

Presented by Kristina A. Boylan

Feb. 23, 2026

[pre-recorded version]

*Note: all images in this presentation have alt-text written for them – you can right-click on the images to read the descriptions I have written.*

# Alt-text for Art Tech



SUNY POLY



**GANNETT  
GALLERY**



Please note: the live workshop is not being recorded to allow for free discussion of original works.

I will make a video based on this outline to post to the submission website. Your feedback and suggestions for improvement are most appreciated!

# Tonight's agenda:

1. **Introductions**
2. **What we're asking for: you to generate descriptive visual, tactile, and other sensory language about your creative works.**
3. **Why we're asking for it: accessibility needs for visitors with blindness and low vision, and our techniques for using lower-cost technologies to provide accessibility enhancements.**
4. **Recommendations of good resources.**
5. **Discussion of technologies, intellectual property, and privacy concerns—your choices and ours.**
6. **Throughout: real-time exercises to practice generating descriptive visual, tactile, and other sensory language.**
7. **If desired: continued discussion/live review of your draft writing.**



**Introductions,  
and:**

**What is your  
experience  
with alt-text?**



How would you describe this image for a person with blindness or low vision?

[Image caption: Kristina Boylan, comic frame from *The Kitty and the Orange Toothpaste*]



# What we're asking for, for your creative work:

- **Alt-text:** “text added to images and other non-text web content so that it can be perceived and understood by people who may not be able to see or otherwise grasp the meaning of it” (WC3, 2021).
- An **artist statement with extended description** – since that first 75-150 words, +/- one minute goes fast.
  - Space to add additional sensory and contextual information.
  - Length may vary – how long would you want to be positioned in front of a creative work?
    - Typical reading pace is about 100-120 words per minute, so multiply accordingly.
    - For example, if you write 2 pages/600 words, that’s about 5-6 minutes listening).
- Both versions written out in text, so they can be sent to a braille reader and converted to a speech file.
  - If you prefer to record your alt-text and extended description in your own voice, we would love that (contact us for instructions)!



Image caption: Refreshable Braille label designed and printed by Bao Do; and Audio-Tactile Map designed and 3D printed by Bao Do, Edrick Pham, and Cong Du Phan





# Why we're asking for it

- Would this original, creative and research work be accessible for a blind or low-vision person?
- Avoiding both lack of access and/or that person having to experience the creative work through an intermediary.
- Creating Collaboratively Across Visual Abilities (DREAM-Center supported) goal to make the Gannett Gallery a more accessible space for creative and educational events for SUNY Poly;
- AND to provide inspiration and practical instructions for others to use low(er) cost mechanisms to provide accessibility enhancements.
- Visit the [Creating Collaboratively Across Visual Abilities](https://creatingcollaboratively.org/) website.
  - URL <https://creatingcollaboratively.org/>



Image caption: Chloe Raut, "Famous Works You Didn't Know Were Created by Disabled Artists" (2025) – poster, printed artist statement, and QR code leading to digitally-accessible files

# Techniques for writing alt-text and extended descriptions (not an exclusive list – your thoughts?)

- Consider: What would you tell someone about the characteristics of your creative work often experienced via sight – appearance, dimensionality, texture, and so on, as well as why it came to be that way?
  - Also: are you willing to allow people to experience your work via touch? Parameters and instructions can be shared here too.
- Brainstorm words and phrases, and remember, your flow and grammar do not have to be perfect the first time around!
- Alternatively, record yourself describing your work:
  - Free and subscription-based, online options and apps for audio transcription exist, as well as dictation/transcription features built into word-processing programs.
  - It is a good idea to check whether your inputs remain private or can become training data before using such tools.
- Then, refine your text, perhaps sharing with a willing peer – does it convey what you deem to be essential sensory and contextual information about your work?



# “Subjectivity and Audience” exercise, from Coklyat and Finnegan, pp. 22-23

Pause the video here and write your first description before you hear my context for this picture. Then, listen, and write a second description.

Alternatively, you can do the same exercise for one of your creative works, or a photo as C&F suggest):

- Describe the image as though you are a complete stranger who has stumbled across it for the first time. Pretend that you’ve never seen it before and have no context for the image.
- Describe the image again, this time from your own perspective, as though you were describing it to your best friend.

Compare: what goals do we have each time, and how does the description approach them? What helps evoke artist intent and meaning?

