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Από τα θεραπευτικά στα καλλιτεχνικά-πολιτικά παραδείγματα: Οι ιστορικά διαμορφωμένες διαστάσεις της τέχνης των αναπήρων και το ελληνικό πολιτισμικό πλαίσιο

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From **therapeutic** to **artistic-political examples** The **historically shaped dimensions of art** involving **people with disabilities** and the **Greek cultural context**

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THEAMA: The Trojan Women *(Summer Tour 2022). Photo: Antigoni Kourakou*

Abstract

Art involving disabled people and artists is a field that is gradually attracting the interest of academics, researchers, artists and cultural organisations in Greece. However, the relatively limited theoretical and research scope of the field requires an exploration of different trends in relation to the arts, and in particular theatre and people with disabilities. The first part of this study explores the different artistic practices related to disabled people and artists through specific, historically shaped dimensions. The second part focuses on the relevant research and the structure of artistic practice and education of disabled people in the Greek cultural context. Through a theoretical analysis of the above data, the study attempts to discuss how the historically shaped dimensions of art involving people and artists with disabilities are intertwined with the artistic practice and education of disabled people in the Greek cultural space.
Keywords: *disability, theatre, art, arts education*

Introduction

The relationship and engagement of disabled people with the arts is a constantly changing and evolving field, reflected in both practical artistic applications and theoretical framing. A significant part of the existing literature is devoted to cultural representations of disabled people in the arts, "where disabled people are symbolically present" (Karagianni, 2023, p. 145). Traditional and dominant representations of disabled people, as historically established in the media and the arts, portray disabled people as either "villains" or "victims", associating the experience of impairment with tragedy, loss and healing (Kempe & Shah, 2016; Lewis, 2006; O'Reilly, 2009). Even today, disabled people as impostors, disabled people in need of charity and disabled people as subjects of inspiration make up the vast majority of available representations of disabled identities in the media and the arts (Hadley & McDonald, 2019). In the context of these negative representations, non-disabled artists continue to take the available theatrical roles of disabled characters, thus reproducing and fuelling the professional exclusion of disabled artists from the arts.

With regard to the issue of the participation of disabled people in the arts as producers and participants in the arts, specific dimensions have emerged and developed in the international literature. The historical exclusion of disabled people from the arts, among other things, and the consequent demand for disabled people's access to the arts has led to the development of different dimensions. Therefore, references to the different directions of art in relation to disability create a distinct field from the outset. Through an in-depth exploration of the relevant foreign and Greek literature, this study aims, on the one hand, to open a dialogue on the aforementioned dimensions that reflect the artistic practices in the field under discussion and, on the other hand, to outline the research trends and artistic practices and education in the Greek cultural space.

Theoretical background

Studies on art and disabled people and artists are grouped into different categories, offering different dimensions and approaches to the field. According to Newsinger and Green (2016), these studies can be grouped into two categories and, by extension, form two dimensions: on the one hand, art therapy, i.e. art as a therapeutic tool, articulated within the spaces of health and social work professionals, and on the other hand, disability arts, which have been linked to empowerment, political and artistic imperatives. Disabled activist Michael Oliver (2009) aptly points out that the disability arts movement is called upon to "fight to free itself from the domination of able-bodied professionals who define art as therapy" (p. 149) rather than as a cultural product. In other studies (Solvang, 2012, 2017), four dimensions are most widely recognised as framing art related to disabled people and artists: art therapy, outsider art, disability aesthetics[1] and disability arts. Through a spectrum map, Lee et al. (2019) attempt to schematise the two different dimensions, placing arts and disability, which encompasses art therapy and art by non-disabled artists that includes disabled people or art with relevant content, on one side, and disability arts, the art produced by disabled artists with or without relevant content, on the other. Similarly, in Hadley and McDonald's (2019) study, there is a variation in the terminology used in the relevant field, as arts and disability and disability arts are present, but there is also mention of the term "inclusive arts".

