



# **Programmatic Accessibility in Performing Arts and Museums**

with

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**National Assembly of State Arts Agencies - NASAA Assembly 2024**

**Friday, October 25, 2024 – 2:00 pm-3:30 pm EDT**

Laguna 1, 2nd Floor - Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel & Casino

The theory of inclusive design describes one common approach to accessibility. The main tenets are:

- 1) the designers consider as many different human abilities, limitations and needs as possible; and
- 2) these factors should be included from **the beginning** of the design process.

The arrangement had two benefits over the traditional model of audio description development for live performance:

- 1) time was available to carefully observe the theatrical process and construct descriptive language that was more thorough and considered; and
- 2) people desiring the service could attend any performance with no advance notice and be assured of access to the visual aspects of the production.



# Programmatic Accessibility in the Arts

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## Perspective on Audio description and Blindness Initiatives in Puerto Rico

*by Shalmarie Arroyo*

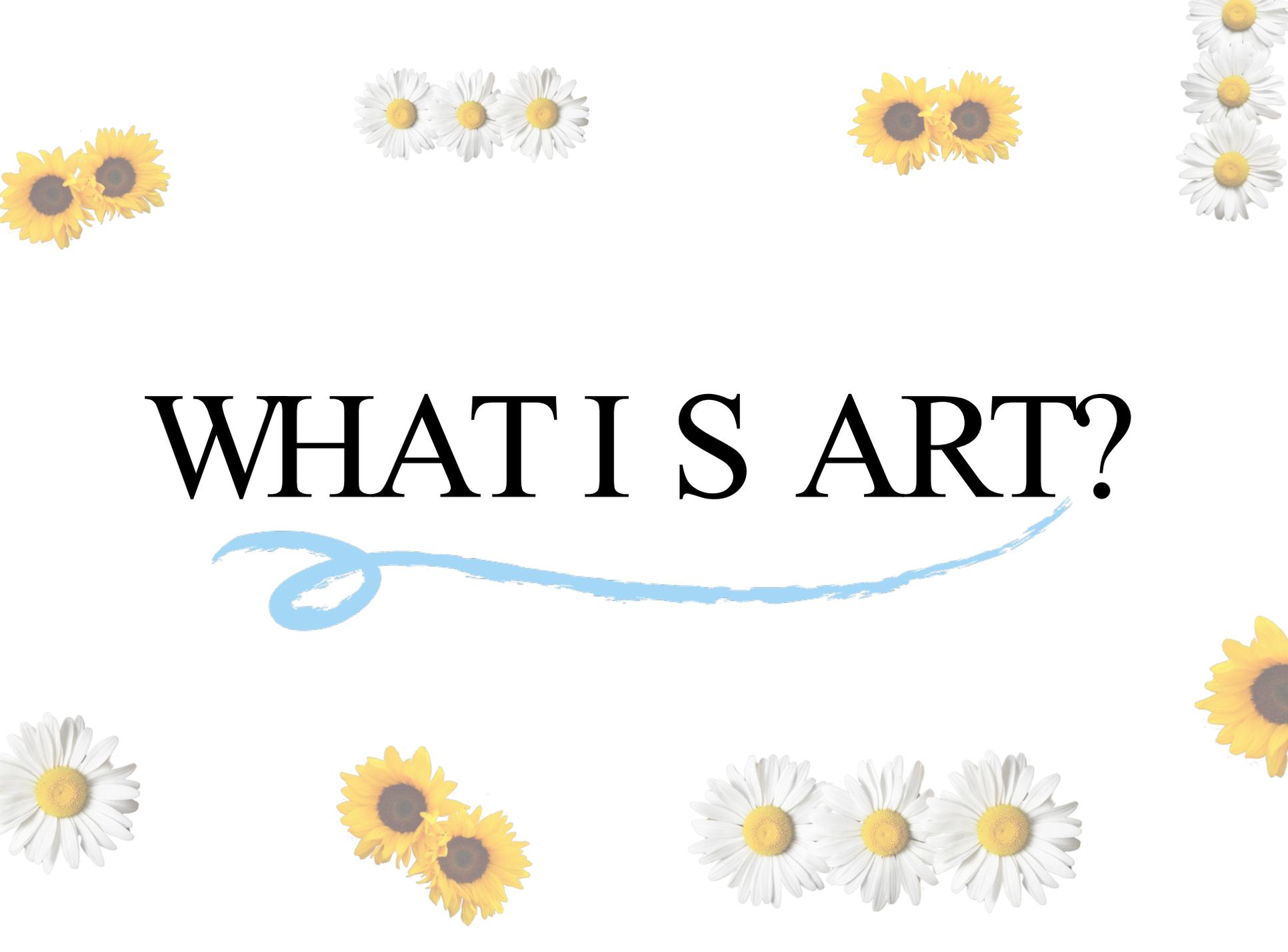
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# Emily



# WHAT IS ART?





Why do blind people want . . .





