matthew Schrage and Andrew Gipe-Lazarou, are complemented by invited contributions from colleagues with long-standing presence in the field such as Jos Boys, Ann Heylighen, and Natalia Pérez-Liebergesell. The voices of architects, younger scholars, and emerging writers such as Maria Kramer, Danielle Koplitz, Iason Stathatos, and Anna Ulrikke Andersen, who co-authored articles, reviewed buildings and exhibitions, or conducted interviews, have also enriched this special issue. The resulting creative and intellectual exchanges between the articles of this special issue also interweave the self-advocating voices and subjectivities of deaf or disabled scholars of different ages with those of their hearing peers, nondisabled advocates, or neurotypical allies in collectively advancing liberatory practices in architecture. The pages of the journal therefore serve as a platform that ignites conversations between different generations, bodyminds, lived experiences, and political engagements with the built environment. Following Gissen's engagement with established mainstream discourses in architectural history, theory, and practice as a precursor, this volume also pushes against widespread assumptions that pigeonhole disabled researchers into studying their own groups and being held responsible for raising wider awareness around them. By moving away from addressing questions of accessible space design in material terms, we additionally join Gissen and Liebermann in offering a more general critique of the discipline. In what follows, we further highlight how each of the articles featured in this special issue converses with, builds on, or further develops specific threads of thinking that have been foregrounded or only tangentially mentioned in existing scholarship on deafness, disability, and neurodiversity in architecture.

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Spatial constructs

'Disability is not a minor issue that relates to a relatively small number of unfortunate people; it is part of a historically constructed discourse, an ideology of thinking about the body under certain historical circumstances', disability scholar Lennard Davis importantly argues; as a result, he emphasises, scholarship must not consider 'the person using the wheelchair or the Deaf person but the set of social, historical, economic, and cultural processes that regulate and control the way we think about and think through the body.'[14] The contributions gathered in this issue start from the premise that, in addition to the factors that Davis identifies, *architectural* processes must also be seen as central producers of disability – in other words, disability is a social, historical, economic, cultural, but also very much a *spatial* construction. The featured texts, including those in the 'review' and 'insight' sections, are written by architectural practitioners, historians, theorists, and activists working at the conjunctures of disability, deafness, neurodiversity, and the built environment. The main thread that connects them is their desire to grapple with the built environment's long-standing entwinement with ableism, to address the partialities of architectural histories, and to consider how we might, in the words of Boys, design – and think – *from* disability, rather than *for* it.

The opening articles adopt a long-term historical perspective, inviting one to expand their historical horizons of thinking around diverse bodyminds in architecture, in order to retrieve hidden precursors and interrupted lines of continuity between these distant periods and their legacies in contemporary design practices. In the first article, Nina Vollenbröker considers the planning, construction, and operation of an early purpose-built residential school for deaf children in the mid-nineteenth century. Entitled 'Hide and Speak: Childhood Deafness, Spatial Visions, and Cultural Ideologies in Donaldson's Hospital, Edinburgh', her contribution traces how the visibility (or its absence) and the *voice* (or its absence) of deaf children was mediated by the building, which was designed by William Henry Playfair (1790–1857). Vollenbröker argues that the architecture of special education, through its power to organise and control bodies in space, was a key contributor to the changing, increasingly problematic cultural understandings of deafness between 1840 and 1900. She clearly details the instrumentality of architecture in ongoing processes of attaching meaning to disability: from the initial concerted efforts to provide formal deaf education, space was at the centre of debates about what it meant to be a child who does not hear. The architecture of deaf teaching was fiercely contested by educators, legislators, governments, and financial donors – in other words, by those who had the power to organise bodies in space. In addition, Vollenbröker highlights historical reflection as a potent constituent in the construction of social selfhoods and hierarchies: how we think about buildings, she proposes, is a site of powerful control and deaf spatial experience has too long been omitted from narratives of architectural value, historical importance, and shared heritage.

