

# De la vie au lit



UQÀM

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# De la vie au lit

Artists: Cindy Baker, Tamyka Bullen, Liz Crow,  
Octavia Rose Hingle, Salima Punjani, Rea Sweets

Curator: Sarah Heussaff

February 23 – April 6, 2024  
Exhibition produced by Galerie de l'UQAM  
Booklet No 44 written by Sarah Heussaff

# De la vie au lit

While in bed, I'm writing to us.

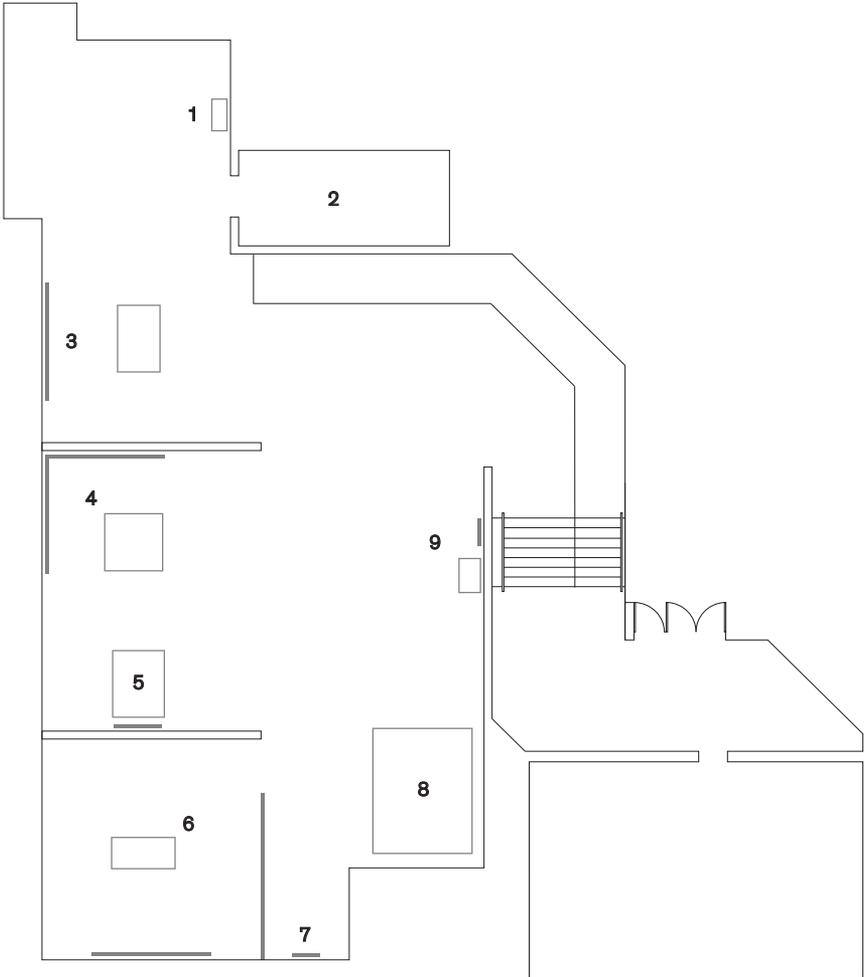
The time spent in bed, whether temporary, occasional, or permanent, offers rest and alleviates the pain or weariness caused by sickness, disability, or depression. In the collective unconscious, and due to its frequent occurrence in private or domestic space, bed rest tends to be an intimate activity. Indeed, Western philosophy, art history and terminology have long associated bed rest and the physiological act of lying down with lasciviousness, laziness, or idleness. They have also persistently relegated private spaces to the realms of apolitical individuality. Following ableist and capitalist expectations, which favour mind-body entities that are not disabled or sick, and workers, the bed should strictly —for those who are entitled to it— be a place to recover for the sake of greater productivity and reproductivity. They want our bodies and minds to be fertile, steady, on their feet, and at work.

However, considering experiences in bed solely from a performative point of view ignores the realities of disability and sickness, for which the bed is not only a tool for (re)productivity but also a place of the everyday—where one eats, sleeps, enjoys leisure time, or even works and creates. The bed is also a space for encounters, both online and offline in which we communicate outward and inside.

