

# KINETIC LIGHT

## Access Glossary | 2025

Kinetic Light offers this resource as one reference point into disability arts, not *the* reference point. Disability aesthetics, culture, and access are not static; as such, this is a living glossary that is frequently updated. This glossary was originally created to inform discussions between Kinetic Light and potential collaborators and presenters; we offer it as a window into our process and access work.

We ask that you not redistribute this document, and that you credit us if you copy these definitions. Interested parties are invited to contact us via [access@kineticlight.org](mailto:access@kineticlight.org) with questions or for the most recent version.

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|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>ACCESS CONFLICT</b>                       | <b>1</b> |
| <b>ACCESS DOULAS/USHERS</b>                  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>ACCESSIBILITY + HOSPITALITY WORKSHOPS</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>ACCESS LOOPING</b>                        | <b>2</b> |
| <b>AESTHETICALLY ACCESSIBLE</b>              | <b>2</b> |
| <b>AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE</b>                | <b>3</b> |
| <b>AUDIO DESCRIPTION</b>                     | <b>3</b> |
| <b>AUDIMANCE</b>                             | <b>3</b> |
| – SINGLE TRACK                               | 3        |
| – MULTITRACK, also called MULTIPLEX          | 4        |
| – SPATIAL ENVIRONMENT                        | 4        |
| <b>CART CAPTIONING</b>                       | <b>4</b> |
| <b>HAPTICS</b>                               | <b>4</b> |
| <b>IMAGE DESCRIPTIONS</b>                    | <b>4</b> |
| <b>INTERSECTIONAL DISABILITY AESTHETICS</b>  | <b>4</b> |
| <b>QUIET SPACE</b>                           | <b>5</b> |
| <b>SCREEN READER</b>                         | <b>5</b> |
| <b>SENSORY KITS</b>                          | <b>5</b> |
| <b>TACTILE EXHIBIT/TACTILE TABLE</b>         | <b>5</b> |
| <b>KINETIC LIGHT CONTACTS</b>                | <b>6</b> |

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### **ACCESS CONFLICT**

An access conflict may arise when two forms of access are in direct competition with each other (for example, a need for quiet versus a need for all information to be audible). Most access conflicts can be

negotiated or resolved through intentional use of space and thoughtful communication between affected parties, potentially with the facilitation of Access Doulas.

### **ACCESS DOULAS/USHERS**

The work of a doula is described as “listening to and supporting others, holding space, being kind”.<sup>1</sup> Access doulas/ushers for Kinetic Light performances embrace this kind of space holding: welcoming audiences to the venue; directing folks to ASL interpreters, Quiet Spaces, restrooms, elevators; helping people to understand the kinds of accesses available and to choose their preferred experience; and more. These ushers are often members of the local disability community and are well versed in disability culture.

### **ACCESSIBILITY + HOSPITALITY WORKSHOPS**

For Kinetic Light performances, the company requires that venue front of house staff and ushers will be required to attend an Accessibility and Hospitality workshop, which includes general and specific access and equity information, participatory solo and team exercises, and information specific to Kinetic Light events such as instructions for Audimance and haptics devices. This workshop includes a customized, user experience focused workshopping of the performance venue and audience pathways. Depending on capacity, venue staff & select community partners may also be optionally invited to attend this workshop.

### **ACCESS LOOPING**

Access looping is a situation that occurs when individual access layers that are usually provided to specific members of a group are then layered with different kinds of access layers that retransmit information to the entire group. This contains the risk or caution of becoming an endless loop or memory leak, and potentially creating an experience that is inaccessible if/as access layers directly conflict with each other.

- For Example: ASL is provided to translate spoken word for those fluent in ASL, and then captioning is provided to translate ASL (in addition to or instead of spoken word captioning) with those not fluent in ASL. While informative and often interesting, this can create an ever-growing number of versions to be translated and rebroadcast, eventually bringing discussion to a halt.

### **AESTHETICALLY ACCESSIBLE**

This term emerges from our desire to create work that does not replicate the experience that many disabled audiences know well: access, especially when treated as an add-on or compliance-based accommodation, often does not produce an equitably engaging, artful experience. Aesthetically accessible work roots access at the core of the creative process. It offers multiple entry points and sensory experiences – not as translations, but as artistic versions in their own right. This term also

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Mahoney & Lauren Mitchell, *The Doulas: Radical Care for Pregnant People* (The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2016), 279. Access Doula'ing is also unpacked in Kevin Gotkin's CAMPUS reflections for Kinetic Light, 2022.

reminds us that access practices, just like aesthetics, are in constant evolution: access can never be complete nor universal.

### **AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE**

American Sign Language (ASL) is a language used predominantly by d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HoH) people in the United States. It is a separate language with an independent grammar and not a gestural substitute for English. At Kinetic Light performances, ASL interpretation exists for gatherings in the lobby before/after the show + intermission, any pre-show announcements, and any post-show meet and greet. Kinetic Light additionally strives to book musical interpretation during shows, as well as prioritizing collaboration with Deaf Interpreters (DI).

### **AUDIO DESCRIPTION**

Traditionally, Audio Description (AD) renders visual information into sound; it can be done live, in-person and in real time, or synced virtually to a show/event. Kinetic Light's research and relationship with primary AD users and artists have resulted in AD that is equitably engaging and as complex as the visual work. Rather than a translation of the visual information, our AD is an experience in its own right – crafted specifically for people who use AD. AD for most Kinetic Light performances occurs via our app [Audimance](#). For recorded or animated content, you may also encounter the term Visual Description.

