

The Power of Visuals in the Performing Arts:
Focusing on Liz Crow's performances

Name: Rowanne Cassar

Department: Disability Studies

Faculty: Faculty for Social Wellbeing

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Introduction

“Cultural policy is inevitably shaped by dominant cultural assumptions... Disabled representations are oppressive for disabled people and continue to propagate a disabling culture. However, culture can be a source of liberation or emancipation... through the disability art movement, disabled people have sought to produce a culture aimed at exploring a positive identity of disability whilst combating the dominant disablist culture”

(Callus & Camilleri-Zahra, 2018, p.167)

Throughout history, disabled people have been perceived by individuals in different societies to be inferior (Mitchell & Synder, 2011). Culture has been dominated by various concepts and ideas that were constructed following societal norms built on medical/tragedy model of disability, this led to the development of an oppressive culture that places disabled people at the lower level of the hierarchy and pictures them as inferior subjects. Consequently, disabled people are at times portrayed as having superpowers if they manage to achieve something that others normally would (Callus & Camilleri-Zahra, 2018; Mitchell & Synder, 2011).

However, as stated in the above epigraph, oppressive views changed with the development of disability culture and disability arts movements in the late 1980s where disabled people started challenging negative perspectives such as being labelled as dependent, people who have poor quality of life, passive citizens and others (Brewer, Brueggemann, Hetrich & Yergeau, 2012). Various disabled people started making use of the arts including writing, film making, the performing arts, digital imagery and others as a cultural tool to share their personal experience. This is in line with the affirmative model of disability developed by French and Swain in 2000 (French & Swain, 2012).

The affirmative model gives an alternative definition of disability that challenges the tragedy model (Stamou, Alevriadou & Soufla, 2014; Swain & French, 2000). Whilst it agrees with the social model of disability that there are various societal barriers that needs to be acknowledged, it also emphasises the importance of the positive personal experience of disabled individuals (Beckett & Campbell, 2015; French & Swain, 2012; Levitt, 2017). Furthermore, this model celebrates the diverse experiences of disabled people and makes use of the arts to resist the aforementioned beliefs that are currently shaping society's culture.

As stated by the affirmative model of disability, various disabled people are making use of the arts including Riva Lehrer, Alison Lapper, John Callahan and many others. Among these artists there is also Liz Crow who is a disabled activist and artist. She makes use of various cultural products including short-film productions and performances, as tools to transmit her messages (Crow, 2012). This assignment will focus on Crow's work of arts, mainly on two of her most famous performances: *Resistance on the Plinth* and *Bedding Out*. Throughout her performances Crow makes use of different visuals and resources to share her lived experience as a disabled individual and to resist present austerities.

In my opinion, Crow's work stands out for its creativity and the way she transmits her messages. As a result, when I started watching and reading about her performances, I was struck with how through her professional work, she manages to create different performances that convey strong messages. Personally, I also got intrigued with her work of arts as she managed to visualise her thoughts in her performances. Therefore, in this assignment, my arguments will focus on the power of visuals used in the performing arts as a cultural tool, principally in the imagery that Crow makes use of to reach out to her spectators.

Additionally, all different types of austerities and societal challenges mentioned in this assignment, are all based on how Crow mentions, pictures and perceives them in relation to how such matters affected her personally. Although, this assignment will mainly focus on *Resistance on the Plinth* and *Bedding Out*, other works of art that Crow has worked on will also be mentioned, to reinforce the power and effects of visuality within her work.

In the next section, I will give a brief introduction of what performing arts consist of and how it is being used, this will then be followed by the different visuals that Crow used in her performances. In the following section, the impact of Crow's work within the disability community will be discussed. This will be followed by a section focusing on the impact that Crow's work had on the dominant discourse in society, together with the challenges that disabled artists face. Lastly, I will compare Crow's work with the works of art of other artists and how they make use of similar visuals in different manners. Since *Resistance on the Plinth* was created together by Crow together with a short film *Resistance: Which way to the future?*, in the comparison section, her short film will be compared with other films, since the second world war is mostly discussed in films.

