

The Defining Artworks of 2023:

#17 Emilie L. Gossiaux, *White Cane Maypole Dance*, 2023

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With its audio descriptions and tactile interventions, [Emilie L. Gossiaux](#)'s debut institutional solo at the Queens Museum is an exemplary model for accessible art. Her new work explores the twinned ways in which both nonhuman animals and disabled people experience oppression: both groups are seen as lacking certain capacities, and for this, denied various rights. In response, Gossiaux celebrates the beautiful interdependence that disabled people and their nonhuman companions often enjoy. Her giant maypole sculpture replaces a regular rod with a monumental, 15-foot version of her white cane, and around it, human-sized sculptures of her guide dog London leap and dance. In a world that too often views disabled people as tragedies, Gossiaux gives us a powerful portrait of disabled joy.

—*Emily Watlington*