

Arts and Disability in Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Jordan

Literature and Practice Review

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The Disability Under Siege Network+ Project is a co-created programme bringing together a community of researchers, educational practitioners, advocacy organisations and disability led groups in the UK and Middle East. It will contribute to research efforts by providing intellectual and logistical resources that local practitioners need to transform education provision for children with disabilities in conflict-affected countries.

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I Summary

This report maps available literature and cultural practices relating to arts and disability in Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and Jordan, respectively. In the absence of any structured literature in the field of arts and disability in the region, and while noting where it does exist, the main bodies of research that remain available invariably relate to one-off projects produced by arts and cultural organisations. These form the central focus of this report, which seeks to capture the institutional, collective, and individual practices of artists, curators, institutions, and activists alike who have engaged with disability in the three countries under consideration.

A number of issues were recurrent, including the widespread cultural stereotyping and social misrepresentation of disability, the lack of evaluative impact studies and processes for considering the relationship between art and disability practices, the absence of sustainable support for disability organisations to engage with art institutions (and vice versa), and the scarcity of structured governmental guidelines on cultural inclusion and disability. There are, furthermore, few government policies that outline arts and disability programmes and, where they do exist, they tend to relate to physical barriers to access for persons with disabilities.

To address and delineate these issues, there are four main sections to this report. The first is an overview of the available international literature on the subject of disability in the arts, especially as it relates to the areas of identity formation, self-representation, agency, and performance. This section prefaces broader debates in the region, not least how disability is represented and engaged with through media and cultural forms of representation. These models of representation, as evidenced throughout section one, have a considerable impact on how disability is understood in social contexts and, crucially, how disabled people view their contributions to these activities.¹ Throughout section I, practices and areas of debate that offer a critically responsive approach to considering cultural representations of disability are specifically highlighted. Three key questions emerged here: How does contemporary cultural practices represent disability and in what contexts? How do these representations, moreover, affect understanding of disability in the arts? And how, in turn, do cultural practices disrupt conventional forms of representation.

Section II of this review explores these concerns in specific relation to the available literature on arts and disability in Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Jordan. This section, in lieu of specific material in this field (of which there is a notable absence of co-ordinated research), highlights areas where further research is needed. Section III concentrates on art practices and institutions that engage with disability in each country (given that the majority of the literature relating to art and disability is not academic, instead generated by cultural events and institutions). Throughout sections II and III, we provide a mapping of the various communities of practice that currently exist in these three countries, highlighting institutions that have developed projects with disability-led practice.

Although the primary focus of research throughout this review highlights metropolitan practices in Beirut, Ramallah, East Jerusalem, and Amman respectively, other locations and institutions are included. The main bodies of research in sections II and III is concentrated on

detailing art practices and institutions that engage with how disability is perceived in the region, and the degree to which non-institutional cultural practices—working from within community-based, civic settings—have addressed disability and inclusivity. These projects, moreover, suggest future potential connections to be had between arts and disability-led organisations especially in relation to raising awareness of disability and the promotion of services for people with disabilities and their families.

We conclude this report with suggestions for further research in the field of arts disability and cultural studies.

2 Introduction

Persons with disabilities in Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Jordan continue to face multiple challenges, from attitudes to disability, environmental concerns, and social barriers to inclusion, in the formation of human rights discourse in this field and access to services (WHO, 2008; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015; Nagata, 2008). Artists and cultural institutions, across the Middle East in particular, but also globally, place a high premium on engaging with so-called marginal communities through the discursive politics of representation and collaborative practices. They do so through a discourse of participation and a critical understanding of identity politics. In these contexts, there is evidence in Lebanon, the OPT, and Jordan that arts practitioners and institutions have a capacity, if resourced and supported, to develop debates about disability while reaching out to communities and individuals affected by it.

The issue of inclusion, to take one key example, has long been a key concern for cultural organizations working within the context of the Middle East and communities. Artists' workshops and other collaborative-based activities often address inequities, institutional or otherwise, in gender, equality, diversity and inclusivity objectives but less so when it comes to engaging with disability. The research gathered here seeks to provide a template for how we may further encourage potential areas for developing capacity and, in turn, improve theoretical understandings of disability in different geographical and socio-political contexts, specifically those experiencing conflict, through cultural partnerships.

In proposing areas of further activity in this field, we should also consider how cultural activities, formally and informally, often focus on gathering narratives, stories, experiences, and other forms of material and immaterial research, so as to produce collaborative-based artworks—installations or performative events—and, crucially, first-hand accounts of both an audience and participant engagement with such practices. Throughout the research collated here, art as a practice—particularly through its representational, collaborative, interdisciplinary processes—emerges as a productive way to foster discussion about inclusion (in both formal and informal contexts) and generate a commensurate level of practical debate around the politics of representing disability.² The ongoing struggle for meaningful inclusion for persons with disabilities continues to inform disability activism. Art practices, be they institutional, community-based, or informal one-off events, can and do highlight these issues, while also, in part, effecting more formal support structures for discussions about disability

and human rights. Art practices, when merely paying forms of “lip-service” to the issues in hand can be, likewise, part of the problem.

Given the community-based practices of arts institutions, which differ across all three countries, the scope to consider community-based rehabilitation (CBR) practices is considerable, as is the opportunity to support the development and implementation of inclusive education programmes. As noted, there are few instances of studies related to the effectiveness of art practices in these areas, so this could also be an opportunity to garner structured information, in partnership with persons with disabilities, about the impact of practices and policies and how such documentation could improve the rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Cultural organizations and arts practitioners are likewise part of broader networks that tend to avoid overt political control and often are embedded in local, often non-sectarian communities. As part of a civil society network, they can often encourage cross-institutional leadership projects between international and non-academic partners. This focus on building capacity among persons with disabilities, policy-makers and service providers, educators, and arts institutions could further encourage multi-sectoral networks and partnerships, as we observed in the variety of organisations who engage with such issues across all three countries. This could affect a step change in public understanding of disability through co-produced forms of knowledge—including films, exhibitions, artist-led workshops, literary festivals—that supports broader public engagement with the issues in hand.

Assessing and reporting on projects addressing such concerns could be essential to the growth of disability studies and countering stigmatization. The overall lack of literature and research on disability vis-à-vis art and culture further indicates the need for research, studies, and evaluations for both supporting and archiving the work implemented by cultural and arts organizations that focus on disability. Exploring and questioning the role of arts and culture in disability stigma, social inclusion, education, and the employability of persons with disabilities would no doubt encourage more initiatives.

Finally, research-led, and collaborative practices in the field of visual culture—as we will see below—have become mainstream and common to institutions in the Middle East, further adding platforms within which disability can be discussed and explored. From this standpoint, we encountered art practices across the region that already offer, formally and informally, platforms for discussing the politics and ethics of representation. The cultural practitioners in the region that engage with disability-led groups tend to foreground the degree to which current institutional, societal and political views about disability present barriers to full cognitive and corporeal engagement for persons with disabilities in culture. In this context, exploring the opportunities for collaborative partnerships between cultural partners and disability-led organisations further shifts discussions of disability away from medical models—where disability is seen as a problem to be either cured or managed—to socially-inclined models of disability and debates about social mores and misrepresentation (Oliver, 2013).

3 Methodology

The research methodology used throughout was primarily based on first-hand knowledge of the cultural networks under consideration (through observation, meetings, and previous research), online research, a consultation workshop carried out with key stakeholders, and focused interviews with artists and institutions.

The interviews were undertaken with a particular focus on modes of work and praxis in relation to disability (including concerns around access, cultural policies, the politics of collaboration and representation), and the issue of agency and self-representation. Conducted by researchers based in the region and others with extensive experience of the arts in Lebanon, Jordan and the OPT, the report is underlined by critical inquiry, social network analysis, content analysis, visual analysis, case studies, and participant observation. The focus on art practices ensured that the research is largely qualitative with some quantitative analysis of statistics.

4 Research Questions

As we proceeded with this review, two key research questions emerged: What are the opportunities and barriers to promoting discussion of culture, disability, and inclusive education? And how can such discussions be developed through collaborative partnerships between cultural partners and disability-led organisations? In light of the primary research questions, and the networks needed to effect the development of communities of practice between cultural partners and disability organisations, a number of supplementary questions are posed throughout:

- How do contemporary cultural practices engage with disability?
- How do disability organisations engage with contemporary cultural practices?
- What can these models of engagement tell us about the priorities of each institution?
- Are there productive ways of engaging the institutional structures of cultural practices to reflect upon the issue of inclusion and disability education?
- And, how can discourses and social practices related to disability reflect upon political concerns about marginalisation within cultural practices, including issues around identity, ideology, the body, and social injustice?

A more general research objective relates to framing an accessible account of what constitutes art practices in this field, specifically when terms such as research-led practices, participation and collaboration practices are employed in the discussion. Although not necessarily addressed in full in what follows, a further question came into further focus as we proceeded: How can disability studies reciprocally effect an alternative methodology for cultural practices to engage with the politics of representing forms of exclusion? This will form the basis of further research, but, for now, such questions not only encourage potential disability-led partner organisations to more fully engage with the potential to be had in partnering with

cultural organisations, but also to clarify to arts institutions the terms of the research and its potential impact.

Through an expanded definition of art practices, a further objective was to contextualise the non-institutional cultural practices that already exist within community-based, civic settings. Given this, we have mapped non-institutional and institutional practices as part of the research objectives to ensure a more capacious notion of cultural activity that includes informal, civic, and social practices such as music, story-telling, narrative-based forms of engagement, theatre and performance, and so-called street art. How would this, in turn, provide more effective frames of reference for improved multi-sector understanding of the factors impacting access to education for persons with disabilities?

5 Overview of Terminologies: Collaboration and Knowledge Production in the Field of Visual Culture

In the context of contemporary art practices and the field of visual culture, an increasing number of practitioners work with process-based models of production. This means that the production of objects—paintings, sculpture, installations, for example—are usually secondary to the processes of collaboration and the discursive development of ideas involved in achieving the final form of the work in question. Artists are understood to produce systems of knowledge that can be transferred and applied—however provisionally—under institutional conditions that provide platforms, if not substance, for social and political debates (Dean and Smith, 2009; Kester, 2011). Throughout such practices, there has been a recurring emphasis placed upon the participation of communities who would be otherwise considered marginal to, or under-represented within, social frameworks (Alacovska, 2020). Again, this focus has a key role to play in any discussion of inclusion, arts, and disability. The degree to which research-led practices have engaged with issues of agency (who is speaking), autonomy (who gets to speak), and human rights (or the lack thereof) likewise continues to resonate with issues within disability studies.

The prominence of these collaborative practices and participative processes offers a productive route to effecting both small- and large-scale events that generate inclusivity, build capacity, and foster resilience for education programmes (Carnwath and Brown, 2014). Such activity can, it is argued, effect forms of inclusivity, diversity, and productive collaboration (Zapata-Barrero, 2016; Miles and Gibson, 2016). A pattern has also emerged whereby art is understood as a method to not only produce knowledge but also foster inclusion through offering access to alternative systems of non-normative knowledge and ideas, including digital methodologies (Hlavajova et al., 2008; Moreton, 2016; Downey, 2020; Holert, 2020). This has become a significant area in contemporary visual culture and, given the context of epistemic violence, exclusion through language, and the taxonomies of discrimination, it could have a significant bearing on considerations of disability and culture, and the claims of identity made through disability-led knowledge systems (Linton, 1998).

A central element here is the mediation of experience. Again, this has been a key question in contemporary art practices, specifically those involved in feminist, post-feminist, and post-colonial discourses. In each instance, these points could be likewise explored in relation to disability studies and the issue of subjective agency and the autonomy of the voices and experiences in question (Hadley and McDonald, 2020; Wexler and Derby, 2020). These considerations in contemporary visual culture could also support a formal investigation into how disability is understood in the various domains of medical science, law, religion and culture, and how such paradigms underpin the legal, educational, social, economic and practical everyday allocation of resources for persons with disabilities—thus further encouraging an interdisciplinary research network.

The fact that contemporary art practices are often engaged in producing inclusive, speculative forms of knowledge through their interactions with marginalised communities could be seen as a means to provide more informal, open, wide-ranging, and potentially more encompassing events and platforms for inviting individuals and communities to discuss issues around the causes of marginalisation, the absence of agency, the lack of autonomy, and the effect of such processes. In addition to this, the terms of how disability is (mis)represented in contemporary visual culture is a source of considerable research (Millett-Gallant and Howie, 2016; Crutchfield and Epstein, 2000).

6 Literature and Art Practices Relating to Culture and Disability

There is a significant amount of material relating to the broad issues of arts and disability, but significantly less on disability, the arts, and practices in Lebanon, the OPT, and Jordan. The majority of key texts are US-, UK- and Europe-focused, but they do offer a framework for understanding the challenges and potential of arts institutions in the countries under consideration in this report and how they could effectively partner with disability-led organisations. Drawing on professional accounts, alongside first-hand experiences of projects and experimental, community-based projects, these texts tend to be grouped into three overarching areas, including but not limited to the following:

- The Politics of Representing Disability in Contemporary Visual Culture
- Disability, Performance, and Self-Representation in the Arts
- Disability Rights Activism, Inclusion, and Cultural Practices

6.1 The Politics of Representing Disability in Contemporary Visual Culture

For Millett-Gallant and Howie (2016), the contribution that art history has made to disability studies is in its distinctive ability to “open ways to think about art historical tropes that tie together appearance, character, and identity, in diverse geographical and historical contexts”(ibid, p.3). The enquiry into critical disability studies and how it relates to materialism, “bodies that matter”, global disability studies, and the relation of self to Other is explored throughout Goodley (2013), where the author emphasises the extent to which critical disability studies “reminds us of the centrality of disability when we consider the

politics of life itself”(ibid, p.631). Arguing that disability studies can transform assumptions about identity, ideology, politics, meaning, social injustice, and the body, Siebers (2008) observes how these concerns relate to the future of identity politics. The theoretical analysis of visual signifiers of disability in the arts are further detailed in Garland-Thompson (1997, 2011); Mitchell and Snyder (2000); Siebers (2010); and Johnston (2016). For David T. Mitchell and Sharon Snyder (2015), in particular, the economies of representing the disabled body through visual media can often result in disability standing in for a “narrative prothesis”, or a figure of tragedy, trauma and inspiration, for normative cultural representations of the body.