### **AUDIMANCE**

Audimance is a web app, designed by Laurel Lawson and grounded and tested in the practices of blind and low vision artists and community members, that provides an aesthetically rich and agentful approach to audio description. Originating in feedback from blind and low-vision audiences and colleagues, our approach invites listeners to choose their own experience of the work. Further development has also incorporated feedback from neurodivergent artists and audience members as well as other users of AD. Descriptive tracks may include content which orients the work to time, place, and embodiment, such as scene titles, sounds of dancer bodies and movement, emotional undercurrents, narrative, projection environment, and time shaping. Audience members access Audimance via their own devices (tablet or cell phone and headphones).

Operating the app requires connecting to a specific wifi network and loading a webpage on your phone's browser. Once live, listeners can select from, combine, and move within a spatial environment featuring a range of descriptive tracks with varied styles and content; OR select one or more tracks from a list for a non-spatialized experience.

#### **– SINGLE TRACK**

Single track description features one voice, from one descriptive point of view. Audience members who desire this route of listening, including many sighter users of audio description, will be able to select one track at a time through a non-spatialized setup on the app.

**– MULTITRACK, also called MULTIPLEX**

Multitrack description is Kinetic Light’s signature approach to user-centered, aesthetically equitable audio description. This route of description simultaneously features multiple voices, from multiple descriptive points of view – creating a multilayered aural experience of the work. During live performance, Multitrack AD is accessed through the Audimance app.

**– SPATIAL ENVIRONMENT**

The spatial environment experience is explicitly created to center blind and low-vision audiences whose primary experience of dance is through sound; it offers an interactive approach to multitrack listening. Using Audimance, the spatial environment transforms the phone’s display into a field where the user can move their listening position as if they are moving through space.

**CART CAPTIONING**

CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) is a captioning service provided by professional, live captioners. CART captioning is much more accurate than AI captioning; it can be offered in-person or virtually. Kinetic Light requires CART at any in-person or virtual public event and when requested by the company or any participants at private events.

**HAPTICS**

Kinetic Light’s haptic offering creates a touch-based entry point to the work, and is often used to interpret sonic elements such as the soundtrack or vibrational interpretation of the movement. These frequencies then travel through a medium (such as wire, metal rods, or sculpted resin) that audience members can touch and interact with during the show. No electric current runs through the haptic medium. Haptic-enabled seats should be distributed throughout the house, including overlaps with ASL priority seating and wheelchair seating.

**IMAGE DESCRIPTIONS**

An image description (ID) offers the essence of an image in text form. Equitable IDs should capture the feel, tone, and emotion of an image. They can be added to an image’s alt text and/or caption; however, image descriptions are not the same as and do not serve the exact same purpose as alt text. Kinetic Light provides IDs for all photos which we require to be published with our images, and the company maintains a practice of rendering image descriptions visible in various types of media to create awareness and education around this practice. Descriptions of humans should be informed or created by the individuals themselves. For examples, please reference the Kinetic Light website or Instagram account. Sometimes this is considered interchangeable with Visual Description.

**INTERSECTIONAL DISABILITY AESTHETICS**

Disability aesthetics as we live them goes beyond the idea that disability is beautiful. We consider the

way disability, race, and queerness blend and rub against each other. We investigate connections between community and scholarly learning, as well as work by other disabled creators. We think of access realities across race, gender, disability and queerness as anchors for our creativity, and we then take these ideas and use them to inform the choreography, sets, production design, and experience of the work.

### **QUIET SPACE**

Quiet Spaces offer a low-sensory environment for anyone needing it. They should be inviting, softly lit, and offer choice to the visitor. During performances, we recommend that audience members be reminded and facilitated to move between the performance and quiet space as they wish.

Ideally, this space consists of a room or rooms (with and without video-only streaming where possible), sufficient for at least 4 people to maintain at least 6 feet of separation from each other, with an usher available nearby. Quiet spaces may also offer sensory tools and items, and ideally include soft furniture and blankets.

NB: we specifically use “space” and not “room” as this terminology has been punitively used, particularly in the US education system, and can be triggering or imply harmful practice.

### **SCREEN READER**

Screen readers are a type of assistive technology that renders text and image information as spoken word (or braille). They are essential elements of digital accessibility; without screen reader compatibility, any given text/email/graphic will be inaccessible. Websites can be immediately tested in part by nontechnical personnel by tabbing through on any browser or by turning on chromevox in chrome or voiceover on mac; full testing should be conducted by appropriate technical access specialists. Ticket purchase paths should in particular be checked for screen reader compatibility, as this is a place where we often find issues.

### **SENSORY KITS**

The purpose of these kits is to ensure each audience member has the best possible experience. Loosely and informally named by Kinetic Light as sensory kits, these are designed to offer multiple ways for an individual to customize their experience of an event. Some items, such as sound or light filters, can help modify the sensory environment present in the venue at large. Other items may provide helpful ways to process or interact with the environment. Kinetic Light works with our presenters and their venues to help them create and customize kits for their own use.

### **TACTILE EXHIBIT/TACTILE TABLE**

Tactile exhibits, available at a front of house table during Kinetic Light shows, offer an array of touchable elements that are a part of the show itself. Elements often include costume samples, set pieces or models, and dance flooring. Audience members are invited and encouraged to interact with

these samples. This is an alternative practice to touch tours, which is a practice where some venues allow audience members to tour the stage, set pieces, and costumes prior to a performance.

*Have a question about a term not listed here? Reach out to us at [access@kineticlight.org](mailto:access@kineticlight.org) so we can include it in a future version.*

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