

**Deaf Artists'
Exhibit**

20 DEAF ARTISTS:
COMMON MOTIFS

AT PRO ARTS GALLERY
OAKLAND, CA

APRIL 9-10, 1999

Gallery Guide

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introduction

20 DEAF ARTISTS: COMMON MOTIFS

The first two exhibitions of Deaf Art that I organized, in 1993 and 1995, were each titled "Deaf Artists' Exhibit: A Perspective of Deaf Culture Through Art" which reflected a growing awareness of the importance of Deaf Art in Deaf Studies. The personal perspectives of the artists brought fresh insights to what it means to be Deaf.

The ever-growing number of works in the field of De'VIA (Deaf View Image Art or Deaf Art) frequently amaze me, not least because of the number of motifs common to artists who have had no prior contact with each other. Not all of these shared motifs are included in this exhibit, because there simply is not room for them all, but many of the works here do use similar symbols.

Some of these symbols are quite obvious. Take the hand, for instance. In a variety of different forms, the hand appears in many works as a symbol of our pride with our language and the importance of our means of communication. Endless approaches to representing sign language in different formats are also popular. Sometimes certain positions or differences in proportion indicate that the hand represents oppression or oppressors.

TTYs are another easily recognizable motif. Interpretations of sound, music or use of musical instruments also frequently occur. Speech lessons and the experience of learning speech have stayed with many of us for most of our lives and this, too, is reflected in this exhibit. Feelings of being trapped are another common theme. One curious motif that has appeared in recent works is the reworking of historical paintings or other representations of historical events to reflect Deaf history or the Deaf experience; this is a way of indicating the magnitude of an event in our history.

This exhibit invites the viewer to explore other common motifs and themes and share these observations with other viewers and artists in the gallery.

Many nuances of the works included in this exhibit may be difficult to discern without knowledge of the issues and perceptions common to members of the Deaf community. This guide is intended to provide information concerning the ways in which each work is relevant to the Deaf culture or experience.

People who are already knowledgeable about the Deaf culture may find this guide helpful in obtaining deeper insights into these works. No one, however, should consider the information presented here absolutely definitive: it is, rather, subjective material written on the basis of information obtained from a variety of sources, including the artists, and including direct quotations from many of these artists. Viewers are encouraged to offer their own thoughts.

Brenda Schertz
March 30, 1999

the De'VIA Manifesto

DEAF VIEW/IMAGE ART

De'VIA represents Deaf artists and perceptions based on their Deaf experiences. It uses formal art elements with the intention of expressing innate cultural or physical Deaf experience. These experiences may include Deaf metaphors, Deaf perspectives, and Deaf insight in relationship with the environment (both the natural world and Deaf cultural environment), spiritual and everyday life.

De'VIA can be identified by formal elements such as Deaf artists' possible tendency to use contrasting colors and values, intense colors, contrasting textures. It may also most often include a centralized focus, with exaggeration or emphasis on facial features, especially eyes, mouths, ears, and hands. Currently, Deaf artists tend to work in human scale with these exaggerations, and not exaggerate the space around these elements.

There is a difference between Deaf artists and De'VIA. Deaf artists are those who use art in any form, media, or subject matter; and who are held to the same artistic standards as other artists. De'VIA is created when the artist intends to express their Deaf experience through visual art. De'VIA may also be created by deafened or hearing artists, if the intention is to create work that is born of their Deaf experience (a possible example would be a hearing child of Deaf parents). It is clearly possible for Deaf artists not to work in the area of De'VIA.

While applied and decorative arts may also use the qualities of De'VIA (high contrast, centralized focus, exaggeration of specific features), this manifesto is specifically written to cover the traditional fields of visual fine arts (painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, printmaking) as well as alternative media when used as fine arts such as fiber arts, ceramics, neon, and collage.

Created in May, 1989, at The DeafWay.

