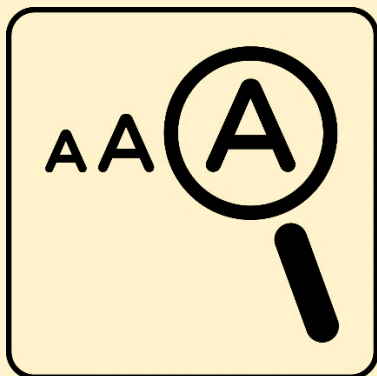


## Large Print guide

Nothing about us without us

**Section:** Piss on pity

**Text size:** 14pt



Transcription

This guide contains:

- Large print of the wall texts and labels within this exhibition section.
- Short descriptions of the objects and images within this exhibition section.
- Transcripts of the films included within this exhibition section.

Large Print exhibition guides in 18pt and 24pt text versions, magnifiers and colour overlays are also available.

Please ask a staff member if you need any further assistance.



# Piss on Pity

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This guide follows the order of the displays within this section of the exhibition.

When you have finished using this guide, please return it or give it to a member of staff. Thank you.

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## **Section introduction: Piss on pity**

During the 19th century, there was a huge growth in the number of charitable organisations. Many were set up to address concerns about the welfare and living conditions of poor and disabled people. These charities often reinforced the idea that disabled people were helpless objects of pity that needed to be rescued.

This image of disabled people has deep historical roots in culture. One of the most famous examples is Tiny Tim from Charles Dickens' novel 'A Christmas Carol'. Similar representations of disabled people can still be found in books, film and television today.

Disabled activists have long rejected charity and the ways in which it undermines disabled people's independence. As early as 1893, blind workers set up their own union and campaigned under the slogan 'Justice not Charity'.

The 1990s saw thousands of disabled people gathering to express anger and contempt for televised charity fundraiser 'Telethon' and its portrayal of disabled people. It was during these protests that 'Piss on Pity' emerged as a key slogan for the movement inspiring both activists and artists.

### **National League of the Blind (NLB) banner, date unknown**

The NLB was founded in 1894. The League's slogan was 'Justice not Charity'. It campaigned to improve the lives of blind people, many of whom depended on employment in workshops run by charities where conditions were often poor and wages low.

On loan from Working Class Movement Library



▷ [Object description]

Red textile banner measuring 850mm x 380mm with red tassels along the bottom. The words 'NATIONAL LEAGUE OF THE BLIND' 'TOTTENHAM BRANCH' and 'JUSTICE NOT CHARITY' are embroidered across it along with floral motifs.

**National League of the Blind (NLB) march photograph, 1920**

The NLB campaigned for the state to take responsibility for employing blind people and to provide a pension for those who could not work.

To secure these aims, the League organised a march from three locations in Britain to meet for a mass demonstration in London. 171 blind workers marched to Trafalgar Square. The Manchester contingent left from Stevenson Square in the Northern Quarter. Their action led to significant change with the introduction of the Blind Person's Act 1920.

Courtesy of Working Class Movement Library

[Object description]

Black and white photograph of a long line of people marching, they are dressed in suits, hats and overcoats, some are using walking canes. Two people at the front are holding a banner that reads 'JUSTICE NOT CHARITY'. In the background are fields and trees.

**Photograph of flower makers at John Groom's Crippleage and Flower Girls' Mission, date unknown**

Preacher John Groom established the Crippleage and Flower Girls' Mission in 1866. The artificial flowers produced at his workshops were sold at exhibitions or fundraising events. These events often included flower making demonstrations where the young women's impairments were presented as curiosities.

Courtesy of the Mary Evans Peter Higginbotham Collection



▷ [Object description]

Black and white photograph of people posing in rows, with the front row seated and the second row standing. All wear dark dresses with long sleeves and white aprons. Text along the top includes 'MR. GROOM'S INDUSTRIAL TRAINING HOMES FOR AFFLICTED, BLIND AND CRIPPLED GIRLS'.

**Photograph of girls at John Groom's making roses for Alexandra Rose Day, 1912**

Alexandra Rose Day was an event started by Queen Alexandra in 1912. Each year artificial wild roses were sold to raise money for London charities. The flowers sold were made at John Groom's workshops.

Courtesy of the Mary Evans Peter Higginbotham Collection

[Object description]

Black and white photograph of a busy workshop, with people sat crammed around tables making artificial roses.

[Cased objects]

**Artificial flowers made at John Groom's Crippleage and Flower Girls' Mission box, around 1907**

Preacher John Groom established the Crippleage and Flower Girls' Mission in 1866.

Groom became concerned with the welfare of the young disabled women who sold watercress and flowers on the streets of London.



- ▷ He began by providing them with shelter and refreshment. But by 1876 Groom had setup a workshop which trained the young women to make artificial flowers like ones displayed here. The flowers were then sold to raise funds for the mission.

