



Access Projects

Through our Universal Access Artist in Residence Program, Pittsburgh and Chicago-based artist, Owen Lowery, presents *Access Projects* in Gallery 1. These interactive installations harness technology, universal design, and multi-sensory communication as media for his finished works of art. Each of the three installations in this exhibition: *Speech-to-Text-to-Sign-to-Song-to-Art-to-Touch*, *Balloon Song*, and *Magnetic Braille* pose visitors with situations that encourage dialogue and play, with the hope of cultivating curiosity, exploration, and expansion within and beyond the gallery space. Shifting color and undulating light bathe the space creating a joyful ambience, musical sound fills the space in response to visitors movement, and poetry is created by visitors using 3D printed magnets on a magnetized wall.

During his month-long residency, Lowery engaged with visitors to Artspace and people out in the community. These interactions function as an integral part of his process, allowing him to test and refine his ideas based on observation and feedback. His primary project in residence was to create the “touch” component of *Speech-to-Text-to-Sign-to-Song-to-Art-to-Touch*. This fully interactive work explores the ways that different modes of communication provide varying types of access to information and opportunities for distortion, humor, and mystery. Visitors to the gallery are invited to speak in front of five vertically projected panels where a microphone picks up words and translates them into text. That text is then converted into sign language through an animated figure, and those signs are then converted into musical notes on an animated keyboard. The sound is then animated into a colorful art visualization, and finally the visualization is translated into six word generative braille poetry which is animated in three dimensions utilizing 3D printed mechanical cells controlled by Servo motors. These motors raise and lower cells to create braille words alongside illuminated text. Visitors who can read sign language or braille

will have access to information others do not, reminding us that we each experience the world differently, and many of us do not have equal access to information in our day-to-day lives. Yet, this whimsical animated game of telephone is not heavy-handed in this message, each aspect of the installation is designed to be engaging and delight all who encounter it. *Speech-to-Text-to-Sign-to-Song-to-Art-to-Touch*, along with Lowery’s other works, embodies the power and importance of universal design and above all, the value of practicing curiosity and wonder in our daily lives.

ANNAH LEE *Creative Director*

l-r, works by Owen Lowery: *Speech-to-Text-to-Sign-to-Song-to-Art-to-Touch*, detail; *Balloon Song*, detail; detail of 3D printed braille cell powered by Servo motors in progress.