The signatories were:

Dr. Betty G. Miller, painter; Dr. Paul Johnston, sculptor; Dr. Deborah M. Sonnenstrahl, art historian; Chuck Baird, painter; Guy Wonder, sculptor; Alex Wilhite, painter; Sandi Inches Vasnick, fiber artist; Nancy Creighton, fiber artist; and Lai-Yok Ho, video artist.

artists' biographies

CHUCK BAIRD, B. 1947

Biography

Chuck Baird was born deaf in Kansas City and along with his three older sisters, went to the Kansas School for the Deaf. He received his art education from Mrs. Grace Bilger, a renowned watercolorist and graduated in 1967. He enrolled at Gallaudet University but then transferred to the Rochester Institute of Technology, where he received his BFA in Painting in 1974. Baird spent his first 5 summers after graduation at the National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) painting their sets. During these years, he held a variety of jobs while working to develop his art. He had his first major exhibition at the World Federation of the Deaf Conference in Washington DC in 1975.

Chuck served as Visual Arts Coordinator for the deaf art colony Spectrum - Focus on Deaf Artists.

He finally joined the National Theatre of the Deaf in 1980. During the 10 years Chuck Baird spent with NTD as an actor and set designer, he designed and painted a large number of sets for them. He is probably best remembered for his work in "King of Hearts," based on Phillippe de Broca's cult film classic. In the role of the Painter, Chuck recreated the entire set each night in front of a live audience.

After an art residency at the California School for the Deaf in Fremont, he moved to San Diego in 1992 to work for DawnSignPress as an in-house artist, and painted a number of new Deaf-related works, culminating in the book, "Chuck Baird, 35 Plates." Baird went back to Kansas City in 1993 to establish a painting and sculpture studio. He created a 150-foot long collage/mural of Deaf history and language for The Learning Center for Deaf Children in Framingham, MA, for the school's 25th anniversary celebration, in June of 1995.

Chuck Baird currently works part time at his alma mater, videotaping storytelling in ASL. Videotapes of his work are now on sale across the country. Baird travels often to lead art workshops for Deaf children at schools, summer camps, and at art festivals. In addition he still performs in Equity theatres with short runs of plays. Baird also enjoys visiting his new love, Claudia.

Artist's Statement

"Right now, I don't paint for the result, as I used to, but rather for the process. I let it lead me to whatever it will be. I often change the subject matter of a work throughout the process, and the end result depends on the medium, images that suddenly appear in the middle of the process, and so forth.

"The Deaf theme in my work relates to my own experience as a deaf human being; my genre is De'Via.

"The artist whose technique I currently most admire is Wayne Thiebaud of Davis, CA. I wish my painting was as rich as his. I like to use his multicolored effect rainbow-spectrum effect the delineation of objects, and the portrayal of three-dimensional things. My idol, however, is Michael C. McMillen, a miniature artist who is also from California. What I find similar in both our works is a sense of whimsy.

"I no longer paint what people would like to see. I paint for myself. It is about my own experience, my love of ASL and pride in our Deaf heritage. I sometimes create works that have no particular relation to the Deaf."

IRENE BARTOK, B. 1965

Biography

Irene Bartok, presently a resident of New York City, was born in Venice, Italy. She grew up in Paris, where she obtained her degree in Fashion Design from the Private School of Professional Studies. She also studied at FIT in New York City. However, her first love is photography. Her passion is to capture the beauty in nature and architecture - their elements, shapes and spiritual essence.

Ms. Bartok plans to attend the Rochester Institute of Technology, for a two-year program in Digital Design and Interactive Media. She wants to combine her photography with graphic arts, and to keep up with today's rapidly-changing technology.

Artist's Statement

"The fashion industry changes constantly while nature remains almost the same. When I take pictures, it keeps my world in balance and keeps me in touch with nature. Fashion is illusion; nature is reality. In these pictures, the nature and architecture remain silent and their essence is revealed more powerfully."