The publication of two recent volumes has drawn further attention to the politics and ethics of representing disability in contemporary visual culture. These are *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Arts, Culture, and Media* (Hadley and McDonald, 2020), and *Contemporary Art and Disability Studies* (Wexler and Derby, 2020). Among the questions posed, key concerns are raised in these volumes as to how cultural practices realign and potentially redefine popular perceptions of disability; a recent article in the New York Times focused on this area in particular (Leiderman, 2020). It is also important to observe here the activist framing of disability arts in the UK and how these led to legal changes and further legislation (BBC, 2015).

This becomes all the more evident when we consider how cultural practices are repeatedly understood—through critical, curatorial, and institutional discourses—to explore the politics of representation, be it in relation to gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, and other markers of identity. In these contexts, artists are understood to be producers of knowledge that can be transferred and applied—however provisionally—under institutional conditions that provide platforms, if not substance, for social and political debates about agency and self-representation, including disability.³ In considering the politics and ethics of representing persons with disabilities and the various agencies involved, we likewise need to examine the taxonomies of knowledge in use: What types of knowledge are constructed *within* cultural practices and, crucially, how these knowledge systems are applied *beyond* art institutions and by whom (Hlavajova et al., 2008).

Throughout Derby and Wexler’s volume, *Contemporary Art and Disability Studies*, these concerns and others are addressed further though the methodology, agency and access that cultural practices afford for disability studies. Contributors to this volume variously argue for engaging with art practices as new methodological forms for understanding disability (Papalia, 2020; Keifer-Boyd, Kraft, and Wexler, 2020), the politics and ethics of collaboration in the arts in respect of disability (Derby and Wexler, 2020), and the central role of performance (Sandahl, 2020) and portraiture (Leher, 2020) in addressing the ethics of representation in contemporary visual culture. The ethics of representing disability was highlighted in the early 1990s and can be summarise thus: the process of research production can be often alienating both for disabled people and for researchers themselves and there is a need for an “emancipatory research paradigm” (Oliver, 1992). Given the focus on research-led practice in the arts and collaboration, interdisciplinary processes that are community-based, the extent to which such practices could provide precisely such an “emancipatory research paradigm” without either alienating participants or instrumentalising cultural practice is a further under-research concern in any discussion of the politics of representing disability.

6.2 Disability, Performance, and Self-Representation in the Arts

A prevailing feature of contemporary art practices has been an exploration of how the disabled body redefines the boundary of normative human bodies and the social mores and discursive representations that underwrite them. This has involved a notable emphasis on performance art and theatre (Rosemarie Garland Thomson, 2000; Kuppers, 2003 2011, 2017; Sandahl and Auslander, 2005; Hickey-Moody, 2009; Hadley, 2014). The majority of these texts focus on how disabled people experience theatre, as both audience members and performers. Further issues considered how the institution of theatre responds to disability over time and whether the practice of performance can generate new spaces for disabled communities to explore forms of self-expression and agency (Eikels, 2012). One abiding element of discussion that emerges, as we will see in some of the practices noted below—Schlingensief, Bel, and Żmijewski, in particular—is the often provocative or playful elements at work in these performances (Umathum and Wihstutz, 2015; Hargrave, 2015; Hadley, 2017).

In terms of actual practices, a number of key practitioners have come to the fore over the last two decades in relation to art practices and the representation of disability. These include Christoph Schlingenseif, Jérôme Bel, Paweł Althamer, Kader Attia, Tarek Atoui, Erkan Özgen, Marc Quinn, and Artur Żmijewski. Throughout these practices, specifically those of Schlingenseif and Żmijewski, there is an often provocative, confrontational approach to how we understand and engage with representations of what it means to be disabled. Others, Bel, Althamer, and Atoui, for example, tend toward a more collaborative approach to the question of disability.

One of the first issues that arises in the relation to the question of disability, identity, and self-representation in contemporary art practices is who gets to represent whom. In relation to the Middle East, these recur across a range of institutional practices.⁴ In Christoph Schlingensief's 2003 film *Freakstars 3000* we encounter an element of parody where we find the genre of the “freak show” and mainstream television being brought together to document a casting and variety show for disabled participants. The film was originally broadcast as a series on German television then later produced as a feature film. For its supporters, of which there are many, *Freakstars 3000* is a pertinent exploration of how disability is effectively absent from mainstream media. Countering medical definitions of disability, alongside the assumptions that preclude people with disabilities from the realm of performance, it extended representation of them in Germany into the genre of sketch comedy and generated considerable debate within medical and cultural circles (Koerner, 2012; Kroß 2012).

Throughout the work of Jérôme Bel, the issue of disability and theatre is repeatedly addressed through performance and his ongoing project Disabled Theatre. For some commentators, Bel's career as a choreographer, and his concerns with notions of authorship, subjectivity, and agency are related to the notion of equality and rights that are central to politics of representing disability (Siegmund 2012; Schmidt, 2012). Bel's practice, which has been key to formal discussions of arts and disability, is often viewed in an emancipatory context inasmuch

as it sets the stage, so to speak, for marginalized people to regain public recognition and agency (Wihstutz, 2012).

Since the early 1990s, Paweł Althamer has collaborated with the Nowolipie Group, an organisation in Warsaw for adults with mental or physical disabilities, with whom he has been teaching a Friday night ceramics class for over a decade. In 2008 Althamer arranged for the group to wear matching overalls and take a trip on a biplane, which became the subject of a short film by Althamer's frequent collaborator, Artur Żmijewski (*Winged*, 2008).

Żmijewski's practice has long engaged with disability and, like Schlingensief's practice, has attracted significant support and opprobrium in equal measure. In *Singing Lesson I*, (2001), Żmijewski collaborated with alumni of the Deaf-Mute Institute in Warsaw to perform the Kyrie from Jan Maklakiewicz's Polish Mass (from the original composition of 1944).⁵ The ensuing cacophony of voices and registers, captured in his documentary film, remained inaudible for his performers but not the audience. Of the process, Żmijewski observed that we "can hear a chaotic tune and deformed words; [but the] choristers do not hear themselves, some of them do not even know what sound is. Against all odds, we hear music that carries crumpled words of the Apostle's Creed: 'I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth...' The impossible is made flesh, despite that the flesh is weak and disabled" (Artur Żmijewski quoted in Gorzdeck, 2016). While the artist's choice of words—"deformed" and "weak", for example—raise questions here about medical and social models of disability, it also highlights questions about how the audience views these works and, more importantly, how they are viewed by the participants. Ewa Gorzdeck observed that "for the deaf-mute performers the fact that they participated in activities they had previously been excluded from was an act of transcendence; they managed to open themselves to previously inaccessible experiences" (ibid). Continuing the theme of collaboration and deafness, the Lebanese sound artist Tarek Atoui led a workshop in 2012 with students from Al Amal School for the Deaf in Sharjah, as part of its internationally renowned biennial show. Highlighting both sound and music composition, Atoui developed the project over a number of months and worked closely with hearing impaired students, mostly through workshops, to explore how they use sound as a means of communication between each other. Examining how sound vibrations become the compositional element that the hearing impaired can relate to through sensory apprehension, a series of regular performances were held over three days, from 23 April- 26 April, 2012, in the Bait Obaid Al Shamsi Arts Square in Sharjah.⁶

In a more formal approach that uses video, Erkan Özgen, *Wonderland*, 2016, portrays Muhammad, a 13 year old boy who is deaf and mute, who in 2015 fled the Syrian civil war from Kobani to Derik in southeastern Turkey. Through his gestures to camera, Muhammad attempts to simulate the loading and firing of a machine gun, while imitating the sounds of a gun battle (Erkan Özgen: *Wonderland*, 2016). This video presents a witness account of sorts, both Özgen's and the artist's, and looks at disability in the context of recent conflict and the question of who gets to speak for whom.

6.3 Disability Rights Activism, Inclusion, and Cultural Practices

The field of disability rights activism provides a further platform for ongoing considerations of disability rights advocacy and legislation. As we will see in the conclusions to this review, these are pertinent concerns in the context of Lebanon, the OPT, and Jordan, where activist practices have a strong foothold in visual culture and its institutions.

A significant number of institutions in the Middle East and elsewhere makes claims on the politics of inclusion but disability does not register as a prominent issue—a concern we should remain mindful of in the regional mapping of cultural organisations below. Collaborative and participative-based practices have not been developed without a degree of controversy—especially when we consider how government policies regarding support for the arts, in the UK and EU, for example, emphasise and demand empirical proof of inclusive activities, whereby the ideal of inclusion is not only a key priority but a prerequisite of funding. Again, this is a concern in the research undertaken below and how it relates to the types of practice undertaken in cultural institutions in Lebanon, the OPT, and Jordan, inasmuch as “inclusion” as a precept has often resulted in rote forms of participation and sub-standard, critically unnuanced, projects. Art institutions, in this context, are often seen to represent a “safe” space of sorts for discussing the politics of gender, migration, and so forth, and offer a level of congeniality that political and other formal environments do not offer. To the extent that this is welcome, the danger here is that issues of inclusivity—and the politics of representing marginalisation—remain bound by cultural discourses rather than being applicable or operable in the field of transformative political, social, economic, and community-based engagement with such issues.

In the broader field of visual arts studies, there are a number of contexts to review, not least those concerning the need for further engagement with the critique of representing disability and the context of western and non-western cultural systems (Sandell et al., 2010). Institutional concerns include issues around access and forms of engagement within arts organisations for persons with disabilities. The area of institutional inclusion, apart from issues of access and policy, has also highlighted the absence of disabled people in the collective imagery of the past, with a specific focus on the UK (Delin, 2002). There is also the question of the therapeutic potential of museums as pathways to inclusion for persons with disabilities (Silverman, 2002).

The ongoing question of access to and representation *within* museums and cultural spaces is discussed throughout *Re-Presenting Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum* (Sandell et al., 2010), where the authors highlight disability representation—and the lack of it—in museums and galleries. These concerns, given recent and ongoing debates about inclusion and exclusion in the arts, are becoming increasingly pressing issues for practitioners working in wide-ranging museums and related cultural organisations. More broadly, the considerations around disability rights activism, inclusion, and cultural practices tend to coalesce, the authors propose, around a series of questions: In what ways have disabled people been represented in the collections, practices and displays of museums and galleries? How do emerging trends in museum practice—designed to counter prejudiced, stereotypical representations of

disabled people—relate to developments in disability rights? How might curators, educators, designers and other actors in the exhibition-making process contribute to the under-representation of disability and disability studies within institutional contexts? How do audiences—disabled and non-disabled—respond to and engage with interpretive interventions designed to confront contemporary attitudes to disability? (*ibid*).

These questions, alongside others, are further related to apprehensions around equality and social justice (Sandell and Nightingale, 2012), and the legal dimension of debates concerning disability and access in relation to calls for equality, diversity, social justice and human rights within and beyond cultural institutions. The calls for justice and emancipatory rights in relation to disability and cultural representation within the arts, furthermore, returns us to the topic of emancipatory politics, performance art, and disability-led practices (Wihstutz, 2012).

In conclusion, the majority of the research in the following section refocuses these three areas above—alongside the broader politics of representing disability as explored at the outset of section I—and examines current institutional practices that explore how disability is represented in the arts. In a regional context we have been mindful to include as many examples of disabled artists' practices of self-representation to counter some of the issues we encountered above around agency and autonomy. We also discuss other media as and when they intersect with practices within visual culture and the politics of representation.

7 Literature Relating to Culture and Disability in Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Jordan

This section provides an overview of available arts and disability literature relating to Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Jordan. Research in library databases and through the internet yielded few results and there is an overall lack of literature on arts and culture vis-à-vis disability in the three countries. The available research and literature on disability within those regions mostly focuses on the legal, health and educational aspects, with much less concern given to arts and culture. This gap highlights the importance of encouraging further studies into the links between disability, art and culture. Some mentions or references to the cultural sector exists, mainly when talking about lack of accessibility to information and/or to space. The majority of resources concerned with disability, art and culture, as noted, include non-academic articles, reports and case studies of projects and/or events relating to disability in the artistic and cultural scenes—which we map in the following section.⁷

7.1 Lebanon

The available literature on disability in Lebanon does not cover all demographical criteria, nor all types of disabilities. Due to the existing literature gap in arts and disability, the review will firstly outline Law 220 on the Rights of Disabled Persons (Law 220/2000), as well as advance its relation or lack thereof to the cultural sector, and then briefly analyse how the general lack of law enforcement affects the participation of persons with disabilities in daily socio-economic life, including the arts and cultural scene, that will be further elaborated upon in the practice review (Lakkis et al., 2015). Emilie Combaz highlights the lack of law

compliance with the 220/2000 government law in a 2018 report, stating that despite the existence of the law, it is not fully “implemented and enforced by the State” (Combaz, 2018, p.6). Al Thani (2007) argues that the prevalent cultural view and stigmatization of disabled people contributes to the lack of governmental action on the subject (Al Thani, 2007).

