

# Andy Slater Interview Transcript

**Claudia:** . [00:00:00] All right, let's do this. We're already recording, so I'm going to start us off on this awesome CripTech, CripTech incubator conversation. welcome, welcome, welcome, Andy. So good to have you here.

**Andy Slater:** Yeah.

**Claudia:** I would love to ask you to tell us about yourself and your work.

**Andy Slater:** Oh gosh. , what isn't there to say? , well, my name is Andy Slater and, , I am blind and my work generally lives in the realm of, , either being a teaching artist, performer, composer, writer, media artists doing a bunch of stuff recently with extended reality and mixed reality and, , virtual worlds.

, and, , I don't know. There's so much to say. I don't know where to start. And so I'll just say that, , I'm 48 going on 49 and I'm married and I have a wonderful son. And, , that's, what's been on my mind lately because I've been so overworked that [00:01:00] I'm just trying to make room for family.

**Claudia:** I love hearing that.

. Tell us about your project. Like, could you describe your vision for it?

**Andy Slater:** Yes. So, , my project originally it has taken a turn, not necessarily in concept, but in, I guess, delivery or, creation. , my original idea was to create, , an accessible augmented reality, , sound installation design app, right?

Something that blind people would be able to use to create a virtual or augmented reality, , sound installation. And, , kind of bypassing the need for any of the, game engine software, like unity or unreal and those sort of things that are not accessible for blind or non visual users because of access barriers.

And so, . Seeking out to make an iOS app with a really basic idea of, let's say, you're in a space, a physical space, and you just can walk around a room and press a button, and it'll [00:02:00] drop a little audio file in that space. And then you can go and listen to it. And it would be spatialized as if you're playing.

You know, a first person video game, right? You walk around and you hear stuff like that. And so you'd be able to occupy a physical space. , and that was the initial goal, but there was, , there's a lot to do with, , miscommunication or sort

of, , having a hard time with. Explaining access and, , I don't know, blind modalities and things like that with, , the collaborators at ThoughtWorks Arts.

And then we kind of finally got, after a year, to a point where things were really going smoothly and

They all got fired. , and the, the, the corporation that was running ThoughtWorks Arts basically just dissolved it. So I was kind of left to rethink what was going on and how to do this sort of thing. So now I am currently working with the, virtual arts [00:03:00] lab and new art city in making this sort of, , app.

Into just an experience that lives on the new art city website gallery, using their technology and their sort of like, I guess, space building engine. And so, , it will no longer be a tool, a public tool that blind people could use to get into spatial audio and mixed reality sound and stuff, but it will be, , a non visual audio experience with, with spatialized audio and, and that sort of thing.

Sort of,, an adventure, if you will, . that people will be able to use in the exhibition. Just use a joystick and wander around with no monitor, nothing to look at, just, just the headphones. And so instead of being able to build a tool like I had set out to do and, , you know, create this work in the physical space, , it's going to live online in a computer until I find a way to get back to the app and, , you know, try to start that up again.[00:04:00]

And the, , the app is... It was called Unseen Sound and that is also the title of the exhibition piece.

**Claudia:** So one of my later questions for you was going to be about audience. It feels like the audience for the first vision were creators, non visual creators, and the audience for this second experience is possibly broader.

Could you talk more about audience?

**Andy Slater:** Yes, absolutely. , yeah, originally it was, it was to make this sort of technology, , more accessible, the sort of ideas for the creator themselves being like a blind creator in the extended reality industry and that sort of thing, doing sound design for, , apps and experiences.

without having, , you know, a way to use things like unity or some of the audio middleware programs like wise or F mod because they're not accessible. , kind

of puts me in a situation where I don't get to control all of the audio and sound that I give to the [00:05:00] developers working on the project with me.

So that's kind of why I wanted to do this app because that would mean that I would have this This ability to just do all this stuff independently. , whereas a lot of these, these, , companies and these, you know, game engines. Like I said, like Unity, , they've put forth a lot to make their experiences more accessible to blind and low vision users, , but not really to the creators.