JEFF CARROLL, B. 1967

Biography

Jeff B. Carroll was born deaf in Cincinnati, OH, and was raised in a very loving hearing family. Upon graduation from the Kentucky School for the Deaf in 1986, he entered Gallaudet University, where he at first majored in engineering and architecture. He ultimately graduated with a BA in Studio Art in 1994.

Mr. Carroll has worked as an instructor at the Interpreter Training Program at Cincinnati State College for 2 years now. He also works as a freelance artist, working mainly in plaster and oil from a small studio in his house in Bromley, KY. Most recently, he has been working on developing a series of plaster sculptures for an exhibition this summer.

Artist's Statement

"The first time I did plaster was at Gallaudet during a class project under Paul Johnston. Four or five of us was involved in a plaster cast project - three life size full length free standing pieces 'Deaf President Now.' It was a very difficult project and never

thought I would be working with plaster again. Three years later in 1997 the Kentucky Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing commissioned me to create a Deaf-related piece that would serve also as an award for an employee. Plaster came immediately to mind this time even though I was more of a painter during that time. I guess that's how I got started again with plasters which I believe is an excellent three dimensional way to show Deaf culture and sign language."

CONNIE M. CLANTON, B. 1947

Biography

Connie M. Clanton was born in Boonesville, MS. Her parents learned that she was deaf when Connie was nine months old, and the apparent cause was a side effect of medicine given to her to relieve a high fever. They enrolled her in the Mississippi School for the Deaf in Jackson when she was of school age, and later when the family moved to Nashville, TN, Connie attended the Tennessee School for the Deaf in Knoxville, from which she graduated in 1967.

Her family knew early on that she had a talent for painting. Connie knew for sure at about age nine that she wanted to be an artist.

Connie moved to Raleigh, NC, where she was able to study art at Meredith College with Dr. Craig Greene and Dr. Maureen Banker. While there, she also studied with the well-known artist Charles Kapsner during 1990-1992. She says "I thank God for Dr. Greene and for his patience and ability to teach me so much about art."

With her husband, Dee, and daughter, Natalie, Connie moved to Concord, NH in July, 1994. Her paintings are on display at the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson, as well as at White Interiors in Raleigh, North Carolina. She is currently showing her work at Interior Additions in Concord, NH.

One of her childhood friends from Mississippi, Linda Shelton, displayed some of Connie's paintings at an open house and the wife of the governor of Mississippi went home with one!

Artist's Statement

"As a Deaf Artist I enjoy using the media of oil to paint children on the beach. When I paint that type of thing I can feel the ocean and I can imagine the surroundings. I also enjoy doing Intaglios which are a challenge and that is what makes them so much fun. The subject of hands is a big part of what I do in Intaglio. When I first started to sell these pieces of art people were so excited that it inspired me to do more."

SUSAN DUPOR, B. 1969

Biography

Susan Dupor was born deaf and has an older brother who was born hard of hearing. She grew up in Madison, WI, where she attended "hearing impaired" mainstream programs from kinder-

garten through 12th grade. In 1987, she enrolled in the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) as a cross-registered RIT student majoring in Illustration. She subsequently transferred to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she earned her Bachelors in Fine Arts. She then worked for a year in an animation studio before going on to earn a Masters in Science in Deaf Education and Art Education from the University of Rochester and NTID. She taught at NTID for three years before she moved back to Wisconsin, where she teaches art at the Wisconsin School for the Deaf. When not teaching, she paints and spends time with her husband, who is a woodworking furniture designer.

Artist's Statement

"As an artist who is Deaf, I am constantly exploring my identity as a Deaf woman. I have been painting within this theme for the past ten years and my perspective has changed throughout the years. There were moments when I vented my emotions, and others when I wanted to celebrate the uniqueness of Deaf culture and seek the ironies of being Deaf in a hearing world."