The artists invited to the exhibition *De la vie au lit* embody diverse and intersectional realities and identities. Their practices address, in a cross-disciplinary and creative manner, themes related to the experience of life in bed, encompassing rest and/or resistance to norms. *De la vie au lit* is simultaneously an object, a bedside, a room of one's own, a pretext or a material and symbolic space to collectively experience testimony,

contemplation, rest, and resistance. The artworks featured in the exhibition exist both physically in the gallery space and online. To tackle the issue of inaccessibility, a challenge not immune to the art world, several sensory approaches have been designed to offer one or more ways of experiencing the works in alignment with our individualities.

# Floor plan



# List of works

1. **Tactile artwork:** Félix Vallotton, *La paresse*
2. **Quiet room**
3. **Octavia Rose Hingle,** *Bodyfabric*
4. **Cindy Baker,** *CRASH PAD*
5. **Liz Crow,** *Bedding Out*
6. **Salima Punjani,** *The Cost of Entry is a Heartbeat*
7. **Salima Punjani,** *The Cost of Entry is a Heartbeat: Salima Punjani at Spatial Sound Institute*
8. **Rea Sweets,** *LOVE MY DYSFUNCTIONS*
9. **Tamyka Bullen,** *Spiral Life*

# Exhibited artists and works

## Cindy Baker

*CRASH PAD*, 2016

Wooden structure, mattress, textile, tapestry, 6 watercolours (41 x 51 cm each)

274 x 366 x 366 cm

A “crash pad” can refer to protective foam for sports, places where people squat occasionally, or safe spaces for drug use.

An 8-foot wooden platform painted in silver rests on the floor. Atop this structure lies a circular white mattress, symbolizing a pill and its aluminium packaging. A blue monochrome blanket on top mirrors the graphic codes of a Toile de Jouy. Originally depicting pastoral scenes with characters engaged in recreational activities, these cotton fabrics in Cindy Baker’s work, portray bedroom scenes featuring diverse individuals—fat, queer, friends, lovers, fivers, people with different disabilities—sharing their beds. Amidst plants and cats, the characters care for and cuddle each other, highlighting disabled and sick intimacies that reflect how we, as communities of close carers, accompany our loved ones in maintaining precarious equilibrium. An analogy is drawn here with our pills and medicines.

These same tender everyday scenes are echoed on the wall in a tapestry forming a corner and framing the sculpture, as well as in six small-format watercolours displayed on the wall, aligned and at sitting height.

## Tamyka Bullen

*Spiral Life*, 2022

Chair, table, vase, yellow synthetic flowers, newspaper, video, sound,  
19min 29s

Transcript in French

Variable dimensions

A chair, its back to the wall, with a white woollen shawl on it. Beside it, a table with synthetic yellow flowers and a newspaper. On the wall, a monitor displays a recording of Tamyka Bullen's performance at Galerie de l'UQAM on February 24, 2024.

~

### Performance

Saturday, February 24, 2024, 12:30 – 1:15 pm

Galerie de l'UQAM

ASL, translation read in French by Sindy-Loo Emmanuel

Free admission

In the performance, the bed and its bedside table symbolize a final recollection, a last testimony from a daughter to her ailing mother. Jimena, a 40-year-old Deaf woman, angrily shares her frustrations about her distant relationship with her mother. She describes the divide between two worlds: that of the hearing and that of the Deaf. Addressing themes of loneliness, rejection, and her mother's carelessness, she ponders whether it is because she is Deaf or because she loves women. Reflecting on parenthood, Jimena recounts her childhood in Guyana and the risks of navigating public spaces as a Deaf person. She unveils intergenerational taboos and family beliefs about deafness. Jimena dreams of herself as a motherland, a welcoming place for Deaf lives, stories, and knowledge. The artist draws an analogy between this distant, suffering mother and our own ailing mother earth.

## Liz Crow

*Bedding Out*, 2012

Bed, cover, pillowcases, woollen blanket, video, sound, 8min 55s

Transcript in French

Variable dimensions

On the floor is a bed with white sheets, on which is placed a red knitted woollen blanket\*. Headphones are placed on either side of the bed, above which a television screen is mounted on the wall. The edited video features a performance filmed over a decade ago, during which Liz Crow spent 48 hours in her bed in an exhibition space in the UK. By placing her private bed life in public, she set out to show the complexity of a disabled person's real life.

The work was a response to the UK government's austerity agenda, which included a massive overhaul of the benefits system and an accompanying rhetoric of cheats, scroungers and skivers. The situation was further fuelled by the Olympic and Paralympic Games taking place concurrently; the media portrayal of disabled athletes as 'superheroes' accentuated the broader denigration of disabled people.