The Performing Arts and Its Significance for Disabled Performers

The performing arts have often served as a medium for individuals to express their own opinions while also sharing their creations (Curtis & Mercado, 2006; Gooley & Moore, 2000; Kontogeorgakopoulos, Wechsler & Keay-Birght, 2016; Preece, 2011). Additionally, the performing arts is a powerful tool used to shape an individual's narrative (Kolpas 2004; Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli & Tuckwell, 2012). This type of arts takes various forms including theatre, comedy, musical performance, dance, singing and many others, all of which make use of a variety of visuals (Brewer, et al., 2012; Trayes, Harre & Overall, 2012).

Disabled artists started making use of the performing arts to reinforce ideas originated from the disabled culture, and to share their lives with other non-disabled peers (Preece, 2011). Cheryl Marie Wade and Carrie Shandahl, both disabled artists, claim that performing arts are being used by disabled people/artists to “say something by us about us for us” (Boatman, 2013, p.2; Shandahl, 2005, p.622). This is reinforced by Bill Shannon, a disabled performer, who argues that using arts to share his daily life experiences bring to light disabled people’s lived reality (Richardson & Richardson, 2020). Hence, it is being used by disabled people to share their disability experiences with non-disabled peers (Brewer, et al., 2012).

Additionally, through the performing arts, disabled artists give a positive definition of disability and their shared disabled identities (Band, Lindsay, Neelands & Freakley, 2011; Delgado & Humm-Delgado, 2017). Furthermore, disability artworks are often perceived as having unique qualities that makes them more realistic and humane (Sibers, 2010). Lastly, performing arts is being used to aesthetically represent the lives of disabled people through time and society’s impact on disabled people (Butt, Heathfield & Keidan, 2014; Kontogeorgakopoulos, et al., 2016).

In her performances *Resistance on the Plinth* and *Bedding Out*, Crow makes use of various visuals to transmit her message of resistance and to share her lived experiences (Raphael, 2013). In the next section, Crow’s use of visuals as cultural tools to convey her message will be discussed.

The Power of Visuals in Crow’s Performances

Liz Crow who is a British storyteller, artist, filmmaker and a disabled activist defines disability arts as “arts that may include explicitly politicalised work about disability. However, it may also include work about daily lives, which happens to engage a disability perspective

because that is part of the artist lived experiences” (Hadley, 2011, p.126). In her two performances she makes use of different visuals to achieve her aims and to transmit the message of change needed within the dominant culture (Abewunmi, 2013).

Resistance on the Plinth

“I want to create a standing point, a moment where the onlooker might think what it means for them. My job is to knock people off balance, to pull the rug from under them, enough to ask questions... this is a political work effected through performance”

(Crow, 2011, p.115)

Resistance on the Plinth is a performance that took place in the *One and Other* project in London’s Trafalgar Square in 2009 (Hadley, 2011). This is one of the four pieces that Crow has worked on to represent the millions of disabled people that were mass murder by the Nazi regime’s in the Aktion T4 program. From these 4 pieces, *Resistance on the Plinth* and the short film: *Resistance: Which way to the future?* are the two most famous pieces, this short film will be discussed later on in the assignment. This project as stated above by Crow, aims to encourage viewers to reflect about the society that we are living in. *Resistance on the Plinth* was also shared online on the *Actual Fact* website, to join both local and global communities together.

In her performance Crow decides to act as a symbol and to use the power of silence and stillness to allow viewers to reflect (Crow, 2011, 2012). Furthermore, she dresses up as a Nazi soldier who uses a wheelchair, to purposefully create two contradicting images to symbolise resistance, since the Nazi wanted ‘to wipe out’ all disabled people. Additionally, she decided that during the performance she would gaze afar and avoid eye contact, to instil the message of determination to resist these oppressing forces (Bush, 2010). Whilst she is still dressed as a Nazi soldier, Crow raises a flag with the anti-Nazi statement of Martin Niemöller

which she modifies to refer to disabled people rather than Jewish, the quote states “First they came for the sick, the so-called incurables and I did not speak out- because I was not incurable” (Crow, 2011, p.117). In her performance, Crow makes use of the flag to make her audience reflect that had everyone joined forces to resist the Nazi movement then mass murdering and discrimination of disabled people and other minority groups could have been avoided (Crow, 2011). Lastly, she finishes off her performance by throwing the Nazi uniform off the plinth, in disgust. It is important to note that during her performance, various individuals were passing on leaflets to live viewers, and Crow shared a small introduction on *Actual Fact* website, to help both live and online viewers understand the imagery used in this performance.

