

Philip D.:

Hello inclusion believers, and welcome to The Access Champions podcast. I'm your host, Phil Dallmann, for this week's journey into the galaxies of accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. We got another great episode for you guys this week. I keep thinking it's our last interview from the LEAD Pop-Up Studio last August, but we actually have one more. This is actually our last one and it is with the Access Gallery in Denver, and the interview is done by our outgoing Associate Producer, Miss Kelsey Rose Brown. As this is her last week in that role, I couldn't think of a more appropriate episode. I think this is the last interview she did for us at that Pop-Up, and those moments, those conferences, they would not have been nearly as successful as they have been... Really, the show as a whole would not be as successful as it has been without Kelsey's hard work, her persistence, her ingenuity, and just real passion for accessibility, diversity, and inclusion in culture.

Philip D.:

It feels like just yesterday that I was only maybe a handful of episodes in, and Katie Keddell who was at Imagination Stage at the time reached out and said, "I have this apprentice that listens to the show but also is killing the game in the world of access and inclusion. I think she'd be a good fit for you." And I think Kelsey and I had one conversation before she came on board, so it really feels like I haven't done this show really ever without her support and guidance and energy moving us along and helping us grow substantially. As I think I've said before, she's not leaving us completely. I would not allow it. As she transitions over to our advisory board, no.

Philip D.:

And I think it speaks to the work that she did that I really had to go out and find two people to replace her. First in the Associate Producer role, Alie B. Gorrie, the one and only Alie B. will be joining us as our new Associate Producer. Ally is just a ball of energy and passion and empathy, I think is the best way to describe her. She is really just taking on the world as an advocate, as a performer in her own right, as a producer. You may have encountered her through a series that she produced that actually has sponsored a few episodes here, which was Able: A Series, which is on Amazon Prime. If you haven't watched it, I highly recommend it. And it feels right. I think she's going to make a wonderful addition to the team. She's already taken on a ton, and we will have her on the show very soon so you guys can get to know her as well.

Philip D.:

And then additionally, I don't know how much we disclosed this on the show, but Kelsey was responsible for those social media images every week, the line drawings that we love so much. So we have a new Champion artist. Justin Campbell is joining us, and Justin is a tremendous artist, really amazing, and he's also an incredible performer and specifically dancer. Fun fact about Justin. Not only does he dance in my wife's dance company, Alma, here in New York, but he also took my little sister to prom. Just a fun, small world. But we're so excited to have him on board as our new Champion artist, creating those weekly images for all of our episodes. Speaking of the images, make sure you are following us on social media. We're @accesschampion on Instagram and Twitter, and The Access Champion podcast on Facebook. A reminder, we are also always open for guest suggestions, topic suggestions, general feedback, and you can reach us at accesschampion@gmail.com. And now a quick word about Patreon.

Olivia Jones:

Hi! This is Olivia Jones from episode 76. Did you know that there's even more amazing Access Champion content out there? It's true. For only a dollar a month, you get access to even more exclusive interviews, games, and coming soon, a book club. We're basically Oprah. All you have to do is go to [www.patreon.com/accesschampions](http://www.patreon.com/accesschampions) to sign up, and not only will you get all of that content, you will also get all sorts of other perks like amazing swag, on-air shout outs, stickers and more. Join our team of inclusion warriors for only \$1 a month at [www.patreon.com/accesschampions](http://www.patreon.com/accesschampions). Don't miss out!

Philip D.:

Thanks Olivia, and a reminder that if you can't support us for \$1 a month on Patreon, you can also support us by rating and reviewing us wherever you listen to this podcast. Hit us with that review. Hit us with that five-star rating. If you're going to give us less than five stars, please don't. Go ahead and email us at [accesschampion@gmail.com](mailto:accesschampion@gmail.com) and let us know what we can do to get that five-star review, because that's what we're striving to do. We want to make the highest quality, most inclusive podcast possible. Again, that's [accesschampion@gmail.com](mailto:accesschampion@gmail.com), and hit us with those five-star ratings. This episode is sponsored by the Borne Dance Company. This month, Borne Dance Company presents their new work, Bound, as part of their annual Eating Disorder Awareness show. This show will take place on February 28th and 29th at 7:00 PM in Long Island City at The Secret Theater. Admission to the show is donation-based, and majority of the proceeds made will go directly to NEDA. That's the National Eating Disorders Association.