PAUL JOHNSTON, B. 1952

Biography

Paul Johnston was born deaf to artistic, hearing parents and raised in Los Angeles. He attended the California School for the Deaf at Riverside, where he learned ASL and was inspired by Felix Kowalewski, a Deaf art educator. At the age of 13, Johnson enrolled in the Oregon School for the Deaf, where he stayed until graduation from high school. He was the first deaf student to receive a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in furniture design and woodworking from the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). While at RIT, Johnston also studied drama, literature, and Deaf culture and in 1975 made his acting debut with the National Theater of the Deaf. He graduated from Penn State University with a Master of Science degree in art education and a minor in sculpture in 1980 and went on to earn a doctorate in art education with a minor in philosophy from the same university in 1988. Prior to joining the academic staff of Gallaudet University, Johnston taught experimental educational theater at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf in Washington, DC. Johnston currently teaches several courses, including experimental drawing and sculpture. For as long as he has been an artist, Johnson has been interested in the concept that came to be known as De'VIA. In May 1989, in partnership with Dr. Betty G. Miller, Johnson co-facilitated a workshop sponsored by the Deaf Way, where a group of artists defined and developed the concept and the name, wrote a manifesto, and painted a visual manifesto founding De'VIA.

Artist's Statement

"I consider myself a semi-abstract artist. I continuously try to both nurture and share my art by transferring to paper my feelings, my philosophical interpretations of my Deaf experience, and the use of the hand as a tool for both communication and creation. My

works are, at times, expressions both of my identity as an American and a Deaf individual living a bicultural experience.

"In creating my Handscapes, I use my insight into imagination, interpretation, perception, perspective and appreciation in an experiment with content and form to construct three-dimensional poems. I am infatuated with the shape and gestures of the hand. The perception of the 'hand instrument' and the 'mask-of-hands' relates the poetic beauty of hands using either sign language or gesture to the expression of mood and emotion on the face or through the voice. Some of my work serves as an analogy; the pleasure that music brings to hearing people is equivalent to the pleasure which beautifully expressed hand signs and gestures bring to Deaf people. As hearing people appreciate the beauty of music, so do Deaf people appreciate and respect the beauty of sign language and the pleasure of the visual arts. My intention is to embrace freedom of expression by inventing new and imaginative icons in each of my works. The image I seek to create the expressive individuality of each hand — pride, beauty and character. I want my works to speak for themselves. I welcome your reaction."

TONY LANDON MCGREGOR, B. 1958

Biography

A lifelong Texan, Tony McGregor was born in Garland, TX on November 18, 1958. He became deaf at approximately 18 months of age from hereditary causes. Tony was heavily encouraged to pursue art in his boyhood and studied drawing and painting in both private and "mainstreamed" public schools. He attended Gallaudet University and took some studio art classes there in 1977, but transferred to the University of Texas at Austin, from which he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts with honors. Tony also majored in Engineering Design Graphics at Austin Community College. He also earned an Art Education certification and a Masters in Education in Multicultural Special Education. He is now pursuing a doctorate in multicultural special education with an emphasis in museum studies at the University of Texas, Austin. McGregor has worked as a research assistant, a computer graphics designer, a technical illustrator and an art teacher. He is currently a Resident Artist-in-Education at the Austin Museum of Art.

Artist's Statement

"I am always involved in many things with my hands; I am constantly experimenting with art. My favorite medium is mixed media. For the last twenty years, I have traveled to West Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Utah and those areas have greatly influenced my way of thinking. The most prominent artists who influenced me significantly are Georgia O'Keefe and of course, Francisco de Goya of Spain. In addition, I have been surrounded by Native American Friends living in the Southwest area and their culture and folklore are fascinating to me.

"I have been exploring juxtaposition as a concept in many of my artworks; it contains a unique blending of two cultures; the Native American culture and Deaf culture. This concept creates a new

frontier called 'Southwestern De'VIA' art. The works of art I have composed are extensions or dimensions of my artistic personality. Sometimes, I create political art to make strong statements about situations or events that somewhat affect me and many of my political satire drawings have been featured in Deaf Life magazine. The political satire illustrations are somewhat reminiscent of Goya's style. My political satire art is therapeutic; when I put my "deaf feelings" down on paper or canvas, negative feelings and thoughts are reduced.