So this was going to be a tool that anybody could use. And then, , you know, when it comes to experiencing the exhibition, that as well as it would be experienced on. On an iPhone in a space that would be accessible and easy to use as well. And so now, and so the audience to that could have been anybody.

Honestly, there were cited, , sound designers and developers that I spoke to about this and they said, Hey, you know, I know that this is something that would be very helpful for you. But this doesn't exist to begin with. So it would be, I think, really great to be able to go to a space [00:06:00] and work in that space and like, that You know, manually add these sounds into particular, , parts of the environment or the room as opposed to having to do everything inside a program.

, so, you know, this, this originally was going to be for my community and trying to get more blind people involved in this sort of. Spatial audio and immersive sort of tech. , but now it's basically me creating, , one single piece that, , can't, you know, the audience would basically be, , you know, sighted or blind folks that, , you know, can, can go and navigate this.

Virtual space and sort of do the sonic drifting and listening and have this experience. , that's the main audience, , that I imagine that anybody just either getting on your computer online or in this exhibition, et cetera, but that, but because of it being an audio only experience, you know, that cuts out.

An audience of, , deaf and hard of hearing folks.[00:07:00] , and then of course, people, people that either cannot hear the sounds or choose not to hear the sounds. , since the experience is meant for headphones, you know, you give the opportunity people to adjust the volume, , and control that experience if they're using it, but even then, if it's like.

somebody, you know, like sensory accommodation or whatever concern they may have might be like, I don't want to put on these headphones and I don't want to hear these sounds because, you know, who, who knows what they're

going to be, who knows how they might affect them. So with that in mind, I'm picking up part of my practice that I've been doing for a couple years now of writing these sort of descriptions of the sound work themselves, either , sort of a poetic sort of description of, of the piece as a whole, , describing the characteristics of the sounds that are, are being heard, , were performed or whatever.

So sonic, sonic characteristics, their movement, what these actions [00:08:00] are trying to make them. Referential to other sounds or experiences and that sort of thing, not necessarily like live captioning or captions that are synced in time. , so having this sort of text piece that exists on its own as either an access point or just another way to experience it.

But it would just be through text. , that's something that I always provide for whatever my work is. And sometimes, you know, sometimes it hits, sometimes it misses. It's very experimental. Sometimes it's really goth. Sometimes it's just really objective and cut and dry and boring. It depends on what the project is.

But for this one, what I'm doing with, , virtual access lab is let's say that we have A hundred different audio files in this experience, right? And there's certain things as you walk through this virtual world that you can, you can trigger some of these sound events, or some of these things, , are just there and not affected at all [00:09:00] by, by you and your character being in the room, but if you consider, let's say, like, you're in.

I don't know, Roblox or something like that, and you have a player, and there's their avatar, and then above them is their name, like, you know, CoolGuy42069 or whatever. If you take these audio files in, in the virtual space, and you, instead of having, like, an avatar name, you give them, like, a short description of what they are.

, when the person who's playing the game, in the exhibition space, there'll be a desk where somebody will be playing the game with a joystick and headphones on. And then on an opposite wall will be a monitor that will be displaying the text, , of the, of the sound description sort of captions or whatever on that monitor.

So then, as this person moves throughout, people can watch and see these. You know, bursts, , or not even bursts, but these sort of experiences, , are these, I'm sorry, these events, these sonic events and see what the type of, of description that [00:10:00] I give them. So, if it's like, I don't know, , you know, a robot stepping on a helium balloon, whatever that may be, you know, some, some

kind of ridiculous description of a sound, because all of these sounds are a lot of them are sci fi and then a lot of them are recordings of my cane moving through different spaces and that sort of thing.

, anyway. With each sound that is experienced in the game, that text will be on screen, so somebody that's watching it that, that cannot hear it, or chooses not to hear it, , will at least get some kind of representation of what the hell is actually happening. And it might be cacophonous, it might be too noisy to look at, it might not make a whole lot of sense, and it might even be frustrating, but the audio experience itself will always have some kind of challenge.

To it, and my work is sometimes challenging so that doesn't really bother me. But so those are those are the audiences.