Philip D.:

To reserve tickets, please visit [bornedance.com](http://bornedance.com). That's B-O-R-N-E dance.com, and we'll have a link in the copy to get tickets. But it sounds like a great event, obviously for a tremendous cause. The more we do to combat stigma around eating disorders and provide support for those navigating it, the better. And I think that's that. So without further ado, Access Champions, the Access Gallery.

Kelsey B.:

Hello, Access believers. This is Associate Producer Kelsey Brown here in our Pop-Up Shop at the Kennedy Center LEAD Conference. Today I've got some folks from Access Gallery here in Colorado, and I'm really excited to hear from some of their artists. McKenzie, why don't you introduce yourself?

McKenzie G.:

Hello, everybody. My name is McKenzie Givens.

Joanna Wall:

Hi, I'm Joanna Wall.

Diego:

Hello. I'm Diego [inaudible 00:08:10].

Chris Siani:

And hello, I'm Chris [Siani 00:08:13].

Kelsey B.:

Chris, why don't you tell us a little bit about your program?

Chris Siani:

Yes, we're very excited to be here. We get support funds from the Kennedy Center for our summer Artworks program, which is a job training program for high school students to learn job skills through the arts. We're a nonprofit that works primarily with people with disabilities through the visual arts, and we've had some great, great interns with this summer who produced a ton of artwork, so I'm excited for them to share about what they did and what they learned.

Kelsey B.:

All right, McKenzie, can you share with our listeners, how did you get started with art? How'd you know that was something that you loved to do?

McKenzie G.:

I'm not really sure, because for a while now, I knew I loved drawing and showing them to my family and friends, and just creating in general.

Kelsey B.:

What kind of art do you like to do?

McKenzie G.:

I mostly specialize in abstract art. Right now I'm experimenting with digital.

Kelsey B.:

Very cool. How about you, Joanna?

Joanna Wall:

I've been doing art for as long as I could hold a pencil. Art has been one of my huge escapes through a lot of stuff I've gone through. It's just a really creative outlet, and I think more people should try it out.

Kelsey B.:

And what kind of art do you do?

Joanna Wall:

My art style, I'm more of a pencil paper, but I'm experimenting with paint and a few other materials. My art style, it's more of a kind of in your face talking about a social issue or a problem. More recently, I've been focusing on a lot of mental health disorders as well as kind of my overall theme that no one is ever truly alone.

Kelsey B.:

That's awesome. What kind of response have you gotten about your work?

Joanna Wall:

Most of it has been really positive. There are however going to be some people that dislike it, but I'm really willing to roll with that criticism.

Kelsey B.:

Sure. How about you, Diego? When did you get started?

Diego:

Well, I'm not really sure about this, but I think it all started with all those objects shows, and I start drawing inanimate objects for my show, which will be May release later.

Kelsey B.:

Nice. What kinds of medium do you work with?

Diego:

Mostly on sketching, especially when I'm starting to be able to start creating more characters, especially when those are not objects.

Kelsey B.:

Awesome. Chris, can you talk a little bit about how the internship works and what kinds of accommodations are involved?

Chris Siani:

Yes. We work with the Denver Public Schools and Jeffco Public Schools with their SWAP program, which is a School to Work Alliance Program, and they recruit for us students that have an interest or a strong talent in the visual arts. And I would say a lot of the artists that we work with are on the autistic spectrum. We create a space where they can work at their own pace, they can take breaks. We try to work around with each individual person. We're always thinking about ways to accommodate.

Kelsey B.:

Awesome.

Chris Siani:

There was one more thing I was going to say too.

Kelsey B.:

Yeah, sure.

Chris Siani:

And for us, we're really working to make disability cool. We're not ashamed of it. We highlight it. We focus on it because we talk about people. Everybody has challenges and everybody processes the world differently, so we just really emphasize that and work with that.