"Nonetheless, my basic philosophy of art is this: Art should be appreciated for what it is and not by whom it had been done. Art should not be judged as either 'Deaf art' or 'hearing art'; the artist's own style should be respected. Art should be thought of as art for all people. And most important, art galleries should be willing to take in Deaf artists as artists, not as 'deaf' artists."

BETTY G. MILLER, B. 1934

Biography

Dr. Betty G. Miller, who resides in Washington, DC, was born to Deaf parents in Chicago, IL. She is a well-known professional Deaf Artist who taught art at Gallaudet University for 18 years. She left Gallaudet in 1977 to co-found Spectrum, Focus on Deaf Artists. In 1986, she was an Artist-In-Residence at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) in Washington, DC.

Dr. Miller has participated in numerous art shows in Washington DC, Maryland, Texas, California and Massachusetts. She is primarily known for her visual representation of her Deaf experience, some of which has been published in "Deaf Heritage" by Jack Gannon (1980). Her first one-woman show depicting the Deaf experience and entitled "The Silent World" was held at Gallaudet College, where she was an Art professor; in 1972. In the eighties and nineties, she continued with her one-woman and group art shows, on the theme, "The Deaf Experience" in Takoma Park, MD in 1989, at Gallaudet University, in 1989, 1990, and 1992; and in the Capitol Hill area in Washington, DC, and in Chicago, IL, 1992 and 1993. Dr. Miller's artworks also appeared with those of eight other Deaf artists in a first of its kind art show of works relating the Deaf experience at Northern Essex Community College, Haverhill, MA, in September, 1993.

Dr. Miller has become increasingly interested in neon as a medium for her artwork. In 1996 she completed a 16' x 6' neon work commissioned by the North Carolina Arts Council for the recreation center at the Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf, Wilson, NC. 1998 saw the completion of neon artwork commissioned by a deaf couple for their home. Her most recent exhibits, in April and May of 1999, were at the Deaf Studies VI Conference in Oakland, CA, and at the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression in Charlottesville, VA.

Among her influences she cites her father; the Deaf artist Ralph R. Miller, Sr.; one of her art education professors (also an artist) at Pennsylvania State University; and Nancy Creighton, another deaf artist who "also inspired me in the past ten years."

Artist's Statement

"Much of my work depicts the Deaf experience expressed in the most appropriate form of communication: visual art. I present both the suppression, and the beauty of Deaf Culture and American Sign Language as I see it; in the past, and in the present. I hope this work, and the understanding that may arise from this visual expression, will help bridge the gap between the Deaf world, and the hearing world."

VICTOR NOTARO, B. 1958**Biography**

Victor Notaro was born in Danbury, Connecticut. He has a Deaf sister. He attended the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, CT, from 1961 to 1978. He won a prize for a poster design for the American Automobile Association's "Safe System" in 1972, while still a student. He then went to St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute, graduating in 1981 with a Diploma in Graphic Arts/ Commercial Art. Victor received a BFA in 1995 from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), where he studied animation, video, film and sculpture. While at the MFA School, Victor received "Best of Exhibit" awards in students' exhibit in the animation and video category in 1994, and for a welded sculpture in 1995.

Artist's Statement

"I learned about art and that was the first subject that I could learn. All of my teachers always had told me I was good at art and I felt connected with art. I fell in love with Michanegelo because he could do anything - sculpture, architecture, painting, drawing and many others. I feel my work is like his - in that I work with various mediums. I got started with animation at TVI. At the MFA School I took an animation class which gave me more opportunities and that led me to film work. I originally thought I couldn't get into film because it was a thing hearing people did. I do enjoy film projects working with Deaf people."

