

Rainclamation: How installation art can reclaim space, transform collective suffering into poetic resistance, and educate through accessible aesthetics

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Rainclamation is an installation art project which reclaims the space around elevators from an area of stigma fraught with the experience of being "seen" as a disabled body in need of an elevator to one of beauty in relishing in a disabled identity that inspires art. The art is meant to be at once acceptable to able-bodied viewers and revolutionary to disabled viewers. Our tactic of reclaiming space responds to the need for disabled activism in colleges and universities, whose versions of diversity frequently erase disabled experiences, rendering them invisible and "ugly". Rainclamation is an accessible work: attached to the wall at a height that prioritizes the gaze of a wheelchair user, contained in a public building, and featuring a multifaceted conception that acknowledges viewers' differing levels of familiarity with disability theory. By centering disabled experiences and reaching a broad audience the piece functions as inclusive public pedagogy.

Bio:

Erin Davenport is a rising senior at Davidson College. She is Editor-in-chief of the Davidson student newspaper, a Leadership Fellow, and a passionate advocate for minority rights on campus and beyond. She has served on staff hiring committees, represented Davidson during its re-accreditation process, and proposed changes to schoolwide academic policy. Erin is passionate about academia, arts, and activism, which she explored most recently through an installation art project completed with another student. That project, Rainclamation, received acclaim within the campus community, and caused Erin to realize a passion for sociology, which she hopes to pursue further in graduate school.