Kelsey B.:

Awesome. For our high school folks, what about being at Access Gallery? Can you share maybe a challenge that you've had with your art, something that you've had to overcome and the folks that the gallery have helped you through that?

Joanna Wall:

Well, I'm just a very high-anxiety person. I've dealt a lot with accepting criticism because I understand a lot of my work isn't going to be perfect first off, but the gallery has kind of helped me deal with my social anxiety. I'm talking to way more people now, because through art I've been able to really connect with people and start making those easier to talk to conversations. Access Gallery has really given me a positive way to learn to be less anxious.

Kelsey B.:

Yeah, for sure. And there's so much more to being an artist than just sitting down and drawing or painting. There's those other skills are so important. Diego, do you have anything to share?

Diego:

Well, it's actually still of a challenge, but mine is going to be a bit more on procrastination since I'm not very big, good, active, even in the art studio. It's just that I just like to do something else.

Kelsey B.:

Sure. McKenzie?

McKenzie G.:

I'd have to say that the Gallery, being at the Gallery helped me to socialize a bit more.

Kelsey B.:

Awesome.

McKenzie G.:

Be more open.

Kelsey B.:

Great. And I think it's really fun. It's great when you can be social with other people who have the same interests as you and other people your age. I think that always makes being in a group and being social a little easier when you have something shared to talk about. Now I want to talk about our dreams moving forward in the future. Chris, can you share with us dreams that you have, either for your organization or for access as a whole, that big hopes for the future?

Chris Siani:

Yeah. For us, space is a big issue, so we have this dream of becoming a fully accessible arts center, and expanding out of just the visual arts and doing all the arts, drama, music, dance, and just being able to have more staff. And we just have this great vision and we're working towards that.

Kelsey B.:

Awesome. Diego, what are your hopes and dreams for the future, either for your art or something else in your life?

Diego:

Well, one of my aspect points of going to the future is something about me becoming an animator, being able to animate things that what I have in my head, that most of them will be lingering around for a long time.

Kelsey B.:

Yeah.

Diego:

I'm also going to try something about helping with my parents able to do something a bit much more higher. Especially my mother, because yesterday I think I might notice something that I think will be a perfect opportunity for my mother if things actually go properly.

Kelsey B.:

Great. I love that. McKenzie, what about you? Dreams for the future?

McKenzie G.:

Right now, I'm hoping that after I graduate from high school, I can move to Chicago and work at an art gallery there.

Kelsey B.:

That's awesome. Are you interested in being an artist, or do you want to do some of the business and administration side too?

McKenzie G.:

Right now, I think I'd like to be an artist.

Kelsey B.:

Awesome. How about you, Joanna?

Joanna Wall:

Well, in all honesty, I want to take my art, because art has such a healing process, and I want to give back to the community and people who have helped me along the way. I want to do art therapy with the umbrella theme that no one is ever alone and there's always going to be someone that's there to help you. Art therapy to me is very special and I hold it near and dear, because it's helped me kind of say what I want to and without having to use words, because sometimes it's just different to tell someone. A picture truly is worth a thousand words, and sometimes you're not comfortable saying those thousand words.

Kelsey B.:

That's awesome. Thank you so much for sharing that. I really had a great time chatting with you all. Your art was amazing in the Pop-Up Studio, and I can't wait to follow your careers from here on. Thank you so much for taking time to chat with me, and thank you especially for all being access champions.

Philip D.:

Thanks to Chris and the rest of the folks from the Access Gallery for taking the time to pop on by our Pop-Up Studio and chat with Kelsey. I will say once again, thank you to Kelsey. I'm forever grateful for everything that she's done, and how much she's given to this show and to our mission of creating and facilitating conversations about accessibility, diversity, and inclusion across the world. Thank you as always to our Executive Producer, Matt Kerstetter, for making us sound great each and every single week. Thank you to our new Associate Producer, Alie B. Gorrie, for all that she's done already. Thank you to our Champion Artist, Justin Campbell, for the images this week. Thank you to Tommy Karr for his artwork. Thank you to Eric Walton and Austin Begley for all of the music on the show. We'll be back again next week, and remember, inclusion believers, never stop running through that brick wall.