Throughout the performance, Liz Crow engaged in bedside conversations, with members of the public gathering around the bed to talk about the work, its politics and their own lives. The bed, in this context, served as a space for rest, conviviality, sharing, and resistance.

\* The Red Blanket represents an innovative collaborative project, where four skilled Spanish weavers (Maria Platas, Maribel Manceñido, Marisa Calduch, led by Blanca Fernández Navas) combined their talents and summer time for this solidarity knitting project benefiting vulnerable individuals. Crafted with two needles using exquisite alpaca and red wool. 35 knitted squares, all of the same dimensions, created with different motifs and stitches. A collaborative effort with a very personal touch and the signature of the four knitters.

## Octavia Rose Hingle

*Bodyfabric*, 2020

Video, sound, 7min 25s

Audio described video in French, 7min 26s

Variable dimensions

The curator would like to thank MELS Studios for kindly producing the audio description in French.

On the wall, two versions of the video *Bodyfabric* are projected in a loop, alternating between a non-audio described version and a second one with audio description, deliberately reducing the volume of the soundtrack.

The video is accompanied by lively, punchy piano music. The artist performs repetitive dance movements on a bed or strolls down the street with a cane in his hand. The video editing enhances the dynamism of the imagery, presenting various perspectives through a kaleidoscope of shots: aerial, frontal, oblique, and back views alternate. The project originated from an invitation by disabled dancer Alice Sheppard to explore body movements directly inspired by experiences of disability. The bed facilitates performance by allowing bounce and a range of movement without the risk of injury or exacerbating pain. The artist invites us to understand how bed rest can spark unique choreographies through the safe use of our interactions with our beds. In doing so, they encourage us to honour the beauty, simplicity, and strength inherent in our everyday movements.

On the floor, a wooden structure and a bass amplification system help you feel the vibratory effects of the music. The audience is encouraged to climb onto the structure to directly experience the sound vibrations. Two speakers descend from the ceiling on either side of the structure, controlling and restricting the diffusion of sound.

## Salima Punjani

*The Cost of Entry is a Heartbeat*, 2020

Spatial sound, sound recordings, social sculpture, vibrotactile transducers, video, heartbeat sensors

28min (in loop)

Variable dimensions

The artist thanks the Canada Council for the Arts for its support and Pipo Pierre-Louis for his technical support

Originally conceived and exhibited in Budapest in 2020 at the Spatial Sound Institute, the multisensory work underwent further development in 2021 at the Lobe Studio in Vancouver. It is now presented as a mobile spatial sound installation for the first time. Before entering the space, the artist invites us to record our own heartbeats.

Behind the curtains, a bed is positioned in the centre of the room, surrounded by armchairs. Visitors are invited to lie down and immerse themselves in the soothing sounds of diverse water textures recorded in Budapest's thermal baths, including fountains, bubbles, trickling moisture droplets, the refreshing sounds of plunging into cold water, and those that evoking the warmth of dry saunas and steam.

A projection enhances the multisensory landscape with footage recorded in the thermal baths—steam pools, sumptuous architecture and warm, turquoise, rippling water. The images include raindrops beading on the outdoor pools, people swimming, and decadent sculptures of bathers around the pools.

Salima Punjani invites us to slow down, daydream and rest, as a collective response to the pressures of productivity. The artist believes that the first step towards understanding difference lies in our ability to be together. She offers us a moment to simply *be*.

*The Cost of Entry is a Heartbeat: Salima Punjani at Spatial Sound Institute, 2020*

15min 6s

Audio described video and subtitles in English

Transcript in French

A video documenting the original installation, created in 2020 in Budapest, Hungary, is displayed on a monitor on the wall separate from the installation. The video has been translated into French on the printed documents, and the audio is played through headphones.

The film documents the performance titled *The Cost of Entry is a Heartbeat*, held in Budapest, Hungary, in autumn 2020. Salima Punjani drew inspiration from Resmaa Menakem's and Tricia Hersey's writings on trauma, rest, and the control of the nervous system. Embracing a disability justice perspective, the authors challenge productivity as the ultimate value. The artwork invites us to participate in a ritual of collective rest and unity, using heart rate data as the central element, combined with the sounds of the Budapest thermal baths.

## Rea Sweets

*LOVE MY DYSFUNCTIONS*, 2020

Print on fabric, curtains, soundtrack (7min 41s), video, sound (6min 6s), furniture

Pillow text in Braille, French and English

Variable dimensions

Several elements coexist within an intimate tent bathed in diffused red light.