According to Al Thani, examples of communication and language constraints—for instance, using terms that delineate types of disabilities as insults—continues to be a major issue. The minimal compliance in law within the wide range of healthcare services, rehabilitation, and educational services, has an immeasurable effect on physical accessibility to public spaces, inclusivity policies, and accessibility to cultural information. In addition, Al Thani’s inquiries have found that there is no real acknowledgement of persons with disabilities capabilities to partake in society and give input into it.

There is an absence of clarity amongst disabled communities as to what their rights are and what are the available public services and facilities provided. The result is that people with disabilities—who often also lack basic education—are unaware of their basic rights and what services would be accessible to them, including any links to cultural events (Wehbi and Lakkis, 2010). This would appear, based on the practice review below, to be further reflected in the arts and cultural sphere on an institutional level where the absence of cultural and/or institutional policies, alongside the lack of staff member awareness about how to cater for the needs of persons with disabilities, was evidenced.

Several reports mention the lack of awareness and sensibility-training amongst employees of governmental institutions when it comes to catering to the needs to the disabled, although they do not mention specifically the link to other organizations such as cultural organizations. In this regard, Al Thani further states that “there is a strong belief [in Lebanon] that "people take care of their own" rather than delegate that responsibility to government. This credo, the tightly knit extended family structure, along with the lack of government support, and an organizational and institutional base for services, results in something of a forced integration for persons with disabilities” (Al Thani, 2007). For Combaz’s study, such attitudes further perpetuate the idea that disability studies and cultural perceptions view disability more as a medical topic in Lebanon: “In addition, general knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours towards persons with disabilities in Lebanon often rely on charitable or medical approaches to disabilities, rather than social or rights-based ones” (Combaz, 2018, p.6).

Further literature on disability in Lebanon has a clear focus on education and medical matters, academic practitioner, and policy literature, which are mostly presented in the form of country situational analysis reports. There were only two available texts that referred to arts and culture, albeit very briefly. In the 2015 UNESCO periodic review, there was a recommendation that Lebanon recognize the right of disabled people to participate in cultural life through facilitating their involvement in the arts and cultural scene for “communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from civil society, as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, indigenous people, migrants, refugees, young peoples and people with disability)” (UNESCO, 2015, p.13-14). The other text briefly mentions the importance of making cultural material and media material accessible to persons with disabilities, besides other relevant governmental information (Wehbi and Lakkis, 2010). Lakkis and Wehbi also stress that “relatively powerless people—such as many people with disabilities—do not have easy access

to information that could help bring about change” (*ibid*, p.4) and observes that access to information “is based on informal social and political networks” (*ibid*).

A limited number of papers investigate gender and disability and/or disability in the workforce, notably Wehbi and El-Lahib (2007), Lakkis and Wehbi (2010), and Hazzouri (2011). However, these papers do not develop their discussions of arts and culture in any structured way. Despite the clear lack of academic research into the links between arts and disability in Lebanon, it is important to note that disability-led organizations and NGOs have been actively working with disability movements in an attempt to counter the predominant culture of isolating disabled people from society and their consequent lack of education, and some use art as a tool to “empower” the disabled community. As for the Lebanese art practices of individual artists and institutions, few Lebanese art institutions directly engage in tackling disability as a theme or representing artists with disabilities (see practice review below).

In one study, progressed through a Canadian foundation, relationships between “contemporary western cultural representations of bodies and the experiences of women born with physical disabilities and differences”, the author carried out in-depth interviews with 14 disabled women, one of whom grew up in Lebanon (Zitzelsberger, 2005). Although the author does not categorise her data findings geographically, she states that their views on embodiments are formed by national cultural discourses of disability and gender (how it is produced, seen and experienced). The study does not solely focus on arts and disability for the most part, but it does highlight perceptions around the mental constructs of bodies, namely: “most women described being better able to resist imposed subject positions after exposure to alternative discourses, such as those offered by feminist, disability or Deaf culture and activism” and how “participants’ stories indicated that they struggled continuously with powerful and colonizing hegemonic gendered norms of the appearance and capacities of bodies. Yet, each woman also experienced moments of seeing differently through resistance to hegemonic orderings of normal/abnormal, beautiful/ugly and same/different bodies. As such, they have come to see their bodies within and also outside of these normative and idealized representations.” (*ibid*, p.399). The text recognized the possible active engagement of disabled individuals in constructing meaning and identities realized through “their interactions with built environments and with others”, including the cultural sphere (*ibid*, p.401). The conclusion was that various and different approaches to disability and body differences present valuable tools to “think” disability and challenge disability oppression: “importantly, identifying the role and effects of visibility and invisibility offers access to alternative ways of investigating systems of meaning that shape women’s embodied experiences” (*ibid*, p.399). We should observe, finally, that before the 1975-1991 Lebanon War, disability was not on the political agenda in Lebanon. Post-war Lebanon saw thousands of people becoming disabled due to sustained war injuries and this developed social awareness on disability (Berghs and Kabbara, 2016). These themes were taken up by numerous artist practitioners across Lebanon and are noted below.

7.2 Occupied Palestine Territories

Persons with disabilities in the OPT are at a great disadvantage, living under Israeli occupation and siege in a social, economic, and cultural state of instability. The political and economic conditions that prevail have placed disability at a lower level on the national agenda (Nasser et al., 2017). Consequently, the arts and cultural sector becomes secondary amidst the political socioeconomic difficult struggles of Palestine. There is a perennial research gap pertaining to arts and disability. Due to this gap, the focus of this literature review will present further context of disability in relation to stigma, occupation, social inclusion, advocacy, and education as it relates to culture and the arts.

The focus on disability has increased in the OPT since the First Intifada in the 1980s, as the number of disabled people increased because of war injuries (World Bank, 2016). “Those who were injured were regarded as heroes. However, while people’s perceptions of war-disabled persons were and still are positive, exclusion of and discrimination against other PWDs prevail” (*ibid*). This exclusion and discrimination of people with disabilities are still predominant in all aspects, including the arts and cultural field. The impact of the Israeli occupation continues to impact across all sectors of Palestinian life, not least the corporeal and psychical well-being of communities and individuals. Snounu (2019) describes Israeli occupation as contributing to a triple matrix of maiming: “such a matrix begins with targeting the Palestinian body, then continues to destroy the Palestinian infrastructure, which directly debilitates Palestinians, and finally it maintains and increases barriers through check-points, siege on Gaza, and the apartheid wall in the West Bank” (*ibid*, p.466). The concept of social inclusion for persons with disabilities, more specifically for children with physical disabilities in Gaza, was addressed by Nasser et al., (2017), whereby participants highlighted that the lack of basic needs does not give space for social inclusion as defined by the researcher, including cultural participation. One participant noted: How a full inclusion would be created when I don’t have basic medical supplies in my rehabilitation clinic and suffer chronic financial problems? (*ibid*).

The lack of basic needs and economic distress of people with disabilities impacts employability and advocacy. In terms of employment opportunities, the Palestinian Law of the Disabled, 1999/No.4, specifies that at least 5% of the workforce of government and non-government organizations should include persons with disabilities while encouraging the private and non-governmental sector to employ persons with disabilities through the provision of tax exemptions (Abusrour, 2017). However, no clear examples of law implementation are found in governmental, private, or civil institutions. Abusrour questions the role of disability NGOs and their policies concerning persons with disabilities and their impact on public employment policies in Palestine. Nonetheless, the author also highlights that the Law of Charitable Organizations, which most arts and cultural organizations conform to in principle, “does not include provisions that regulate or limit in any way the organizations work on advocacy in Palestine” (*ibid*).

The issue of stigma and negative perception of people with disabilities is a challenge that further raises the question of how art and culture can play a role in changing such perceptions. This creates an opportunity for art and cultural institutions to work on advocacy in terms of disability, and for NGOs to contribute to both employment of people with disabilities and

policy change in this realm. As Holert (2015) suggests “activism or at least readiness to intervene artistically in political, and social processes such as the struggle for social change, the fight against authoritarian regimes or the building and protection of structures has become somewhat obligatory” (*ibid*).

In an attempt to understand the human rights needs of youth and adolescents with disabilities in Palestine and Jordan through qualitative research, Presler-Marshall et al., (2020) recommend moving beyond charitable models. Emphasizing the importance of providing an “integrated package of disability-tailored support that includes accessible, appropriate and quality inclusive education and training, access to primary and disability-specific health and nutritional care, formal psychosocial support services, and social protection programmes that are appropriately targeted and indexed to account for disability. Equally important are safe spaces and recreational opportunities (including through access to digital technologies) that are accessible to adolescents—including girls” (*ibid*). The role of digital technologies in cultural practices and arts education—as noted in the Further Research section below—is paramount in addressing the digital divide and concerns around inclusion and disability.

The educational system in Palestine is still in its early stages for supporting students with disabilities, although there has been a growth in educational service provision since the Rights of Education for All (1994) was adopted by the Palestinian Ministry of education (Nasir-Tucktuck et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the Palestinian educational system does not focus on arts education in schools and the arts are still considered a secondary subject. No literature was found on arts education and disability within the Palestinian context. However, Biggeri and Ciani (2018) observed through data collected from their research on inclusion that there was no sufficient degree of inclusivity in art classes for students with disabilities. The degree of inclusivity is higher for students with hearing and mobility impairments than, the authors noted, that of visual and mental disabilities. Biggeri and Ciani associated this difference with the disability itself rather than the presence of support to certain types of disabilities.

Available literature drawing on the performing arts as an empowerment tool in Palestine includes Delphine Biquet (2014) report *Performing Arts as Vehicle for Youth Empowerment—The Case of The Palestinian Circus School*, in which the author explores how performing arts can be utilized as a vehicle for youth empowerment. Through a case study that focuses on the Palestinian Circus School, Biquet explains how such performances develop a sense of confidence through “resisting the outside oppressing forces by finding the ones contained inside oneself” (*ibid*, p.7). Elsewhere, Bingham and Green (2016) address theories of humour and disability through comedy, focussing on the experience of the American-Palestinian comedian Maysoon Zayid who has cerebral palsy. Zayid uses humour, the authors observe, to re-narrate both the experience of disability and conflict in the Middle East and Palestine. The authors explore how disability and humour can entice audiences to rethink disability and any predetermined perceptions through humour. Although they highlight the fact that “despite the rise of disability humour as a form of activism, scholars have identified disability humour as an undertheorized area” (*ibid*, p.278).

Some projects, finally, documented achievements about the contribution of arts to social change and empowerment. In "Reshaping Cultural Policies for the Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms and Diversity of Cultural Expression", UNESCO focused on the OPT as the chosen beneficiary. The social change and empowerment components of this project were implemented by Art for Heart Institution and the Palestinian Ministry of Culture. In the ensuing UNESCO quadrennial periodic report on Palestine in 2020, the project stated that: "Persons with disabilities have access to cultural activities, goods, and services; creative productions and artworks by talented disabled artists are appreciated and valued; access of persons with disabilities to cultural goods and services enhanced, economic empowerment of persons with disabilities /entrepreneurs through capacity building programmes; psycho-social support of persons with disabilities through the arts helped them express themselves and share their concerns" (Quadrennial Period Report, 2020). Arts and disability as a means to affect access and inclusion were only noted in literature concerning this one-off project; however, as with many of these projects, it lacked statistical data to support any results.

7.3 Jordan

As with the above two countries, but more so, there was little by way of structured literature on the subject of arts and disability produced with Jordan in mind. The majority of literature on arts and disability was generated through cultural institutions and one-off projects—see the review of practice below. The general disability literature included Thompson (2018), and a UNESCWA report on persons with disabilities in Jordan (Zovighian, 2009). Further reports on Syrian refugees with disabilities in Jordan have been published by the UNHCR (Australian Aid, 2018).⁸

One of the more engaged contributions on the subject of models of rights and disability involves Nagata's study that reviewed the process and outcome of constructing a "rights model of disability" that was culturally specific to Jordan and Lebanon (Nagata, 2008). The objective of the empirical part of Nagata's study was to survey the current level of attitudes of non-disabled people towards their persons with disabilities in Jordan, and to compare the attitudes of, in particular, Lebanon's university students towards five different categories of persons with disabilities (persons with, mental disabilities, psycho-social disabilities, physical disabilities, hearing impairments, and visual impairments) so as to highlight the variations and diversity among them.

Nagata's study, which includes Lebanon for comparison, also examined the relationship between the attitudes and various demographic and social characteristics of the respondents across Jordan. The set of findings was further tested and triangulated through meta-analysis of individual views expressed in the qualitative studies. In Jordan, the attitude of 191 randomly selected non-disabled people was studied, using a Scale of Attitudes towards Disabled Persons (SADP). The participants from 4 communities within Jordan exhibited overall negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Socio-economic-demographic characteristics showed almost no difference regarding their attitudes towards persons with disabilities. In Lebanon, a more complex scale composed of four sub-scales—namely, the "Baseline Survey

of Student Attitudes towards People with a Disability”—was used to survey 94 university students' attitudes towards five different categories of disabled people, and a set of indices for future comparison was constructed.