According to Ineland (2004), theatre involving disabled people and artists can be divided into two categories: on the one hand, theatre is seen as art in which the meaning and value of the artistic work is emphasised and on the other hand, theatre is viewed as a method, as therapy, in the context of which its ameliorative effects on disabled people are discussed, reproducing the individual-medical model of disability. In the field of applied theatre, Hargrave (2015) distinguishes between the therapeutic dimension of theatre and social/participatory theatre, which reflect the individual-medical and social models of disability, respectively.[2] According to Hargrave, a third dimension is encapsulated in the term "arts and disability" and refers to the production of professional theatre performances with disabled artists, which has emerged in the first two decades of the 21st century. This distinction is made because similarities are often seen between the therapeutic and social/participatory approaches mentioned above, so that the particular benefits of disabled people's participation in the arts overlap with the resulting aesthetic product.

The first part of this study presents the different dimensions that art involving disabled people and artists has historically taken. The study refers to individuals, artists and creators as it is considered that the dimensions to be discussed do not concern or refer to artists as a whole. These dimensions include outsider art, art therapy, arts and disability, inclusive arts and disability arts. The second part of the study provides an overview of the Greek cultural landscape, with reference to research trends in the field, artistic practices, arts education and broader issues related to the arts involving disabled people and artists. The review of the historically shaped dimensions of art

related to disabled people aims to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which research and artistic practices and education of disabled people have developed in the Greek context.

The historically shaped dimensions of disabled art

Outsider art

In the 1940s, the French artist Jean Dubuffet described the art created by people with disabilities and people with mental health problems in institutions as *art brut*. A historical starting point for art brut was the collection of the psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn, who compiled a collection of artworks by people who had been institutionalised (Solvang, 2017). The term was reformulated in 1972 by the British art historian Roger Cardinal, who called it outsider art. According to Cardinal (2009), it is a personal and unusual art produced by individuals on the margins of society, who deviate from or are unaware of existing artistic norms and have not incorporated prevailing cultural influences, while the artistic creation is characterised by its unconventional nature. Central to the definition of outsider art is that it departs radically from mainstream cultural expectations of what art should look like and how it should be made (Cardinal, 2009). Historically, the best-known creators, collectors and curators of outsider art have had close relationships with institutions, but this relationship changed in the late 20th century with the emergence of independent collectors and gallery owners specialising in and working with this kind of art (Rhodes, 2000).

Criticism of outsider art has been multi-faceted. It has been argued that it largely reflected the treatment of disabled people in institutions based on ableism where disabled people were not considered capable of caring for themselves, expressing themselves, asserting themselves and making decisions (Chandler et al., 2023). Outsider art was dominated by non-disabled curators who collected the work of people in institutions. Creators were not paid for the works they sold, as the curators reaped the profits (Prinz, 2017), and were excluded from exhibitions and related speeches, a practice that continues into the 21st century (Kuppers, 2016). Although the creators of outsider art have not all been disabled, this kind of art is essentially tied to medicalised discourses and logics that are based on ableism (Wexler & Derby, 2015). At the same time, Davies (2009) raises questions about whether outsider art qualifies as art, arguing that the creative process is not understood. The boundaries of the nature of this art and the creators who engage with it are blurred, while reducing it to outsider art isolates the creators and creates divisions. In this context, social marginality is causally linked to the aesthetic appreciation of the work of these creators, as their value lies in their non-relationship to both the society and the dominant artistic establishment (Hargrave, 2015). This dimension cuts off the creator from their work, exoticises disabled people and artists, fetishises their artworks and functions in a patronising way, as disabled people and artists themselves have no control or voice in the different stages of the artistic process.