On the back wall, a long red curtain unveils a video at its centre, with sound played through headphones. The video captures the artist's computer screen, documenting the writing process while she films herself. Various shots, including the end-of-session assignment, the artist's expressions as she loses patience, and a manual of self-compassion and relaxation techniques, are repeated. The scene depicts her breathing, stretching, walking, holding her head in her hands, flinching, and frantically opening various web pages, and she dedicates the night to it with endurance.

A sleeping bag and pillow rest on the floor, inviting us to touch and flip them to explore the English and French versions of the text printed on the pillowcase. The text is Rea Sweets' testimony to several ableist situations in the academic world. Adjacent to them, on a bedside table, a computer plays a soundtrack through headphones featuring repetitive keyboard and coughing noises. A Braille version of the pillow text is also displayed on the table.

The installation evokes the intimacy of a bedroom, a space of one's own, providing a sonic, visual and tactile experience of how a person living with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) functions in a manner considered 'dysfunctional'. The artist's Mad, neurodivergent, and disabled identities converge in this space, resisting the ableist, sanist and capitalist demands of the academic world.

## Tactile artwork

Replica of the artwork *La paresse* (1896) by Félix Vallotton  
38 x 48.5 cm

The work is part of the collections of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Originally a black-and-white woodcut, it has been enlarged and reproduced on a black acrylic plate using a laser engraving technique. By touching it, you can feel the contours of a woman's body, lying naked on a bed, stroking a cat—these represent the smooth surfaces. The bed is covered with variously patterned blankets and cushions, creating the rough surfaces. In the bottom left corner, the title of the work suggests a scene that might be familiar to anyone experiencing bedlife. In capital letters, *LA PARESSE* [idleness] is personified as a female figure, bedridden and idle.

Reproducing the work in the exhibition *De la vie au lit* serves as an invitation to reflect on its representation throughout art history and its potential derogatory connotations.

A Braille text, crafted by Denise Beaudry, provides a tactile translation of the description, enabling the public to read it through touch, like the printed version.

## Quiet room

The quiet room invites you to have a rest in silence. The lights are dimmed, and the furniture is designed for your comfort, allowing you to sit or lie down as you prefer. If you are interested in reading, we have prepared several editions of zines, self-published magazines on the cross-disciplinary themes of the exhibition. Are available for on-site consultation:

Three issues of *Bed Zine*

*Bed Zine* is an exploration of the complicated feelings disabled people have about our beds.

Two issues of *PRUDEmag*

*PRUDEmag* is a Toronto-based zine for spinsters, rule-makers, asexuals, relationship anarchists, and all others refusing sex necessarism.

Two editions by Steffie Molla

*Chronic fatigue* — Volume 1

This is a collection of chronic fatigue inspired art from 2020-2022. A whimsical approach to give those suffering something to relate to, and those who don't another way to understand.

*Migraines* — Volume 1

This is a collection of Migraine inspired art from 2020-2022.

One edition by Natasha Graves

*Chronically Loved*

A children's book designed not only to provide educational content on the realities of chronic illnesses and pain, but also to contribute to their representation.

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Leduc, Véro, et collab. *Les pratiques artistiques des personnes sourdes ou handicapées au Canada. Rapport de recherche*, Montréal : Conseil des arts du Canada, 2020, 110 p.

# About the artists

**Cindy Baker** is a contemporary artist based in Western Canada whose work engages with queer, gender, race, disability, fat, and art discourses. Committed to ethical community engagement and critical social enquiry, Baker's interdisciplinary research-based practice draws upon 25 years working, volunteering, and organizing in the communities of which she is part. She moves fluidly between the arts, humanities, and social sciences, emphasizing the theoretical and conceptual over material concerns. Baker holds an MFA from the University of Lethbridge where she received a SSHRC grant for her research in performance in the absence of the artist's body; she has exhibited and performed across Canada and internationally. Helping found important community and advocacy organizations over the course of her career, Baker continues to maintain volunteer leadership roles across her communities.