Through these visuals Crow aims to make the public aware of the history that disabled people have gone through (Bush, 2010; Crow, 2012). Additionally, she also aims to link past austerities, referring to the mass murdering of disabled people by the Nazi, to the present austerities within the dominant culture such as the discrimination that disabled people face and are still facing including the concept of eugenics, abortion and lack of freedom of choice (Crow, 2011; Raphael, 2013). Lastly, through the power of the uniform, the anti-Nazi quote on the flag, silence and stillness, Crow wants to push her viewers out of their comfort zone and to start questioning and discussing it’s meaning (Callus & Camilleri-Zahra, 2018; Crow, 2011; Mazer, 2014). On the other hand, in *Bedding Out*, Crow makes use of different visuals to transmit her message.

Bedding Out

“It seems it will take a brave woman to undertake public lying down, I intend to be her. I will not be disappeared”

(Crow, 2014, p.360)

In *Bedding Out* Crow shares her own private ‘fractured’ self and her lived experiences to others (Crow, 2014). The idea of this performance originated from the way that, throughout the past 30 years, Crow feels that her public life was a lie. Additionally, Crow was motivated to carry out this performance following the United Kingdom (UK) government’s decision to cut disability welfare benefits. As a result, this has driven Crow to work on *Bedding out*, to show her true ‘fractured’ body that is in constant need of rest and functions best when lying down (Boys, 2014). Additionally, to act as a representation for all ‘fractured bodies’ that function differently than the majority does. Unlike *Resistance on the Plinth*, which is a political work of arts, *Bedding Out*, is considered to be both a political work and a means to share her private self and experiences to act as a subversive narrative (Boys, 2014).

Since Crow spends most of her private time lying down, she decided to carry out this performance and to be interviewed in this position for 48 hours (Abewunmi, 2013). Additionally, *Bedding Out*, was also live streamed on *Twitter* for her to share her experience with other’s who may also be living in a similar situation. Since lying down in public has negative cultural connotations, such as being called ‘lazy’, ‘beggar’ or ‘good for nothing’, through this performance Crow aims to self-narrate her lived experience as a disabled woman and to challenge such dominant cultural norms (Crow, 2014, p.361).

Consequently, in *Bedding out*, Crow makes use of her position and the bed as the main visuals to transmit her message (Crow, 2014). While, in *Resistance on the Plinth*, Crow make use of monologic and dialogic text and dialogue (this implies minimal use of words and

movements during the performance) to give space and time for the audience to reflect on what they are viewing and to give time for viewers to ingest the message that Crow wants to convey (Raphael, 2013). On the other hand, in *Bedding Out*, she makes use of active dialogues with interviewers to narrate her life more deeply and to share her private life to act as a counter-narrative to the dominant narratives that dominant society's beliefs (Burke & Crow, 2017). Therefore, in *Bedding Out*, Crow manages to bring forward her message that she refuses to hide her true self and asks to be accepted as she is without being called a fraud (Raphael, 2013). Hence, through her narration in this performance Crow challenges the stereotypical perspectives that considers disabled people as a 'fraud' and gives a more positive perspective of disabled people as 'humans' (Burke & Crow, 2017).

As described above, the way visuals are used can have an impact on how spectators react and on society's norms and values (Verrent, 2013). The next section will focus on how the general public and the disabled community reacted to Crow's performances.

Reactions to and Impact of Crow's Performance

As stated above, Crow has made use of social media to convey her anti-austerity messages, share her own narrative and resist dominant cultural beliefs. Just as Crow used social media to project her art, other people have used online platforms such as Twitter, to share their views about her work. Both Crow's performances were described as an inspiration by other disabled activists, and disabled and non-disabled spectators alike, who followed her performances (Bricks, 2009; Verrent, 2013). Nowadays, social media such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram* and online websites (such as the *Actual Fact* website used by Crow) are used to communicate common concerns and share personal experiences (van Dijck, 2014). Therefore, Crow's use of the social media was considered to be wise, as using the media as a

tool of communication helps in forming an online global community with others. Through this global community, Crow is able to share her political stance and artworks (Crow, 2014). Additionally, any work of art shared on social media can be transformed into a formalised resource and evidence, that others can refer to and quote (Burke & Crow, 2017; van Dijck, 2014). Therefore, this has helped Crow to merge the private and the public self together, thus making her work more political.