Art therapy

Art therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses artistic means to achieve positive change and personal development in individuals (Hackett et al., 2017). Historically, art as a therapeutic tool has been used in institutional and hospital settings, special schools, day and rehabilitation centres and psychotherapy centres. It aims to use its practical applications as tools for the treatment of medical conditions or the psychoanalytical expression of repressed emotions, as well as for developing useful social skills related to communication, self-esteem, personal development of disabled people, etc. (Hadley & McDonald, 2019; Hall, 2010; Solvang, 2017; Wu et al., 2020). More specifically, drama therapy involves the use of theatrical elements and techniques (improvisation, role play, puppetry, mime, etc.) as therapeutic tools and is the point of convergence between therapy and theatre. The origins of drama therapy can be traced back to the 18th century, when theatre appeared in psychiatric hospitals in Europe to improve mental health through art (Bailey, 2006; Crimmens, 2006). It is argued that drama therapy builds self-confidence, increases self-awareness and responsibility, and improves communication and social skills (Crimmens, 2006). As reported by various drama therapy organisations (e.g., the British Association of Dramatherapists), the therapeutic aspects of drama and theatre are used in the drama therapy process to promote creativity, imagination, learning and the overall development of the individual.

Although the various forms of art therapy concern artistic practices with disabled people as well as with other social groups, they tend to be discussed separately from professional, experimental and politicised artistic practices for, with and by disabled people (Hadley & McDonald, 2019). At the same time, the therapeutic dimension of art has received little attention from disability studies scholars, theatre practitioners and applied theatre practitioners, in contrast to their interest in the performing arts and their aesthetic and social implications (Hadley & McDonald, 2019; Hargrave, 2015; Sandahl & Auslander,

Disabled Artists Movement: The first universally accessible musical performance "Diptych" by Alkinoos Ioannidis on Euripides' Bacchae*, Megaron Athens, March 2018. Photo: Nikos Karanikolas*

2005). The approach of art as therapy for people with disabilities is based on paternalism (Barnes & Mercer, 2001) and adopts medicalised discourses that aim to improve or heal individuals and overlook the socio-political, economic and structural aspects of their disablement (Miller et al., 2020). Similarly, related research tends to limit itself to advising practitioners in the field on how to improve people's mental health and personal development, obscuring issues of social and political agency and power that are central to other studies on arts, culture and disabled people (Hadley & McDonald, 2019). While the value of art to the development and growth of the individual is not generally denied or questioned, the association of disabled people with the arts exclusively through the lens of therapy and the use of the arts to normalise disabled people is particularly problematic.

Arts and disability

In the term "arts and disability", we identify a dimension that could be a precursor to inclusive arts, as they share a number of common assumptions. According to Perring (2005), arts and disability refer to artistic practices that are usually organised by non-disabled artists or organisations run by non-disabled artists and that involve disabled people, especially people with intellectual impairments. It is a practice that usually reflects the values and interests of non-disabled artists (Perring, 2005). It is also known as a facilitative arts practice, where non-disabled artists work with disabled people (Hadley & McDonald, 2019). The aim of arts and disability was to ensure the integration (and later inclusion) of disabled people in art and creative expression. Although it shares common elements, it is a separate category from art therapy (Perring, 2005). As mentioned in the introduction, in his distinction between the therapeutic dimension of theatre and social/participatory theatre, Hargrave (2015) locates a third dimension of arts and disability, namely the production of professional theatre performances by mixed theatre groups. These groups seek to produce theatrical products that are not treated as a form of social charity, but are instead funded, judged and critiqued by audiences for the substance and quality of their artistic material. Within this dimension, the artistic process and its various aspects are largely controlled by non-disabled participants; the artistic work itself is not exclusively focused on issues of concern to disabled people and is often mediated by non-disabled participants.

Inclusive arts

The notion of inclusion has only entered the field of art in the last decade, which shows why it has not been sufficiently clarified and theoretically framed as a dimension. What the relevant studies have in