The results indicated the same pattern of gradations of attitude differences (found in other countries) towards persons with physical or sensory impairments (better), intellectual impairment (middle) and mental illness (worse). The main findings of this empirical field research showed particularly negative public attitudes towards people with intellectual impairment and mental illness, specifically, for this study, throughout Lebanon. Finally, the validity of the proposed rights model of disability and the empirical findings of this study were further examined and co-validated through analysis of the collective views of those who took part in the questionnaire surveys and the participatory focus group discussions, which took place in Lebanon in 2005 and 2007, and in Jordan in 2005, as well as a series of intensive on-line and/or telephone interviews of a few informants comprising of persons with disabilities and experts (*ibid*).

An earlier study on disability and provision in Jordan focused on policy and legislation, but, again, no references to culture were made. In this study, background information on Jordan, the current situation of disabled people and dominant social attitudes to disability were presented by way of context (Turmusani, 1999). The subject of physical disability, gender, and marriage in Jordanian society was discussed throughout Jalal and Gabel, 2014, where the authors observed three Jordanian persons with physical disabilities and their views on gender, marriage, family, and disability in Jordanian society. They refuse to marry women with disabilities, Jalal and Gabel note, “even while they recognize their own stigmatization and oppression. They long for ‘real women’ while absolving themselves of any guilt in the oppression of disabled women. They want wives who can provide the physical assistance they need while facing significant barriers to fulfilling their role as husband, father, and provider.” (Jalal and Gabel, 2014, p.51).

8 Selected Art Practices Relating to Culture and Disability in Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Jordan

8.1 Lebanon

8.1.1 Overview of Arts and Cultural Networks in Relation to Disability

Lebanon's unstable history and 1975-1991 civil war left the country in a precarious socioeconomic state. The 2019 economic collapse and the Beirut Port explosion on August 4, 2020, has further added to a sense of crisis in the country. Despite that, it maintains a vibrant cultural hub, and its artistic scene continues to have a national and international reputation. Ongoing initiatives include Maqamat (initiated in 2002), the Zoukak Theatre Company (2006), Collectif Kahraba (2007), Ashkal Alwan's Home Workspace Program (2011), Haven for Artists (2011), Modern and Contemporary Art Museum- MACAM (2013), the Temporary Art Platform (2014), the Sursock Museum (reopened in 2015), Beirut Art

Residency (2015), Aishti Foundation (2015), the newly refurbished National Museum of Beirut (2016), Dar El-Nimer for Arts and Culture (2016), Hammana Artist House (2016), Beit Beirut (2016), the Nabu Museum (2018), and the forthcoming Beirut Museum of Art—BeMA. Further planned museums are the Tyr and Sidon archaeology museum, the Beirut History Museum and the Beirut Museum of Art. However, most of the above are private initiatives, and a 2017 report observes that the preponderance of private initiatives “may be due to the fact that in a country without a state art museum, without state-funded theatre and with a minimal cultural budget, the arts are not so highly valued in society. In fact, Lebanese cultural life is supported by the artists themselves as well as private local organizations in collaboration with international institutions. All money must be especially procured” (Kohse, 2017). In *Contemporary Performance Arts in Lebanon: An Overview* (Haddad, 2017), the author further notes that “the independent cultural scene shapes itself at the margins of, and in opposition to, this culture of prestige, in an environment where stability, infrastructures and human resources are often scarce” (*ibid*).

To date, the Lebanese government’s priorities lie with basic requirements such as security and/or economic reform. The relative under-prioritizing the arts and culture sector has resulted in a notable absence of coherent national cultural policies, the lack of a unified national museum policy, and inadequate governmental budgets. Therefore, each cultural institution operates differently according to constitution and resources, including whether or not they generally include accessibility programs for persons with disabilities, audience study programmes, and audience outreach developments. Despite the abundance of museums and arts and culture initiatives in Lebanon, the issue of inclusivity and outreach continue to be a major concern. Based on preliminary research, these institutions are not primarily geared towards accessibility and outreach and, for many, there is a failure to attract a broader Lebanese audience that is further compounded by a lack of co-ordinated efforts to engage new audiences. In turn, few institutions actively engage in social and/or civic community development, including disability-themed programs. The perception of elitism around cultural institutions also represents an obstacle to developing inclusive programmes and educational initiatives for persons with disabilities. This raises further concerns, and potential opportunities, as to the role that art practices can play in both developing arts and education programmes for persons with disabilities and encouraging disability-led initiatives.

In 2000, the Lebanese parliament approved the Law 220 on the Rights of Disabled Persons (Law 220/ 2000) that safeguards basic rights for the disabled, as previously mentioned. This law gave citizens with disabilities the basic rights for employment, transportation and housing, as well as health care and education (Lakkis et al., 2015). Accordingly, when it comes to architecture, the country’s construction laws must apply Law 220/ 2000 by demanding that all public buildings, installations, facilities and means of transportation should implement the technical regulations that facilitate persons with disabilities’ access to them. Furthermore, in 2011, the government issued the decree 7194/15 to include minimum requests for accessibility in public buildings; accessible entrances, accessible parking spaces, and satisfactory elevators and toilets, most of which are still ignored. To date, there has been no co-ordination between cultural policies and Law 220/2000. There is, moreover, low compliance to the law

in general. Law 220/2000 does not mention access to information, which would seem to be a major flaw and, apart from the issue of accessibility to newly built cultural institutions, very little is clarified when it comes to policies that should be undertaken by private institutions (including art organisations). According to a country report in 2015 conducted by the Director of the Physical Handicapped Union in Lebanon, the notion of access to information in general highlighted: “a draft law on access to information was submitted to the Lebanese parliament in April 2009, which has not yet been adopted, because of a political crisis in Lebanon—one of the main obstacles to achieving progress on access to information and disability rights in Lebanon. The draft law includes no specific requirement to provide information in accessible or usable formats for persons with disabilities as proposed by the CRPD” (*ibid*).

Public information should be accessible as it can directly concern persons with disabilities with regards to day-to-day life. This would and should of course concern museums and institutions when it comes to making cultural information accessible to all. If institutions are starting to implement architectural and spatial elements for accessibility, and developing other projects related to disability, to date no institution has produced its information in a user-friendly state that is accessible to all types of disabilities (using, for example, appropriate formats and technology). The majority of reports on disability in Lebanon cover education, accessibility and other similar notions, but rarely tend to cover cultural information too. There is therefore an urgent need to make cultural material and media material accessible to persons with disabilities.

8.1.2 Research Challenges in Lebanon

A number of research challenges applied to all three locations, specifically how this research was undertaken against the backdrop of Covid19. However, Lebanon was still reeling in the wake of the August 4, 2020, port explosion in Beirut, meaning that few institutions were open or were just partially opened and many people were unavailable for interview when the research was being undertaken. There is, furthermore, a lack of institutional and individual understanding of the definition of disability, specifically within the arts and cultural sector, therefore the different needs and requirements for persons with disabilities are neither fully quite understood nor met. This lack of consideration is found within the Lebanese society in general, due to the stereotyping and misrepresentation of persons with disabilities. Academic resources, statistical reports and research-based literature on disability vis-à-vis the arts and cultural scene in Lebanon is almost non-existent. There is also a lack of information on the number of artists with disabilities. Not everything can be found online and the metadata for the key word “disability” is not necessarily found in relation to specific artworks or projects. The lack of proper evaluation of the few institutional projects linked to disability likewise makes it harder to gather data and analyse it effectively. Most of these practices are project-based initiatives that often depend on external funding, or they are created but then forgotten. Hence, these projects need to be further assessed to study the impact of arts and culture on persons with disability and discourse of disability.

8.1.3 Arts, Disability and Cultural Practices in Lebanon

A selection of institutions, artists and/or collectives who have directly or indirectly tackled disability themes or initiated related projects are listed and categorized as follows:

- Institutional practices and community-based programmes
- Practices of artists and curators in relation to the theme of disability
- Practices of artists who identify as disabled
- Community-based initiatives undertaken by artists and collectives

8.1.4 Institutional practices and community-based programmes

Planet Discovery: Children's Science Museum is not only the sole museum in Lebanon dedicated specifically to children, but it also is the first museum that includes explicitly a sentence on inclusion of the disabled since 1999. In the Quarterly online newspaper in 1999, they state the following: "Abiding by international standards of safety and security, it is equipped to welcome the disabled and visually-impaired [...]. All activities are available, according to the children's needs, in either of three languages, Arabic, English and French, in addition to Braille." On their current website, nothing of the such is written explicitly, unless you click one downloadable PDF: "In line with international standards of safety and security, Planet Discovery is equipped to welcome disabled visitors. The curvilinear architecture, gentle inclines and sunlit interior makes the museum a friendly space."⁹ The National Museum of Beirut in partnership with the NGO Red OAK (which focuses on mental health initiatives, the empowerment of women, and persons with disabilities) and Omero National Museum of Italy created the *Please Touch Me* tour guide for people with visual impairments.¹⁰ The 1942 building had not initially been designed to be accessible, but there has been the addition of a lift to move from one floor to the next and accessibility from the entrance has been provided. The Modern and Contemporary Art Museum (MACAM) mission statement includes the following statement directly linked to disability: "MACAM prides itself on being a 'Museum for Everyone', by championing inclusivity and ensuring accessibility for the special-need persons and the blind". Furthermore, they include community-based programs, activities with locals and with non-museum visitors. Events revolve around human rights initiatives, for instance include a 60-meter mural done by 12 renowned international and local street artists in collaboration with audience to celebrate human rights day, produced in 2018-2019. Each graffiti artwork was inspired by an article from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and depicts a theme.¹¹ Zoukak Studio and Zoukak Theatre Company is a non-hierarchical structure, dedicated to theatre practice, with a belief in theatre as a space for common reflection as a position against marginalizing systems. They include in their mission statement the inclusion of children with disabilities: "We have tested and developed theatrical interventions in emergency situations and beyond, working with incarcerated youths, children with multiple disabilities, women subjected to domestic violence, migrant domestic workers and other marginalized fractions of our society, while continuing to work with people affected directly and indirectly by war".¹² In addition, they hosted Pierre Geagea's performance in their venue (see below).

Ashkal Alwan's renowned Homework study-program initiative had a yearly course in 2015-2016 that was entitled *Accessibility, Human Rights, and the Ghetto Effect*. Part of the course was focused on disability studies.¹³ An example of a museum space that takes into consideration several forms of disability is the Armenian Genocide Museum, also known as the "Aram Bezikian" Museum (opened in 2015). Not only does it include ramps and easy-access paths, it also includes audio-visual elements within the scenography so the differently-impaired can still experience the exhibition in one way or another. However, it does not explicitly mention accessibility and inclusivity in its mission and vision. Although the Beirut Modern Art Museum (BEMA) is not constructed yet, its staff runs an art-in-residency outreach program in public schools all over Lebanon, including non-urban areas. Focused on delivering the art scene to a wider public in Lebanon, the residencies are workshops given to particular classes and schools once a year. BEMA's mission includes providing an all-inclusive communal space, as well as the explicit aim to render the practice of arts accessible to all by engaging with the local community. As part of their activities, BEMA launched the *Chou Hayda* (*What's That?*), an audio-guide project in collaboration with the National Museum of Beirut. This included non-regular museum visitors with different backgrounds discussing artefacts from their non-expert audience point of view, thus creating an accessible audio-guide.

The Human Rights and Disability Festival was launched in Lebanon in 2003. It is not clear for how many years the festival ran, but it is no longer an annual event. The Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union (LPHU), in collaboration with various national and foreign associations, hosted the festival for two years with the aim of raising awareness on disability through film in particular, showcasing international, regional and national film-makers. The Sursock Museum has a coming-soon access program which will be designed for people with special requirements, including persons with visual impairments, hearing impairments, and learning disabilities. The program is open to all ages and will enable access to the Museum's collection and exhibitions through talks, tours, and workshops led by specially-trained staff and artists. These include visual descriptions of work for visitors with visual impairments, to tours delivered in sign language.¹⁴

8.1.5 Practices of artists and curators in relation to the theme of disability

To begin with, a general theme was observed in visual arts, theatre and literature when it comes to representations and themes that tackles disability as a theme: disability as a result of the 1975-1991 Lebanese civil war. Clearly, there are a lot of Lebanese artists who tackle the theme of the war and post-war effect through their work on memory, identity, territory, political geography, and trauma. Some address more directly the theme of the body in particular vis-a-vis violence, thus we come across themes such as the body and geography, disembodyment, which directly or indirectly address disability.