Reaction to and Impact of Crow's Work within the Disability Community

Following, *Resistance on the Plinth*, Crow received various positive comments from disabled activist and other disabled people on *Twitter* and *Facebook* with some even describing her performance as “the most powerful image on the plinth” (Hadley, 2011, p.128). Moreover, as argued by Hodge (2016) although, present austerities have taken different forms than the austerities of the Nazi represented in *Resistance on the plinth*, her performances have empowered disabled people to speak up and challenge today's austerities. For instance, following the performance, disabled people were encouraged to challenge the idea of eugenics including genetic testing, through commenting and sharing their thoughts and forming communities on different social media platforms. Additionally, Garland-Thomson (2014), one of the leading disability studies scholar and a disabled activist, insists on the benefits of giving time and space for people to stare and to reflect on what the performer is trying to convey. Hence, *Resistance on the Plinth* was described as a piece of work that gave her audience a platform where they can reflect and discuss (Abbott, 2011).

Moreover, Lou Bricks, a disabled activist and the producer of Crow's film *Resistance: Which way to the future?*, explained *Resistance on the Plinth* as a “vital important part of our collective history and essential vocalisation of our silence as survivors” (Bricks, 2009, p.2).

Bricks (2009) goes further in explaining that this performance made her realise the importance for disabled people to voice their concerns about current discriminatory practices that have taken other forms including lack of freedom, decrease in disability social welfare benefits and institutionalisations.

Lastly, Sarah Bush (2010) and Gemma Nash (2015), another two disabled activists, claimed that this performance has encouraged them to keep on fighting for their rights. Bush argues that “if no one speaks out, then nothing changes” (Bush, 2010, p.207). Hence, she joins Crow and encourages other disabled people and their communities to unite and speak up to fight for their disabled rights. On the other hand, Nash (2015) who followed Crow’s steps in performing arts also encourages other disabled artists to make use of disability arts to transmit their message of resistance and lived experiences.

Moving on to *Bedding out*, this performance was considered by Crow’s spectators as a live counter-narrative against governmental austerity and challenges faced when living within a medicalised society, and as a piece of artwork in itself (Burke & Crow, 2017). Additionally, through this performance, *Twitter* users who share a similar life, felt empowered and joined Crow in sharing their own counter-narratives on *Twitter*. For instance, Janey Sain [@janeysian] commented, “thank you for #beddingout I have my own ‘bed life’ and feel less isolated today, knowing that you are there” (as cited by Burke & Crow, 2017, p.60) and Katy O’Leary [@KatyOLEary] claimed, “Always good to know we’re not alone #often suffering in silence” (as cited by Burke & Crow, 2017, p.60).

Apart from encouraging viewers to share their own personal experiences and building a sense of community, *Bedding Out*, also helped spectators to build up courage to mock the governmental system (Burke & Crow, 2017). This encouraged some *Twitter* users to tag

governmental entities such as the Minister of Employment and Education which at that point in time was Ms. Esther McVey, to challenge the governmental systems and to share their subversive narratives (Verrent, 2013). For instance, Ian Beckett [@ian_beckett] refers to “@RGLizCrow you speak for the many unlike Madam McVey” (Beckett [@ian_beckett], n.d). Another Twitter user, Milton Rourke [@miltonorourke], ironically questioned the authority of the Minister of Employment and Education by commenting “@EstherMcVey when ‘diagnosing’, what emphasise will be placed on ‘factual’ medical evidences as opposed to Capita?” (Milton Rourke [@miltonorourke], 2013, August 10). This might be referring to the oppressing decisions being taken by the government.

Additionally, following Crow’s performance, Raquel Meseguer (2018) who suffers from chronic pain and spends most of her time lying down, shared with BBC news that she started lying down in public places when she feels tired. Meseguer follows Crow’s lead and refuses to hide her body’s needs to abide to society’s’ norms. Through publicly lying down she explicitly resists society’s attempt to reduce her freedom of speech, independence, choice, and opportunities.

