

4-2018

Life History from the Vantage Point of a Cane

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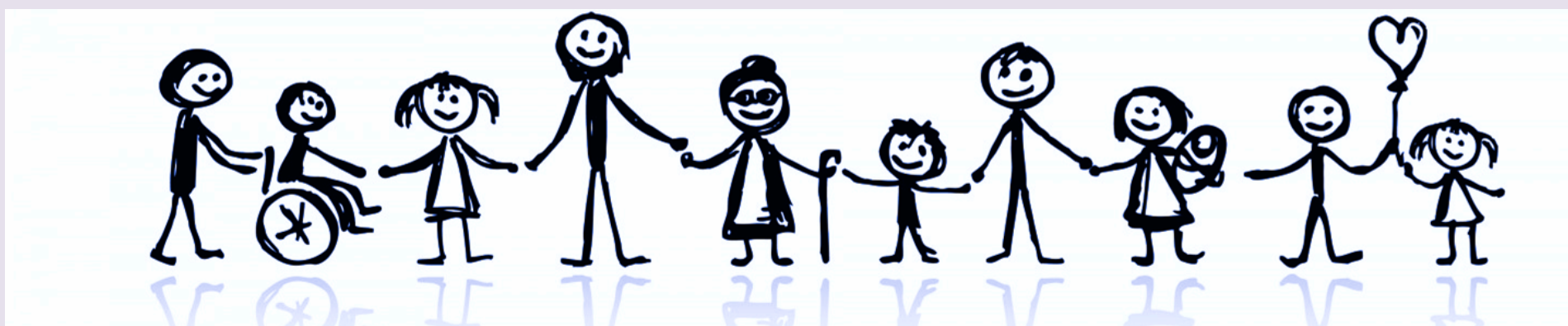
Recommended Citation

Ford, E. (2018, April). *Life history from the vantage point of a cane*. Poster presented at the 2018 University of Maine Student Symposium: Research and Creative Activity. Bangor, ME.

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Abstract

According to Kaiser (2018) “Appearance style is a metaphor for identity.” And while the typical body can project the self through selecting, donning, and displaying fashion, the disabled body has been denied that critical mode of self-expression, until recently. Lack of clothing choice has prevailed due in part to benign and even intentional neglect and omission of disability from both fashion design and display. As a result of negative attitudes towards disability, expectations are perpetuated that function should trump any concern with aesthetics, and that attention to fashion and appearance is petty and frivolous. Yet, the increasingly omnipotent visual culture positions the capacity to project identity through choosing one’s appearance as essential. Recognizing this trend, Jackson, AKA the Girl with the Purple Cane, initiated the Inclusive Fashion and Design Collective. Her goal for this advocacy organization is to grant opportunity of clothing and fashion choice to the full range of disabled bodies. Given the nascence of inclusive fashion, there is limited research on how such movements emerge and evolve. This inquiry contributes to this emerging, important body of knowledge. Through life history design, Jackson’s work, its genesis, and its progress is examined and analyzed. Using interview and observation, the study focuses on the role of object and clothing in Jackson’s life, and then turns to the creative process through which her work unfolds. The study not only unpacks individual ingenuity but provides empirical guidance to other activists in contemporary-relevant approaches to decreasing and eliminating exclusion and discrimination.



What is Disability Design?

Jackson created the Inclusive Fashion and Design Collective

- “Inclusive” fashion developed a sense of segregation

Design terms like adaptive, assistive, inclusive, human centered, etc. are terms that are being used to talk around what is actually being designed which is disability. Disability design is the correct use of language.

Designers create immersive environments to come up with creative solutions

- A collaboration between a designer who is not established as disabled and a level of ingenuity created by a disabled person will allow for creative thinking influencing the design of a project.

By using a specific experience to create a solution ingenuity will flourish

- Describe the product.
- Give credit for ingenuity without pre-determining the user of the product.
- Let design flourish.

“I used to be somebody who advocated for design. I am now somebody who is using design to advocate.”

The Girl With the Purple Cane: Liz Jackson



Meet the Multi-Passionate Creative

-Liz Jackson has cultivated an aesthetic around a cane-

- Her identity was challenged six years ago after being diagnosed with idiopathic neuropathy.
- Her opportunity of choice was limited and for the first time she viewed herself as disabled defined only by the rudimentary design of her cane.