Rabih Mroue (visual artist, stage and film actor, and playwright) theatre performance *Riding on a Cloud* (2013) is based on the true story of his brother who was shot to the head and became physically and mentally disabled because of the 1975 war. In it, he intertwines fiction and reality, whereby his brother Yasser appears on stage to recount what he remembers of the war and its traumas. The work engages notions of memory, identity, trauma and injury, in

which the artist also combines pre-recorded video, images, and text. The impairments to the mental and physical functions of Yasser is what actually incited this reflection on the intricate connections between memory, fiction, and socio-political reality.¹⁵ Mohamad Al-Rawwas created a video installation entitled *Please Sit Down* (2007) “inspired by a school of ancient Arab odes known as “Al Wouqouf ‘alal Atlal” (Standing over the Ruins), a poet’s lamentation on his beloved’s seasonal migration with her (Bedouin) tribe. A wooden chair faces a video screen. We are invited to be seated and a video loop shows people reciting a verse by Abu Nawas, an eighth century poet, in sign language.”^{16,17} Gregory Buchakjian (art historian, visual artist) curated a virtual text-exhibition called a *Cabinet of Broken Bodies*, 2020, published by Selections Magazine in their *Curated By* section. The exhibition discourse is about the body in parts and its link to post-war trauma, and as such contains artworks by Lebanese artists that showcase disability, but also intimacy, illness and gender.¹⁸

Jalal Toufic (thinker, writer, filmmaker, artist) wrote a series of essays on the notion of *Radical Closure* between 2009 and 2020. They appear in a book entitled *Radical Closure* (Toufic, 2020) and include a study of four of his conceptual works as a tribute to Van Gogh. The titles of the paintings are *Radical-Closure Artist with Bandaged Sense Organ (a Tribute to Van Gogh)*, no. 1 and no.2 painted between 2018 and 2020, as well as *Radical-Closure Artist with Bandaged Sense Organ (After Van Gogh’s “Wheatfield with Crows” and “Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear”)*, 2020 and *Radical-Closure Artist with Bandaged Sense Organ (After Van Gogh’s “Wheatfield with Crows” and “Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear”)*, 2018. Toufic defines radical closures as literal or metaphorical spaces that are “disconnected from the environment, but open to [...] an unworldly elsewhere, or to nothing” (*ibid*, p.9). In other words, he describes them as having “a corresponding absence of sight” (*ibid*, p.9). He gives examples and analyses international artists, such as Van Gogh, whose paintings he re-adapts. The lengthy philosophical/art critic essay is a reflection on mental health and disability, amongst other things, and, in some areas of the book, he makes a direct relation to the 1975 war and its aftermath in particular.

In relation to the study of disability and the Lebanese civil war, a number of practices are notable. Said Baalbacki’s *One Hand Alone Can’t Clap* (2010) is a sculpture of a dismembered hand, symbolizing the story of the lost Beirut Martyr’s sculpture hand and at the same time symbolizing the scars that the war perpetuated (this sculpture also appeared in Gregory Buchakjian’s article, see above).¹⁹ Walid Sadek’s (artist, writer and critic) work and essays generally treats all Lebanese as wounded survivors and his general theoretical work on a post-war society are not only a critique on the reluctance of post-war reconstruction efforts, but could also be read as proposing solutions for mental and physical war traumas and amnesia. Of particular note here is his essay *Inside Mourning in the Presence of a Corpse* (2012) and a parallel installation entitled *Inside Mourning in the Presence of a Corpse*, and *The Boy in the Sick Room* (2013).

Huguette Caland (artist, 1931-2019) did not usually produce a lot of “political” works about the war, however in *Uncivil War 1981*, we see a drawing of the lower part of the body with what seems to be an amputated leg. Although not a direct link to disability, Alfred Tarazi’s visuals and installations are historical and archival investigations of the 1975 war and at times address physical/mental disabilities as a result of war violence. In his installation *Senseless*

Realm, 2015, he presents five different narratives pertaining to the five different senses. The stories unfold in a cinematic panorama in the form of still-collages consisting of archival press photos from the war with “subtitles” underneath; the “script” recreates stories from the war. The reconstruction of war narrative highlights how perpetrators, victims and survivors lose their sense faculties.

Renowned artist Etel Adnan’s untitled ceramic wall, with abstract patterns and Nadim Karam’s sculpture *Grasping the World*, are permanent public art intervention for the Special Olympics Abu Dhabi in 2019. *Grasping the World* emphasizes empathy and highlights acceptance and communication by displaying two figurative people with intertwined hands holding a sphere that reflects the surroundings. This was also the first time that the Middle East hosted a Special Olympic games.²⁰ Lara Shamji is a media designer who worked with the Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union (LPHU) on a project for the Human Rights and Disability Festival. As a freelancer who works on designing visual communication projects for marginalized groups, Shamji notes how she contacted LPHU and worked together on developing a project for the youth because they are the most marginalized in society, and designed the project in collaboration with the Inclusion Network, an informal collective that aims to achieve inclusion within the family, the educational system, and society. The collective gathers groups of the various associations representing persons with disabilities, their parents, and specialists with college professors.

Rusted Radishes Collective is an interdisciplinary literary and art Journal. One of the collective’s recent projects was a digital illustration called *Object of Protest*, 2020, in collaboration with Beirut Moment Collective, a research collective based in London.²¹ The project was part of a partnership with Public Works, an architecture practice working within and towards public spaces, and the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union, a grassroots advocacy organization for the handicapped. The proposed outcomes of Beirut Moments are self-built interventions focused on social impact, raising awareness and challenging perceptions regarding disability and its material culture. One of the poetry editors, Christine Choueiri has listed in her interests: gender, sexuality, queerness and disability and it is important to note here that the mention of disability is not commonly listed in Lebanese artist’s statements of biographies.

The protagonist of the film *BeBe*, 2013, is an actor who takes the role of a 33-year-old mentally impaired adult. It received mixed reviews but was overall popular, and showcased mental disability in a comedy genre. It could have been viewed as bordering on misrepresentation, a point that will be taken up in further discussion of agency and representation.

8.1.6 Practices of artists who self-identify as disabled

Mai Ghossoub is a writer and artist who lost an eye during the 1975 war due to a bomb shell. She was the founder of Saqi Bookshop and Publishing House. She also wrote an autobiographical book, *Leaving Beirut: Women and the Wars Within* (1998). Lamia Al-Raad is a writer who became paralyzed when she was 11 during the 1975 war due to a bomb explosion. Her book, *Le Bonheur Bleu* (2002), is an autobiography mainly focusing on resiliency and how

a child survives a trauma and adapts to disability. In addition, Lamia is often found discussing her book in schools around Lebanon to raise awareness on the war and disability. Marie Khoury is a self-taught visual artist who is almost completely paralyzed because of the 1975 war. She draws with her wrists and mouth. The artist is represented at Exode Art Gallery, Beirut, one of the few examples of a visual artist being represented by a gallery (Note: Exode website's profile of Marie Khoury does not mention that she is disabled).²² Pierre Geagea was born deaf. He is a contemporary dancer, performer and he is mostly known to combine dancing with sign language.²³ Paul Guiragossian was a prominent visual artist with an international following who had one leg amputated due to an accident in an elevator and had previously painted amputees. However, few biographies mention that. In addition, he has a painted series on amputees 20 years before the accident, which are not found online. During First International Salsa Festival 2009 , the 1st wheelchair show in Lebanon was entitled Wheelchair on Fire was presented by Fadi Halabi and Maya Nehme. Since he was a kid, Fadi dreamed of creating a dance group where people with disabilities and those without disabilities were able to dance together on stage.²⁴

8.1.7 Community-based initiatives undertaken by artists and collectives

Community-based initiatives initiated by artists tend to be focused on activist-based practices that engage with refugees, lower income communities, and, in some cases, people with disabilities. An overview would include the following:

Rudy Rahme (painter, sculptor and poet) was one of earliest artists who worked with the disabled communities. He held poetry readings in the 90s, some of which were with persons with disabilities. This is an example of an artist starting a community-led initiative but very little information is available on this project to date. Kiki Bokassa is a visual artist and performer who works around themes of refugees, minorities and disadvantaged groups. She has created a book for children about chronic illnesses and diseases in collaboration with Children Cancer Centre. Zena Al-Khalil is an artist and activist who promotes emerging and under-represented Arab artists through Al-Jesser and Xanadu.²⁵ She has also worked with UNHCR, organized yoga and music workshops for Syrian, Kurdish, Armenian, Palestinian and Iraqi refugee children, some of whom are disabled. Joumana Haddad (writer, cultural and social activist) established a Freedom Centre in which she hosts a myriad of different events to raise awareness on issues such as LGBTQ+ rights, freedom of expression, women rights and human rights in general.

In a larger scale project, the internationally acclaimed artist Mounira Al Solh supports and works with the Al Amal Institute, created by her grandmother (the late Mounira El Solh), in Lebanon. Inaugurated in 1959, it was one of the first in the region to host people with special needs and create a school for them. It became a successful school with about 150 students with special needs, who arrived from all over the Arab world. Having survived the Lebanese Civil War, today Al Amal functions as a family house for about 30 permanent residents with special needs, all of whom live there and consider it their home, according to the artist, rather than a school. In the 1990s, the Institute launched programs to allow people with special needs

to work and attain employment. There is also a program to work with farmers with special needs from Lebanon that was initiated by Al Solh's father, Nassib el Solh. The Wheat and the Sweater programs allow people with special needs to rely on themselves, be productive, and to grow crops. Their produce is produced to fair-trade standards and distributed in winter to impoverished people, refugees, people in jails, and those caught in zones of conflict in Lebanon.²⁶

8.2 Occupied Palestinian Territories

8.2.1 Overview of Arts and Cultural Networks in Relation to Disability

The Palestinian arts and cultural scene is beset by multiple local and international concerns. The prevailing social, political, and economic volatility has created significant instability within the arts sector that impacts upon cultural production, visual representation, and cultural infrastructure alike. Across Palestine, art and culture take on heightened importance in questions of identity formation, collective memory, nationhood, displacement, and resistance. Whether it be the resistance to the continued threat of occupation, social injustice, patriarchy, or authority, Palestinian art and culture have historically contributed to the representation politics of archiving and the continued pursuit of change in the future. To date, however, there has been sporadic engagement with the issue of disability. Academic, statistical, and research-based literature on disability in Palestine is almost non-existent, especially when it comes to the art scene. Due to the lack of information, the practice review below was undertaken to understand the type of projects and programmes being implemented related to disability.

The Palestinian arts and cultural sector undertake a considerable number of projects and initiatives in relation to donor driven NGOs, and the number of cultural centres, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2019 is 566 (510 in the West Bank and 56 in the Gaza Strip), see PCBS, (2019). Most of the cultural activities and cultural participation are clustered in Ramallah and Al-Bireh city, being the cultural and economic hub of Palestine respectively. Art, culture, and cultural policies are inseparable from the social and geopolitical situation. Inclusivity and out-reach remain the most frequent concerns, whereby art organizations, artists, and cultural practitioners have been endeavouring for decades to reach a wider audience. These activities increasingly focus on inclusive, community-based and process-oriented practices to engage with a wider audience and community members. This approach, alongside the inclination of active audiences, shows significant potential when it comes to answering the dearth of activities directed towards persons with disabilities.

Continued questions remain, however, as to the exact role of art in advocating and representing political and social issues, including disability. Besides, social conservatism has often led to further resistance to art practices and freedom of expression. Recent research has revealed how institutional discourses on inclusivity and making arts more accessible to a wider audience has nevertheless become a key feature of cultural organisations. An opportunity lies in grasping that momentum and including the discourses on disability as part of these ambitions. The issue of disability has not thus far been a critical issue that cultural organisations and art practitioners engage. Nonetheless, the number of artistic and cultural

practices and projects relating to disability seems to be growing in Palestine. Several cultural partnerships with disability-led organisations are already in place—see below. Research-led practice in the arts has been also increasing in the past few years, encouraging interdisciplinarity within the arts in other sectors, and further activating the role of art in social- and community-based forms of exchange. In addition, several art and cultural institutions are paying more attention to their physical spaces, and facilities to become more inclusive and accessible.

Most disability-led organizations utilize at least one form of art as a therapeutic tool to empower persons with disabilities. This use of arts as a mean of therapy could create opportunities for further engagement and collaborations between art and cultural practices with disability-led organisations. Although the engagement of art and culture in issues surrounding disability remains irregular, the mapping of disability, through art practices and education initiatives, reveals a significant number of artistic and cultural projects/initiatives—see below—relating to disability. These have been largely produced over the last decade. Traditional and contemporary artistic and cultural mediums used in these projects included visual arts, literature, animation, film making, music, performing arts, and performances. Interdisciplinarity and collaborative modes of work have guided most of the initiatives and projects. However, further investigation on the impact of such initiatives and projects is required to better understand the role of art in developing inclusive projects for representing and discussing disability in Palestine.

Within the arts and cultural sector, there is still a lack of institutional and individual understanding of the definition of disability and the different needs and requirements for people with disabilities. This lack of understanding is found within the Palestinian society in general, due to the stereotyping and the stigma of people with disabilities. Most of the art and cultural practices are project-based initiatives with short-term periods that depend on international and a few local funding bodies. This represents an important challenge as these initiatives are rarely evaluated or monitored in a manner that provides evidence or lessons learned for any future development of programmes and projects relating to disability in general. The impact of such projects needs to be further assessed.

8.2.2 Cultural Policies in the Arts in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

There are very few reports or studies on cultural policies linked to art and disability in the OPT. The cultural policy model has been described as a “non-systemized model, predominantly oriented to the non-profit sector. The model has a limited grass-roots orientation and works solely in the central part of Palestine and in major cities. Therefore, significant parts of the country remain deprived of any form of cultural policy and action” (Faraht, 2010). This has impacted the formulation and enactment of cultural policies concerning disability. On a national level, the Palestinian Ministry of Culture has worked on a strategic plan for the years 2017-2022 to create an environment that supports and disseminates culture. This also aims to support talent and creating a cultural infrastructure that connects Palestinians around the world and supports crafts. Such plans and policies are essential for the development of the cultural sector; however, there is often a detachment

between the cultural organizations and their policies from the national cultural policies and the reality. The strategy relating to disability, for example, is not a topic within the cultural agenda.

This shortcoming of culture and cultural policies requires further intervention for the development of this field in Palestine and the integration of persons with disabilities and the disability discourse in both formal and informal cultural policies. Two new high-profile buildings have incorporated facilities to meet the needs of physical disabilities. This includes the newly built A.M Qattan Foundation building, inaugurated in 2018. The Palestinian Museum has also worked on including ramps and other facilities for people with physical disabilities.