**Claudia:** I have myself muted, so I'm not ruining our audio recording with me being like, Oh my god, that's so cool. What. [00:11:00] Yeah, no, totally. , so just just know that I am loving everything you're saying, but I have a question.

So, when I was experiencing one of your pieces. , I recall. Feeling it in my body and it making my body want to move in different ways. And it was such a cool experience. And I realized I actually don't have the opportunity to experience non visual arts in gallery settings, in art settings. Like, I feel like maybe I listened to like a lot of music and audio books, but that doesn't feel like that's the same thing.

Could you help me to understand more about audio visual arts and, and, and where your work is situated within that?

Sure. Yeah. So

I mean, non visual art. Sorry. I

**Andy Slater:** gotcha. Yeah. So, , I've, I've been doing a bunch of sound installations. , I don't know, probably for, for a very long time, but like when usually, , if given a, a, a space.

In a gallery that is, , big enough, , I can [00:12:00] do, like, multi channel things like surround sound or a quadraphonic sort of, , situation where the audio could just play in the room and it could, you know, sometimes it's often just a piece that loops, , you can go in the room, walk around, you know, no ending, no beginning, that sort of thing, and just hear these Speakers pushing sound from all aspects of wherever I want to position them right or sometimes the sound

installation will even just be some headphones mounted on the wall so people can have their own personal experience and that also always depends on the exhibition where I don't necessarily want my sound to bleed into other people's or vice versa.

Right? , and so, yeah, I've been doing sound installation work And, , one of the, one of the things is, , you know, I was at, , Northwestern for my master's getting my master's, , in 2020. So the second half of my program went, you know, totally virtual. And, you know, that was a, [00:13:00] that was a huge. Shit storm for for everybody, but I managed to be somebody that had already had experience with zoom and learning in that situation.

So I was very comfortable. So I was able to kind of foresee what was going to happen. And when I realized that, , I wasn't going to be able to, you know, finish up some of these installations. I had shows and exhibitions lined up, , that, you know, we're going to be in public spaces. And when I realized that wasn't going to happen anytime soon, that's what kind of gave me that idea of.

, Moving sound installation into a virtual or augmented space so that, , you know, people, people can either create these things themselves or kind of have, you know, , have an opportunity to limit, , the amount of people into space and distance and that sort of thing because having my work. That I was really, really excited about just getting either postponed or canceled entirely.

I decided I needed to find some kind of, you know, way to, [00:14:00] to continue working. , and now I've been able to do more physical, , presentations and exhibitions. Since, , some of them in, , outdoor spaces, , there's the Fonoteca Nacional in Mexico City, which is essentially like the, the, , sound library or museum of all of Mexico, right?

That's, that's. Kind of what it is is this wonderful spot for listening and they have this beautiful garden. And when I was out there in March, we set up eight speakers and I played some of my work. And, , you know, it was this wonderful experience where we sat and listened together and there's nothing to look at, , you know, , multiple ways of listening, depending on where you are in the space.

, and. You know, a lot of the times I don't include any kind of visual, , representation or anything with this work, mainly because , I've been working alone for so very long on this sort of thing and that if, you [00:15:00] know, collaborations with visual artists, especially ones that are not disabled, is often

really kind of hard to communicate what I want if I have an idea or what they want from me if they have an idea and that sort of thing.

So, , yeah, generally the sound just exists wherever it may be right. And, , a lot of the times I'll have either printouts or braille of what that, the sound description is, or a QR code that can lead somebody to, you know, an online sort of thing to read that text, , either while they're listening or, or separately.

, Yeah, I mean, I've been, I've been presenting playback and listening of my work in the same spaces, spaces that I would if I were even performing. So, a lot of the times it's just some speakers up in the room and you listen and I'm not, I'm not up there banging on anything or using a laptop or we're just listening and enjoying it as if we were, I don't know, watching a video or, or in the cinema or something.

**Claudia:** I'm so moved that [00:16:00] you're Integrating now with this new piece that you're integrating across disability perspective in terms of adding text that that feels like is that is that is that is that new to the practice for you.

**Andy Slater:** no, no, it's not. It's something that I've been doing. I think since like April of 2018, it became a main part of my practice.

