



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

## ELECTRIC BODIES

*Electric Bodies* is a research study investigating Disability Arts and exploring the experiences of disabled artists. This study involves interviews carried out by the poet, Allan Sutherland, with disabled artists.

This is part of a much larger research project called D4D, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. More information on this can be found here <http://d4d.org.uk/>. The project began in 2016 and will end in 2020.

The D4D project is part of the AHRC Connected Communities Programme. The project investigates with disabled people the ways in which they belong to communities, and ways in which they move in and out of communities. The project aims to build understandings among disabled and non-disabled people about the ways this occurs, and to make people aware of the choices that might lead to change.

### **What is *Electric Bodies* about?**

Photo of Allan Sutherland placed above.

Allan Sutherland and Colin Hambrook are examining the origins, development and future of the Disability Arts community. In common with other 'identity politics'

movements within the arts in the 1970s and '80s, this community originally formed to resist exclusion and fight discrimination.

At present, the evident contributions of this community (in terms of its role in supporting disabled artists via online resources and funding streams, for example) are being increasingly problematised by the sense of limitation or confinement that has come to be associated with issue-led, identity-driven arts practice.

This research will examine the tensions within the disability arts community, looking at how the difficulties manifest through a series of conversations about labels and affiliation, loyalty, professionalism and credibility.

The project will explore these developments, debate the future of this community, and express its narratives through poetry. Outputs will include poems, performances and animation.

#### **Why have I been contacted?**

You have been contacted as an established disability artist to take part in a research project titled 'Electric Bodies', led by Allan Sutherland, award-winning writer and Disability Arts

campaigner, and Colin Hambrook, Editor of Disability Arts Online (DAO). You may already know Allan and/or Colin or they have contacted you as they believe that you have a potentially important contribution to make to the project.

### **How will we do the research?**

Allan Sutherland will create a series of cycles of transcription poetry, using the methods he has developed in working with arts campaigner Paddy Masefield and artist Nancy Willis and in the Leverhulme-funded residency at the Centre for Citizen Participation, Brunel University, which produced the four cycles that compose the work 'Neglected Voices'. (See 'Paddy: A Life', 'The Explorer' and 'Neglected Voices' on Disability Arts Online.)

Transcription poetry is a method of working developed by Allan Sutherland for recording the life experiences of disabled people, particularly disabled artists. He carries out an oral history interview, usually a life history interview, then edits that into poetry. The use of external materials has antecedents in various aspects of twentieth century modernism, including collage, 'readymades' and photomontage in the visual arts, and the work of poets such as T.S.Eliot, William Carlos Williams and particularly the objectivist poet Charles Reznikoff. But the deliberate

gathering of oral material for creating poetry, rather than the use of pre-existing text, is a method that Sutherland has pioneered. It has proved to be an extremely strong and vibrant way to record the experiences of disabled people in a manner which empowers the interviewees and preserves their individual voices.

These cycles of poetry will document the lives and working experience of established and emerging disability artists.

Allan and Colin Hambrook will carry out a series of seminars, supported by Disability Arts Online, which bring together the two groups of artists and a set of workshops intended to give emerging artists the skills to create blogs for DAO.

We hope to unite materials from these various strands (possibly including recordings from the seminars) into a single multi-voice transcription work, which will then be used, with illustration by Colin Hambrook, as the basis for a piece of digital artwork.

#### **What will this mean for me if I take part?**

You will be asked to work with Allan on a set of transcription poems. This will involve a life-history interview, probably taking two or three audio-recording sessions. (This

decision will be based on your convenience, access needs and energy levels.)

Allan will then transcribe this interview. You will at this point be given an opportunity to read the transcription and request the removal of material you might, on reflection, not wish to make public. Allan will then edit the transcription into a cycle of poems.

You will subsequently be given an opportunity to comment publicly on the poems. We will also seek to create opportunities for you to take part in performances or discussions of the work, and will be happy to consider ideas you might have for doing this. You will also be invited to take part in one or more group sessions with other disabled artists, to discuss the issues we are examining.

#### **Who owns what?**

You will be asked to assign copyright in the recordings and transcriptions to Allan. It will subsequently be assigned to an academic library so that the fullest access can be provided to future researchers. This does not affect your right to be recognised as the author of your own words.

Allan will retain copyright in his own creative work on the poems.

Because both recordings and transcriptions are digital documents, they can be deposited in more than one place. We certainly intend that copies should be placed with the National Disability Collection and Archive (NDACA) and are happy to consider other suggestions.

We will give you a copy of the completed poems. We will also be happy to give you a copy of the original transcript if you would like one.