Gail Dubrow and Laura Leppink are similarly concerned with using archival material to firmly position deafness as a constitutive creative force in architectural history. Their article 'Deaf Agency through Architectural Design: Olof Hanson's US Legacy' draws on Gallaudet University's special collections to revisit the life and work of Olof Hanson (1862–1933), the earliest known deaf architect to practise in the United States. Their research highlights not only the obstacles that Hanson encountered as an educated deaf person but also the support that he received from social networks within the deaf community. As the two authors trace Hanson's attempts to secure an architectural education and enter professional practice or contextualise his efforts among those of other early deaf architects, they also demonstrate the tactics and skills that the community had to develop to navigate the ableist barriers of our discipline, many of which remain disappointingly relevant in the present. The fact that 'only 1% of architects currently identify as disabled, and of that 1%, only 0.2% define as deaf', as currently indicated by Deaf architect Chris Laing, demonstrates the persistence of such professional barriers.[15] Dubrow and Leppink especially call attention to Hanson's embodied spatial knowledge, his attempts to address the distinctive needs of deaf people in his buildings, and his legacy of ushering in long-lasting reforms in the design of standard building types such as schools, residences, and social spaces throughout the United States. In so doing, the two authors join Serlin and Vollenbröker in proposing that the nineteenth century plays a key role in emerging efforts to document inclusive design in histories of deafness and architecture; Hanson's extensive portfolio, including the well known but still understudied Charles Thompson Memorial Hall in Minnesota *[1]*, could indeed be seen as heralding the contemporary concept of DeafSpace.[16]

In 'Designing in Others: Lessons from a Deaf Architecture Student', Camille Janssen, Danielle Koplitz, Natalia Pérez-Liebergesell, and Ann Heylighen continue this important quest to better understand deaf architects and spaces rooted in Deaf identity – in this case by



1 Olof Hanson, Charles Thompson Memorial Hall, 1916, one of the first deaf-centred public building designs in the US, photographed October 2012.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135525101073 Published online by Cambridge University Press



2 Maria Kramer, extension to a home in Highgate, North London, 2020, including a 15m-long swimming pool for KP, a client who lives with multiple sclerosis and uses a wheelchair.

focusing on present-day architectural education. Their article follows a young woman, co-author Danielle Koplitz, who was born deaf, uses sign language, and is studying to become an architect at the time of its writing. Drawing on extensive interviews with Koplitz, the authors gradually narrate her lived experiences – including her feeling unlike other children at an early age, her intuitive penchant for open architectural space as a teenager, and her formative education at Gallaudet University – before querying how the student's deafness now profoundly and positively informs what she designs as part of her studio curriculum. Showcasing Koplitz's creative work, the article calls out both architectural education's reliance on canonical notions of universality and normativity and the continued pervasiveness of ableism in architectural practice, pedagogy, and history at large. The authors conclude with asking the discipline to draw on its capacity to counter these problematic forms of othering, to stop materialising asymmetric power relationships, and to capitalise on the creative and critical value of designing-in others.