Therefore, I agree that both Crow’s performances encouraged disabled people to form a community to voice their concerns and resist such austerities (Bricks, 2009; Verrent, 2013). Her performances got highly reviewed by her disabled peers or individuals who are involved within the disability realm. Additionally, as the affirmative model states, Crow makes use of the performing arts to further affirm to her identity, to challenge the dominant society’s perspectives and to form a positive common identity with other peers (French & Swain, 2012). In the next section, I will be discussing Crow’s performance and their impact on the dominant society.

Impact of Crow's Performance on the Dominant Society

Whilst, non-disabled individuals who have followed Crow's performances are now more aware of the importance of diversity and its celebration, following thorough research, it seems that the impact of Crow's work has remained within the disability niche (Raphael, 2013). Especially, since all the research and reviews found were carried out by disabled activists and by individuals who work within the disability realm. As a result, work of arts such as Crow's performances seems to have caused very little change to the governmental system, with disabled people presently still having to fight for their rights, the right to life and the right for independent living/independence (Cobley, 2013; Ganodo, 2018; Harpur, 2012).

However, this has not stopped Crow from continuing the fight against governmental austerities. In 2015, Crow started working on another performance called *Figures* (Monaghan, 2015). This performance took place during the time when an election was going to be held in the UK. In this performance, she created 650 figures from river mud all representing UK constituencies (Fessey, 2015). Every figure has a short narrative of different people living under different austerities. These figures were presented in 5 different constituency regions that were going to vote in the upcoming election. Following this tour, they were taken back to the river and left to return to their natural elements. This performance was also presented at a Composing disability conference in 2018, where there were various audiences and speakers from different areas of studies (Forrest, 2020). The aim of this performance was to encourage individuals to reflect about the current society we are living in, prior to casting a vote (McRuer, 2015). Finally, through *Figures*, Crow wanted to make visible the impact of the austerity programme created by the government on different minority groups including disabled people, women, different ethnic groups, and others.

Following the conference that was held in 2018, *Figures* gave a fresh impetus to the academic world, as a result, various academics from different areas of studies started re-thinking on how to create a world that takes into consideration different others and accept the various ways of how people act, express themselves and move in society (Forrest, 2020). I agree with Forrest (2020) that Crow's presentation of her work to academics was beneficial, since academics are the ones who have the power to educate others about the importance of diversity and its consideration when discussing legislations. However, as discussed in this section, disabled artists face various challenges for their work of arts to have an impact on the dominant society (Ames, 2012). Thus, I felt that it is significant to also make the readers aware of the kind of challenges disabled artists/performers face, which are discussed in the next section.

Challenges Faced by Disabled Artists

Although, disability arts originated in the late 1980s, disabled artists are still finding it hard to represent their work of arts within the mainstream industry (Ames, 2012). Various societal and attitudinal barriers were identified through time (Bites, 2019).

Caird (2012) and Hadley and Goggin (2019) both claimed that many presentations of disabled people works of arts still depend on voluntary organisations grants or funds. This may indicate that society still follows a 'charity base' approach towards disabled people. Consequently, disabled artists may still be perceived as artists who offers inferior quality of works that are not supported by the dominant society. Additionally, work of disabled artists are considered to be a niche and not of interest to the general public (regardless of its quality) (Bites, 2019).

Furthermore, many societies around the globe still follow the medical model of disability, perceiving disability as an individual's problem (Abbott, 2011; Callus & Camilleri-Zahra, 2018). Therefore, various non-disabled peers seem to lack understanding of disability arts and its use by disabled artists leading to exclusion of their work.

Moreover, Williams (2017) argues that the dominant society fails to understand its own impact on the disabled community. Additionally, Siebers (2010) argues that whilst disabled artists are trying to redefine the meaning of disability using arts, the dominant society appears to be resistant to such re-definition.

Consequently, given the above-mentioned challenges, I believe that disability artworks such as Crow's have remained a niche. On the one hand, they have positively impacted disabled people, encouraging more to affirm to their disabled identities, challenge dominant norms and share their positive experiences (Morgan & McWade, 2016; Forrest, 2020). On the other hand, disabled artists' work has had very little impact on the dominant culture, with disabled people still having to fight for their rights (Foubert, Levecque & Rossem, 2017; Gando, 2018).