, as I started thinking about, you know, how, , how, how Much of an, of an activist I am, or advocate for like museum and gallery access for, , you know, access to visual content, image description, you know, descriptions for video and performance and that sort of thing for blind people that I realize, you know, and it has really, you know, shaped my own, you know, creative access practice and just enjoying art in general, , that, , I realized that, , I was leaving out You know, any kind of audience that, [00:17:00] you know, may not be able to hear it or, or, or choose not to hear it.

And so, , I kind of just came up with this, you know, this idea of like, well, I'll just, I'll just write. I'm a weird writer. Right? I don't, I don't, I don't know what the hell I'm doing, but I kind of have a way of describing sound. That's unique. , that has everything to do with my own weird relationship with sound.

Right? You know, being, , blind and relying on my hearing for so much. And then also having ADHD where I take, you know, my, my different modes of listening and then just totally invert it and make it weirder because of how my brain processes. , and so, yeah, in 2018 I did, , I gave this lecture at the Chicago land disability culture conference or, or whatever that was called at UIC.

And I just kind of discussed, , you know, I, I discussed ways of, you know, describing sound art and in that room, , you know, there, we had live cart, we had, , ASL and, , [00:18:00] and we had like, , I guess my, my voice, you know, describing this and then playing the art. And so being able to say. , this is a recording of an old man and a cricket fighting over a gravity bong and then playing this weird sci fi sound.

, this little snippet of a sound piece that I did. , I convinced everybody that that's what the hell it is, right? But then people can, you know, clearly, , see it or hear it any, any way that they choose. But kind of like realizing, like, I can totally control the narrative.

Through accessibility, I can basically do some form of, controlling the narrative of what the art is, which I don't think a lot of people have that, ability or opportunity or, I don't know, are as mischievous as I am. , so real quick though, , I basic, in order to do this. So instead of just saying like, Hey, this is how, , you can describe your sound art for people.

, I created this. [00:19:00] Entirely fictional, , , backstory about a doctor, , in the late sixties, who, , was, was, was teaching at Duke and, and, and, and basically doing these studies with blind people. She came up with this theory that blind people can hear trans dimensionally. , she had some people in her study participants that were, , blind, but then we're claiming to have had these sort of oral hallucinations and hearing things that.

Apparently weren't there, at least visually, and then other people couldn't hear them. So they would say something like, I hear, , two women speaking an unknown language. They're playing their music. It sounds like an electric abacus, and it's too loud, and I don't like it. That's what one person told the doctor.

And so, , Okay. I'm making this whole thing up in order to, , figure out a way to describe the sound. And I came up with that description, then I created the sound piece based on that, or vice versa. Sometimes I just did the sound piece and [00:20:00] then described it. , and I came up with this theory, it's called crypto acoustic auditory non hallucination.

Right. And I wrote this whole back story. I did almost an hour presentation that day with a 30 minute Q and a and it goes very, it goes very, very, very deep. And there's a lot of, , you know, audio. There's, there's some, there's some images or some slides or some stuff like that. , and broke character, maybe at

the 30 minute mark, the Q and a, and then everybody realized that I was just fucking with them, but it was me kind of.

Taking this stance on, you know, blind people have this power of hearing transdimensionally and, you know, disability scholars and doctors now have to really consider that we, we are super and we have super hearing and just kind of like, you know, disrupting the whole, the whole idea of this conference and then what other people might think about blind folks.

So, yeah, I created this thing. Cripto acoustic auditory non hallucination is something that I cite [00:21:00] as an inspiration to a lot of my, my ways of, , presenting sound and describing sound. , and it's gotten to the point where, , I've been using it. You know, citing it as if I didn't create it. And I think that that often confuses people because it's, you know, it's something in my own head that has since like 2018 really inspired me to do what I do, but it's also a fallback measure of so Andy, what, what did you, why did you get to this?

It's like, oh yeah, all the Cripto acoustic auditory non hallucination stuff, man, that's really what my inspiration has been because that means that I don't have to go into super detail because a lot of the times I'm not prepared to talk about it.

Anyway, I'm a dick.