To experience it?



To make it?



To be a part of it?



To advocate for it?



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# Audio description and Other Blindness Initiatives

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# Some Efforts in Puerto Rico



# 2012 - Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña



A project with the mission of bringing art closer to the blind and deaf communities.:

- plays with audio description
- Sign language
- Human museum guides (focused on audio description and sign-language interpretation)

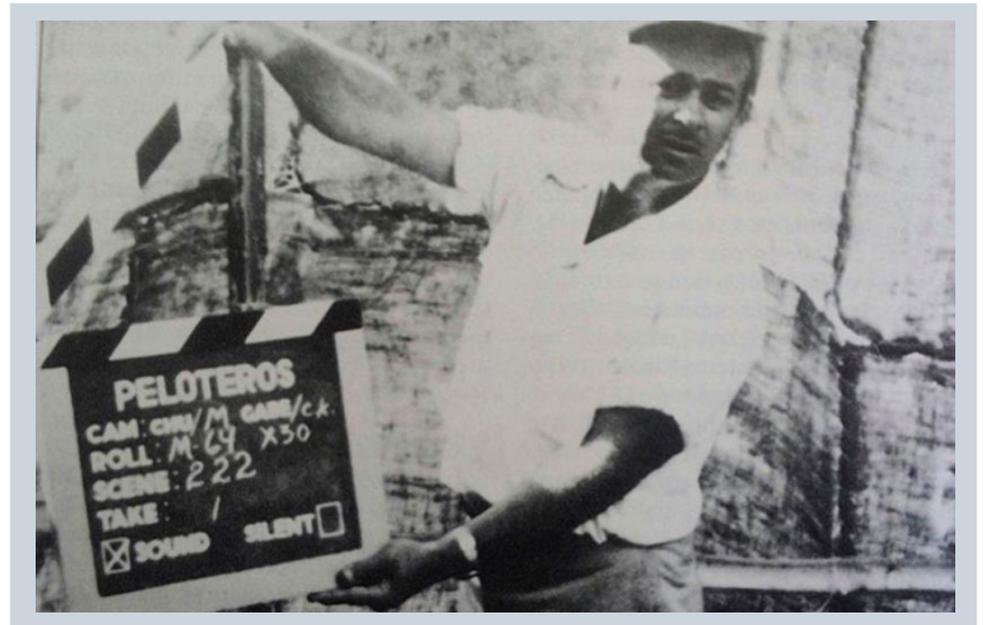




2016

Community Education Division  
Department of Public  
Instruction of Puerto Rico and  
the University of Puerto Rico

- audio description to a film  
produced in Puerto Rico in  
1953: Los Peloteros by Jack  
Delano



Credit to [Enciclopedia](#)



2020 - 2024

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## European Film Festival of Puerto Rico and the Alliance Française of Puerto Rico

- Films with audio description and closed captions through the online edition of the festival

## ALTRUSA International

- “Arte Táctil a Dos Manos” or “Two-Handed Tactile Art”
- Guided experience



2020 - 2024



ADocPR

Short film: Libre de Miedo, produced by Berenice Manjarrez with audio description, sign language and closed captions.

Sign Language Interpreters

Craft Fair of the Deaf Community in the Plaza de Armas of Old San Juan



2020 - 2024



Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico  
Permanent Exhibition “Puerto Rico Plural”



*Credit to Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico*

# Cuarzo Blanco, Inc.

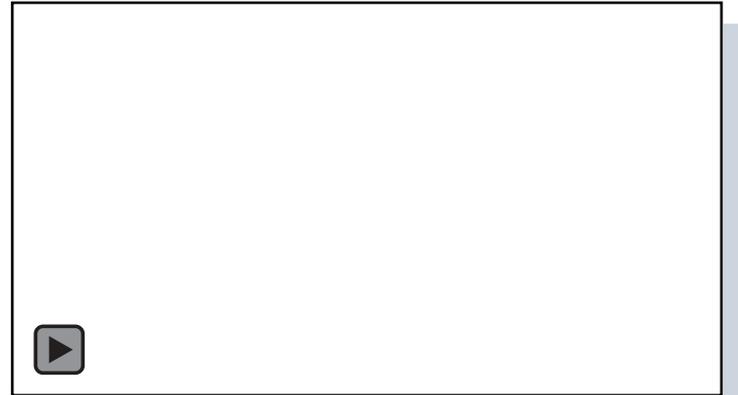
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*Credit to Cuarzo Blanco, Inc*

