

Experiential Exhibition Description

Experiments in Art, Access & Technology (E.A.A.T.), Beall Center for Art + Technology, UC Irvine. 30 September 2023 – 13 January 2024.

This is an experiential description of the gallery space. For more detailed visual descriptions of each artist's installation, please refer to each artist's individual access pages. These descriptions can also be accessed via an installation-specific QR code adjacent to each work in the gallery.

Beall Entrance

The Beall Center for Art + Technology is a large, modern box-shaped building painted brick red. A wheelchair ramp wraps around the corner of the building up to the main entrance. There are two sets of diagonal stairs flanked by trimmed hedges that also lead up to the main landing. There are two benches located outside the door. Large silver lettering on the left of the doors spells "Don and Joan BEALL CENTER FOR ART AND TECHNOLOGY." A 7-foot long rectangular black banner announces the current exhibition up for viewing, *Experiments in Art, Access & Technology (E.A.A.T.)*. There is a metal awning above the main entrance, flanked by two approximately 8 feet tall heavy doors that open outward. During gallery hours, one or both doors will be propped open.

The exhibition wall vinyl is visible from the gallery entrance. The exhibition motifs and description are as follows: Oversized letters E.A.A.T. are outlined in blue. All the letters are outlined in blue, except the second A, representing Access, which is filled in with a bold blue. Under the acronym are the words Experiments in Art, Access & Technology. Running along the wall, close to the floor, is a line of undulating sound waves of varying amplitude.

The vinyl text reads: 30 September 2023 – 13 January 2024. *Experiments in Art, Access and Technology, or E.A.A.T.* chronicles the emergence of access as an animating principle of art, science, and technology. From participatory audio description to captions that evoke poetry, access is

being reimagined as an expressive form that catalyzes new sensory possibilities for artistic experience. Despite their multimodal capacities, many media art tools remain inaccessible and have yet to benefit from this creative attention. *E.A.A.T.* introduces methods in art and technology that embody lived experiences of disability.

Invoking the field's ethos of experimentation and collaboration, *E.A.A.T.* prototypes a new program that links communities, institutions, and ways of knowing through creative access. This paradigm marks a turning point in the history of the art and technology movement. In the 1960s, Leonardo, E.A.T. or Experiments in Art and Technology and LACMA's Art and Technology Program created infrastructure for artists, scientists, and engineers to share knowledge. Emboldened by such platforms, artists redefined the social impact of new technologies.

Meesh Fradkin, Carmen Papalia, Josephine Sales, Andy Slater and Olivia Ting premiere new work developed in Leonardo CripTech Incubator, an art and technology fellowship for disability innovation. These installations foster dialogue and exploration, bringing transparency to often opaque black box systems. They test the limits and affordances of media and machines, drawing attention to ableist values of functionality, usage and navigation such devices encode. *E.A.A.T.* artists guide us through uncharted and often challenging forms of access that echo the capricious demands of technology. Opening prismatic entry points into aesthetic experience, they prompt critical reflection on artistic spaces and for whom they are made. *E.A.A.T.* artists deploy access as an expressive form, a liberatory tool, and an experiential technology for sustaining community.

The text continues: *E.A.A.T.* is organized by Leonardo/ISAST and supported by the California Arts Council, the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Ability Central and the Beall Family Foundations.

As you enter through the gallery doors, you will make a sharp left turn down a narrow 20-ft long and 4 and a half ft wide hallway. As you travel down the hallway, along the right wall and painted a slate blue, you will encounter additional exhibition wall vinyl that lists the curators, Vanessa

Chang and Lindsey D. Felt, program curator Claudia Alick, and featured artists, Meesh Fradkin, Carmen Papalia, Josephine Sales, Andy Slater, and Olivia Ting. A QR code is located here that takes you to the exhibition's access materials webpage.

A few feet away, at the far wall, you will find a table which contains PPE—masks, hand sanitizer, and some copies of access materials. There is a sign that says WHY MASK? with an arrow that leads to a QR code that takes you to a webpage with photos of people wearing masks and saying why they wear masks. Additional copies of access materials are located at the gallery attendant table on the opposite wall.

The entry hall channels visitors into a 12 feet by 17 feet white square-shaped alcove that contains Josephine Sales' multi-perceptual installation *Total Running Time*. A dropped ceiling creates an intimate space at 10 feet high. This alcove's walls are painted "gallery white" which is bright, smooth, and uniform. *Total Running Time* includes four discrete works described clockwise throughout the alcove. "Rescue," a plaster wall relief, and two geometric benches are positioned on the gallery floor. You may sit on the benches. The five-foot-high white plaster relief 1/8th inch thick sits on the left gallery wall and spills into the alcove, bending around the back left corner. Because it is so thin and the same white as the walls, it visually goes almost unnoticed. On the rightmost wall from the entrance is a niche built into the gallery wall, which recedes 4 inches deep and is 19.5 inches tall and 26 inches wide. Perched within the niche are two contained light units. This unit has been prepared to mitigate the cool light with a polyester film and diffusion, creating a daylight effect, hence the title "Day for Night." "Pulses," the ambient sound that pervades the room, is a 15-minute audio recording composed of various sounds from a telephone ringing to a prison telecommunication disclosure announcement that runs on a loop with a one-minute silence between each iteration. The sounds are produced through surface transducers mounted within the gallery walls. The final work, "Total Running Time Site," displays a URL to an auxiliary exhibition website and digital sourcebook.

