

## The gaze, the other and the exhibit: curating Graphic Medicine

*Alexandra P Alberda (Bournemouth University)*

Exhibitions of Graphic Medicine must negotiate a number of issues. The medium's length and the existing structure of museum galleries limit most curators' ability to exhibit an entire graphic memoir. Fracturing these illness and dis/ability memoirs removes the context that is provided when reading the graphic memoir in its entirety. The absence of context (partial exhibition of larger comics works) and the 'ill' or other body in graphic medicine creates challenges for museum professionals attempting to avoid voyeurism.

These limits create voids that both the curator and the museum visitor have to navigate, interpret and read. My paper will examine the relationships between these unshown voids and consider their effects on the socio-politically charged space created by the intersection of various acts. These acts include the loss of narrative context; the ideology of the gaze; and the reframing of the work by the space of the museum. The prevailing limits of the museum and museum communications have a direct effect on how curators perceive visitors are looking at these bodies. If museum visitors are not engaging with these works in their entirety than how are they invited to look at these 'ill' or other bodies?

This paper will examine curatorial practices that attempt to display these non-heteronormative bodies and negotiate the act of the gaze by contextualising the voids in curating partial works. It draws on research from postmodern and queer theories and interviews with curators to analyse their intentions for visitor engagement with these bodies and explore what practices can be used to attempt to fill these empty spaces.

### Kurzbiographie

Alexandra P Alberda is a PhD researcher in the Department of Journalism, English and Communication at Bournemouth University researching public engagement with comics in medical humanities. Through BU's Civic Media Hub she works on projects concerned with graphic communication and health and creates bespoke comics from these collaborations. Her research interests are curatorial practices, Graphic Medicine and the politics and ethics of representation. She received her MA in Art History from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.