8.2.3 Arts, Disability and Cultural Practices in Palestine

Institutional practices in relation to disability were more prevalent than those of individual initiatives. Many art and cultural organisations have either participated in an event related to disability or have been involved in a project related to disability. Most of the projects were one-off performances for a group of persons with disabilities, for example, or a series of workshops for persons with disabilities teaching music or visual arts. A selection of Institutions, artists and/or collectives who have directly or indirectly tackled disability themes or initiated related projects are listed below.²⁷

The Palestinian artist Basel Nasser, working in animation, trained and worked with a group of young people with hearing impairments from the Palestinian Red Crescent Society's Total Communication School. This was a continuation of the project "Animation for the Deaf", where artists Jan Caspers and Gary Rosborough trained young adults with hearing impairments. The project was initiated by the British Council in partnership with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society's Total Communication School and Tamer Institute of Community Education. The project started in 2012, to teach young adults to create animations and conduct animation workshops. As a result of the workshops and the training provided to these students an animation deaf team was created which continues to work till this day.²⁸

Through this experience, Nasser was keen to involve the team as co-producers in his studio the "Animation Factory", and the participants produced two animation movies in collaboration with the artist and his team. This project has enabled these participants to continue working on animation movies after the training sessions and they started providing training sessions for other children. Nasser stressed the importance of the animation medium which utilizes a universal language that created a strong relationship between the group who were able to communicate through this language (Interview with Basel Nasser, January, 2021)

It Was Paradise is a project on disability by Rachel Gadsen, a performance artist with a disability, in partnership with other Palestinian artists with disabilities. The project started in 2017 and ended in 2019. The project was resourced by Unlimited which is an art commissioning programme that supports the work of artists with disabilities in the UK and abroad.²⁹ Art workshops were delivered to visual artists in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including a group of 15 women from The Bereaved Women's Group, most of whom have

mental health issues and trauma caused by the effects of the Israeli occupation. Whereby, *Defying My Disability* was developed by Ramzi Maqdisi, a Palestinian filmmaker who sheds light on disability through his film-making. The film explores the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip and West Bank through the narration of seven disabled Palestinians, aged from 7 to 28.³⁰

The work of the collective Basta Theatre combines both theatre and art activism. Working on artistic interventions in the community through performance art and theatre, it is an independent collective that started in 2015 in Jerusalem. Basta Theatre has recently collaborated with the Movement for a Better Life for People with Disabilities in Palestine, who have protested between October 2020 and January 2021 to have comprehensive, just, and free health insurance for persons with disabilities. Their demands were met on January 5th, 2021. The collective conducted a theatrical intervention and performance co-produced with the movement members entitled “Insurance Basta”, in December 2020, during which the actors included persons with disabilities demonstrating the struggles and injustice they face when seeking out health services.³¹ The collective also provided social media campaigns, visuals, and videos supporting the Movement for a Better Life for People with Disabilities in Palestine. During an interview with Hussam Abu Goush, the leader of the collective, he stressed the importance of art as an active means for social change. He also noted that several persons with disabilities have contacted him after the performance who have an interest in theatre and wanted to join their group. This type of community-oriented, activist approach of interventions and practices is becoming more apparent within the art and cultural scene. (Interview with Abu Goush, December, 2020).

Music Therapy is Al-Mada’s flagship program. The organization is the first in Palestine to open a centre dedicated specifically to Music and Art-based therapy. Additionally, the organization has developed and printed the first music therapy manual in Arabic, so that these ideas and techniques can be made accessible to counsellors, social workers, psychologists, educators, and others. The organization introduced this increasingly popular approach to holistic health and mental well-being into Palestinian society and worked extensively with professionals to incorporate these concepts into their daily work. The First Ramallah Group uses dance as an advocacy tool for persons with disabilities. In 2014, they organized a training course for trainers on the mechanism of dance for persons with disabilities in addition to an inclusive workshop for dancers with disabilities.³² Partnering with Candoco Dance Company from the UK and the British Council, a dance workshop was held in 2013 in which combined Palestinian dancers and students including persons with disabilities. The workshop culminated in a group of participants with and without hearing impairments dancing in the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival titled “Natural Differences”, in late April 2013.

One of the most notable practices on inclusion is the experience of The Palestinian Circus School.³³ The Circus School trains over 300 children in circus skills, including people with learning disabilities. The Circus started working on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in 2016, through research with local disability organizations on the means and methods of integrating people with learning disabilities. The volunteers were provided with training from a German institute that has been working on disability and circus skills for over 25 years. To

date, the Circus School has been working with 22 children with learning disabilities and Down's Syndrome. Over the last four years, children have acquired circus skills that improved their overall wellbeing and helped them focus more on their education, and boosted their self-confidence, according to one of the trainers (Interview with Naif Abdallah, 2021). Abdallah further noted that this experience is on-going, and during the pandemic, circus trainers provided the social workers with training to continue teaching the children. The Palestinian Circus School conducted frequent evaluations with the children, the social workers, the circus trainers, and the children's parents. As a result of the training, the School held an inclusive public performance entitled "The Magic of Circus", where 10 children performed, five of whom had disabilities. They have also held the first virtual international "Social Circus" conference in Palestine promoting equal rights and community inclusion in September 2020.³⁴

One of the major foundations serving education and culture in Palestine is the A.M. Qattan Foundation who have worked on disability projects and programmes, including "Higher than the Fence", a programme that "provides the removal of imaginary walls and barriers that may prevent children with disabilities from participating fully and effectively in society on an equal basis with others"(A.M. Qattan Foundation, 2019). The programme was produced in partnership with disability-led organizations such as Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children in Gaza, and the Al-Noor Centre for the Blind. In addition, the Foundation conducted the programme "We all Read" which addresses learning disabilities for primary school children while utilizing interactive techniques for developing different levels of reading comprehension.

The British Council has been working with local partners on art and disability through its ongoing programme "Disability and Art". In 2017, the Council hosted a two-day event "Disability and Art: Successes and Challenges" with an exhibition and symposium in partnership with Palestine Red Crescent Society and other local partners. The exhibition included works from persons with disabilities and the symposium and talks on success stories on disability arts. (In 2012 the British Council also worked on the "Animation for the Deaf" project, discussed earlier.) From 2013, the Council worked on art therapy sessions in cooperation with Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation (BASR). Further to that, they partnered with Sareyyat Ramallah and Candoco Dance Company from the UK, holding a dance workshop in 2013. This combined Palestinian dancers and students and included people with disabilities, who performed in the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival "Natural Differences" in 2013.³⁵

In 2014, Ashtar Theatre produced the play "File on the Shelf" which is the first play in Palestine to include actors with mental disabilities representing their experience. "File on the Shelf" also relayed stories collected from persons with disabilities. In the same year, Al-Hara Theatre produced the play "Making Sense" addressing gender and disability issues. The project was based on interviews conducted with women from Palestine and Sweden with different disabilities.³⁶ The Popular Art Centre has been conducting "Dabke" training, traditional dance sessions since 2018 for people with special educational needs. This is in collaboration with Star Mountain Rehabilitation Centre and Jasmine Charitable Society. Children have performed on different stages and the programme is ongoing.

Elsewhere, the Ghirass Cultural Center provides therapeutic courses for children with learning difficulties and addresses issues around underachievement.³⁷ The Vision Association for Culture and Arts (House of Hope) is designed for students with Learning Difficulties and to address similar issues around underachievement. Due to the academic weakness of many students and lack of care for children with special educational needs, the Vision Association for Culture and Arts focuses on developing learning levels for children with disabilities at schools. They support participants through a programme of special studying and the “Learning Through Recreation” Programme. WhileTamer Institute for Community Education has worked in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on several projects addressing the discourse of disability and, specifically, literature and the production of children’s books. The Institute has produced the children’s book *Something from this World* that presented written dreams of people with disabilities. Alongside literary productions, Tamer Institute partnered with Gaza Municipality and artists from Gaza to create an art installation in 2015 representing persons with disabilities. Further to partnering with the British Council and Palestinian Red Crescent Society’s Total Communication School they created the “Animated Dictionary of Palestinian Sign Language”, along with Learning Sets, to educate and entertain students with hearing impairments as part of the project Amination for the Deaf.

Art to Heart is a newly established NGO in 2018 in the West Bank – Nablus. The Mission of Art to Heart is to socially and economically empower disabled people and marginalized communities in Palestine through the arts.³⁸ Art to Heart conducts workshops, events, and other activities aiming to promote social inclusion, supporting artistic talents, in addition to advocating and empowering people with disabilities.

In Gaza, the Basma Society for Culture and Arts introduced a project in 2018 to promote the active participation of persons with disabilities in cultural and social life through community theatre. This project was funded by the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, through the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation. Consisting of a 10-week training programme of 90 participants (47 females), the project included youth with disabilities.³⁹ The training revolved around theatre production and scriptwriting. The Basma Society for Culture and Arts also provided animation training for people with hearing impairments. This was a project in collaboration with disability organisations and a campaign supporting persons with disabilities.⁴⁰

8.2.4 Literary narrative and storytelling initiatives

Turning to the narrative arts, Hakaya Collective seeks to connect people ‘who believe in the importance of stories’ both on an individual and societal level. The Collective achieves this by running events, festivals and training sessions, whereby people are empowered to share their life stories in the hope of raising awareness and promoting inter-cultural dialogue; it has collaborated with Palestinian NGO Art and Heart to host storytelling sessions for children with disabilities. Such an emphasis on voicing – and sharing – personal stories as a means to increase understanding of and foster empathy between marginalized groups is central to two other storytelling initiatives working in the region – Narrative 4 and the Hands Up Project. Meanwhile, Voices Beyond Walls runs digital storytelling workshops for underserved youths in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, while in 2019, the Social

Development Forum ran a series of digital storytelling training sessions for women with disabilities, recognising how such skills can facilitate new forms of ‘self-expression and empowerment’.

8.2.5 Current Research Challenges in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Due to the complexity of the political situation, one of the challenges facing the research of disability in relation to art and culture is the geopolitical fragmentation in Palestine. The mapping of cultural and artistic practices includes the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, and the areas of post-1948. Each region has its own geopolitical, social, and economic context. The mapped projects and initiatives relating to disability were mainly located in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, whereas very few examples were found in Jerusalem and areas of post-1948. The fact that the number of persons with disabilities has increased in the consecutive wars on Gaza Strip since 2009, while the ongoing siege impacts the lives of persons with disabilities on all levels. As a result, many of the projects related to disability were based in the Gaza Strip. These challenges ensure that the research opportunities for developing discussions around arts and disability are numerous. The lack of academic resources, the absence of evaluation mechanisms, and the few directly related policies nevertheless mean that there are significant areas to be covered for possible projects and /or proposals.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is more focus on digital infrastructural development. In addition, the pandemic has revealed numerous weaknesses within the educational systems, which has encouraged art institutions and practitioners to focus on education. One potential area of research here is related to developing a framework for art practices to develop education-led initiatives with disability-led organisations. There is, finally, a continued lack of financial and governmental support for cultural initiatives and individuals working in arts and culture. In addition to this, there is an absence of unified cultural policies that could form the basis of research. The available support from the government has determined the types of projects that have been implemented, and the arts scene remains largely donor-driven. In the past 5 years, international funding has shifted to humanitarian support, leaving arts and culture with fewer resources. The lack of funding has further hindered the development of organic practices and the longer-term sustainability of arts and culture.

8.3 Jordan

8.3.1 Overview of Arts and Cultural Networks in Relation to Disability

The Jordanian art scene comprises largely of private foundations and some government sponsored institutions. All of them have the potential to develop or host events related to art and disability. To date, there have been a number of community-based projects and educational programmes on the arts, largely developed by the Khalid Shoman Foundation and Darat al Funun, who, according to their mission statement, “aim to provide a platform for contemporary Arab artists, to support art practices and artistic exchange, to stimulate critical discourse, and to research, document and archive Arab art.”⁴¹ They have hosted multiple online workshops in 2020 and their activities include summer academies and research

seminars. Elsewhere, the Creative Arts Centre is a pioneering model for cultural centres in Jordan, based on an approach that provides skilled and creative artists with an innovative and creative Art & Design learning experience. The centre is focused on offering a space for the community to learn traditional artistic practices.⁴²

Wild Jordan Workshops hold workshops and seminars that help to conserve nature by providing new sources of income and employment for families in villages near nature reserves to reduce their dependency on the reserves' natural resources. The workshops use the natural assets of protected areas to create sustainable economic and social benefits for local communities. The focus of the workshops is to teach traditional crafts and art-making skills to local communities, giving a source of income to local practitioners and also preserving the Jordanian wilderness in the process.⁴³

In collaborations with UNESCO and UNFPA, Qalam Hurr has developed workshops for children to teach illustration and cartoon creation within the local community. Their projects seek to address children and war, youth employment and women's empowerment.⁴⁴ Omar Adnan Abdallat, cartoonist and activist, is the co-founder of Qalam Hurr.⁴⁵ In a similar model, the Raneen Foundation's work focuses on art and storytelling practices to improve children's learning. The Raneen Foundation was established in December 2009 as a Jordanian non-profit organization that produces audio books recorded in a dramatic way with sound effects and music to inspire children and encourage them to use their imagination and creativity.