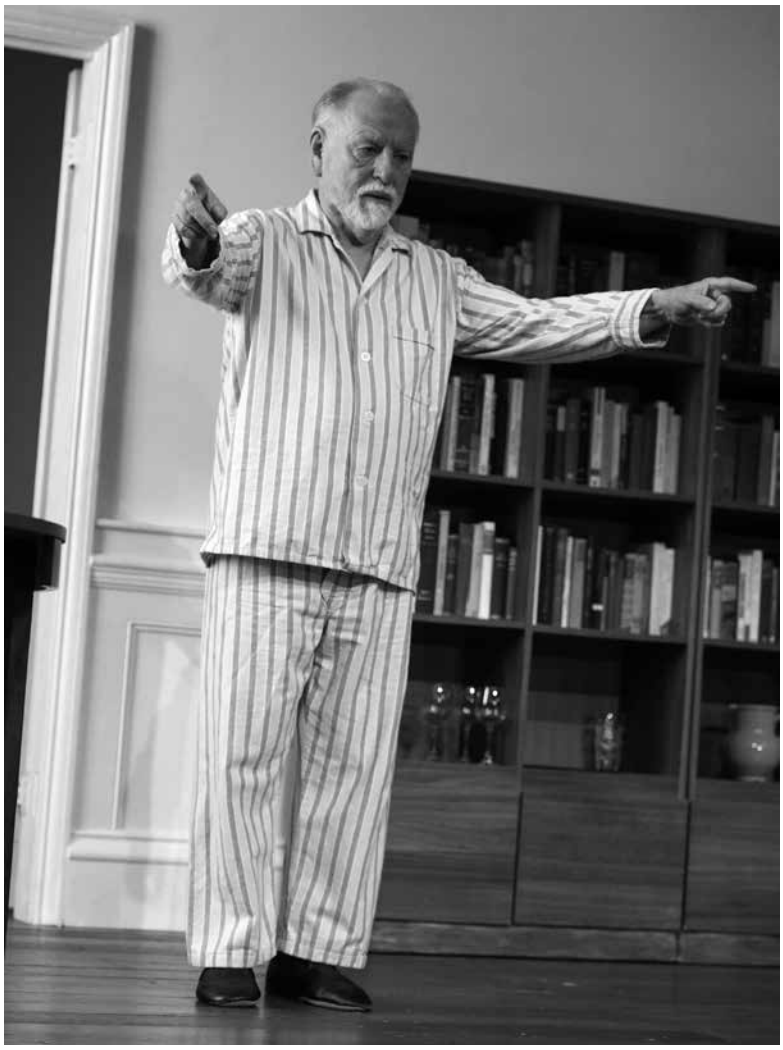
Designing-out othering to design-in others does not stop at academic education. Its application in practice would also run counter to prevalent stereotypes and expectations about the presence, activity, and desires of diverse bodyminds in public, commercial, work, or private spaces, including a widespread conviction that 'disabled people don't frequent places focused on glamour and beauty.'[17] Working in this direction, Maria Kramer details a project which has, in practice, attempted to actively design-in – and to work from – bodily diversity. 'Fluid Freedom: An Empathetic Pool Design Empowering a Client with Multiple Sclerosis' explores a recently completed private pool house *[2]*, including the lengthy design discussions that underpinned its conception and delivery. The new structure is an extension to a London home – surrounded by a mature garden, flooded with light, and carefully crafted for KP, a client who lives with Multiple Sclerosis and uses a wheelchair. 'I often think it's the environment that disables you', KP tells Kramer, whose article then probes the building's materials and layouts, asks how the pool house rises beyond the clinical aesthetic, which stubbornly clings to so many accessible spaces 'as if disabled people don't deserve beauty', and calls out normative assumptions that the built environment makes about human bodies.[18] Most importantly, perhaps, Kramer details the intricate, nonlinear design process, which, through transparent communication between architect, builders, and client, gradually shifted the understanding of disability from being seen as a limitation or restriction, to being viewed as a central gain and vital enrichment to the project.

In the next article, Naina Gupta keeps a typological focus on swimming pools but shifts perspective to a historical and theoretical approach. Her contribution 'Physiotherapy and Play: The Role of the Swimming Pools in Franklin D. Roosevelt's Vision of Polio Rehabilitation at Warm Springs' foregrounds the 32nd US American president, whose lower body was paralysed following a polio infection, and the therapeutic centre that he founded in Warm Springs, Georgia, with the physiotherapist Helena Mahoney and architect Henry J. Tombs. In her study, Gupta foregrounds Warm Springs as the one environment where Roosevelt (1882–1945) not only openly shared his experience of disability but also contemplated the larger community of individuals living with the same condition. At a time when bodily diversity and difference were less accepted, the centre sought to reconstitute disabled individuals' sense of self through activities that included bathing in mineralised waters, participating in physiotherapy and exercises, and engaging in social events. The spaces of Warm Springs were key to achieving this aim, Gupta poignantly argues, and the article foregrounds architecture not as a backdrop to but as an integral part of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135525101073 Published online by Cambridge University Press

treatment efforts. Emerging as a vital and vibrant social space of rehabilitation centres, swimming pools therefore join and expand the discussion around spaces of care for chronic illnesses and disabilities, which more frequently focuses on the spatial typologies of sanatoria or asylums.[19]