THEAMA: "Antigone: Act I" (ISON Theatre 2022). Photo: Gkikas Melachrinos

common in terms of defining inclusive art is that it refers to artistic partnerships between disabled and non-disabled artists to produce artworks that, according to Hadley and McDonald (2019), contain a strong inclusive agenda. Using an outdated term, Kramer and Freedman Fask (2017) refer to creative collaborations between people with "different abilities" in theatre, music, visual arts and elsewhere. In their work, Fox and Macpherson (2015) use the term "inclusive arts" to describe creative collaborations between people with intellectual impairments and non-disabled artists. Inclusive arts seek to develop the abilities, knowledge and skills of those involved, so that these creative collaborations produce works of art or creative experiences of high aesthetic quality. In this context, the main objective is to produce high quality artistic outputs with socio-political objectives being of secondary importance, unlike other related social/participatory practices where disabled participants are perceived as those in need of support or representation. At the same time, non-disabled artists are removed from the traditional role of the helper and are treated as collaborators (Fox & Macpherson, 2015).

For Nijkamp and Cardol (2020), inclusive theatre refers to the artistic partnership between people with intellectual impairments and non-disabled artists, where the aim is to create an open inclusive and egalitarian context for collaboration and to develop the creativity of the participants through artistic expression. Using the example of Odyssey Theatre, an inclusive theatre organisation in the UK, Wooster (2009) identifies inclusive theatre as theatre that is not devoid of aesthetic quality. It is a creative process that involves people from different backgrounds, addresses the issue of inclusion and aims to involve disabled people in the arts from which they have historically been excluded (Barton-Farcas, 2022). As discussed above, inclusive theatre – disabled and non-disabled artists creating together – breaks the traditional pattern of non-disabled artists supporting the disabled artists (McRae, 2018).

The main common premise of inclusive arts and arts and disability is the partnership of disabled and non-disabled people, with a focus on people with intellectual impairments. At the same time, although aesthetic value appears as a primary goal, the inclusive agenda is common to both dimensions. The role of non-disabled participants appears to be critical, and although they are theoretically in the position of equal partners, it is not clear whether changes in the traditional and established power relations between disabled and non-disabled people are taking place.

Disability arts

The disability arts movement emerged in the mid-1980s as a cultural manifestation of the disability movement and resulting disability politics that

Disabled Artists Movement: The first universally accessible screening of the film Little England *at the Greek Film Archive, September 2015. Photo: Nikos Karanikolas*

developed in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom (Darke, 2003; Hargrave, 2015; Solvang, 2017). The disability arts movement was based on the social model of disability (Cameron, 2007), which shifted the focus from the individual's impairment to the physical and social environment that disabled them. In this context, the focus was on disability, through arts and culture, as a collective and personal experience arising from the socio-economic exclusion experienced by disabled people (Darke, 2003). The negotiation of disability issues in socio-political terms therefore changed the way disabled people engaged with arts and cultural processes (Barnes, 2003). The disability arts movement argued strongly that the only acceptable art was that which was demonstrably owned, controlled and performed by disabled artists (Hargrave, 2015). The cultural expression of the disability arts movement is encapsulated in the term "disability arts", which refers to artworks created by people with disabilities that are inspired by the experience of disability (Solvang, 2017) either in content or form (Sandahl, 2006). Disability arts are directly related to the disability movement, as its rise was the substrate for the development of disability arts (Sutherland, 1997). It is a vibrant and rich field in which disabled artists create work that expresses their identity as disabled people (Jacobson & McMurchy, 2010; Sutherland, 1997). Historically, a key focus of disability arts has been the issue of inclusion, the ability of disabled people to make art and actively participate in the art-making process, and by extension, the expression of their individual and collective experiences and the recognition and assertion of their rights (Barnes & Mercer, 2001; Hadley & McDonald, 2019; Hargrave, 2015). During the development of disability arts in the 1990s, there was a growing interest in the career prospects of disabled artists and their professional identities as artists, moving the discussion away from seeing art as a means of transcending the self or proving the worth of disabled people (Cameron, 2007). In this regard, Hargrave (2015) notes that disability arts negotiate the oppression of disabled people, aim to empower them and constitute a tool of resistance against the dual oppression of both dominant culture and art therapy. The art produced by disabled people themselves further aims to undermine traditional aesthetic and social values by causing or attempting to remove ableism (Darke, 2004), i.e. "a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human" (Campbell, 2009, p. 5). Disability arts challenged the bourgeois and dominant assumptions that defined what was and was not art.

