P.A.I.R. · A ZINE · 2026

ACCESSIBILITY IS THE *AESTHETIC.*

A **zine** *for creative accessibility.*
Field notes from the **P.A.I.R.** *residencies*
in **Tallinn, Nicosia** *&* **Athens***.*

MAKE ROOM. MAKE ART.

ACCESSIBILITY IS THE AESTHETIC

BELONGING, BY DESIGN

WHY THIS ZINE EXISTS

Immersive work is only immersive if people can *actually enter.*

Physically, socially, emotionally, sensorially.

Creative accessibility means embedding access
in the artwork itself.

Accessibility isn't a checkbox at the end.
It's a creative method that expands audiences,
deepens connection and makes better art.

Disabled and D/deaf artists, audiences and access professionals
aren't just recipients of access.
They hold and produce knowledge.

Design the encounter, not the obstacle.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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01 PRINCIPLE

Accessibility is the *aesthetic.*

Accessibility isn't "extra." It's part of the artwork's language.
These are the ideas the P.A.I.R. Collaborative Working Group (CWG) kept coming back to.
Now we're sharing them with you.

PRINCIPLE 01

The "average person" doesn't exist.

Most culture is quietly designed for an imaginary visitor, often a non-disabled man aged 25 to 35.
Be clear about who you are really designing for.
Then look at who you're leaving out, and bring them in.

PRINCIPLE 02

Design for a person, not a category.

Don't design "for blind people" or "for Deaf people".
Design together with specific people whose experience you want to respect.
Then build on what you learn with them.

PRINCIPLE 03

Access features help more people than you'd expect.

Captions started for D/deaf viewers. They now help anyone in a noisy bar, anyone learning the language, anyone exhausted.
When access is designed well, the work reaches more people.

PRINCIPLE 04

Access can change the art form.

Embedded sign language interpretation becomes a visual duet.
Seated choreography shifts the movement vocabulary.
Access doesn't limit the work. Often it opens up possibilities you hadn't imagined.

02 SHARED VOCABULARY

Language is the *first design decision.*

Before making anything, the P.A.I.R. team spent time agreeing on shared words.
Which model of disability are we working from?
Here are the frameworks the CWG used.

Two models of disability

P.A.I.R. works from the **social** and **affirmative** models.

★ P.A.I.R. WORKS FROM THIS

Social model

Disability is *created by barriers in the environment*: stairs, bad captions, narrow doors, noise.
Not by bodies.
When you change the environment, you change who can take part.

The ground every P.A.I.R. decision builds on.

★ P.A.I.R. WORKS FROM THIS TOO

Affirmative model

This model sees disability, Deaf culture and neurodivergence as *sources of creativity, language and knowledge*, not as problems to fix.
Lived experience changes what gets made, not just how it's presented.

That's why disabled artists lead the creative process, not just advise on it.

One more term: CWG

COLLABORATIVE WORKING GROUP

A **CWG** isn't a focus group you call in once.
It stays with the project: from the first sketch, through testing, to the review.

It builds on what the first research found:
who is around the work, what they need, and what is getting in the way.

There's no template.
Who's in it, how it meets and how it works depend on the project and where it happens.

Who might be in the room:
disabled and non-disabled artists, access professionals, community members, cultural managers, and someone who knows the tech and production side.