Although, such challenges impact disabled artists work, when one reflects one realises that both disabled and non-disabled artists makes use of the power of visuality to transmit their own messages. Whilst researching on Crow's performances and the visuals that she uses, I came across other work of arts that make use of similar imagery for different purposes. Therefore, in the next section, I will discuss how such visuals were used within different cultural products to transmit their message, while reinforcing the power of visuals.

Others' Cultural Products Using Similar Visuals to Crow's Work

In this section, the work of Tracey Emin and Tilda Swinton will be discussed in relation to *Bedding out*. On the other hand, films were the most cultural products identified to represent austerities carried out by the Nazi. Therefore, films discussing the second world war will be compared to a short film that Crow has worked on as another piece of work together with *Resistance on the Plinth*.

Tracey Emin and Tilda Swinton are performing artists who, both make use of the bed as an important image to reach out to their audience (Dizard, 2013; Smith, 2014). In her performance, Emin presents her messed-up bed with used condoms, soiled sheets, blood-stained underwear, cigarette buds, old newspapers and empty alcohol bottles on the bed (Baydar, 2012; Murray, 2012). Through this representation of her bed, Emin aims to narrate her distorted life which was filled with betrayals and abuse including sexual and verbal abuse (Fanthome, 2008; Garnett, 2012). Similarly, to Crow, Emin uses this performance to join her private self with her public self and to narrate her own life (Medina, 2014). Additionally, she aims to challenge the legislative and judicial system that tends to discriminate against abused women without considering what they have gone through (Garnett, 2012).

On the other hand, Tilda Swinton's performance, *The Maybe*, was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Arts in New York in 2013 (Dizard, 2013). In this performance, Swinton decides to spend 24 hours lying down in bed inside a glass box. Swinton explains her performance as "a kinetic experience of human beings all presents together at the same space and time" (Weil, 2014, p.124). Through, this performance, she aims to use the visuality of the bed to propel her message that to gain attention from other's in society, one either needs to be sick or lying down in bed (Aaron, Star & Ont, 2013). Therefore, Swinton uses her bed to

make a statement that she believes in (de Perthuis, 2018). It is worth noting that Swinton’s and Emin’s performances are both considered as part of the mainstream arts, whilst Crow’s work is not (Dizard, 2013; Garnett, 2012).

Moving on to Crow’s short film, *Resistance: Which way to the future?* will be compared with the following films *La Vita e Bella*, *The Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas*, *Jojo Rabbit* and *The Zookeeper’s Wife*. Although, there are many other films about the second World war, I decided to compare Crow’s film with these four films, as they were highly praised by academics. The table below gives a brief description of the representations used.

Film	Representations
<i>Resistance: Which way to the future?</i>	This film focused on representing disabled people’s life that were taken into camps by the Nazi (Bush, 2010). This film manages to depict the austerities of the Nazi towards disabled people. Whilst, the Nazi soldier celebrated the deaths of thousands of disabled people, on the other hand, disabled people are shown resisting the soldiers that were taking them to the gas chambers (Kikabhai, 2014).
<i>La Vita e Bella</i>	The story is based in Italy. This film represents the Holocaust of Jewish people through a humoristic perspective (Carlo, 2000). Although, the story does not take place in a camp, there are various reference to the horrors that happens within the concentration camps.
<i>The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas</i>	This film takes place in Berlin and it depicts war from a young German boy’s perspective (Baker, 2013). This film also focuses on the Holocaust of the Jewish, it also refers to the austerities that happens within a concentration camp in Germany (Rich & Percy, 2018).
<i>Jojo Rabbit</i>	Jojo Rabbit, has a similar plot to the Boy in the stripped pyjamas, as it too describes the second world war from a little boy’s perspective and the film takes place in Germany (Kermode, 2020). Jojo also made friends with a Jewish girl, that Jojo’s mother was helping. Unlike the Boy in the stripped pyjamas, this story makes use of a humoristic perspective, to

	explain the second world war from a child's perspective, who used to imagine Hitler to be his imaginary funny friend (Geisinger, 2020).
<i>The Zookeeper's Wife</i>	This film takes place in Poland, and the main character is Antonina who as the name of the film implies, is a Polish zookeeper's wife (Lighter, 2018). This film is written down from a female perspective. When the war started and Germans were persecuting Jewish in Poland, Antonina persuades her husband to start sheltering Jewish who were being persecuted by the Germans (Debruge, 2017).