As a direction, in attempting to create and develop a disability culture in opposition to the dominant hegemony of normality, it not only broke with but also undermined core values and exposed the production processes of the dominant culture (Darke, 2003). In contrast to mainstream artistic trends that promote what the disability community and scholars in the field call inspiration porn[3] (Sandahl, 2018), disability arts do not aim to be didactic and evoke empathy, nor do they seek to train audiences to embrace "diversity". In this regard, Abbas et al. (2004) state:

> Disability Arts and Culture marks the growing political power of disabled people over their narratives, as disabled artists use it to counter cultural misrepresentation, establish disability as a valued human condition, shift control to disabled people so they may shape their narratives and bring this disability controlled narrative to wider audiences. (p. 1)

An important starting point for disability arts was the establishment of the London Disability Arts Forum in 1986, an organisation controlled by and employing disabled people (Sutherland, 2008). The Forum's goal was to create an organisation to provide financial support to arts organisations in London (Sutherland, 2008; Vasey, 2004), to develop a disability culture informed by the collective experience of disabled people, to create opportunities for the production of artistic work by disabled people and to establish a framework for expression through different art forms (Vasey, 1989). As disabled activist Vic Finkelstein (1987) notes, "We must be clear that it is essential for us to create our own public image, based upon free acceptance of our distinctive group identity" (p. 4). As a branch of disability arts, disability theatre is created by disabled artists and seeks to abolish stereotypes, challenge the notion of stigma, renegotiate disability as a human condition with value and has both a political and an artistic orientation (Johnston, 2012, 2016).

In this context, the disability arts movement has referred to the practice of cripping up, i.e. non-disabled actors taking on theatrical roles of disabled characters (Kociemba, 2010; Ryan, 2018). The process of non-disabled actors auditioning for and playing the roles of disabled characters refers to the anachronistic and offensive practice of blacking up, i.e., the portrayal of African American characters by white Hollywood actors, when there was clearly an abundance of African American professional actors. As Ryan (2018) notes, while the practice of blacking up is now seen as highly problematic and condemnable, the practice of cripping up is still rewarded with accolades and rave reviews. This practice is often viewed as an indication of the artistic merit and acting ability of non-disabled actors portraying the relevant roles (Kuppers, 2001). Performances in which non-disabled artists play theatrical roles of disabled characters are inherently inauthentic, activate and reproduce the prejudices and fantasies of the dominant culture, and perpetuate the discrimination and exclusion of disabled people from employment in the arts (Kociemba, 2010). The way the entertainment industry works by selecting famous and established actors to play disabled roles in order to achieve financial success and profit and the argument by producers, directors or casting directors that there are no disabled actors suitable for the role in question, are some of the reasons that lead to this practice.