- Audio description in some functions
- sign language for each character

E.G. Play: “Rayo de Luna”



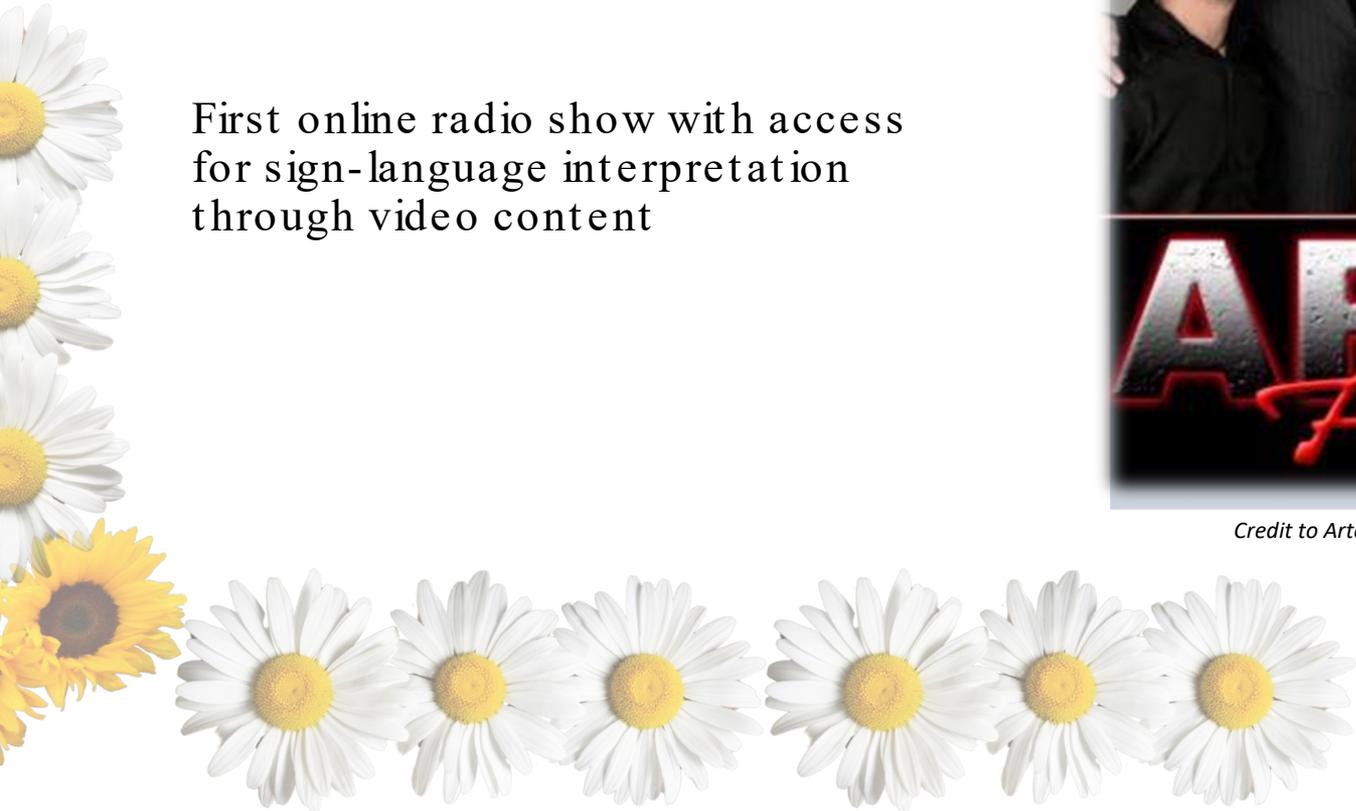
# Arte Fusión

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First online radio show with access  
for sign-language interpretation  
through video content



*Credit to Arte Fusión*



# Realidad Desconocida

- mission of the project = to amplify the existing view of disability in a positive way.
- Only Radio show in PR focused on the topic of disability
- Includes sign-language interpretation of the show through social media





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## WIPR

- Content with audio description through the PRTV+ app

## DICAPTA

- Works with WIPR and other Spanish-content creators





*Credit to El Diario de Hoy*

**Bad Bunny**



*Credit to El Nuevo Día*

**Arcángel**

# Emily



# History of Sign Language Interpreting in Puerto Rico

First “formal” or “professional” interpreting was provided by the government of Puerto Rico through the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration.