“Why are my glasses fashionable when my cane is not?”

-The purple cane that changed her life-

- She reached a level of empowered identity.
- Someone asked her, “nice cane, where’d you get it?” and she realized someone wanted what she had.
- This question positioned her as someone who has the opportunity of choice.
- There is more to it than what meets the eye.
- The woman was really asking, “What is your identity?” since this was something she chose.

-Her identity immersed through her blog: The Girl with the Purple Cane-

- She sees her cane, designed by Norregaard, as an extension of her body.
- Changing rudimentary design of her hospital cane disarms people of their biases and negative attitudes towards her purely functional cane.

“Disability design gives choice”

Identifying an Aesthetic

Which would you choose?



Rudimentary by Design



Ingenuity by Design

Designer disability items are for functional use and brand the user of the product as disabled.

- This can cause the identity of a disabled person to be lost through the aesthetic of such rudimentary products.

The design identifies as more than just a cane.

- Having choice eliminates the bias created by the design, no longer explicitly defining her as disabled
- Rudimentary design may suggest disability causing one to lose their sense of who they really are.

Disability Ingenuity

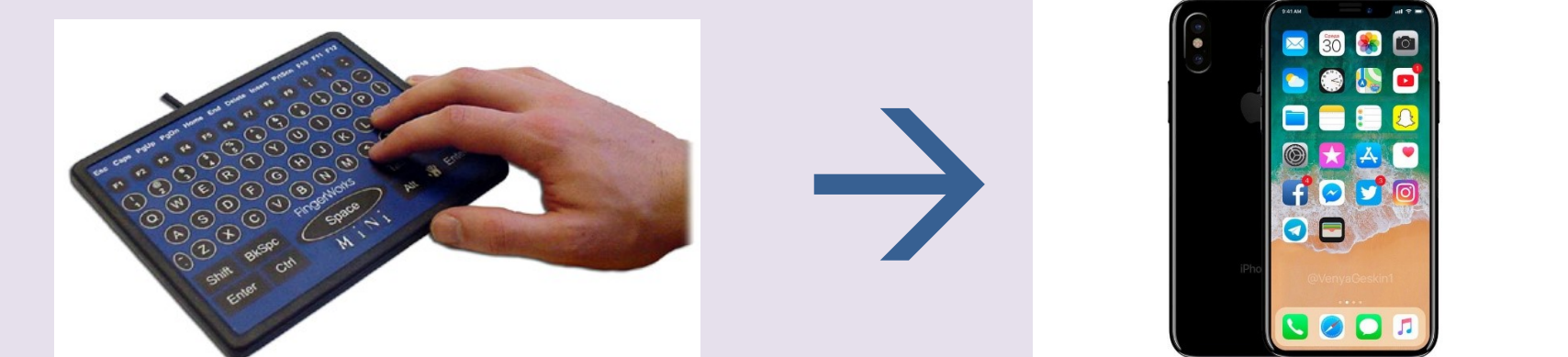
- “Play inspires play” and the cane designed for Liz got her designing too.

- Change will happen in the disability market when the purpose of the design is described and not the user.

- Creating solutions for outliers by allowing them to design for themselves.

...this is disability ingenuity

- The design created as a solution for one person may actually be the precursor to an additional modern design.



FingerWorks, known for its TouchStream multi-touch keyboard founded in 1998 by Wayne Westerman. It was used to help people with medical conditions.

In 2005, the keyboards were discontinued and the company assets were acquired by Apple Inc.

Had a medical supply company come along and labeled FingerWorks as “assistive,” Steve Jobs may not have seen the future of how people talk on the phone.

Future of Disability Fashion

- Rebranding disability culture.
- When disability ingenuity becomes part of the design process, the rebranding will be clear.
- Shift disability as the ugly brand to the ingenuity brand.
- Brilliance is instilled in disabled creatives and by sharing their experiences and creating something suggests **disability as no longer a diagnosis but instead a community that is now a culture.**

What Is Next for Liz?

The Disabled List

- List of people designers can reach out to and talk about disability and general.

Lumanistic

- Cane designed by Jackson.
- Identity over fixing and wants the cane to not only be viewed for its beauty but also as an extension of her body that represents who she is.

With Organization

- Allows people to use their level of ingenuity to create rather than only receive.



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More available upon request

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