JOAN POPOVICH-KUTSCHER, B. 1951**Biography**

(From *Uncharted*, fall 1990, published by Deaf Artists of America)

"Gravely misunderstood at three and a half years old by her parents and misdiagnosed as moderately retarded, she was placed in a state hospital for the developmentally disabled. Out of contact with deaf children like herself and without a kindred soul around, Popovich-Kutscher's first language was art.

"Popovich-Kutscher vividly remembers the dirty walls, the smells, and the cold, prison-like atmosphere of the state hospital, her home until she was almost nine. There she was medicated and denied access to education and communication. 'Everyone assumed that I was mentally retarded,' says Popovich-Kutscher, who has since completed two master's degrees, MA and MFA, and has received 29 awards for her artwork.

"Finally, she was transferred to the California School for the Deaf in Riverside. Once in school among other deaf children her own age, her troubles were far from over: The stigma of mental retardation stuck even as she made progress academically to catch up with her age group.

"Although she practiced art from a young age, her formal training began at the school for the deaf, where a deaf art instructor encouraged her to study painting and drawing. After graduation, she continued studying art for two years at Riverside City College before transferring to the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia. While earning her BFA, she was introduced to printmaking. She was impressed with how prints could create a different kind of three-dimensional space, a suitable medium for the psychological content of her work. She then enrolled in graduate school at California State University in Fullerton, where she earned both her MA and MFA in printmaking in 1987."

Artist's Statement

"The strong imagery in my art is based upon my personal history and through working as a symbolist. The personal symbols used in my prints are related to my past feelings of frustration. I try to show my expression by way of art, which is my favorite way of communicating my thoughts and feelings.

"I discovered some appropriate symbols which formed the sharp, lively imagery. The hard image of rope pulling the graphic symbols, bearing different degrees of sharpness, communicates the intense pains in my life. I try to express the bright lines of the images and the active flowing rope.

"I do printmaking by etching and lithograph on handmade paper because the personal experience matched the emotion of being trapped in a mental hospital which was a dirty old building."

TRACEY SALAWAY, B. 1961**Biography**

"I was born in 1961 in Manhattan, in New York City. During my first 5 years, I lived in Brooklyn Heights, NY. I attended the St. Joseph School for the Deaf, Bronx, NY for only 10 months and then my family moved to Port Washington, NY. There I entered a hearing school and later I was transferred to an Oralist program. I attended the National Technical Institute for the Deaf for one year before transferring to the College of Fine and Applied Arts (since renamed the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences) of the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). I graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design in 1985.

"During my professional experience, I worked and interacted my way up from being a production artist to Art Director for 7 years through various corporations, in house departments, and art studios. I returned to RIT in 1991 to study Film/Video related to Computer Animation, and graduated with a Master of Fine Arts in 1995."

Tracey is an Associate Professor in Graphic Design at Gallaudet University, currently studying oils and digital arts.

Artist's Statement

"I discovered a sense of love was needed to give a strong impact and a pessimistic view. Like one of my film influences was the infamous film called 'Gogol: The Nose,' produced by Alexeiff & C. Parker. Most films gave me a feeling that something crawled underneath my skin, and that was the feeling I was looking for. And then, one of my biggest influences was the comic strip, the 'Opus n' Bill Outland' by Berkeley Breathed. I believe the beauty and the creativity that takes place indoors and outdoors that his drawing of characters are whimsical and adventurous. Very saturated color; the artistic style was as clear and crisp. Probably similar styles to my film."

ORKID SASSOUNI, B. 1971**Biography**

Orkid Sassouni was born in Tehran, Iran, and was discovered to be deaf at age three. She never went to the Iran School for the Deaf because her mother insisted that she be put in a regular school. When the Islamic Revolution started in 1979, her entire family escaped to Europe thinking the revolution would soon collapse. The family ended up settling on Long Island, NY, and Orkid was put in a regular public school and had speech therapy everyday until she graduated from Great Neck North High School in Long Island, NY, in 1990. Orkid thought she was the only Deaf person in the whole wide world until she saw "DEAF PRESIDENT NOW!" on television!