Previous deaf only had access to interpreting through family and/or friends.

Interpretations and accessibility was provided for only essential daily activities since there was a limited number of interpreters.

It has only been in the last 25 years in which the interpreting profession has been developed and more qualified interpreters are available to interpret.

# Present Day Sign Language Interpreting in Puerto Rico

There are a limited number of qualified Sign Language Interpreters available on the island

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Hurricane Maria & COVID

It has only been in the last 25 years in which the interpreting profession has begun to be developed, and more qualified interpreters are available to interpret.

# Accessibility to the Arts for the Deaf in Puerto Rico

Performance interpreting requires additional skills

Majority of the access is related to the Musical Arts

Cultural demand for interpreting / accessibility for the deaf community

Funding



Arcangel



Karol G



PJ sin Suela



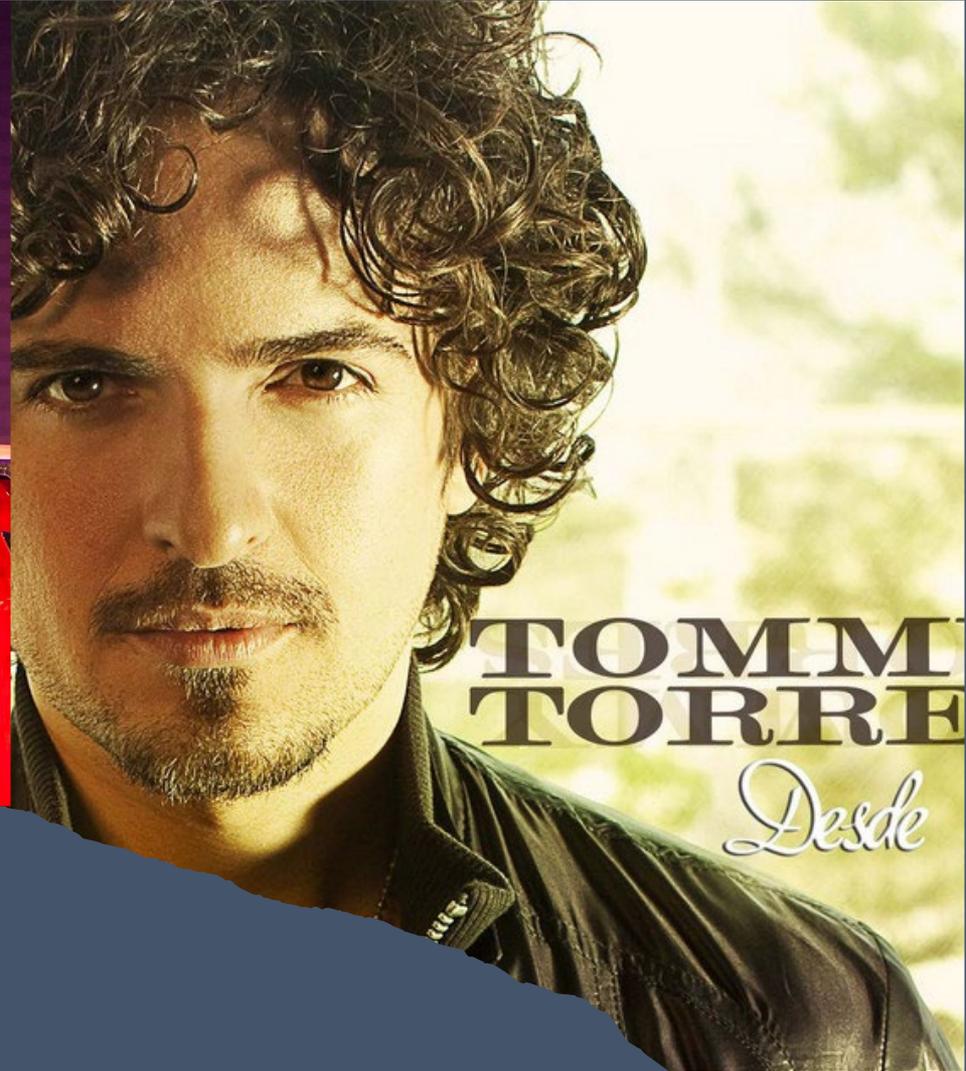
Bad Bunny

Feid



Atencion Atencion





Banda de  
Galdy Santiago

# Programmatic Accessibility in the Arts

**October 25, 2024**

**Katharine Hayward, PhD  
NEA Office of Accessibility**

# NEA Office of Accessibility

## **We provide:**

- **Resources** to help make the arts accessible for people with disabilities, veterans, older adults, and those living in institutional settings
- **Technical assistance & training** to:
  - applicants, grantees, artists with disabilities
  - NEA staff
  - State Arts Agency & Regional Arts Org staff