[cindy-baker.ca](http://cindy-baker.ca)

**Tamyka Bullen** is a Deaf artist and performer. As a social justice advocate, she has volunteered and worked with youth, Deaf women, immigrant and LGBTQ communities. In 2015, she performed in RARE Theatre's latest production *After the Blackout* Created by Judith Thompson. Among her other achievements, Tamyka Bullen took part in the 2020 exhibition *Hidden* at Toronto's Tangled Arts + Disability Gallery. This same year, she performed *Spiral Life* as part of the Rhubarb Festival and at SOUND OFF festival, in 2022. At the end of 2023, she performed in Montreal alongside members of the black Deaf women's collective Survivance as part of the performance evenings *Dis/ability diversity sets culture in motion!* produced by the Canada Research Chair on Cultural Citizenship of Deaf People and Cultural Equity Practices.

**Liz Crow** is a disabled person and artist-activist working in performance, film, audio and text, drawn to the power of creative work as a tool for change. A former NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) fellow and founder of Roaring Girl Productions, she has completed a practice-led PhD in extending activist reach and influence. Liz's work has shown at Tate Modern, British Film Institute, Washington DC's Kennedy Center and on the Trafalgar Square Fourth Plinth. Works include the touring film installation *Resistance: which way the future?* which explored the Nazi programme of mass-murder that targeted disabled people, reflecting on what this history means for us now, and *Figures*, a mass-sculptural durational performance that made visible the human cost of the UK government's austerity programme and urged action against it. Liz is currently working on a creative response to climate and disability with the University of Exeter's *Sensing Climate* project. [roaring-girl.com](http://roaring-girl.com)

**Octavia Rose Hingle** (he/she/they) is a Bay Area born & raised choreographer and installation artist with a physical impairment. Their performance work centers access as an aesthetic portal to visions of past and future ancestors that travel through the present moment. Most recently, their project *Crip Ecstasy* brought together a disabled and non-disabled cast of performance artists, visual designers, DJs and access providers to conjure new blueprints for what a nightlife space can be. Octavia holds a BA in dance from Middlebury College, and has studied with ODC/Dance, the UCLA Dancing Disability Lab, AXIS Dance Company's Choreo-Lab Fellowship, and the Headlong Performance Institute. They have presented work with Counterpulse, Roots Division, 2727 California Street, Queering Dance Festival, LEVYdance and SAFEhouse for the Performing Arts. [vimeo.com/octaviarose](https://vimeo.com/octaviarose)

**Salima Punjani** is a multi-sensory artist whose work is rooted in relational aesthetics. Central to her creations is the aspiration to craft environments that foster receptivity and connection. Her recent projects explore themes such as the dynamics of isolation and resocialization associated with the COVID-19 pandemic; the act of resting as a form of resistance against systemic injustices; and the potential of hijacking medical data to uncover human connections rather than highlighting anomalies that divide us.  
[salimapunjani.com](http://salimapunjani.com)

**Rea Sweets** is a Toronto-based multidisciplinary artist. Through tangible, performance, and interactive mediums, Sweets explores the cosmic enchantments and hindrances of digitality, circling between intimacy, identity, and the imagination. She has worked with Margin of Eras Gallery, Akin Collective and exhibited works at Charles Street Video, Trinity Square Video, Dames Making Games, Myseum of Toronto and Gladstone House. She is a co-founder of *PRUDEmag*, a zine for spinsters, rule-makers, asexuals, relationship anarchists, and all others refusing a sex necessary culture. The zine reclaims "prude" as a celebration of autonomy and boundary setting, and a liberation in which "no" is sacred.  
[reasweets.com](http://reasweets.com)

# About the curator

**Sarah Heussaff** holds a Master's degree in curating from Université Rennes 2, France. From 2014 to 2019, she began research in the field of critical disability studies via online chronicles. Her research is then presented in France and abroad through conferences, workshops and an exhibition (*Autonomous Spaces*, Ateliers du Vent-Rennes, 2017) that introduces, alongside Zig Blanquer, practices of Disability/crip arts in the field of visual arts in France. At the end of 2019, she begins PhD research in the communications program at UQAM. In 2024, her research, funded by the Fonds de Recherche du Québec-Société et culture (FRQSC), focused on the emergence of disability arts in relation to disability activist movements and accessible curating. In her research method and in her curatorial practice, she places great importance on those who have expertise through experience.

# Public activities

## L'art observe series

The art mediation platform *L'art observe* encompasses a number of public activities designed to complement Galerie de l'UQAM's exhibition program, tailored to audiences keen to expand their knowledge of contemporary visual art.