Orkid soon decided to go to Gallaudet University. Because she had never learned American Sign Language, she attended Gallaudet's three-week ASL Summer Program. She eventually became fluent in ASL. Orkid also had to struggle with her parents, whose religious and cultural beliefs did not allow an unmarried Persian girl to go away to college.

Orkid graduated from Gallaudet in May 1995 with a degree in Art History and Museum Studies. She was curious about photography and started with beginning Black and White photography at Gallaudet. Later, she took more photography courses where she fell in love with the darkroom and studio using a 4 by 5 Sinar Bron camera. This led her to advanced photography courses at the Parsons School of Design, where she spent one summer working as an archival intern in the studio of Annie Leibovitz, an internationally known photographer.

Orkid Sassouni has for the past three years worked as a Gallery Lecturer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her lectures are given in ASL and she is the first and only Deaf person employed at the Met.

Artist's Statement

"I have been photographing and still continuing my on-going project of and about Deaf and hard of hearing individuals for more than two years. I traveled great distances around the east coast and the west coast to get inspiration for my photography project.

"What made me start doing this project in the first place? I got advice from Annie Leibovitz, a well-known photographer who suggested that I photograph my family and Deaf friends. I tried both to see how much I could capture. Slowly, I started photographing more and more Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. But soon my idea changed to more of a fine art of sign language and their life within me.

"I became fascinated with their pride, their energy, their most important tools in communication, their thoughts, and their self-conscious of the world outside. Today, I continue with my photography project about 'Being Deaf and Free-Spirits'."

PAUL SETZER**Biography**

Paul Setzer was born profoundly deaf into a hearing family in Oklahoma City, OK. His family later moved to Los Angeles where he attended the John Tracy Clinic at age 2 and then enrolled at the California School for the Deaf in Riverside. At 18, Paul designed a poster that won the Latham Foundation Art Award.

Paul has a B.F.A. from Gallaudet University and earned a M.F.A. in Visual Communication at George Washington University. He worked on the staff at the United States Department of Justice as a visual information specialist before joining the Gallaudet faculty, where he is currently an associate professor in the Department of Art. His sign language illustrations have been published by Simon & Schuster, Dawn Sign Press and Gallaudet University Press. Finding that his teaching commitments limited the time he could devote to personal work, he began a personal pursuit to make his own painting accessible to all. In 1997, his first show was at the gallery of Washburn Arts Center at Gallaudet University. His second show, at the Very Special Arts gallery in Washington, DC in 1998, was very well received. This led to a decision to continue to show Paul's works, which began touring in Washington, DC, Frederick, MD, and other cities and towns in that area after the close of the exhibit at Deaf Studies VI.

Paul is married to Kathleen and has two children, Lisl and Eric and three stepchildren, Kristine, David and Julie. They live in Middletown, MD.

Artist's Statement

"'Visual and Auditory Senses: Series of Three': these three paintings are the broad range of emotional visual and auditory senses whose expressive power depends on orchestrations of radiant and chromatic colors. I have a good perception of the visual sense but the auditory sense engages me by toying with my perception of space and reality. The illusion of sounds in a still and silent medium engages my sense; therefore, it captures my attention. With illusion, art imitates life in a most interesting way... my ability to be beautiful or to be communicative feeling.

"My intention is to open freedom of expression by sharing my

perception of visual and auditory senses in each of my works, taking into account the full range of human communicative behavior.