**Claudia:** It's such a good thing that I am muted because I was laughing so hard. That is absolutely brilliant. I, I'm really moved by the way you're centering creativity in the accessibility that you [00:22:00] have. So it means that as somebody is experiencing the audio description, it's. It's another piece of the art that feels like a really powerful entry point that's that's through your creative lens through your aesthetic lens.

, I also feel like there's something that's almost punking the Academy and disrupting the way we make meaning, and I'm delighted.

**Andy Slater:** Thank you. And it's, it's, and so, like, all of this work, and I'll, and I'll, I'll send it to you. It was, , published in McSweeney's Quarterly Concern in 2021. There was an audio issue where everything was audio art.

, and so, yeah, it was, it, the whole thing was published there. And even though I had the sound descriptions, You know, baked into the whole thing where it was like a, there was a dossier that came with all of this text and this, you know, this, this essay I wrote and these transcripts and ephemera and stuff like that.

, they still went and hired, , Finnegan to do sound descriptions of my work that had already been described. So there's this other [00:23:00] absurd layer of how they heard the sounds and how they described it in more of an objective but still confused sort of way that I think is even more brilliant. So it's, I love multiple voices of access and description where it's like, I'll describe it like this, but somebody else You give it a shot in your own style and whether you have this sort of, , you know, this sort of intimacy or this more like community based sort of personal, , way of describing art, or if you, you know, you want to treat it like a scientist and be totally objective, then, then go for it.

And I think that that's, I think that's important with any kind of access, you know, , I've had people, , like presenting some of this work and talking about it and even describing it, , myself on stage while or before playing it, , I've been in spaces where there's ASL interpreters that even though I have text on screen and I, you know, , describing what's going on, even movement and, and pitch changes and sonic qualities, , [00:24:00] I've found these wonderful, , Interpreters to move and sign.

I'm not sure if, if, if more of it is just kind of interpretive movement or like signing what's And so when that sort of

thing happens, it's, it's, it's just, I don't know. It's, it, it just warms me up where it's like, wow, this is become an even bigger. game of stoner access telephone than I could ever have imagined. And it's wonderful because it's, it's fun and it's performative on a bunch of different levels. And a lot of it is just disconnected from what I'm doing.

So that's just really fucking cool. And, and when, when that part of, , that part of accessibility is, , access and just, you know, community, , interaction is. Involved in work in the presentation of work in the creation of work, then I think that's really, I mean, that's just really important to me. , even if the work itself isn't interesting, the whole way of how it's presented [00:25:00] and given, , could totally overshadow that and make me love it.

**Claudia:** I love that. , I'm going to move us on to process. But it's only because I know that we can edit this and do you go back and I want to make sure we get through all the sections, but oh, I could linger I could linger in this part of the conversation for a while longer. I'm, I am so delighted by the way you describe your work.

, I'm just wondering, is there anything that you would like to reflect on in terms of your time. Collaborating with this incubator. You know, you named some

experiences you had in 2018 doing learning at a distance, you know, collaborating through zoom. That was something that deeply impacted the CripTech incubator being situated within the pandemic.

Just curious for you. , yeah, if there's anything you'd want to collaborate on in terms of your time with the incubator.

**Andy Slater:** I mean, the cohort, I've gotten to know the folks in the cohort, , and they're all really wonderful. And I, [00:26:00] you know, respect them and really look forward to, , you know, their, their work and exhibition, but then being there with them for like the past year and talking and conversing and sort of, you know, coming.

To solutions for certain things, and that sort of stuff has been wonderful and, you know, making good friends and, you know, having the opportunity even to, , sort of work alongside or or at least in conversation with Carmen Papalia. As he and I have the same eye disease, , RP, , retinitis pigmentosa, but we also kind of have a different view of what our identity is as a blind person or as, as he considers himself a non visual person.

And, you know, I've always just thought like, okay, that's cool. We're, you know, we identify as whoever we are, but then like collaborating with him and, and, and talking and stuff makes me realize how. It is, our ideas are a little bit different, , not in any kind of way where there's like, Static [00:27:00] or anything like that.

