

MEDIA RELEASE

[University Galleries of Illinois State University](#) is pleased to present [Andy Slater: Paintings & Sculptures](#) from January 14 through March 26, 2025. All events are free and open to the public.

This exhibition features Chicago-based artist Andy Slater's sound works and three-dimensional objects that mimic the presentation and appearance of traditional artistic formats but engage senses other than vision. Meant to be touched or heard rather than seen, these "paintings and sculptures" trouble the ocularcentrism that is at the core of the "visual" arts. For Slater, who is blind, this is more than just a conceptual gesture or a political statement (though it is those things, too): it is an attempt to invite people to have artistic experiences that are analogous to his own.

Slater has observed that when institutions attempt to make their artworks accessible to visually impaired people, the alternatives they present frequently do a poor job of approximating the original works. Audio descriptions of paintings, for instance, often focus on descriptive terms or traits that are irrelevant to blind people. Handling either a scaled model of a sculpture or a hunk of the material it is made of hardly gets one halfway towards what it is like to look at it. The problem is not that a description is not a painting, or that a model is not a sculpture. Instead, the problem is that descriptions, models, and other accessible options are essentially new works of art that need to translate the original into a different sensory register. Museums and galleries seldom achieve this.

The works in *Paintings & Sculptures* are inspired by accessible alternatives and the ways they often fail. Slater has created alt-text descriptions and sculptural models that are their own originals, not translations of other visual artworks. His *Invisible Ink* series, which features heavily in this exhibition, comprises textual accounts of paintings that do not physically exist. Intended to be listened to rather than seen, these "paintings" encourage their audience to mentally construct images of "visual" objects that only exist as sound. Likewise, the proper way to engage the small bronzes which Slater presents alongside these sound works is not through the sense of sight, but rather touch. Meant to be handled and appreciated solely for their tactile complexity, these artworks broaden the notion of sculpture as either a visual or spatial medium by proposing the aesthetic significance of touch and touch alone.

Andy Slater: Paintings & Sculptures is the center point of multiple educational programs. Slater will give a public lecture and meet with students and classes at ISU. University Galleries is collaborating with the Wonsook Kim School of Art's Visiting Artist Program for his public lecture and class visits. University Galleries' staff will lead art-making workshops for ISU students, families, K-12 students, and community members. Free virtual and in-person curator-led tours are available by appointment for the duration of the exhibition.

Paintings & Sculptures is organized by Troy Sherman, Curator at University Galleries. The exhibition and programming are supported by University Galleries' grants from the Illinois Arts Council, the Harold K. Sage Foundation, and the Illinois State University Foundation Fund. Workshops and field trip reimbursements are supported by the Lori Baum and Aaron Henkelman University Galleries Community Fund.

Artist biography

[Andy Slater](#) (b. 1975, Milford, Connecticut) is a blind Chicago-based media artist, writer, performer, and disability advocate/"loudmouth." Slater holds a Masters in Sound Arts and Industries from Northwestern University and a B.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He is a 2024 3Arts Next Level Awardee, 2022-2023 Leonardo Crip Tech Incubator fellow, 2022 United States Artists fellow, and 2018 3Arts/Bodies of Work fellow. The founder of the Society of Visually Impaired Sound Artists and the director of the *Sound as Sight* accessible field-recording project, Slater has exhibited and performed at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, California; Transmediale Festival, Berlin, Germany; Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne, Australia; Critical Distance, Toronto, Canada; Experimental Sound Studios, Chicago, Illinois; the Art Institute of Chicago; Flux Factory, New York, New York; and the Momenta Dance Company, Oak Park, Illinois.

Events

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 16, 2024

All events are free and open to the public.

- **Sensory-friendly Morning**
Saturday, January 18 from 11:00 to noon. Visit the galleries before opening hours where you can enjoy dimmed lighting and a quiet space.
- **Artist Lecture**
Wednesday, January 22 from noon to 1:00 p.m.
Slater will present a lecture on his artwork, followed by a brief reception. Refreshments will be provided.
- **Independent Drawing Hour**
Wednesday, January 29 from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Spend time looking closely at artworks in the exhibitions and drawing at your own pace. Materials provided.
- **Independent Drawing Hour**
Wednesday, February 19 from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Spend time looking closely at artworks in the exhibitions and drawing at your own pace. Materials provided.
- **Poetry at the Galleries**
Thursday, February 20 from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. Write and perform poems in response to artworks on view. *Performance optional.
- **Sensory-friendly Morning**
Saturday, February 22 from 11:00 to noon. Visit the galleries before opening hours where you can enjoy dimmed lighting and a quiet space.
- **Artmaking Workshop**
Saturday, February 22 from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. Create tactile sculptures inspired by Andy Slater's artwork. Materials provided. *Registration required.
- Free curator-led exhibition tours and workshops are available by appointment for classes and community groups. Contact Gallery@IllinoisState.edu to schedule.

University Galleries, a unit in the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts, is located at 11 Uptown Circle, Suite 103, at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available in the Uptown Station parking deck located directly above University Galleries—the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01 p.m.

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#), and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact Gallery@IllinoisState.edu or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to these exhibitions.