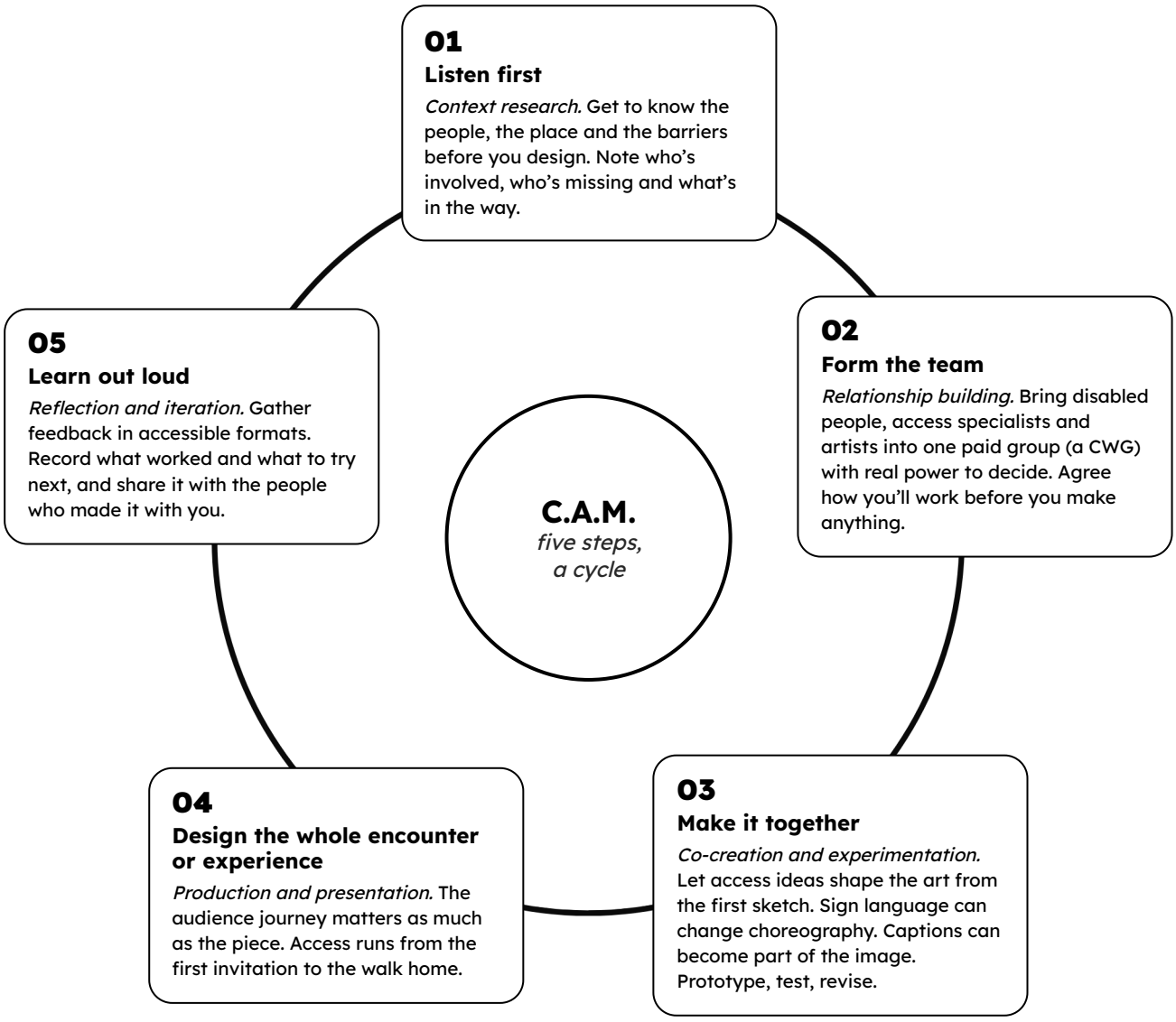
03 CREATIVE ACCESSIBILITY METHODOLOGY

Build with people, not *for* people.

Before making anything, we agreed how we would work together.
These are the practices P.A.I.R. actually used.
They changed what people saw on stage and on the walls, and what they heard from the speakers.

The method has a name: C.A.M.

The **Creative Accessibility Methodology** is the backbone of the manual. It has five steps.
Follow them in order, and go back to an earlier step whenever you need to.



Nothing about us without us.

04 PRACTICE

Multi-sensory *by default.*

Most events assume one kind of body: one that can see, stand and keep going for hours. Don't.
Build the work in layers (sight, sound, touch, space, time, choice).
Treat each layer as part of the work, not something added at the end.

SIGHT

Describe inside the work.

Build visual description into the dialogue or sound design, instead of a separate track.
Let a character say what just happened, so nobody is left waiting for an explanation.
Sign language is part of the choreography, not beside it.

SOUND

Literal captions. Felt sound.

Captions in clear, literal language. No summaries, no metaphor.
Turn rhythm into something people can feel (vibrating wearables) and see (waveforms that move with the music).

TOUCH

Give the body landmarks.

Use textures underfoot, handrails that are part of the design, and fabric and materials people can hold.
Offer sensory kits (ear defenders, fidget tools) so visitors can look after themselves without having to ask.
Make touch safe and optional.

SPACE

Put access where the eye already goes.

Place interpreters and supertitles where people are already looking, not in a corner.
Keep the lighting stable. Make sure every seat has a clear view, not just the best ones.

TIME

Build in room to breathe.

Plan around what disabled collaborators can manage,
not a standard twelve-hour working day.

Pace the work so people can take in captions, description
and interpretation together.

Add pauses, breaks and a clear running order.
Let people arrive late, leave and return without missing the point.

CRIP TIME

Crip time is real time.

A flexible approach to time that bends to bodies and minds,
rather than asking them to bend to the clock.

CHOICE

Let people shape their own way in.

Offer more than one way to take part:
seats or floor, close or far, quiet or loud, watching or joining.