But I, you know, I'm thinking, I think that I get a better idea of where he's coming from with not using a white cane. , like I use a white cane. I'm very proud of it. , and then he chooses not to, and he has his own style of everything. , and that's really opened my eyes to a lot of ways on how to, , even communicate blindness or rethink or reconsider blindness and then how that's presented to.

You know, , to the world, you know, it's so fucking hard to explain myself or walk down the street without somebody trying to explain myself to me kind of thing. And then so, you know, having, having that shared, shared experience with Carmen, , and then, you know, getting to know, , you know, the other three, , members of the cohort and just their own.

, practice and process and just being like, wait, this is how you think of things to, , wait, what there's so often where I'm like, what the hell are you doing and talking about? This [00:28:00] is baffling to me. And then therefore I love that.

If something challenges me in a way where I'm like, I don't, I don't know what's going on.

I don't know if I'm supposed to know what's going on, but I'm, you know, when I get it intrigued by work, by being kind of, Like, shrugging being, you know, way into it, but still having no idea, like, what my reaction is, especially if it's something visual and then working with, like, Meesh and Josephine and Olivia on getting descriptions of their visual work and these ideas and seeing how You know, everybody has common ideas of describing work and communicating it with me, but then they all have their own personal sort of things.

And depending on how personal our own relationship is, , you know, you get that sort of different insight. So it's kind of having this, this. cohort of other disabled artists and talking about our own way of of adapting and, you [00:29:00] know, telling ableism to fuck off within our work, but then also, you know, trying to show up, do the best we can to show up for each other and, you know, consider disability solidarity in our work and our access and even from the creation and not necessarily after the completion.

, that that's been, I think, my favorite. That's been the highlight of this fellowship for me, because it's very Chicago to be, to get a group of, of artists together and just have these kinds of conversations in the way that we have, right? It's things that I've noticed most strongly in my own immediate local, , community of disabled artists, , and disabled folks.

And, , Yeah, I love that it's where we're all different parts of the country, countries, , and still virtually having these kind of interactions, which, yeah, I feel that. Every member of the cohort has influenced [00:30:00] a lot of my decisions and especially, , especially the ideas I've had for making it more accessible.

Right. And a lot of that too came out of, , when I went to San Francisco for the metaverse access lab, where we got to meet in person and being, you know, meeting that cohort and that group of artists, , who a few of them, I. I knew, but weren't necessarily familiar with my own work and that sort of thing.

And having those discussions with, you know, like, . A group of, you know, a, a, a fresh new friends, , was really exciting to me too. That also was a wonderful moment. And I've since then, , went on to collaborate with a couple of people I met in the cohort. , so, yeah, I mean, always having this sort of.

Exposure, introduction to other, , disabled artists, , ones that we share lived experiences with ones that we resonate with. And then once that we just, you know, become, you know, friends with and that [00:31:00] sort of thing is, , it's so very, , I think it's so very important, especially since, , you know, since it's, When it's a group of artists and people that work, , in, you know, media arts and, and, and tech and that sort of thing with an interest on the progression of technology and making sure that accessibility grows parallel to whatever is coming out of the metaverse or down the, you know, coming out of the, the drainage of whatever our, our next future may be, whether it's a blind future, deaf future, disabled, future, a Crip future or whatever.

, the fact that we were all in conversation with each other and then continue to be, , I think is very strong and it's very strong thing. And something that, you know, really kind of, encourages me to just. Keep at it at times, , knowing that there's, there's people that, , you know, are, you know, your collaborators, your [00:32:00] friends, your allies, and just like minded folks out there that are doing the same thing.

, that's very positive and I love it.

**Claudia:** I gotta say, I was, , really excited. To see people building meaning with each other, because I think there's an assumption that because you share a community, you share a vocabulary and you share experiences and your best friends already. And I know that I can't assume one person who has one specific disabled experience.

Is going to know the, we're not homogenous, we're an incredibly diverse experience of different disabilities. And there's also an assumption, sometimes, that a disabled artist will be able to create something that speaks to all disabled artists. It's, it has just been, , I feel like that's one of the outcomes that I hoped that that would come from this project, which is a greater shared vocabularies between more disabled [00:33:00] artists.