But the agency of architecture in the art of living with deafness, disability, or neurodiversity is not limited to its integral role in medical treatment. Two decades ago, architect and journalist Lisa Findley foregrounded the significant part that the discipline plays in empowering disenfranchised social groups and reinforcing their visibility.[20] Stylianos Giamarelos considers this cultural agency of architecture in cultivating collective imaginaries around neurodiversity by discussing design outputs that move beyond Findley's focus on buildings. In 'Neurodiversifying Space: Affective Architectures of Dementia from Buro Kader's De Hogeweyk to Florian Zeller's The Father', he argues for creative narratives as a valuable framework for thinking through architecture's role in relation to neurodiversity. He draws on the theatre production (2012) and the feature film (2020) of Zeller's story of an old engineer living with dementia and the frictions that ensue with his caregiving family members. While *The Father*'s nonlinear scenes all take place in the same apartment, the set changes subtly but constantly as the performance unfolds. Following the story from the viewpoint of the protagonist, the spectators share the same difficulties that he encounters to reconcile all aspects of his lifeworld without contradiction in a way that also makes sense to them *[3]*. In this way, architecture contributes to rendering the lived experience of dementia relatable to neurotypical audiences, which might be a first step towards validating it and countering its othering. Giamarelos proposes that these forms of creative output could help architects in expanding their cultural imaginaries around neurodiversity and creatively engaging with the related conditions in their practice. Probing further in this direction, he foregrounds Níall McLaughlin and Yeoryia Manolopoulou's collaborative practices of dialogic drawing around the Alzheimer's Respite Centre in Dublin, Ireland (2009 and 2016), as one important step in working with people living with dementia to transgress the frequently encountered limits of care homes and the reductive design principles that accompany them.



3 **Living with dementia, the Father struggles to reorient his recent experience as the flat around him subtly changes from one scene to the next. Kenneth Cranham as the Father in Florian Zeller's *The Father*, performed at the Wyndham's Theatre, London, UK, 5 October 2015.**

Creative writing and the cultivation of cultural imaginaries, this time around deafness, is also central to Matthew Schrage and Andrew Gipe-Lazarou's investigation of Chilmark, a town on the US island of Martha's Vineyard, which has long had a high number of deaf residents and operated equally on both signed and spoken languages. For this reason, Chilmark is frequently cited as a site of cultural fantasy where deaf and hearing individuals harmoniously coexist. Schrage and Gipe-Lazarou shine the spotlight on the town's spatial artefacts to discuss its deaf community's desired cultural position in relation to the mainstream. They then contextualise Chilmark within contrasting fictional utopias that reject this amalgamation in favour of complete deaf separation and distinctiveness from hearing cultures. The related literature includes the cultural narratives around Eyeth, the mythical eye-centric planet of the Deaf in place of the ear-centric Earth, John Jacobus Flournoy's 'Scheme for a Deaf Commonwealth', and Douglas Bullard's novel *Islay*. From fact to fiction and back again, 'Up-Island Architecture and the Artefacts of Deaf Utopia: The Spatial-Architectural History of Nineteenth-Century Chilmark, Massachusetts' spatially interrogates the relationships between these two opposing stances – integration and separation – to provide critical insights into a persistent source of ambivalence within US Deaf culture; namely, fraught debates about the community's desired position in relation to the mainstream, which have defined it since its inception in the early 1800s.

Schrage and Gipe-Lazarou's discussion of these debates in the political terms of utopia also foregrounds the importance of thinking about diverse bodyminds in architecture in relation to possible

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futures. The two 'insight' pieces that conclude this volume address aspects of this question, as they reflect on advancing the related histories and archaeologies. Starting at the gates of the Acropolis, Iason Stathatos allows his eyes to glide along the steep ascend and circle the ancient citadel atop a rocky outcrop. Noting how these sites have been repeatedly re-envisioned and modified for contemporary accessibility, he ponders the fifth-century BCE ramp that once connected the nearby Agora and the Propylaea. This wide, archaic structure has recently become the centrepiece of the exhibition 'An Archaeology of Disability' that Gissen curated with art historian Jennifer Stager and architect and historian Mantha Zarmakoupi. Housed at the Canellopoulos Museum on the northern slope of the Acropolis, the exhibition presented a counter-reconstruction of the canonical Athenian archaeological site through the lens of impairment. It included ancient artefacts relevant to present-day disabled bodies and highlighted collective human difference across space and time along the line of ideas presented in Gissen's book. But the central contribution of the exhibition, Stathatos reminds us, lies in its prototyping of a new way to address disability as a form of historical and spatial enquiry.