Share what to expect before people arrive,
and let them change their minds mid-event.

Invite the whole body.

05 CHECKLIST

The creative accessibility checklist.

a "we actually mean it" checklist

Before you call a work creatively accessible, check:

WHILE YOU MAKE IT

- [ ] Disabled and D/deaf people shaped the work. Not just reviewed it at the end.
- [ ] Everyone knows their role, what they get to decide, and where to go when they disagree.
- [ ] Lived, artistic and specialist expertise was paid, and credited by name.
- [ ] Access priorities start from the art and the audience you want. Not from a generic list.
- [ ] Every access element has a job: what it does, what it adds to the art, how good it needs to be.
- [ ] Creative never beats clear. The artistic choices haven't made anything less accurate, safe or usable.
- [ ] Prototypes tested with the people they're for, in real conditions. Not just in the studio.
- [ ] Testing actually changed something. The changes were written down and tested again.
- [ ] Captions are literal. No summaries. No metaphor dropped in. No dialogue silently cut.
- [ ] Visual description built into the work itself. Or, if separate, named honestly as an artistic re-interpretation.

BEFORE DOORS OPEN

- [ ] Wheelchair access confirmed: entrance, route, accessible toilets at correct height, lift actually working.
- [ ] The whole visit walked through, from the first invitation to the walk home.
- [ ] Interpreters booked four or more weeks ahead. Lighting and sightlines tested with them at rehearsal.
- [ ] One named access coordinator, reachable before the event and present during it. And a backup for every person, device or piece of tech the access depends on.
- [ ] Public info says what's available, how it works and where it's partial. Content notes too: strobe, loud sound, crowd density, anything sudden.
- [ ] Sensory kit available on request (ear defenders, fidget tools, grounding objects). Quiet room signed from the entrance.
- [ ] Real choice over pace, position, intensity and support. Free entry and exit. No judgement for leaving early or coming back mid-way.
- [ ] All front-of-house staff briefed on the access plan, not just told "expect some visitors with needs".

AFTER

- [ ] Feedback route open during and after, in accessible formats. Anonymous if wanted. Read. Actioned. Honest about what it can't tell you.
- [ ] Tensions and barriers you couldn't fix: written down, not quietly dropped. And named what you'll keep, change and test next time.

Not a pass-or-fail score. A prompt to keep asking, and to decide better each time.

And ask for access riders. An access rider is a short, confidential note where an artist, crew member or participant describes what they need to take part: access, communication, breaks, support. Ask for it early and budget for what it says.

Access first. Magic follows.

06 JOURNEY

How this actually *happened*, and what it left behind.

P.A.I.R. (Paving Accessible Inclusive Realities) ran across Greece, Cyprus and Estonia, co-funded by Creative Europe and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture. The methodology is shared openly so others can use it too.

Five stages, in order:

01 **Capacity building.** Online and in-person training sessions in cultural participation, accessibility, digital accessibility, digital art and Creative Accessibility.

02 **An open call.** Across all three countries, for emerging artists and collectives. Paid fees, so the labour wasn't volunteer labour. Applications accepted in text, audio or video.

03 **The CWG.** Selected artists joined a standing group with disabled collaborators, accessibility experts and cultural managers from liminal, ABR and Estonian Agrenska Foundation. Disabled people took part as co-authors and paid consultants, not just as audience.

04 **Three residencies, three national events.** Works developed in residency and shown live in Tallinn, Nicosia and Athens (summer 2026) as accessible, multisensory events.

05 **This zine · the manual · the closing event.** An accessible digital zine (what you're reading), a full *Creative Accessibility Methodology Manual*, and an accessible online closing event bringing the three works and the methodology together.

07 WORKS

The three *commissioned works.*



THE PASSAGE

OPEN P.ARTS COLLECTIVE · ESTONIA

What does it feel like to arrive?
To meet someone, face to face, for the first time?
To discover what "home" means?

Created by the Open P.Arts Collective (Sara Fontana, Marleen Kuusik and Heleri Luuga), *The Passage* (Estonian: *Kaasteelised*) is a multisensory installation that invites two people to journey together through three stages: birth, encounter and coexistence.

Built from fabric, touch, sound, moving image and storytelling, it offers no single way through. Visitors choose how they move, what they touch, how long they stay, how close they come to one another and which senses they use. At its heart is one question: how do we encounter another person, and what makes a place feel like home?







The passageway, the fabric doorway, and a tactile encounter inside the installation. Photography: Meelis Joost, Mari Tuulik.