That was exciting. Yeah, sure. This exhibition is a riff on E.A.T., , Experiments in Art, Access, and Technology, from like the 1960s, and ours is E.A.A.T.. And I would love to ask you, how do you understand your project in relation to, I'm going to take this in little pieces, how do you understand your project in relation to the E, experimentation?

**Andy Slater:** Oh boy, , well... Since I kind of consider my project and my kind of goal and concept to be , I don't know, innovative in the fact that I don't really know any other work like this with this sort of like goal and concept, , knowing

that I may know as much as what I want to happen, but collaborating with engineers and people that have skills that I.

I don't, and especially, , maybe, , people whose, like, language, , is different than mine, not, not [00:34:00] like a different language, like, English speaking or, or whatever, but just the way that, you know, , developers think as opposed to the wacky, Andy, nonlinear way of thinking, , the, the communication is definitely part of the experiment, right?

And that's kind of, yeah. With the original E.A.T. Stuff, like, especially with like the nine evenings, like those first group of performances and collaborations, it was like the engineers had no idea how to accommodate what the artists were asking them because they didn't necessarily have that language to communicate.

, I think like in the end run, they were just like, here's what we like, just told the artists, like, here's what we can do instead of you asking if we can do this and this, and this, this is probably what we can do. And then they created wonderful work. Out of that, right? So that sort of like initial static or, or communication breakdown that happened then, but lended itself to some wonderful [00:35:00] work, , that's certainly the experiment part.

And that's, you know, that's something that I certainly, , you know, experienced myself.

**Claudia:** Yeah. The

first iteration of your vision was creating a tool for other artists, like a technological tool. How does technology, , relate to the project as it is now?

**Andy Slater:** , well, what we're doing now is by using the, the, the, the format and the platform and the tech that new art city has developed, which is like a web-based, , design engine.

Like I had mentioned, , unity and Unreal earlier, which are kind of like game design, , engines, right? Everything is, , it's not accessible. The blind folks using a screen reader or anything, because so much of it is like the graphic user interface, where it's click and drag, use the mouse and that sort of thing.

And what New Art City is, they developed and are still developing something that's similar, like you can, you can, you can say, oh, this is similar to Unity, [00:36:00] but there's, you know, there's a bunch of sort of nuanced and then not so nuanced ways and how it's different. , it's web based, but like through, , like

the design and the creative, , platform of doing things, there's, there's more accessible ways of, of designing, right?

And so with this tech, which is, is stand out from the other things that I think are available and that are, you know, more standard, , there's, , oh gosh, what was I going to say? , this is, this is the, the tech that. We're using and doing research with, , not only to create, create this world or the sound experience that, , you know, that I've, that I've, I've come up with for the exhibition, but we're also going to be using this time to do more, , research and development and, and experimenting with what else can we add to this?

Like doing, like I had said, like the captions and the, the sound descriptions, , and, and other things like that really kind of like [00:37:00] pushing these. , these, the functionality of what it can already do into, you know, , you know, the, the weird and wacky world of Andy type of shit, and then kind of see what comes of that, what might be the next step, , for this technology and how could we make it more accessible to, , you know, creator that would, that would need it.

And then consider how can we, how can we consider what, , What we finalize and what we, we come up with, , while in this process that can be, , I guess shared and put towards the use of other, , curators that use their virtual gallery space. Right? What can, like, what we come up with get put, put towards other, , shows and exhibitions and experiences that are housed on their site?

, so, you know, Yeah, I hope that answers because I kind of lost myself and

**Claudia:** that was awesome. You, you not only responded to art and technology you naturally slipped in the access which is the extra a that was [00:38:00] gorgeous and it makes me think about why you're such an ideal artist to collaborate with on a project such as this because we're dealing with a lot of Spaces of precarity, , to be disabled is to be in a space of precarity and crip time.

And, and, and like, who knows if the, if everyone can show up when you've scheduled the thing, , to, to be an artist is to be in a space of precarity. It's like, Oh, will our art even be funded? Will our art be seen in the world? Will it be understood? And then the tech industry will, will that, will that space even be there?