The Greek cultural context

Research review

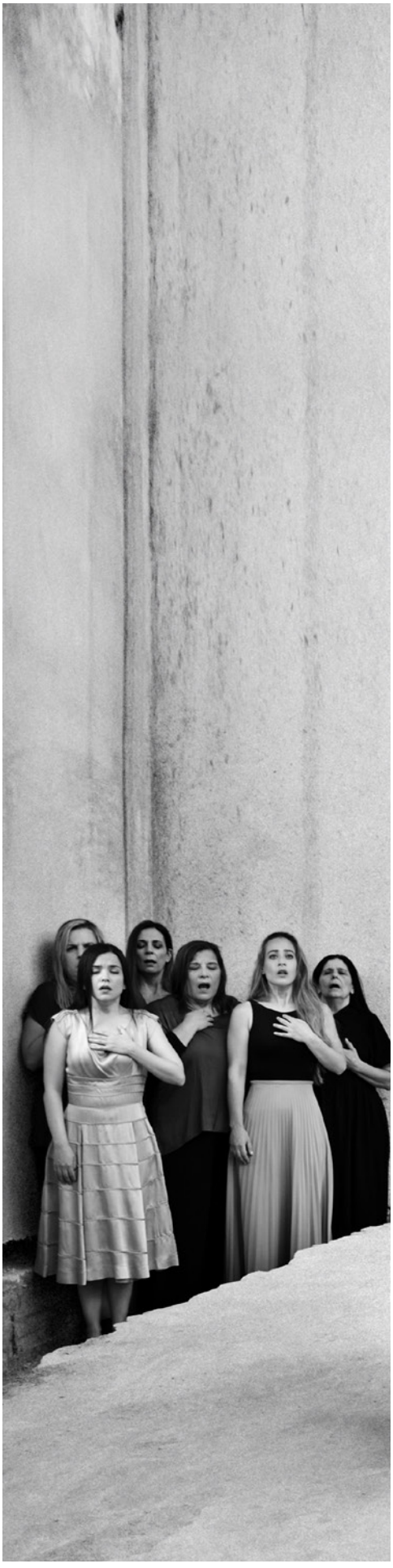
As has already been shown, the field of arts involving people with disabilities remains unexplored in Greek literature, both in terms of research and theoretical studies (Koltsida, 2022; Koltsida & Lenakakis, 2019). The theoretical and research work found in this area concerns the review of disability theatre groups and mixed groups (Economou & Perifanou, 2019; Koltsida, 2022; Koltsida & Lenakakis, 2017), the study of drama production and the representation of disabled people on stage (Koltsida, 2023; Koltsida & Lenakakis, 2019), research on other arts such as dance and visual arts involving disabled people and artists (Alexias et al., 2019; Kanari & Souliotou, 2021; Karagianni, 2023), the mobilisation of disabled artists (Rellas, 2022) and the study of public exhibitions or performances of heteromorphic bodies (freak shows) (Karagianni & Koutsoklenis, 2023). At the same time, there are studies that are influenced by the individual-medical model of disability in terms of discourse, practices and approaches and that focus on the therapeutic effects of art and theatre on disabled people (Christodoulou, 2016; Kladaki et al., 2016; Kyriakou, 2016; Michailidou & Petra, 2016; Mpella et al., 2019; Stratou & Tsiaras, 2019; Tegopoulou, 2020; Tsibidaki & Kladaki, 2016). The artistic and theatre pedagogical programmes of the above studies are characterised by a single-subject approach, as they address specific categories of impairment based on medical diagnostic criteria (e.g., research on children with autistic spectrum disorders or children with moderate mental retardation, etc.). Finally, research conducted by the author (Lenakakis & Koltsida, 2017), although not based on an individual-medical model of disability, focuses on research findings related to the positive impact of the rehearsal and performance process on disabled subjects, without including non-disabled subjects.

Artistic practice and education

The involvement of people with disabilities in theatre began in the 1980s and intensified in the late 2000s and early 2010s, with the establishment of amateur and professional artistic and theatrical groups and collectives. The historical Greek Deaf Theatre, founded in 1983, ARTimeleia, En Dynamei, THEAMA, the Disabled Artists Movement and Crazy Colours, among others, have been active on Greek theatrical stages (Koltsida, 2022), but without sharing an understanding of disability and the art of theatre. As an example, the Disabled Artists Movement clearly uses the social model of disability in the art field both theoretically and practically (Karagianni, 2023), while the THEAMA group incorporates the philosophy of the social model in the context of their performances (Fanouraki, 2019). Despite the long-standing artistic presence and activity of these groups and collectives, disabled people themselves have little or no access to institutionalised professional theatre training (Alexias et al., 2019). As reflected in a survey of disabled participants in European arts organisations, including those in Greece, a common problem reported by the majority of disabled artists was their exclusion from higher education or opportunities for professional development as artists (Leahy & Ferri, 2023).