[Object description]

Opened box containing an artificial buttonhole flower. The flowers have purple petals and grey leaves, with a fluffy white centre detail. A typed message from the mission is in the inside of the lid.

**The Blind Advocate journal, April 1899**

This is an early copy of the National League of the Blind (NLB) journal. The Blind Advocate was set up and edited by Ben Purse, a blind man, and piano tuner from Salford. Purse was a founder member of the NLB and the first general secretary in 1897.

On loan from Working Class Movement Library

[Object description]

A4 faded paper journal with light brown discolouring around the edges. The text below the title on the front cover reads 'Organ of the National League for the Blind of Great Britain and Ireland.' Below this an article typed in two columns.

**National League of the Blind Rules booklet,  
signed by Ben Purse, around 1899**

On loan from Working Class Movement Library

[Object description]

Grey A5 front cover. Details printed include an office address for London and Will Banham as General Sectary.

Cased objects

**National League of the Blind enamel pin badge, dates unknown**

[Object description]

Small pin badge in an octagonal shape with gold text reading 'THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF THE BLIND' along a red border. In the centre are two gold hands shaking on a white background.

**National League of the Blind Great Britain and Ireland badge, around 1900**

[Object description]

Small circular enamel pin badge with text reading 'NATIONAL LEAGUE OF THE BLIND' and a shamrock and thistle symbol in gold along a dark blue border. There is a bronze circle in the centre with the text 'GT. BRITAIN & IRELAND'.

**'Disabled People Bite... The Hand That Patronises' postcard, 1995**

The image on this postcard was taken from a short animation video called 'disability is' produced by young disabled people from Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People (GMCDP).

On loan from Disabled People's Archive

[Object description]

A5 white postcard. At the top 'Disabled People Bite...' is printed in black text. The central image has circles in multiple colours in the background with illustrations of a dog on the left and a person on the right. Above each is an outstretched hand. This image is repeated three times. At the bottom text says 'Aah, are you being a good boy' followed by 'The Hand That Patronises'.



### **Children in Need (...OF WHAT?) leaflet, 1993**

This leaflet was given out at a protest at Manchester's Albert square. It was organised by GMCDP and UNISON's Disabled Members Group. They were there to disrupt an outside broadcast being filmed by Children in Need. The leaflet explains why disabled people don't like the shows representation of disabled children as needing charity rather than rights.

On loan from Disabled People's Archive

#### **[Object description]**

A4 landscape black and white leaflet. On the left side an image of the Children in Need mascot Pudsey Bear holding a placard that reads 'Rights Not Charity'. 'IT DOESN'T HELP AND IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE WAY DISABLED PEOPLE ARE TREATED' printed below. On the right side is text with further information about the protest.

## **Main section two**

### **Children in Need protest photograph, 1991**

Children in Need is a televised fundraising event organised by the BBC. Disabled people objected to the show's negative representation of disabled children. This protest took place outside a television studio in Leeds where part of the programme was being filmed.

Courtesy of Disabled People's Archive

#### **[Object description]**

Black and white photograph of protestors with placards, four people are shown. The placards read 'CHARITY PUTS US DOWN' and 'Wages not Charity'.

**Pity by Katherine Araniello, film of live performance, 2013 (2 minutes 38 seconds)**

In this piece Katherine Araniello pastiches Damien Hirst's cynical use of the spastic collection box figure in his large bronze sculpture 'Charity'. Like much of her body of work, this a direct attack on disabled victimhood, a swipe that satirises Hirst, art history, and attitudes to disabled people all at the same time.

Courtesy of Katherine Araniello

**[Film description]**

Katherine Araniello dressed as the spastics collection box, in a yellow head piece and blue dress, with a sign on her lap 'PLEASE HELP SickBitchCrips', holding a small dog under her left arm. A person next to her holds out a charity collection box and people walk up to put coins in. They are in a car park layby with a building and a portable toilet behind them.

**[Text on the wall]**

'And she looks at the crowd on the TV news,  
With their wheelchairs and sticks and their guides.  
They are brandishing banners,  
They are pissing on pity,  
And they celebrate difference with pride.  
Something stirs inside.'

- Lyrics from 'Tragic but Brave' song written by Ian Stanton

**Help the Normals collection can by Dolly Sen, 2012**

Dolly Sen created this charity collecting can, to challenge assumptions about who we should pity. Making disabled people objects of pity is damaging, it will always keep them in a subservient situation. Dolly turned this on its head and made being normal a thing to pity to see how the average non-disabled person feels about being put in this position.



- ▷ Giving to charity won't change the lives of disabled people. Seeing what part, you have in creating or supporting a society that excluded people does.  
On loan from Dolly Sen

[Object description]

Red plastic collection can for money with a white sticker saying 'HELP' in black bold lettering, followed by 'THE NORMALS' in bold red lettering and a black rope handle.

