

Book Review

Title: *Moving Over the Edge: Artists with Disabilities Take the Leap*

Author: Pamela Kay Walker

Publisher: M. Horton Media, 2005

Paper, ISBN 0-9771505-2-6, 243 pages

Cost: \$25.00 USD

Reviewer: Steven E. Brown

This is an extremely important book, which not only describes the role of artists with disabilities, particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area, but also how the intersection of art, advocacy, and activism has moved forward disability rights. This story is told through the lens of the author who has been a vital player in much of the arts that occurred in the San Francisco, California Bay Area.

The book includes 20 chapters that look at various topics, such as “disability awareness,” comics, dance, theater, and music. But to separate topics is in a way a disservice. Many of the artists described in the book are doing multitudes of art and other activities, including the author herself who is an actress, talent agent, fine artist, and of course, writer, among many other talents. Perhaps Walker’s most salient gift to readers is her ability to integrate all the pieces of the Bay Area disability arts world and demonstrate how it evolved (and continues to do so) while life goes on. The interweaving of art and activism is the core of this book and of the shows that give the volume its title, *Moving Over the Edge*.

Walker looks at the work of numerous artists with disabilities, focusing on a few to explore in more depth. Interspersing personal stories, postscripts to each chapter, generally from someone Walker writes about in that chapter, vignettes from her knowledge of these artists, and analyses of how art and activism mesh and create something new, Walker shines as an author in this book. Yet, she also describes the long process she took to come to the realization that she could be both a person with a disability and an artist. In an engaging style, Walker mesmerizes with personal stories, activist rhetoric, and, most importantly, why for so long people with disabilities have been missing from both artistic communities AND art and what is being done to change that. My hope is not only that this book will find its way into many libraries, but also into many classrooms looking for texts about the disability experience.