Sooner or later, such an endeavour inevitably involves an engagement with archives. As Anna Ulrikke Andersen observes in the last piece of this special issue, however, the gate to official repositories could prove as exclusionary as that of the modern reconstructed archaeological site of the Athenian Acropolis. In archives of the built environment, disabled people frequently appear in familiar and expected sources: in drawings and logbooks documenting the construction and operation of asylums and hospitals; in statutory applications tracing architects' slowly growing but half-hearted engagement with ramps, tactile paving, and signage; in ever-changing legislation and public policy aiming to ensure access to public spaces. These highlight persistent cultural biases which frame disability through a deficit lens and reinforce a cultural understanding of 'impairments as physical and mental aberrations and burdens to overcome', in Gissen's words.[21] At the same time, there is a distinct, persistent lack of disability representation in architectural archives manifesting in multifaceted ways: records might be – intentionally or unintentionally – created to imbue the perspectives of some while erasing the perspectives of others; records might be treated carelessly, misplaced, or not selected for preservation in a repository; or they might be grouped with other documents and not indexed in catalogues. In her conversation with Jos Boys, Andersen asks what materials, visitors, and narratives typically cross the threshold of formal repositories. She ponders why some items are carefully preserved for future consideration while others are excluded from official collections. These archival absences betray the fact that not all pasts are deemed worthy of being documented, archived, and written about in the present and that the voices and perspectives of many historically marginalised communities – including disabled people – are still silenced across mainstream repositories and discourses. Consequently, partial histories continue to be perpetuated, normative narratives confirmed, and alternative forms of thinking about and creating space missed.

Open-ended futures

'In the flow of everyday life, disability usually comes to us as embodied mistakes and, thus, as mistaken bodies', disability studies scholar Tanya Titchkosky critically observes.[22] Taken together, the articles in this volume problematise these mistaken understandings of diverse bodyminds in an architectural context, highlighting the relevance of the related overlooked experiences, practices, and histories in the built environment. In doing so, this special issue also moves away from stereotypical representations of living with deafness, disability, and neurodiversity and underscores their potential to fuel architectural imaginaries. To *crip* both the discipline and the built environment, the profession needs to overcome the persistent 'us–them' dichotomy that accompanies thinking around diverse bodyminds. As Andersen and Boys concur in their contribution, there is still much to be done in this direction. Even when mainstream discourse directly addresses questions of spatial justice in architecture, deafness, disability, and neurodiversity effectively remain marginalised – an oversight that continues to come at an immense cost at all architectural registers.[23]

Hence, there is still much to be done in practice. As the DisOrdinary Architecture Project crucially notes: 'Fitting *smoothly* into the world is not a very creative place to be, because it doesn't require you to pay attention to your surroundings, and assumptions about your place in the world. In comparison, having a non-normative bodymind can actually increase your creativity.'[24] Introducing disability, deafness, and neurodiversity to architecture adds *friction* to all-too-often smooth design practices: it effaces the clarity of spatial narratives and the linearity of their predictable processes; it calls attention to the controlled, narrow, and reductive understandings of humanity that underpin the constructed environments of everyday life; it offers the profession an opportunity to imagine alternative spaces. Still, scholarship that addresses the ways in which one's designs could be uniquely informed from this standpoint remains sparse.[25] While architecture cannot possibly arrive at universally suitable designs, it can contribute to collective attempts to live together, which start from recognising diverse embodied and lived experiences as equally valuable in a non-hierarchical way.[26]

There is therefore still much to be done in scholarship, too. For one, this volume has underscored the persistent lack of disability representation in architectural archives and research. Historian Achille Mbembe argues that any archive 'is fundamentally a matter of discrimination and of selection, which, in the end, results in the granting of a privileged status to certain written documents, and the refusal of that same status to others, thereby judged "unarchivable".'[27] The constant omissions of diverse bodyminds from architectural archives and research has, for decades, reinforced the perpetuation of partial or distorted spatial histories. Advancing scholarship that speaks to the cross-cutting ways in which deafness, disability, and neurodiversity meet the built world will also retrieve the multifarious ways in which the related lived experiences have also creatively generated alternative spatial visions and narratives.[28]