**Photographs of Shaken Not Stirred-Into Which performance by Tony Heaton, 1992**

Shaken Not Stirred is a performance piece by artist Tony Heaton. It was first commissioned in 1991 and then recreated in 1992 as part of the Block Telethon campaign. At the centre of the piece is a sculpture made out of 1760 charity collection cans arranged in the shape of a pyramid. These photographs capture that performance at the Block Telethon press conference. They show Heaton hurling a prosthetic leg into the pyramid, symbolically demolishing the hierarchy of charities.  
On loan from NDACA

[Object description]

Landscape framed series of six black and white photographs, taken in sequence, starting with a pyramid of charity collection cans, and going on to show the pyramid being demolished.

Black and white photograph of Tony Heaton sat in a wheelchair holding a prosthetic leg over his right shoulder. Around him on the floor are the charity collections cans.

**Ian Stanton and Piss on Pity, Dadafest performance photograph, around 1992**

Ian Stanton was born in Oldham in 1950. He was an accomplished singer songwriter who performed up and down the country.



## Main section two

- ▷ Stanton can be seen here performing alongside 'Chip the Crip', an old style 'Spastics' Society collection box. It was often used in performances by the Tragic But Brave cabaret troupe that Stanton was a member of, alongside comedian Barbara Lisicki (Wanda Barbara), and poet and singer Alan Holdsworth (Johnny Crescendo).  
Courtesy of NDACA

### [Object description]

Black and white photograph of Ian Stanton playing guitar and singing into a microphone. A BSL interpreter is signing to his right. To his left is an old style charity collection box in the figure of a child with a 'PISS ON PITY' sign in front of their chest.

### **A selection of Block Telethon photographs, 1992**

ITV's Telethon was a televised charity fundraiser hosted by Michael Aspel. In 1990, disabled people organised the first protest against the show's portrayal of disabled people as objects of pity. By the next Telethon in 1992, the demonstration had grown with thousands gathering outside the television studios.

The Block Telethon protest was a defining moment for many in the Disabled People's Movement. Not only did it lead to the cancellation of Telethon, it also played an important part in building a sense of community. The demonstrations may have been fueled by anger but the protest had a party atmosphere with music, poetry and performance.  
Courtesy of Tony Baldwinson

### [Object description]

Three colour photographs of protestors outside.

A person speaking into a microphone, to their right a BSL interpreter is signing. Behind them are rows of placards on a wire fence.



▷ A crowd of protestors behind barriers with banners and placards. In the background a large banner hangs on a bush with the words 'BLOCK TELETHON'. In the foreground, a person sat in a wheelchair is filming the demonstration. A large crowd of protestors lined along a fence and area outside the studios.

Two black and white photographs of the demonstration.

A person speaking into a microphone wearing a t-shirt that reads 'PISS ON PITY'. Behind them are placards reading 'BREAD & BUTTER RIGHTS NOT JELLY & ICE CREAM TREATS' and 'TELETHON TV APARTHEID'.

A protester sat in a wheelchair speaking into a microphone. Placards are attached to the wire fence behind, one reads 'IS TERRY WOGAN SHOWING HIS PANTS ALL MY LIFE IS WORTH?'.

### **Block Telethon Disability Pride t-shirt, 1992**

[Object description]

White t-shirt with 'Block Telethon, Disability Pride' in black text in the centre.

### **Piss on Pity t-shirt, around 1994**

The pink and black Piss on Pity t-shirts were first made for the 1992 Block Telethon protest. 100 were printed and worn at the demonstration. In the years that followed numerous versions of the iconic t-shirt were produced.

On loan from Disabled People's Archive

[Object description]

Black t-shirt, with the words 'PISS ON PITY' in bright pink in the centre.

## Film transcript

### **Pity by Katherine Araniello, film of live performance, 2013**

[Text]: Sickbitchcrips (Katherine Araniello)

(acapella)

Pity pity.

The best things in life are free, pity doesn't grow on trees, I want your pity that's what I want, I want your pity that's what I want. Sick bitch crips want your pity. Just a little bit of your pity. That will do, I want your pity, just give it to me, I want your pity that's what I want. I want your pity, pity, pity, pity, pity. That's what I want, I want your pity pity, pity, pity, pity just a little bit of your pity.

Sick bitch crips gives her alcohol for free in return for sympathy. I want your pity, that's what I want, I want your pity. Give it to me, oooh lots of pity. Pity, pity, pity, pity. Give it to me, just give it to me. Give, give, give it to me. I want your pity. Pity, pity, pity pity pity. I need it. I'm desperate for your pity, pity, pity, pity, pity, pity, pity. That's what I want, I want your pity, that's what I want. Lots and lots of your pity, I want your pity, just a little bit of your pity will do. But I want your pity, give it to me, just give it to me. Give it to me, lots of pity, I just want.

### **The end**

This is the end of the Large Print guide for the Piss on pity people section of the exhibition. We hope you have found it useful. Please return the guide or give it to a member of staff. Thank you.

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