+ More information : [galerie.uqam.ca/type\\_activite/serie-lart-observe/](http://galerie.uqam.ca/type_activite/serie-lart-observe/)

### Performance by Tamyka Bullen

Saturday, February 24, 2024, 12:30 – 1:15 pm

Galerie de l'UQAM

ASL, translation read in French by Sendy-Loo Emmanuel

Free admission

In the performance, the bed and its bedside table symbolize a final recollection, a last testimony from a daughter to her ailing mother. Jimena, the character in the story, is a 40-year-old Deaf woman who angrily shares her frustrations about her distant relationship with her mother. She tells us the divide between two worlds: that of the hearing and that of the Deaf.

### Performance by Cindy Baker

Saturday, February 24, 2024, 2 – 5 pm

Galerie de l'UQAM

Audio description in French, 2 – 3 pm by Letizia Binda-Partensky

Free admission

Cindy Baker will conduct a 3-hour performance, interacting with the *CRASH PAD* installation displayed in the exhibition. The artist's work resides at the intersection of *Queer, Gender, Race, Disability* and *Fat Studies*, exploring body-mind resources, fatigability, and stamina in performance. The first hour of the performance will be audio described in French.

### **Pillow talk with Salima Punjani**

Saturday, March 2, 2024, 2 – 3:30 pm

Galerie de l'UQAM

French, LSQ

Free admission

Salima Punjani will host a public gathering to present her artistic approach and activate the installation exhibited in the Galerie. Participants are invited to a collective listening and resting session, followed by an informal discussion with the artist.

### **Guided tour with the curator**

Friday, March 8, 2024, 12:30 – 1:30 pm

Galerie de l'UQAM

French

Free admission

An informal visit of the exhibition *De la vie au lit* is organized with the curator Sarah Heussaff. This activity will be an opportunity to interact with the public around the themes of the exhibition.

### **Bed dance workshop**

In partnership with Studio 303

Saturday, March 16, 2024, 2 – 3:30 pm

Online

English, ASL, LSQ

Admission limited; registration required on Studio 303's website (priority seating reserved for Deaf or hearing-impaired people)

Free

In this workshop, Octavia Rose Hingle draws on their technique of dancing in bed to offer strategies for exploring the pleasure and possibilities presented by the soft surfaces of our domestic spaces. Disabled and non-disabled dancers from all backgrounds are invited to interpret contemporary dance fundamentals from their bed, sofa, or floor.

## **Bedside reading**

Tuesday, April 2, 2024, 10:30 – 11:30 am

Online via Zoom

French; written material available in French and English on Framapad

Free admission

The exhibition curator, Sarah Heussaff, invites the public to a reading in bed within the *Bedding Out* installation, which will be broadcast online. She will read the script from the video featured in the exhibition and the text *S'allonger quoi qu'il en soit, une auto-ethnographie* by Liz Crow. Embracing disabled and sick mobilities, the author describes the discomfort and judgements that arise when the act of lying down is performed in public spaces.

## **Educational Program**

The cultural mediators of Galerie de l'UQAM will be offering guided tours of the exhibition *De la vie au lit* to groups and faculty members. Flexible and open to all school and community groups, the tours can be adapted to meet particular needs and to complement material covered in the classroom, if needed. These activities are offered free of charge, in French or English. An interpreter in Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) or American Sign Language (ASL) can be made available to groups wishing to visit our exhibitions with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Please contact our staff as soon as possible, given the time required to book interpreters.

+ More information: [galerie.uqam.ca/en/educational-program/on-site/](https://galerie.uqam.ca/en/educational-program/on-site/)

Reservation required:

Léa Lanthier-Lapierre

Cultural Mediation and Communications Coordinator, Galerie de l'UQAM

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# Notes



# Credits

Presented at Galerie de l'UQAM from February 23 to April 6, 2024, the exhibition *De la vie au lit* is produced by Galerie de l'UQAM, as is the accompanying booklet No 44.

Texts: Sarah Heussaff

Translation: Gauthier Lesturgie

Coordination: Léa Lanthier-Lapierre, Anne Philippon

Graphic Design: Léa Lanthier-Lapierre, Camille Rémillard-Vigneault

Proofreading: Anne Philippon, Ève Pigeon

Printing: Repro-UQAM

ISBN : 978-2-925187-09-7

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Bibliothèques et Archives nationales du Québec, 2024

Bibliothèques et Archives Canada, 2024

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Galerie de l'UQAM is a university gallery whose operations are funded by the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec.



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DES PERSONNES SOURDES ET LES  
PRATIQUES D'ÉQUITÉ CULTURELLE



MELS

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