THREE ROOMS, ONE JOURNEY

ROOM 1

The Womb

Behind red curtains: warm, dim, wrapped in soft fabrics. A low heartbeat pulses through a bass speaker. Each visitor begins alone, with themselves.

ROOM 2

The World's Intervention

A fabric partition with openings and pockets. Reach through, exchange an object, offer a hand, or stay on your own side. A gesture can be offered, accepted or declined.

ROOM 3

The Encounter

Face to face at last. A short film on names and "home", soft objects, chairs to stay as long as needed, and a canvas where visitors write who they are.

How it was made

Accessibility was in the process from day one. Feedback from the CWG changed the scale, fabrics, colour contrasts, equipment placement and visitor pathways. Even the handmade sewing, drawing and gluing became part of the experience.

WAYS IN

- Passageways adapted for wheelchairs and other mobility devices, with seating at the end
- Information in Estonian and English
- Estonian Sign Language introduction video with subtitles
- Subtitled visual material
- Audio description, and spoken guidance through the space
- A guided tour with the artists, eyes closed if wished, through spoken description, touch and physical guidance

> *"Discussing and giving advice on how to keep the installation strong and solid, while not hindering the artistic part, was great."*
>
> **Mare Kõrtsini · CWG member, Estonia**

> *"The Passage felt like entering a room that listens and enables me to enjoy art through several senses at the same time."*
>
> **Survey respondent · Estonia**

Scan to see *The Passage* on the P.A.I.R. website

`pair.liminal.eu/showcase/digital-artworks/the-passage`

Accessibility solutions: Kai Kunder, Ene Oga | Easy to Read: Janek Muru, Kerttu Rakke | CWG: Mari Tuulik, Daniel Kotsjuba, Mare Kõrtsini, Hendra Raud | Production: Estonian Agrenska Foundation, with the Estonian Chamber of People with Disabilities



MISSING FREQUENCIES

NAFSIKA HADJICHRISTOU · CYPRUS

When sound is felt, seen and imagined.

Created by artist Nafsika Hadjichristou, *Missing Frequencies* is a multisensory video installation exploring the experience of partial hearing.

Moving image, photography, animation, collage, experimental sound and haptic technology come together in an intimate experience of perception that keeps shifting. Sound moves across different forms, becoming image, text, texture and vibration. Not to explain partial hearing from the outside, but to let visitors feel their way into it.

The work is built from fragments rather than a storyline. Its meaning comes from how the pieces meet, and from the different ways each visitor chooses to explore them.



Stills from the trailer: the film, visitors with headphones and haptic cushions, and the bilingual audio description cards.

How it was made

Access was there from the earliest stages, growing alongside the work's artistic language. With the CWG, seating, labels, colour contrast, equipment placement and visitor movement were tested and adjusted in the space. Then visitors found ways nobody had planned: closing their eyes while holding the cushions, or listening to the description without looking at the screen.

WAYS IN

- Continuous audio description on headphones beside the seating
- Greek and English captions and labels in large, bold, simple lettering
- Two haptic cushions translating rhythm, bass and intensity into vibration
- Cypriot Sign Language hosts at the opening
- Seating at different distances from the screen

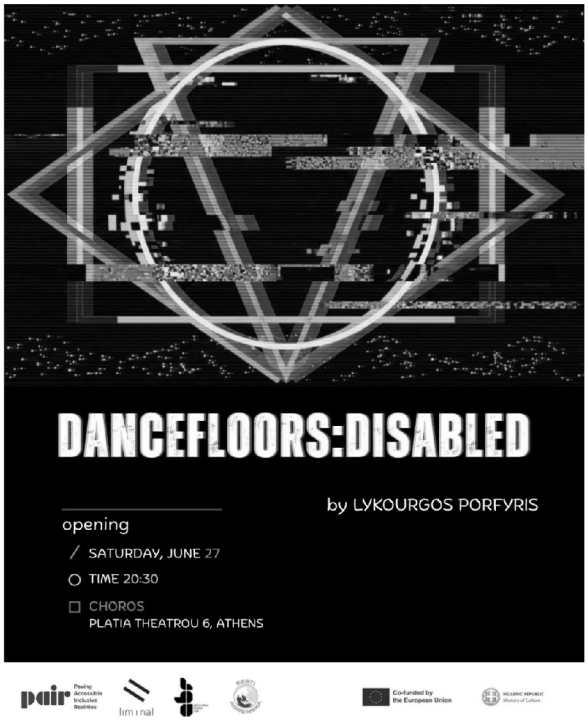
> *"Touching the cushion and feeling the intensity of the artist's experience in my chest and hands was very different. It was intense and beautiful because I felt I could step into another person's shoes and begin to understand what partial hearing might mean."*
>
> **Visitor · Nicosia**