8.3.2 Overview of Cultural Institutions who have projects relating to Disability and the Arts

The Children's Museum Jordan is based around interactive learning for children, with many activities and programs. Through their disability programme, they launched "I am Me" in 2015 as part of their Community Connections Program entitled Children with Disabilities Month.⁴⁶ The program aimed to raise awareness about disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also sought to highlight the fact that disabilities are part of the natural differences between individuals. The museum designed a special program full of activities reflecting the aim of "Children with Disabilities Month", and welcomed for free all children with disabilities and their families, alongside disability specialized schools and institutes. With a similar focus on youth, the Jofeh Community Rehabilitation Centre is a community centre that works with young people with physical and intellectual disabilities. The centre serves over 60000 people in 13 villages and is focused on working with people with physical, mental and learning disabilities. It provides a range of services. One of which is a focus on using crafts and art practices to provide the service users with a vocation and skills.⁴⁷

Artists who have engaged with or work with disability-led groups, include Ala Younis, a prominent research-based artist based in Amman. Collaboration forms a big part of her practice, as does curating and joint book projects. Using objects, film and printed matter, she often seeks instances where historical and political events collapse into personal ones. She tends to combine personal narratives with collective and national histories of the region.⁴⁸ Younis currently sits on the board of 3ala-l-Jisir (On the Bridge), a community-based set of

initiatives in and outside Amman that is led by a group of cultural practitioners (musicians, artists, and others) who aim to develop, include and foster local capacity in the arts. 3ala-I-Jisir is in the process of setting up a community-based rehabilitation and outreach program in Al Ghour in the Jordan Valley area. The site is a 50,000 sqm piece of land, secured as the base for the project through a 10-year agreement where land is given for free and gets developed in return. 10,000 sqm of this site will have a school (or a training centre) for persons with disabilities (low vision or visually impaired, hearing impaired, Down syndrome, and other), attention deficit hyperactive disordered (ADHD), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This project is produced in close collaboration with activists and experts from the field, including Hala Bana who is a specialist in early intervention and has a long history of working with people and programs on disabilities in Jordan, UAE, Yemen and other places.

The programme of Accessible Jordan is focused on raising awareness of the issues faced by persons with disabilities, improve accessibility in workplaces, homes, restaurants, tourist and cultural sites. Accessible Jordan states that “we want to raise awareness about the challenges people with disabilities face when it comes to lack of accessibility and how it hinders their full inclusion in society. We also want to highlight how improving accessibility will help more than just people with disabilities”.⁴⁹ Although not primarily arts focused, it does provide data on what arts and cultural sites are accessible and has the goal of increasing accessibility in places that are not necessarily accessible. Seenaryo is a leading specialist in participatory arts and education with marginalised communities in Lebanon and Jordan. Having reached 64,000 children, youth and women to date, it uses arts and play to transform education and equip people with the tools to collaborate, think critically and build transferable skills. During the consultation workshop in Lebanon for the DUS project, they mentioned that they are aiming to work further with disability-led organizations.⁵⁰

Wadi Finan Gallery showcases Arab artists internationally and brings a heightened contemporary and modern aesthetic to its surrounding heritage by hosting public exhibitions, workshops and leading special community collaborations. They recently launched an exhibition in collaboration with Ruwwad Al Tanmeya NGO, featuring ceramics and paintings created by persons with disabilities.⁵¹ Art River Mosaic Workshop has been set up to provide training and employment for persons with disabilities. Jobs for persons with disabilities in Jordan are very limited, yet 60% of the people working at Art River have some form of disability. The organization has been created to provide work and training for persons for disabilities.⁵²

Studio 8 is a collective comprising a group of young artists aiming to shape and humanize dance art. Studio 8 care mission objectives aim to promote dance art and culture in Jordan, to make dance creation and production accessible, foster dance education and research, and promote diversity and inclusion so that the organisation becomes a portal for international collaborations and exchange. Recent activity related to disability came in support for the Lebanese after the August 4, 2020 Beirut explosion: “With the guidance of creative members of Jordanian deaf community and their supportive circle, after two-month intensive rehearsals, a dance performance is created as our statement to express that we will remain by the side of Lebanese people to continue our collective work during these challenging times”.⁵³

Our Step Association is an innovative project and the first national association in Jordan established with the aim to include people with mental health issues in the community. All activities within this project have been implemented by service users, ranging from awareness raising, training, advocacy, networking, partnerships, and collaborating with other NGOs. The association is set up to provide support to persons with mental health issues and disabilities.⁵⁴

Specific examples of artists engaging with institutions on one-off projects would include the Royal Academy for the Blind collaboration with artist Suheil Baqaeen, who launched The Colour Reader program for the people with visual impairments to teach them how to paint.⁵⁵ Baqaeen is an artist who works closely with disadvantaged communities, and has instigated other projects, such as his other initiative with the Touring Museum in rural areas.⁵⁶ Madaline Marrar is a visual artist whose “goals are many, from working on as many creative projects as possible to bringing people closer through my art. I have the commitment, passion and zeal within me to one day show the world what art is and what it can be”.⁵⁷ For instance, she paints bowls made by adults with special educational needs. Murad Abu Saraya is a theatre practitioner, drama therapist and drama teacher. He specifically teaches drama and theatre to persons with disabilities. Dalia Hussein has a PhD in Musicology and she works on a music album with songs composed and written by persons with disabilities. Although there is not much information on her work available. Yara Hindawi is a street artist her work often focuses on issues of mental health. Saba Inab is an architect, urban researcher, and artist based in Amman and Beirut. She has worked as an architect and urban designer with UNRWA on the reconstruction of the Nahr el Bared Camp in the North of Lebanon.⁵⁸

Finally, within a literary context, Palestinian-Jordanian academic and activist Rana Dajani founded the We Love Reading programme in 2006. We Love Reading trains local volunteers to hold reading aloud sessions for marginalised children in their communities so as to increase empathy and social understanding, and to alleviate mental stress from trauma.⁵⁹ The We Love Reading methodology has been incorporated into disability organisations in the region such as the Khalidiya Society for Special Education in Mafraq, which now runs reading aloud sessions as well as reading sessions for students with hearing impairments through sign language.⁶⁰ We Love Reading has also collaborated with local writers, illustrators and publishers to develop a new range of children’s books featuring inclusive content around themes such as gender and disability.

In a related project, Jordanian writer Lina Abu Samha was inspired to write the Arabic children’s series *Miryana’s World* after struggling to identify any children’s literature that reflected her daughter’s experience of living with cerebral palsy.⁶¹ Another Jordanian mother of children with disabilities, Reem Al Faranji, developed Team Hero, an animated TV programme which “aims to build positive attitudes towards children with disabilities and other differences.”⁶² Al Faranji is also the co-founder of Habaybna – “Our Loved Ones” – an Arabic language website supporting families of children with intellectual disabilities, which features videos of parents sharing their own personal stories and experiences.⁶³

8.3.3 Disability-led Institutions for further consideration

Humanity and Inclusion are an international organisation that provides support to people with disabilities across the world. In Jordan, they specifically have been supporting Syrian refugees, and also provide psychosocial support to persons with disabilities alongside physical support.⁶⁴ Although it is presently unclear as to whether they have art based interventions or practices in their services, a number of case studies exist that would suggest potential collaborations with art practices.⁶⁵ Christian Blind Mission (CBM) focuses on enabling local and national partners in developing countries to implement services for persons with disabilities, mainly for people with: visual disabilities, hearing disabilities, physical disabilities, mental disabilities, or intellectual disabilities. In addition, CBM runs interdisciplinary programmes that could have a potential connection with art institutions. These include the secondment of staff to CBM's partner organizations, and vocational training and employment for persons with disabilities, as well as disaster relief, in case a project is affected. Core activities in this mandated field include the following: awareness creation and advocacy, pre-vocational training, skill and vocational training, self-employment, and mainstreaming.⁶⁶ World Blind Union is a non-political, non-religious, non-governmental and non-profit organization, representing over 160 million persons who are blind and visually impaired in 177 member countries. It is the internationally recognized organization speaking on behalf of people with visual impairments at the international level. The World Blind Union does not provide direct services or programs to people who are blind and partially sighted but rather brings together major organizations of people with visual impairments and those providing services and programs to them from around the world.⁶⁷

Inclusion International (II) is a global federation of family-based organizations advocating for the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities and their families worldwide.⁶⁸

The WHO Disability and Rehabilitation Team (DAR) is situated within the Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention in the Cluster of Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health. DAR works to enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities through national, regional and global efforts to raise awareness about the magnitude and consequences of disability; facilitate collection, conduct analysis and dissemination of disability-related data and information; support, promote and strengthen health and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities and their families; and promote community-based rehabilitation (CBR).

Al Hussein Society offers a holistic approach to healthcare to persons with physical disabilities in Jordan and the Middle East. The centre provides a comprehensive method of treatment, which takes into account intellectual challenges and social factors, in addition to the physical symptoms of cases.⁶⁹ The Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF) is an information and research centre that has been in operation since 1996, working largely as a catalyst for socio-economic transformation through research, information and dissemination of knowledge. They have initiated several major projects which tackle vulnerable groups such as women, children and persons with disabilities.⁷⁰ With the support of IM Swedish Development Partner, IRCKHF has been given the opportunity to continue its work on researching and advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities. They launched

a National Campaign on persons with disabilities rights, aiming to focus on Jordan's Disability Law and the CRPD Concluding Observations.⁷¹

9 Future Areas of Proposed Research

The relative lack of academic resources, absence of evaluation mechanisms, and the insufficiency of unified policies, while troubling given the concerns and issues around disability and the rights of persons with disabilities, can be also understood as an opportunity for disability-led and cultural organisations to develop projects that address their own priorities in relation to inclusivity and education. In general terms, future projects and/or research could include an examination of how institutions often use the concept of inclusivity in the arts but neglect disability. A number of disability-led organizations mentioned above also utilize different forms of the arts as a therapeutic tool to empower persons with disabilities. The use of arts as a means of therapy could create opportunities for further engagement and collaborations between art and cultural practices and disability-led organizations. The opportunities therefore involve the development of both practical elements and theoretical discourses on disability. This would encourage the development of already existing interdisciplinary collaborations, as well as encouraging research-led practices in the art sphere to further activate the multi-sector role of art in social and community transformations.

Given the significant potential for arts and cultural practices to develop education programmes around issues of inclusivity and the politics of representation, there is a need for further coordination between literature and practice in the arts, cultural organizations and civil society. In partnership with arts and cultural organisations, disability-led organizations could develop their expertise and knowledge on the needs of persons with disabilities and, in turn, produce vital projects and initiatives in the field of measuring the impact of arts education in relation to disability. Supporting research-based practices and collaborative initiatives would encourage engagement with the arts in the lives of persons with disabilities and would the development of a cultural infrastructure that is capable of engaging more fully with disability. Whether this is through cultural policies that adopts disability policies, further research and evaluation on arts and disability, the inception of educational programming for cultural practitioners on disability, or building collaborations with disability led organizations, there is substantial potential to be had in all areas, despite the current state of infrastructure and policy.

While our research maps the relationship between art practices and disability-led practices in the cultural sphere, there are further areas of research that need to be expanded upon to give a fuller sense of the potential to be had in supporting cultural organisations and disability-led organisations in the development of projects. As noted from the outset, a number of key questions emerged throughout this research, one related to the opportunities and barriers to promoting inclusive education through collaborative partnerships between cultural partners and disability-led organisations; the other was concerned with how disability studies could affect an alternative methodology for cultural practices to further engage with the

politics of representing forms of exclusion? In light of these questions, three further areas of research need to be expanded upon:

- Disability Studies and Arts Education
- Disability, the Arts, and Digital Methodologies
- Art Activism and Disability in The Middle East

9.1 Disability Studies and Arts Education

A number of texts related to Disability Studies and Arts Education promote the field of disability studies as a valuable resource for expanding art education's concept of disability and as a promising venue for interdisciplinary dialogue (Derby, 2011). Derby observes how "disability advocacy has advanced in the past two decades toward self-awareness, self-reliance, and self-expression", all being key areas in contemporary cultural practices. Similarly, in *Disability Arts and Culture*, Petra Kuppers (2014) draws on a wide range of examples, exercises and activities to introduce the key artists and theoretical concepts in the diverse field of studying disability-led arts practices. In the *Routledge Handbook of Disability Art, Culture, and Media* (Hadley and McDonald, 2020), the authors explore the concept of interdependency, which has, we would argue, a counterpart of sorts in the inter-disciplinary development of disability-led education projects in the arts. More specifically the authors propose frameworks for increased collaboration between disabled and non-disabled scholar-artists, alongside the means to manage the complexity of doing disability arts work together. They articulate this potential in terms of a desire to develop trickster methods (Petra Kuppers, 2020) that go beyond the comfort zone of polite exchange (Sarah Austin, 2020) and also grapple more fully with the entanglements, frictions, and limitations of day-to-day disabled/non-disabled engagement (Jori De Coster, 2020). Again, there are multiple cross-overs to be had with the respective practices of Artur Żmijewski, Christoph Schlingenschiefer and others.

9.2 Disability, the Arts, and Digital Methodologies

More recently, collaborative methods within the arts have focused on the uses of digital technologies to effect inclusion and interpretation. Through formulating new methods of audience and persons with disabilities participant collaboration through digital means, these activities could be further researched in relation to how they formally and informally effect participations with artistic interventions *through* the virtual realm. The questions of technology, digital and otherwise, in the context of disability and the arts is a fast-growing field. In the context of Cyprus and Greece, Symeonidou (2019) explores how art produced by persons with disabilities can be utilised to develop the school curriculum. This was done through the production of an electronic archive of the life stories of persons with disabilities and their art, which involved artists, and sought to identify the potential of art to promote inclusive education. Further work on the role of Assistive Technology in Renegotiating the

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education in North Africa has been undertaken by Clouder et al. (Clouder et al., 2019).