In Greece, the admission of disabled candidates to drama schools, and thus the prospect of professional training in theatre and acting was impossible because disabled people were institutionally excluded from artistic education until 2017 (Alexias et al., 2019; Koltsida & Lenakakis, 2017; Rellas, 2022). As Alexias et al. (2019) note, "[d]isability was – and still is – institutionally incompatible with professional training in dance and theatre by Greek standards" (p. 176). According to the Regulation on the organisation and operation of Higher Schools of Dramatic Art (Department of Acting), "candidates must also be able-bodied, as certified by the examination board" (P.D. 370/1983, art. 8, par. 1c), while the same passage is included in the Presidential Decree on the organisation of the operation of the Higher Schools of Dramatic Art of the National Theatre and the National Theatre of Northern Greece (P.D. 336/1989, art. 6, par. 3). A similar criterion for admission can also be found in dance education where, according to the Regulation on the organisation and operation of Higher Schools of Dance, in order to be considered suitable for admission, candidates are subjected to a health examination to determine whether they are "healthy, fit and of suitable physique", while "[the] examinee is not considered fit if he or she has a serious physical defect or

THEAMA: Nekrassov *(Apo Michanis Theatre 2018). Photo: Peny Delta*



disease" (P.D. 372/1983, art. 8, par. c). Although the criterion of "able-bodiedness" has been abolished following protests and mobilisation by associations and groups of disabled people active in the arts (Disabled Artists Movement, THEAMA, etc.) (Rellas, 2022), barriers to participation in arts education and employment for people with disabilities remain, as the corresponding criterion for admission to dance schools is still in force (Alexias et al., 2019). At the same time, the alternative for disabled people to attend private drama schools is expensive and therefore excludes a particularly large proportion of disabled candidates.

While access to arts education for disabled people can be achieved through national exams and admission to higher education institutions (HEI), this possibility is also linked with a number of issues that lead to the educational exclusion of disabled people in the field of the arts. The enrolment rates of students with disabilities in higher education without national exams, which for extended periods appear to be lower taking into account the places reserved for them (5%) (Vlachou & Papananou, 2018), raise questions about their access to higher education, as well as the broader educational policy pursued with the existence of segregated educational structures (special and general education). Despite the theoretical possibility of access for disabled people to university departments, research shows that attending higher education is particularly difficult for disabled people due to both architectural/structural barriers and inaccessible teaching methods and resources (Koutsoklenis et al., 2009; Vlachou & Papananou, 2018). Despite fragmented and isolated initiatives by university departments to establish support centres for students with disabilities, a broader institutional and integrated system of accessibility support mechanisms and tools is lacking in HEIs (Vlachou & Papananou, 2018). As far as higher education in theatre is concerned, it is provided by three departments of Theatre Studies (Department of Theatre Studies of the University of the Peloponnese, Department of Theatre Studies of the University of Patras and Department of Theatre Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) and the School of Drama of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Koltsida, 2022). However, of the four departments mentioned, only two (the School of Drama of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of the Peloponnese) offer arts diplomas (Puchner, 2014).

At the theoretical level, people with disabilities are allowed to take part in the entrance exams for drama schools and are given the possibility to

take the national exams for admission to higher education institutions, but no substantial changes and modifications have been made in the educational procedures, accessibility, content and teaching methods of the courses in the relevant educational institutions. The lack of professional training in theatre leads theatre groups to create their own programmes and workshops for the training of their disabled members and artists, which is observed both internationally (Calvert, 2009) and in Greece (Economou & Perifanou, 2019).

The problem of the exclusion of people with disabilities from arts education is deeply intertwined with the aforementioned practice of cripping up, which can also be observed in the Greek cultural landscape, where the very few artistic projects with disabled characters usually feature non-disabled actors in these roles. For example, during the 2021–2022 theatre season, "The Intouchables" by Olivier Nakache and Éric Toledano, directed by N. Haniotakis, was presented at the NEOS Akademos Theatre, where a non-disabled actor played a disabled character. Similarly, during the 2018–2019 theatre season, "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time" by Mark Haddon was presented at the Tzeni Karezi Theatre in a theatrical adaptation by Simon Stephens and directed by V. Theodoropoulos, in which a non-disabled actor plays a disabled teenager. A cycle of exclusion is thus clearly reflected, as chronic social oppression, the institutional obstruction of disabled people in professional training in the arts, the devaluation of disabled artists and the pervasive disablist notions of what theatre should be like lead to the practice of cripping up, which in turn leads to the re-exclusion of disabled people professionally, economically and more broadly.