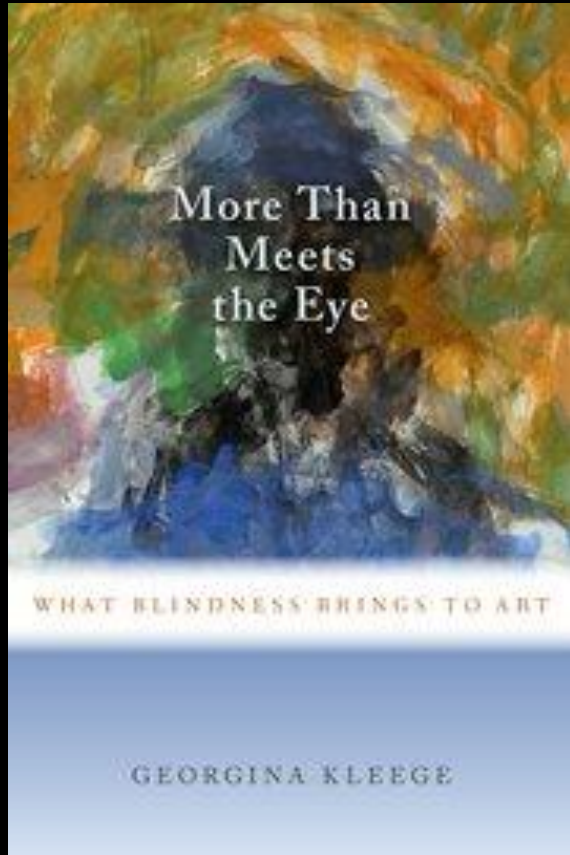


Image caption: comic panel from Kristina Boylan, *Kitties Under Construction*





# Some great resources



- Bojana Coklyat and Shannon Finnegan’s *Alt-Text as Poetry Workbook*, available on their even more comprehensive website [Alt-Text as Poetry](https://alt-text-as-poetry.net/)
  - Resource URL <https://alt-text-as-poetry.net/>.
- Georgina Kleege, [\*More than Meets the Eye: What Blindness Brings to Art\*](#) (Oxford University Press, 2018).
  - Publisher URL <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/more-than-meets-the-eye-9780190604363>
  - Deborah Kent Stein, [book review](#), National Federation for the Blind
    - Stein review URL <https://nfb.org/images/nfb/publications/fr/fr38/2/fr380215.htm>
  - Maggie Bell, “[More than Meets the Eye, a Conversation with Georgina Kleege](#),” Norton Simon Museum (2021)
    - Bell URL <https://www.nortonsimon.org/learn/watch-and-listen/videos-podcasts-and-lectures/audio-more-than-meets-the-eye-a-conversation-with-georgina-kleege>





# Technologies: serious discussions about your choices and ours

- We believe that descriptions and **alt-text is best composed by artists themselves**, as you are the people meaning-making in your creative work.
- We also share **concerns** that indiscriminate use of generative artificial intelligence to produce alt-text and additional image descriptions can facilitate **intellectual property violations** AND also **not effectively convey the content and meaning of your work**.
- For **conversion of text to speech only**, Gannett Gallery uses **Luvvoice** (terms of service regarding data ownership and end-to-end access at URL <https://luvvoice.com/terms-of-service>), though we also welcome your own recordings if you prefer.
  - Contact us for instructions on how to insert the estimate of the remaining playback time and word count between the alt-text and extended description.
- **You retain copyright of your creative works AND your descriptions.**
- For content and alt-text comparison (what makes sense, and what might you change?):
  - Tom Humberstone, "I'm A Luddite (and So Can You!)," *The Nib*, 17 Jul 2023, at URL <https://thenib.com/im-a-luddite/>
  - Alistair Shepherd, "Alternative text for "I'm a Luddite (and So Can You!)," 2 Aug. 2023, at URL <https://alstairshepherd.uk/writing/im-a-luddite-alt-text/>



Image caption: comic frame from Tom Humberstone, "I'm a Luddite (and so can you!)" (2023)

# More great resources

- Veronica Lewis, “How to Write Alt-text and Image Descriptions for the Visually Impaired,” *Veronica With Four Eyes* (2024), URL <https://veroniiiica.com/how-to-write-alt-text-image-descriptions-visually-impaired/>
  - And if you are interested in comics, “[How to Write Alt Text for Digital Comics](https://veroniiiica.com/how-to-write-alt-text-digital-comics/) “ (URL <https://veroniiiica.com/how-to-write-alt-text-digital-comics/>)
- The WC3 Web Accessibility Initiative has many resources for creating accessible content and enhancements; a good place to start is their article “[Good Alt Text, Bad Alt Text – Making Your Content Perceivable](https://www.wcag.com/blog/good-alt-text-bad-alt-text-making-your-content-perceivable/),” Dec. 23, 2021 [URL <https://www.wcag.com/blog/good-alt-text-bad-alt-text-making-your-content-perceivable/>].
  - To learn more, visit W3C’s [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines homepage](https://www.wcag.com/) [URL <https://www.wcag.com/>]



# Final thoughts and further invitations

- Do you have any additional questions about the exhibit?
- Do you have any individual questions about creative works?
- Please consider participation in our research project about alt-text writing and reception experiences (e-mail invitation will be sent to all exhibitors, but it is 100% voluntary to join in).
  - Pre- and post-exhibit surveys
  - Optional semi-structured interview
- Thank you for your time and interest – I look forward to engaging more with you and your creative works!

And please keep in touch!

E-mail [boylank@sunypoly.edu](mailto:boylank@sunypoly.edu), Phone (315) 792-7325



[Image caption: Kristina Boylan, comic frame  
from *The Kitty and the Orange Toothpaste*]

