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S/pace: Neurodiversity in Relation

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S/pace: Neurodiversity in Relation

Cover Page Footnote

Reference: Melanie Yergeau, *Authoring Autism: on rhetoric and neurological queerness*, 2018. Adam Wolfond and Estée Klar, *S/Pace*, 2019.

S/pace: Neurodiversity in Relation

Estée Klar and Adam Wolfond



S/pace: Neurodiversity in Relation (2019). [Click image to view.](#)

Artists' Statement: We move research creation by inventing with neurodiversity. Neurodiversity is relation. This moves autism away from the concept of dis-order and as non-relational and we untether from the pathology paradigm to express and language otherwise. As Adam Wolfond, my non-speaking son and collaborator suggests, this is a new way of “languaging” neurodiversity through art and movement to consider the question: “can a good body feel without another body?” to address concepts of independence and agency as it is imagined by neurotypicality. This latter way forces a particular narrative and art form largely for the purposes of explaining experience rather than being immersed within it. We feel this film is also important for thinking about support and movement as mutuuated and affective.

The film *S/Pace* emerged from a collaboration, thinking about the conditions to support neurodiversity. We “think with sticks,” (Wolfond), rubber bath toys, tics, flaps, taps, space, pace and proprioception. Wolfond’s interest in

perception, movement and support with the human and non-human became part of a processual artistic practice we have named intraethnography, and the film merged Wolfond's poetry with movement in the art studio and on walks for a new way of research-creation. We contend that this processual-artistic way of invention allows us to remain open, without goal and directive, letting movement, relation and creation unfold to think of what we may not have yet conceived.

We extend the idea of autistic narrative towards artistic experimentation and relational expression to "blast" (Wolfond) form, inspired by Melanie Yergeau's call to "queer the lines of rhetoric, humanity and agency" (Yergeau, 2018, 25). We question notions around authorship and intelligibility that enforces a dominant neurotypical body and form; a form that is largely instrumental and directional. We propose the notions of relation and support as mutual, and also, incorporeal (non-human and affective) thereby eliding the false binary between dis/abled in what is traditionally conceived as the support dyad. Rethinking "orientation", a motional-relational attunement is instead perpetually aligning-moving-pacing, requiring practices and techniques that put form and its neurotypical "legibility" into question. We therefore imagine new forms of neurodiverse expression.

Editor's Note: *S/pace* was first presented as an installation with Wolfond's "poetry sticks" at Critical Distance Centre for Curators, Toronto, Canada, in October, 2019.

Estée Klar holds a PhD Critical Disability Studies at York University. Her dissertation, *Neurodiversity in Relation: an Artistic Intraethnography* is a collaborative work with her non-speaking autistic son/poet, Adam Wolfond and The A Collective (recently renamed Disassembly), a learning artistic community that thinks about the conditions that support neurodiversity. Estée is also the founder of the former Autism Acceptance Project (2006–16) and its subsequent artistic-activist events, and the original blogger at *The Joy of Autism* (2004–8). She is an artist and filmmaker and her work with Adam can be seen at www.esteerelation.com