Lastly, there is still much to be done in pedagogy.[29] Education scholar Nirmala Erevelles notes that 'even though critical theories of education have privileged the theorization of the body along the axes of race, class, gender, and

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sexuality, they have consistently omitted any mention of the "disabled" body.'[30] To obliquely rephrase Gissen, the goal is not only to enable diverse bodyminds to become more emphatically present in the sites and subject matter of architectural education – but also to change pedagogical practices, methods, and epistemologies.[31] Such changes entail foregrounding the inextricable imbrication of the built environment with disability, deafness, neurodiversity, and architecture. They involve disrupting built environment curricula which centre on 'able', neurotypical bodyminds, project normativity onto space, and perpetuate discriminatory approaches as neutral, normal, and to be expected. Similarly to the ways in which race is currently problematised in architectural curricula, bodily and neuro-diversity can become central analytical lenses through which to approach both the field and the education of built environment professionals.[32]

Summing up, as editors of this special issue, we share Liebermann's 'hope is to inform new thinking and action for architecture's disability *future*.'[33] We envision the contributions we have included in this volume as catalysts for imagining how change might be enacted at the various scales, registers, and practices of theory and history, education, and design, in order to finally enjoy and appreciate the values and qualities that deafness, disability and neurodiversity can bring in architectures yet to come.

Notes

1. Wanda Katja Liebermann, 'The Architecture of Disability: Buildings, Cities, and Landscapes Beyond Access David Gissen | University of Minnesota Press, 2022', book review, *Journal of Architectural Education* (23 August 2024) <doi: 10.35483/JAEOR.8.23.2024>.
2. See, for example: *Sick Architecture*, ed. by Beatriz Colomina, Nick Axel, Nikolaus Hirsch <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/sick-architecture> [accessed 28 November 2024].
3. Charles W. Moore and Kent C. Bloomer, *Body, Memory, and Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), p. ix.
4. Peter Hall and Rob Imrie, 'Architectural Practices and Disabling Design in the Built Environment', *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science*, 26:3 (June 1999), 409–25 (p. 423) <doi: 10.1068/b260409>.
5. See, for example: *Body and Building: Essays on the Changing Relation of Body and Architecture*, ed. by George Dodds and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); see also: David Gissen, *The Architecture of Disability: Buildings, Cities, and Landscapes beyond Access* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2022), pp. 87–9.
6. Matrix, *Making Space: Women and the Man-made Environment* (London: Pluto Press, 1984).
7. See David Serlin and Ignacio G. Galán, 'Call for Papers: Designing for Disability Futures', *Journal of Design History* (2024) <https://academic.oup.com/jdh/pages/cfp-designing-for-disability-futures> [accessed 28 November 2024].
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https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135525101073 Published online by Cambridge University Press

23. For instance, disability is only tangentially mentioned (in relation to sidewalk curb cuts) on two of 300 pages of Dana Cuff's recent monograph *Architectures of Spatial Justice* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2023), pp. 213–14; pointed out in Liebermann, *Architecture's Disability Problem*, p. 3.
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33. Liebermann, *Architecture's Disability Problem*, p. 198 (emphasis in original).

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Acknowledgements

This research has been supported by The Bartlett School of Architecture Research Fund 2023–4. We would like to thank Barbara Penner and the participants in our session on 'Histories of Disability and Deafness in Architecture' at the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) 2024 annual conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Gail Dubrow and Laura Leppink, Matthew Schrage and Andrew Gipe-Lazarou, Naina Gupta, and India Whiteley) for our insightful conversations and online workshops before and after the conference. Stylianos Giamarelos's thanks extend to Joseph Bedford, Tom Dyckhoff, Michael Faciejew, Elizabeth Keslacy, Anthi Rozi, and the undergraduate students who participated in his 'Histories of Disability and Neurodiversity in Architecture' seminar at The Bartlett School of Architecture (2022–5) for inspiring conversations. Nina Vollenbröker would also like to thank Jos Boys and Kerstin Sailer for ongoing exchanges about disability and architecture as well as Tania Sengupta and Megha Chand Inglis for their continued support of her research on this topic.

Competing interests

The authors declare none.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135525101073 Published online by Cambridge University Press