> *"Being part of a group where we could discuss how the artwork was developing, offer feedback, and explore the artist's ideas together was very valuable. I believe art is something social."*
>
> **CWG member, Cyprus**

Scan to see *Missing Frequencies* on the P.A.I.R. website

`pair.liminal.eu/showcase/digital-artworks/missing-frequencies`

Sound design: Antonis Antoniou | Haptics: Yiannis Souhis | Production: ABR (Alternative Brains Rule)



DANCEFLOORS:DISABLED

LYKOURGOS PORFYRIS · GREECE

You are not allowed to dance. Why don't you dance?
Why do you dance? Why do you dance like that?

Created by disabled artist Lykourgos Porfyris, *Dancefloors:Disabled* is a multisensory installation that explores dance, music and club culture through sound, moving image, light and creative accessibility.

The dancefloor here is more than a place for entertainment. It is where bodies meet questions of access, belonging, freedom and participation. Who gets to dance? What happens when the sensory codes of the club are opened up, translated and transformed?



Stills from the trailer: moving subtitles, shapes that visualise sound, and sign language performance inside the work.

How it was made

Porfyris interviewed disabled people about dance: what it means to them, how they experience today's dancefloors and how they imagine their future. Their voices became three original techno and electronic compositions. Testimony became rhythm; speech became sonic texture. With the CWG, subtitles were revised, projection reconsidered, and the visual symbols for sound tested with Deaf and hard-of-hearing participants.

WAYS IN

- Large, dynamic subtitles that move with rhythm and emphasis
- Greek Sign Language and International Sign built into the moving image
- Geometric shapes that make bass, metallic and sparkling sounds visible
- A creative audio introduction blending orientation, atmosphere and sound design
- Accessible printed and audio materials

> *"We wish every club was like this."*
>
> **Visitors to the installation · Athens**

> *"I had never really considered how a disabled person experiences the dancefloor. This installation gave me the opportunity to explore that from different perspectives, and I found it both thought-provoking and genuinely enjoyable."*
>
> **Visitor · Athens**

Scan to see *Dancefloors:Disabled* on the P.A.I.R. website

`pair.liminal.eu/showcase/digital-artworks/dancefloors-disabled`

Sign language direction: Andreas Plemmenos | Performance in GSL and IS: Nafsika Koskori, Andreas Plemmenos, Chara Riga | Audio description direction: Maria Thrasyvoulidi, Eva Gkritzali | Production: liminal

08 LESSONS

What we're *taking with us.*

Eight things the three artworks taught us.

01 **Access can be an artistic language.**

Captions shape rhythm. Sign language shapes space. Description adds voice. Vibration turns sound into something you feel. But function comes first: it still has to be clear, reliable and usable.

02 **Lived experience changes the starting point.**

The best ideas came from what disabled people want and love, not from a checklist of deficits. Nightlife interviews, partial hearing and everyday barriers became the art.

03 **No influence, no collaboration.**

Bring people in early, with real power to decide. They shape the work, not just review it.

04 **There's no single disabled audience.**

Sound can give access to one person and overwhelm another. Don't promise perfection. Set priorities, offer choice, record the tensions and say what remains partial.

05 **More ways in. More control.**

Image, sound, touch, movement, guidance. Let people change position, pace, duration and intensity. Choice isn't the absence of design. It's designing several good ways in.

06 **Multisensory isn't automatically accessible.**

More layers can mean more overload. Every element needs a clear purpose, a clear audience, and testing. Aim for the most meaningful formats, not the most formats.

07 **Prototype, observe, revise.**

Make → test → listen → revise → retest. People focused on one sense at a time, combined tools in new ways, and stayed longer than we expected. No plan can predict that.

08 **Access doesn't stop at the artwork.**

Information, entry, rest, toilets, asking for help. It's one encounter, not separate parts. Ask for feedback in accessible ways, and be honest about what it can and can't tell you.

09 PLEDGE

A pledge for *immersive makers.*

We will design experiences people can sense in different ways, enter at different speeds, and stay on their own terms.

IF IT'S NOT ACCESSIBLE, IT'S NOT IMMERSIVE.

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11 KEEP GOING

Take the *full manual* with you.

The full *Creative Accessibility Methodology Manual*
by the **P.A.I.R. Consortium**.

Free to read online or download as a PDF.
The longer read behind this zine, with practical tools for your next project.

pair.liminal.eu/manual

Pass it on.

Every copy opens a door for one more maker.
Send it to one artist, one curator, one producer who needs it today.

Download, embed, translate freely.
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CREDITS & LINKS

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