A number of key volumes have been published on digital technology and disability, including Roulstone et al. (Roulstone et al., 2017). Gerard Goggin's and Christopher Newell's *Digital Disability: The Social Construction of Disability in New Media*, (2003), and Kate Ellis and Mike Kent's *Disability and New Media*, (2011). In the mapping the relationship between the digital and cultural studies in relation to disability, further issues around access and "recognising disability" could be addressed as could the attendant concern around changing the discourse of disability through inclusive forms of digital education. Again, in respect to questions concerning the role of art practices in the development of collaborative partnerships for the promotion of inclusive disability-led educational programmes, we might want to consider how art as a practice encourages the development of interdisciplinary methodologies *through* digital technologies. In turn, we may want to consider how we think of disability through digital means and digital, on-line projects developed by artists and cultural institutions.

9.3 Art Activism and Disability

The move with contemporary visual culture and cultural activism towards engaging with rights-based models of political legislation could be utilised further in relation to disability. Such practice in the arts tend to focus on effecting forms of inclusivity, diversity, and productive collaboration to promote inclusive education and develop arts and humanities methodologies. This could be further capitalised upon in the context of disability and to support the co-production of collaborative systems of knowledge that question exclusionary practices and how social attitudes to persons with disabilities affect individuals, families, and communities. In focusing on art activist practices and disability, we would produce research that supports the strengthening of local network capacities and communities of practice, while also addressing the economic impact associated with the marginalization of individuals and communities.

10 Overview: Potential Cultural Outputs in Partnership with Disability Organisation

In the most basic sense, a series of collaborative artist's workshops and an exhibition-based event, to take but two examples, could act as a starting point to effect the following outcomes:

- I. Intellectual – the production of conference papers relating to the workshop and its participant's experience of it. Such papers could provide a significant contribution to regional action through the formalisation of strategic development goals within arts institutions and other knowledge platforms in respect of disability and inclusion;

2. Practical – preparation of new data sources disaggregated for knowledge production in the arts; preliminary development of national and school databases and training materials related to the arts and disability; technological innovations (specifically apps); curricular development and training; pedagogical initiatives and school knowledge exchange partnerships;
3. Cultural – planning for future artist-led workshops; collaborative and participative events; exhibitions and narrative projects; film, video and performance events;
- 4 Capacity Building – specifically for cultural partnerships in formal and informal learning contexts.

To this end, these processes can, with further context and critical support, effect forms of inclusivity, diversity, and productive collaboration to:

- promote inclusive education and develop arts and humanities methodologies in the context of disability;
- support the co-production of collaborative systems of knowledge that question exclusionary practices around disability and how it affects individuals, families, and communities;
- strengthen local network capacities and communities of practice in arts and disability organisations to address the economic impact associated with the marginalization of individuals and communities.

In effecting collaborations between cultural activities and disability organisations we can, as a result, encourage research-led practices in the arts and humanities to develop a number of interrelated outcomes in partnership with disability advocates and organisations, including:

- the improvement of public understanding of, and everyday engagement with, disability;
- the development of local, regional and international capacities to address issues of access in education for those with disabilities;
- the promotion of interdisciplinary research methods for research-informed policy and future practice;
- the development of legacy programmes through developing communities of practice within cultural and disability organisations;
- the enhancement of multidisciplinary forms of knowledge production and methodologies.

Appendices

Appendix A (In Excel Format): Art Institutions, Education Programmes, Outreach Projects And Disability Organisations In Lebanon, the OPT, and Jordan

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¹ For recent studies on this area, see Bree Hadley and Donna McDonald, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Arts, Culture, and Media* (2018); and Alice Wexler and John Derby, eds., *Contemporary Art and Disability Studies* (2019). For a discussion of how autism is viewed, see Stuart Murray *Representing Autism: Culture, Narrative, Fascination* (2008). For a study of disability in contemporary Arabic literature, see Abir Hamdar, *The Female Suffering Body: Illness and Disability in Modern Arabic Literature* (2014). This area has attracted considerable research to date in relation to how mental distress and, to a lesser extent, disability, are represented within and through cultural processes, see Simon Cross, *Mediating Madness: Mental Distress and Cultural Representation* (2010); Stephen Harper, *Madness, Power and the Media: Class, Gender and Race in Popular Representations of Mental Distress* (2009).

² For a discussion of the issue of inclusion for disabled people in the context of UK, see Mike Oliver & Colin Barnes (2010).

³ In England, the “Taking Part” survey is the source of evidence for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to gauge cultural participation and the impact of DCMS policy in this area. In 2016, using hierarchical cluster analysis and k-means cluster analysis to identify patterns of participation, it was reported that “about 8.7% of the English population is highly engaged with state-supported forms of culture, and that this fraction is particularly well-off, well-educated, and white.” See: Taylor (2016).

⁴ This issue came to the fore in the wake of Marc Quinn’s contribution to the 4th Plinth in London, where he represented Alison Lapper who, due to a congenital condition, was born with shortened legs and no arms. Titled “Alison Lapper Pregnant”, the work was installed in 2005 and it remained on display until 2007. A series of debates have since revolved around the question of agency and representation, which continue to inform debates about the arts and disability. Speaking in the lead up to the installation, Lapper noted that: “I find it very hard to deal with being described as a heroine. I consider a hero to be someone who has climbed Everest. I am just living my life. I think what Marc [Quinn] has done is fantastic but it would also have been fantastic if it was a work of me by me that was going on that plinth. If the same work had been done by me and I wasn’t disabled, might it be my sculpture that won? Despite being 11 years out of art school, I haven’t broken into the art world. I have not yet sold one of my photographs showing me naked with my son to a private buyer.” (The woman on the plinth: the story of Alison Lapper, 2013).

⁵ Artur Żmijewski, *Singing Lesson 1*, DVD, master Betacam, 14', 2001. The partner project, *Singing Lesson 2*, was realized in St. Thomas Cathedral in Lipsk. Żmijewski asked a group of young, deaf alumni of Samuel-Heinicke-Schule für Schwerhörige to perform with the Barockensemble der Fachrichtung Alte Musik orchestra. They worked together on Johann Sebastian Bach’s music, including *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben*, where musicians were joined by a professional cantatrice.

⁶ For further details see, <http://sharjahart.org/biennial-10/events/tarek-atoui-below-160>

⁷ A number of texts in Arabic were researched, but neither related to our selected countries. These included “Blind people and the Taste of Visual Arts”, an article exploring the issue of visual arts for blind people in Egypt . See: https://mbse.journals.ekb.eg/article_135588.html. The other, focusing on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, focused on the impact of including students with hearing disabilities in artistic workshops. See: “Raising the Academic Level of Students with Hearing Disabilities from Tayif University through Involvement in Artistic Workshops” . Available here: journals.ekb.eg/article_78995_7d953861024bbdeaa4cc0322558df54d.pdf

⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/65892.pdf>

⁹ See; <http://www.solidere.com/sites/default/files/attached/planet-discovery.pdf>

¹⁰ See; <http://www.redoaklb.org/news/the-national-museum-of-beirut-opens-its-doors-to-the-blind-and-visually-impaired>

¹¹ See; <https://www.macamlebanon.org/>

¹² See; <https://zoukak.org/zoukak-theatre-company>

¹³ See; <https://ashkalalwan.org/program.php?category=4&id=309>

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- ¹⁴ See; <https://sursock.museum/content/access-program>
- ¹⁵ See; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4PiXuP8zb4>
- ¹⁶ Buchakjian, Gregory (2010). Territory, Space and Body: Historical Issues in Contemporary Lebanese Art in book: Convergence: New Art from Lebanon Publisher: APEAL Editors: Amal Traboulsi
- ¹⁷ See; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khQ0wewICXU>
- ¹⁸ See; <https://selectionarts.com/a-cabinet-of-broken-bodies-gregory-buchakjian/>
- ¹⁹ See; <https://www.barjeelartfoundation.org/collection/mohammed-said-baalbaki-one-hand-cannot-clap-alone/>
- ²⁰ See; <https://www.abudhabi2019.org/recent-news/new-permanent-public-artworks-in-abu-dhabi-to-deliver-a-lasting-legacy-of-inclusion>
- ²¹ See; <http://www.rustedradishes.com/object-of-protest/>
- ²² See; <http://www.equipeexode.com/MarieKhoury>
- ²³ See; <https://pierregagea.com/>
- ²⁴ See; <https://ritachemaly.wordpress.com/2010/03/16/wheel-on-fire-people-with-disabilities-dancing-rita-chemaly/>
- ²⁵ See; <http://www.zenaelkhalil.com/zena>
- ²⁶ The author is grateful to Mounira Al Solh for these and other details of the Al Amal Institute.
- ²⁷ There is an absence of available information on the number of artists and cultural practitioners with disabilities. Through preliminary research, however, there would appear to be a low number of artists with disabilities due to the social, educational and health difficulties they face in general, which does not provide them with the ability to pursue their artistic practice through education.
- ²⁸ See; <http://www.deafanimation.com> and <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-xIIN2KuiZNEKnLMmwKMYWGpmyjNfghR>
- ²⁹ See: <https://weareunlimited.org.uk>
- ³⁰ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfmA9s0LwHg>
- ³¹ See: <https://www.facebook.com/basta.theatre/videos/207230087851219/>
- ³² See; <https://www.diakonia.se/en/Info/News--Publications/Latest-news/dance-advocacy-palestine/>
- ³³ See: <https://palcircus.ps/en/>
- ³⁴ See: <https://www.map.org.uk/news/archive/post/1156-first-asocial-circusa-conference-in-palestine-to-promote-equal-rights-and-community-inclusion>
- ³⁵ See: <https://www.britishcouncil.ps/en/programmes/arts/disability>
<https://www.britishcouncil.ps/en/events/disability-arts-and-social-change-exhibition>
- ³⁶ See: http://alharah.org/en/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=31:making-senses&Itemid=250. And:
<https://www.ogonblicksteatern.se/arkiv/verbestammer-kjyab-mtcbw>
- ³⁷ See: <http://ghirass.org/en/?p=6329>
- ³⁸ See: https://www.facebook.com/arttoheartpalestine/?ref=page_internal
- ³⁹ See: <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/news/palestine-community-based-theatre-inspires-youth-gaza>
- ⁴⁰ See: <https://basmaorg.org/>
- ⁴¹ See; <https://daratalfunun.org/>
- ⁴² See; <https://cacaman.com/>
- ⁴³ See; <http://wildjordan.com/workshops>
- ⁴⁴ See; <http://qalamhurr.com/projects/>
- ⁴⁵ See; <http://qalamhurr.com/omarabdallat/>
- ⁴⁶ See; <http://www.cmj.jo/content/i-am-me>
- ⁴⁷ See; <https://afedj.org/institution/jofeh-community-rehabilitation-center-jordan-valley-jordan/>
- ⁴⁸ See; <https://alayounis.art/biography>
- ⁴⁹ See; <https://www.accessiblejordan.com/en/about>
- ⁵⁰ See; <http://www.seenaryo.org/>
- ⁵¹ See; <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/people-disabilities-find-haven-mode-expression-art>
- ⁵² See; <https://www.responsibletravel.com/holidays/jordan/travel-guide/jordan-culture>
- ⁵³ See; <https://www.studio8jo.com/mission>
- ⁵⁴ See; https://www.mhinnovation.net/innovations/our-step-association?qt-content_innovation=2#qt-content_innovation
- ⁵⁵ See; <https://theearabweekly.com/jordan-academy-helps-blind-would-be-painters>
- ⁵⁶ See; <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/18/world/middleeast/in-jordan-a-traveling-gallery-brings-paintings-to-children.html>
- ⁵⁷ See; <http://mmarrar.weebly.com/about.html>

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- ⁵⁸ See; <https://marfaprojects.com/artists/saba-innab/>
- ⁵⁹ See; <https://welovereading.org/>
- ⁶⁰ See; <https://welovereading.org/reading-turned-into-their-favorite-hobby/>
- ⁶¹ See; <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/let%E2%80%99s-fly-home%E2%80%99-mother-shares-story-daughter-cerebral-palsy>
- ⁶² See; <https://www.f6s.com/teamherocartoon>
- ⁶³ See; <https://en.qantara.de/content/first-arabic-website-for-parents-of-disabled-children-habaybna-%E2%80%93-for-advice-community-and?nopaging=1>
- ⁶⁴ See; <https://humanity-inclusion.org.uk/en/country/jordan>
- ⁶⁵ See; <https://humanity-inclusion.org.uk/en/news/being-a-child-with-a-disability-in-a-refugee-family>
- ⁶⁶ See; <https://www.cbm.org/in-action/community-based-inclusive-development-cbid/>
- ⁶⁷ See; <https://worldblindunion.org/>
- ⁶⁸ See; <https://inclusion-international.org/category/regions/mena/>
- ⁶⁹ See; <http://ahs.org.jo/programs/>
- ⁷⁰ See; <http://irckhf.org/en/our-projects>
- ⁷¹ See; <http://irckhf.org/en/project/national-campaign-pwd-rights-jordan%E2%80%99s-disability-law-and-crpd-concluding-observations>