All the films mentioned above make use of similar visuals including camps, the Swastika symbol, mass murdering of minority groups and representation of Hitler to describe the austerities that oppressed groups faced (Bush, 2010; Grierson, 2017). Whilst, Crow uses such visualities to explain the austerities that disabled people faced, all the other films used similar visuals to represent austerities faced by Jewish people (Bernard & Harris, 2011; Grierson, 2017; Kikabhai, 2014). Moreover, through her short film, Crow focuses on transmitting a message of resistance and hope to her disabled audience. Contrastingly, the other films all make use of the war to educate audience (Bush, 2010; Rich & Percy, 2018). Interestingly, although disabled people were one of the first minority group to experience mass murdering by the Nazis, they are never mentioned in the other films. This was one of the reasons that prompted Crow to focus her production and work of arts on the representation of disabled people during the second world war (Crow, 2012).

Therefore, the power of visuals and how similar visuals were used by different artists and producers in different areas was analysed in this section. Additionally, throughout this

section, one can notice how although similar visualities were used by different artists and film producers, non-disabled work had more influence and were more acknowledged, than the works created by Crow, who is a disabled artist. Therefore, this reinforces the previous arguments that disabled artists work have remained a niche, with minimal influence on society. Moreover, although similar images were used, it was noted that such visuals had more power and influence when used by non-disabled artists and producers, this may imply that the medical model of disability still dominates, reinforcing the hierarchy system that perceives disabled artists work as inferior (Williams, 2017). I believe that this is important to reinforce the power that visuals have on individuals in society.

Conclusion

Following the research that I have carried out about Liz Crow's work, I am now more aware about the importance of the performing arts as a medium of self-expression (Kontogeorgakopoulos, et al., 2016). Furthermore, as stated by the affirmative model of disability, disability arts is an important cultural tool for disabled people to celebrate diversity and to resist the dominant social norms (French & Swain, 2012).

In this assignment, a thorough analysis of how Crow manages to make use of various visuals to transmit her message was seen in her two performances *Resistance on the plinth* and *Bedding out*. Additionally, the power of visuals was further reinforced, when Crow's work was compared with other non-disabled artists who made use of similar visualities to transmit their messages. Furthermore, I agree with Raphael (2013) and Bricks (2009) who described Crow's performances as anti-austerity acts, that transmit messages of resistance and a message to unite disabled and non-disabled people together to share subversive narrative and challenge dominant suppressive norms. This is also seen clearly in her performance,

Figures, where Crow kept reinforcing and encouraging individuals within the UK to think well prior of voting (Forrest, 2020). However, the pro-austerity party was still elected and kept governing.

Consequently, as argued by Snyder, Brueggerman & Garland-Thomson (2002), various cultural products are now being used by disabled people to express their concerns and share their disabling experiences and life with others. Through her work of arts together with other disabled artists, Crow has managed to empower disabled people to speak up and challenge dominant societal norms, that tends to use disability to define what should be considered as a 'norm' (Crow, 2011, 2014). Additionally, Crow has opened an online platform giving space for open discussions amongst her viewers. This has encouraged various disabled people to make use of social media to narrate their lived experiences and to create a positive collective identity (Crow, 2012).

Unfortunately, disability art seems to still be contained within the disability niche, having very little impact on the dominant society (Brenda & Brueggeman, 2012). This can also be seen in Crow's work of arts. Her efforts to challenge the present austerities, has done very little impact on the decisions that the government takes, with disabled people still facing similar challenges including lack of welfare benefits, abortion, genetic testing and euthanasia (Gando, 2018; Verrent, 2013).

Despite the aforementioned challenges, thanks to Crow's work, I am now more aware of the role that disability arts play in representing disabled people experiences. On another note, I believe that if non-disabled artists join disabled artists in making use of arts as a cultural product to challenge societal norms, then a collective community would be formed where there is no categorisation between 'us' and 'them'.

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