Discussion

The above analysis has explored the individual dimensions that have shaped the arts, with a focus on theatre, that involve, engage with and are produced by people and artists with disabilities. It is clear, however, that this is an evolving field of research in constant dialogue with the cultural expressions and practices of art involving disabled people and artists. A key distinction between these dimensions is the degree of control that disabled artists have over the work produced and the various aspects of the artistic process. The issue of control and the promotion of disabled artists to key roles where they make decisions and have a voice has been a goal of disability arts for the past 30 years (Hadley, 2020). A second differentiation of these dimensions can be found in their purposes, which undoubtedly relate to ideological and political assumptions around art and disability. In this context, practices that have therapeutic, artistic or political purposes, or a combination of these, are reflected through the above dimensions.

As discussed, there is a strong tendency both at the theoretical level and at the level of arts education – through its presence or absence – to view art as a means and tool for the improvement and development of disabled participants. This orientation cannot be studied and explained in isolation from the broader national disability policies. A typical example is the educational policy for disabled students and young people, which is articulated through segregated education, takes place in segregated structures (special schools) and reproduces discourses that refer to the individual-medical model of disability (Karagianni & Koutsoklenis, 2023). The projects that use art as a tool exclusively for people with disabilities, and even more so for people with specific impairments, and that aim to have a therapeutic effect on individuals reflect the corresponding corrective and normalising character of special education. As has already been shown, the way in which each dimension is framed varies depending on its purpose and content, the theoretical and ideological basis of said dimension and the power relations of those involved. In this context, disability arts scholars have pointed to the phenomenon of pseudo-alliance, i.e. support from non-disabled people at the level of theoretical proclamation, but a failure to engage in practical and meaningful participation in the elimination of disability oppression and social change (Hadley, 2020; Hargrave, 2009; Schmidt, 2017). As disability activist and artist Paul Anthony Darke (2003) notes:

> The problem is that you will almost never see any actual Disability Art in a theatre, museum, gallery or even at a Disability Arts festival. [...] Mostly, though, what you will see is pseudo-therapy workshop products or impairment-orientated works. Usually it will be from a craft basis or developed in an empowerment course, superficially structured within the social model of disability but actually impairment-specific. (p. 133)

The historically shaped dimensions related to art that involves, engages with and is produced by people and artists with disabilities are part of a dynamic and constantly evolving field and their analysis aims to initiate a dialogue in the Greek academic and cultural space. It is imperative that in Greece, too, the proclamations of inclusion of people with disabilities should not be limited to theoretical slogans that ignore the barriers in education and art, the lack of accessibility to the theatre stage and the dominance of non-disabled people in the art field.

To conclude, the mapping of the barriers to the artistic development of people with disabilities, the identification of the "options" available for professional engagement with the arts in Greece and the existing research suggest the need for both further investigation in the field and changes at the institutional level. In terms of research, it is necessary to focus and delve into artistic practices that actively relate to the demands and rights of disabled people and that promote the elimination of oppression and universal accessibility to art, without downgrading their artistic value.

Notes

1. For Siebers (2010), disability aesthetics seeks to emphasise its presence in cultural representations and to challenge the dominant aesthetic criteria of art based on ableism. Drawing primarily on examples from the visual arts, disability aesthetics opposes the representation of the human condition without impairment as the only defining aesthetic.
2. For an extensive analysis of the social and individual-medical model of disability, see Karagianni and Koutsoklenis (2023).
3. Inspiration porn, according to Grue (2016), refers to the portrayal of disabled people in ways that objectify them, individualise their disability and devalue their lives. It is the process of objectifying disabled people for the purpose of inspiring non-disabled people by reproducing and promoting ableism.

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