From the alcove, you turn right into the main gallery space which is a long rectangle about 60 ft long and 38 ft wide. The ceiling is 16.5 feet tall and exposes an intricate grid of lighting, air ventilation pipes, tubing and support struts.

babbel

The first installation in the main gallery space is Meesh Fradkin's *babbel*. You will first encounter a 3 ft chandelier hanging between two walls that demarcate the gallery's entry. This chandelier forms part of an outer ring of three other smaller chandeliers that encircle one large 4 ft tall chandelier. They are suspended from the gallery's pipe grid with thin metal wires, floating 4 to 7 feet off the ground. For wayfinding purposes and to avoid bumping into them, tactile floor bumpers and arranged seating mark off these areas. Please take a seat, rest, or recline to take in the work.

The largest chandelier is voice-activated, fabricated out of white oak, steel rod and assorted industrial plastic tubing. Activated by sound, LED lights threaded along the tubing emanate a warm, vibrant glow. Four small speakers and two microphones are integrated into the sculpture. The chandelier also emits different sounds in response to certain words spoken in the gallery space. Please note some of the sounds may be loud or dissonant.

Just behind the chandeliers are three large screens mounted in a horizontal line on the wall. The screens are about 4 feet off the ground. The outside monitors display sonic descriptions of sounds that emanate from the central chandelier. These sonic descriptions range in length and detail. The central monitor includes noisy text with messages that are activated by the chandelier.

Song Without Words

Just beyond and further to the right of *babbel* is Olivia Ting's *Song Without Words*, an immersive audiovisual installation with 15 sheer black voile panels hanging from the pipe grid. The panels are arrayed as fragments

placed at varying angles, some touching, in a gentle curve from one end of the gallery to the other. The banners range from 3 to 4 feet in width, and are 9 feet tall. A pedestal against the furthest right wall holds 4 bluetooth wireless headphones. You are welcome to don one of the headphones from the docking station to experience the audio. You may wander through the tapestries as you wish, touching, grazing or pushing the fabric aside as you move through the space. There are two pedestals close to the terminus of the fabric array. On top are two large vintage radios that represent a haptic translation of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*.

Parallel to Ting's *Song Without Words* is a long white wall on the left that provides the enclosure for the alcove. Two large wall prints containing intricate flowcharts about lip reading and speaker identification, titled *Sorting It Out* and *Lip Reading*, are mounted on the wall.

Pain Pals

At the end of *Song Without Words*, you can either enter Carmen Papalia's *Pain Pals*, or make a slight left into Andy Slater's *Unseen Sound*. Their installations are two sections separated by a floor to ceiling black curtain. On the right side of the curtain is *Pain Pals*.

A dining table with four low white stools is positioned in front of a large wall-mounted screen, which is playing videos of Papalia and his collaborators on a loop. The videos are Zoom recordings of conversations from the *Pain Series*, and Papalia's works in progress. Four floating black shelves with an assortment of sundry items are on the back wall adjacent to the monitor. Items include, but are not limited to: stuffed animals, snacks, pamphlets, heating pads, lotion, compression socks, Vitamin C packets, comic books. Against the gallery's back wall is an L-shaped upholstered dark gray couch and a cozy robe. An iPad is mounted on a stand with headphones.

Unseen Sound

On the left side of the curtain is Andy's piece. Against a far wall, a joystick with two large buttons and an amplifier sit on a round black table. A black hard-backed chair is pulled against it. A large TV monitor is mounted in the middle of the adjacent wall, on which textual descriptions of sounds intermittently appear.

Gallery Emergency Exit

The emergency exit can be accessed at the end of the gallery behind Ting's *Song Without Words*. Turning left, about two feet past the artificial wall followed by a quick right, you will encounter two doors with push bars. Be sure to turn right, there is a short hallway that has a curtain at the end. There is a heavy door with a push bar you will need to open. Turning right out of the first exit (you are still inside the building), you will travel a few feet to the second set of doors with a push bar. There is a short staircase on the right, and a wheelchair ramp on the slight left side. This exit route takes you outside the Beall gallery to a sidewalk that connects to other paths on the University of California, Irvine's campus.