# Our work with the SAA/RAOs

- Bi-monthly accessibility peer learning calls
- Accessibility office hours (alternate months) for SAA/RAO staff
- LEAD and NASAA accessibility all-day peer sessions
- Trainings for staff and constituents

# Access is a

- Requirement under Sect. 504 and the ADA
  - Physical and program accessibility
- Way to engage more communities
  - Disability can happen to anyone at any time.
  - People with disabilities don't come if they don't know there will be access.

# Access is an Aesthetic

- Proactive – access at the start
- Disability is central
- Access is part of creative process
  - e.g. alt text as poetry, mobility aids part of the visual, haptics to feel the experience

# Alice Sheppard quote - Kinetic Light

“When disabled artists and disability artistry are not centered, supported, and welcomed as important contributors to the field, the field misses out on the innovation, creativity, imagination, and artistry that comes from the disability community. Audiences and artists should know our work. As people invested in the arts, we owe it to ourselves and to the future to engage with the work of disabled artists.”



Jerron Herman, Laurel Lawson, and Alice Sheppard from Kinetic Light, *Wired*. Photo by Robbie Sweeny

# NEA Supported Activities

# Cuarzo Blanco Inc. (PR) - Theater

- Doble Cara (Double Face), written and directed by Adriana Pantoja. Sign language interpreters and audio describers will be fully integrated into performances to ensure accessibility for Deaf and Blind audiences.

## Universal Access Productions (Glendale, AZ)

- Arizona Theatre Matters' production of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* featuring performers with disabilities. The creative team for the production will include an American Sign Language (ASL) supervisor who will assist in identifying and selecting Deaf actors and advising on accessibility related concerns. The production also will be recorded and made available on YouTube offering audio descriptions and captioning in many languages

## In Progress (St. Paul, MN) – Media Arts

- Libre de Miedo (Free From Fear), a documentary film by Berenice Manjarrez. The film follows Luis Felipe Passalacqua, a blind sculptor and activist, who developed a tactile art program for blind and low vision individuals at el Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico after a misdiagnosed case of meningitis left him blind and with hearing loss.

## Jess Curtis/Gravity, Inc. (SF, CA) - Dance

- Creation and presentation of an ensemble work directed by Jess Curtis. The work will focus on social and cultural experiences of darkness and light. Accessibility accommodations such as audio description, tactile floor markings, and touchbased navigation strategies will be utilized to allow performers to safely navigate the space and negotiate proximity to audiences given the literal use of extreme darkness and light.

## Louisville (KY) Visual Art Inc.

- Design and planning for the installation of a sensory accessible tactile public artwork for blind and low vision individuals. The large-scale public artwork will be designed by artist Liz Richter for installation in the Clifton neighborhood near the Kentucky School for the Blind and the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville.

## NC State University (Raleigh, NC) - Design

- Creation and implementation of tactile wayfinding tools for people with vision disabilities. Students and faculty at the university will partner with instructors and students from the Governor Morehead School for the Blind to implement prototypes for tactile, 3D maps and corresponding sidewalk mats that improve orientation and mobility for blind and low-vision individuals.

## Public Poetry (Houston, TX) – Literary Arts

- REELpoetry festival. Featuring hearing and deaf poets who work at the intersection of poetry and video/film, the festival will include programming such as themed curated programs, commissioned collaborations, an America Sign Language (ASL) slam, craft workshops, and poet and filmmaker talks and panels.

# Resources

# General accessibility resources

- [NEA Office of Accessibility](#)
- [Civil Rights FAQs for Applicants and Grantees](#)
- [Section 504 Self-Evaluation Workbook](#)
- [Brief Accessibility Checklist](#)
- [ADA National Network](https://adata.org/) <https://adata.org/>
- [U.S. Access Board](#) (& animation models)
- [ADA 2010 Design Standards](#)

# Careers in the Arts Toolkit

- [Resources for Artists, Cultural Workers, and Youth with Disabilities](#)
- [Resources for Arts Employers](#)
- [Resources for Arts Educators](#)
- [Resources for Arts Grantmakers](#)
- [Artist Profiles](#)



Reach out to us!

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**American Council of the Blind's Audio Description Project (ADP)—**

12/19/2024

**25<sup>th</sup> ADP AD Institute – VIRTUAL: Spring 2025**