I think about the really powerful building work you did, and the place you got with the, with your first iteration, and my frustration that it was thwarted by, by,

by, by, by disappearing, but also, I just, I, I feel like it is. a really brilliant reflection on the way you work and what you manifest in the world.

Thank you. I am curious, what are [00:39:00] you most excited about in relation to this

exhibition? ,

**Andy Slater:** well, let's see. Well, I'm excited to, first off, be around. Everybody, I know that Carmen won't be there for the exhibition, but you know, being able to, , hang out with Meesh and Josephine and Olivia, and then, and then you all like given the opportunity to just be in this space together, even if we're just going to be, you know, , installing our work parallel to each other and not even engaging during that time.

It's still, I think being in these spaces together and like just throwing our energy out there. , I look forward to that. I look forward to, , having, , like the, the, the amount of time for installation of the exhibition, , is, is a lot more than I'm usually given. So, , and, and the fact that I'll be able to be a part of that is really important to me because, you know, , I can be very specific about stuff, , and, , I'm looking forward to kind of [00:40:00] having.

You know, somewhat of control over how things go. Right. , and then I got friends and family out there and that don't ever get to experience my work because I haven't really, I haven't shown in L. A. before. , so kind of, you know, I'm looking, I'm looking forward to that. And then I'm just looking forward to being able to present.

This work also, it will also exist online. And so, , you know, the exhibition will not be the only space to see it, which I think is really important as well. You know, you won't have the same, , experience as being in the room and then watching the, the screen with the captions and stuff, but you can certainly do so, , from your home or wherever your computer is.

And I'm really excited about that. And also excited the fact that it is a living space where I can add stuff to it, like over time, no matter what I added in on, you know, on my computer at home. And then it could be, [00:41:00] you know, , , you know, playable in the gallery or online and that sort of thing. And so, You know, the exhibition is going to be a nice place of celebration and fun, and then seeing people, , and then getting to know people in L.

A. and California that will be going, but, you know, at the same time, it's just, it's going to be, it's going to be a really nice. , you know, a milestone and I guess end to it all because I think that, , well, not into it all. That sounds so ominous, but, , you know, for that part, you know, getting to the point where we have this exhibition and it stays up for, for months, but then being able to just share space with everybody else's.

Ideas like some of them are wacky and fun and then some are so incredibly. , Just I don't know Inspiring which is a word that I hate to use But when I when I hear from the other artists of what it is that they've done and what they're doing You know just being like oh shit. You can [00:42:00] do that. You did that.

Let's do that together But you know, how how can I help how can we continue this sort of idea and that sort of thing? that's always the kind of I, I sort of get while being just in the spaces with folks.

**Claudia:** You know, I don't think ending is necessarily a negative thing. Birth is the end of a pregnancy, and we've been working together for months and months, building and creating, and this feels like a marvelous culmination.

**Andy Slater:** Right, right.

But saying putting an end to it all sounds kind of ominous, and that's kind of what I meant. But, you know, having this crescendo and then this finale.

**Claudia:** I'm also just really moved by the ability of a disabled cohort to take back language that means things to us. I like being able to be inspired by my colleagues. I'm annoyed that dominant culture messed that word up for me. Sometimes I want someone to be able to call me [00:43:00] articulate, but dominant culture messed that up for me.

So I love that in the context of this cross disability collaboration. We can be inspired. I'm inspired by you. I am. I am you. All right, let me do this closing speech. Okay, been a marvelous conversation with you, Andy. I am bouncing up and down in my chair. I'm just so excited about being able to experience your work in person.

To like see you in person. This collaboration has been this doing a residency that that moves throughout time and space has just been a real interesting experience. So I'm really excited that I'm not only going to get to see you in person. I'm also going to have the ability to experience your art remotely through the website.

That's so powerful. Yeah. The CripTech incubator exhibition EAAT experiments in art access and technology will be held from September 30th, 2023 [00:44:00] through January 13th, 2024 at the Beall Center for Art and Technology, UC Irvine. If you can't make it to the physical exhibition, please check out the virtual exhibition with more details to follow.

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