**What will happen to the results of the research?**

The transcription poetry process produces multiple outcomes including interview recordings, transcriptions and finished cycles of poetry. These materials will be available to future scholars, disabled people looking to understand their own history, and disabled artists researching ideas to underpin their own arts practice. For the first time, we are starting to lay down materials that will let other disabled people, and disabled artists in particular, know that others have travelled this way before them. The results of 'Electric Bodies' will be a significant part of that.

These materials will be made available to the National Disability Arts Collection and Archive (NDACA), where they will complement NDACA's other holdings about your career.

The poems will be published on Disability Arts Online, and possibly elsewhere, such as the D4D website and in a book about the project. You will have an opportunity to suggest possible illustrations, and potentially to become more involved in the publication process if that is something you would like.

We shall arrange live performances, including readings of the poems. Excerpts from the poem cycles, or from elsewhere in the transcriptions will form part of a larger multi-voice work. With visual work by Colin Hambrook, this will be used in a digital artwork. This work will help develop the transcription poetry process. The work will inform and influence Arts Council England and other funding bodies, making a particular contribution to ACE's 'Creative Case for Diversity'. The results will be used in academic papers and conference reports.

We would be very happy to work with you if you wish to explore ways of using the poetry, transcriptions or voice recordings in your own work. DAO will be happy to publish, promote or publicise such work.

One important goal of 'Electric Bodies' is that this work will lead to understanding and rapprochement between established and emerging disabled artists. The results of this research will lead to greater public awareness of Dis Arts.

**And what happens in the context of wider D4D work?**

D4D research is with disabled people, and in seeking ways of achieving changes desired by our participants, we will share some information with user groups and agencies involved in disability issues. We will speak to a range of people, such as those who work in education, health care, social care and charity work.

We will share information online with those who are involved with the research. We hope to influence future government policy, so reports of our key findings will be sent to policy-makers. We seek to improve understandings of issues around disability, so we will speak at university conferences about our findings and we will write articles in academic journals.

We want to share our findings with a wider audience and plan to write a book about the project. We do not want our work to be restricted to written outputs and we intend to stage events in public places, such as short plays, exhibitions or presentations at e.g. shopping centres. The exact way this will happen will depend on the choices of our participants.



### **If you agree to be involved, can you change my mind?**

At any time you can change your mind and withdraw from this research study. However, once the poems have been published, they are in the public domain. It is important, therefore, that you read them once Allan has shown them to you, raising any concerns then.

### **Will your participation be confidential?**

The D4D team believe that our participants should have the right to choose whether the data collected will be anonymised. As you are sharing personal experiences from your life during the interview phase, it is inevitable that the poems will reveal information about you. You can choose to withhold details that you prefer not to share. You can request after interviews that you prefer some elements to be omitted.

### **What do you do if you have any further questions?**

For information about Electric Bodies and the interview data, **please contact:**

Allan Sutherland

Disability Arts Online, 9 Jew Street, Brighton BN1 1UT

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

For information about the D4D project, **please contact:**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else, please contact:

Professor Martin Levinson (Principal Investigator D4D)

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## Final Note

The researchers will respect the RCUK (Research Councils UK) guidelines for transparency of data. The researchers will also follow ethical guidelines as proposed by the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council). For more information about the broader scope of the D4D project visit <http://d4d.org.uk/>

All research has to be approved by an independent research ethics committee. The research for this project was initially approved by the University of Exeter's College of Social Sciences and International Studies Ethics Committee and then endorsed by Bath Spa University's Research Ethics Committee when the project coordinator moved institutions. For more information about expected ethical standards, please see: <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/research-and-enterprise/research-strategy/integrity-and-ethics/>

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research team, or other details you do not wish to discuss with the research team, please contact: [REDACTED]

## What do I do if I want to take part?

Please fill out the form below:

## CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

You have been invited to take part in the *Electric Bodies* workstream of the AHRC funded Disability and Community project, as described in the Information Sheet.

Please read the following statements and addt your initials if you agree with the accompanying statement.

Only put your initials in each box if you agree with the accompanying statement	
I have read and understood the information sheet	
I have been given enough time to decide whether I would like to participate, and have had the opportunity to ask any questions about the work	
I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and consent can be withdrawn at any stage of the research, by letting a researcher know, without giving a reason.	

I understand that I retain the right to be recognised as the author of my words	
I agree to transfer any copyright in the recordings and transcriptions arising from these interviews to Allan Sutherland.	
I understand that I may withdraw my data from the study up to 7 days after I have taken part in a session by contacting Allan Sutherland, copying in the Principal Investigator (Martin Levinson)	

.....  
(Signature of participant)

.....  
(Date)

.....  
(Printed name of participant)

.....  
(Signature of researcher)

.....  
(Printed name of researcher)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researchers.