"These paintings are considered being an abstract surrealism that is based on the experience of the visual and auditory senses. ... he works all his surfaces, large, or small, to the finest details in his compositions. In his paintings, he creates these edges of the boundaries effected by gradually changing from light violet to dark violet that depicts one person's path of life. There is a complex element of one long rectangle shaping out toward expanding edges into one section of human ears on the area. There are two different black bars representing the two obstacles in a person's life such as his/or her mid-life crisis or accidents and also another two different white bars such as his/or her puberty or accomplishments. There are also two black bars to be put on the top and bottom of all these paintings depicting "from the cradle to the grave" in a human's span of life. It has a lot of interpretations for comparing with the degrees of the visual and auditory senses for some hearing, hard of hearing and deaf people who encounter a perspicacity in hearing, seeing and feeling the sound and vision.

ANN SILVER

Biography

Born genetically deaf into a hearing family in Seattle, Washington, Ann Silver attended public schools. As professional support services did not exist, she was not mainstreamed. Her childhood education, she says, "was 90% guesswork, 10% art."

Silver received her BA in Commercial Art from Gallaudet University and an MA in Deafness [sic] Rehabilitation from New York University. Along with Betty G. Miller and Harry R. Williams, she has the distinction of being one of the founding members of the Deaf Art Movement (DAM) in the 1960s-1970s.

While working as a designer/art director for major book publishing companies in Manhattan, she burned the midnight oil as a sign language designer/illustrator as well as a Deaf Studies researcher/writer. In 1979, Silver helped establish a museum consortium for the Museum of Modern Art's Education Department—which earned MoMA a New York State Governor's Art Award. She was also a museum docent at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Living in Japan as a 1986 Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission Fellow, her pioneering cross-cultural research led to Japanese Deaf Studies.

Silver's artistic background is varied—ranging from poster art, graphics, drawings, logos and greeting cards to book jackets, Deaftoons and creative direction. While her work represents the visual arts wing of the academic Deaf Studies spectrum, she also deals in issues of discrimination based on hearing status (aka audism). As an oppression theorist, her work includes legal and policy analysis and identification of system barriers for agencies such as the Washington State Human Rights Commission.

Artist's Statement

"I fuse scholarship, art and sociopolitical philosophy from a Deafcentric point. As a Deaf woman who faces a world that still has no place for artists/art scholars not Hearing and male, my work may be construed as ideological art. However, art and activism can serve each other. Deaf Art is my soul, my heart, my conscience."

DAWN SKWERSKY, B. 1969

Biography

Dawn grew up in Philadelphia. Her parents didn't notice she was deaf until she was 4 years old. They didn't realize up to that point, she got by on reading their lips not hearing their voices. She graduated from Boston University's graduate program in Film Production. She wants to make films that educate as well as entertain audiences about deaf people and their culture by using deaf actors in "regular" roles not just "deaf" character roles. Her day job is at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital where she works as a web designer, merging film and the web to create multimedia for the Internet and for CD-ROMs. She lives in Boston with her two dogs.

Artist's Statement

"Growing up, I always went to the movies. Every week, my parents would bring us to the latest feature film or the latest subtitled foreign film playing on the big screen. Of course, I didn't always know what was being said in the American films. I loathed always having to ask my friends and parents what was going on or what was being said in the films.

"When I was in college, my classmates would always ask me to teach them about Deaf Culture and American Sign Language. This prompted me to start a club on campus that offered ASL classes as well as Deaf Culture events. My goal was to promote awareness about Deaf Culture.

"When I graduated, I took an Art Management course thinking that this will help me figure ways to continue promoting awareness about Deaf Culture and ASL. Through that, I landed an internship at a film festival and POOF! The answer was there. The best way for me to reach the most people was through FILM and VIDEO. I applied to Boston University for my MS in Film Production and the rest is history.

"All my films have deaf themes, but they also have universal themes as well. Look At Me So I Can Hear You shows the confusion of being a stranger in your own land. Someone She Loved deals with domestic violence. He Says, She Signs deals with over-protectiveness in relationships.

"And to cap it off, I can make films in which I know what is being said and people who don't know sign language need to read the subtitles!"

ETHAN SINNOTT, B. 1974**Biography**

"I was born April 24, 1974, in Phoenix, Arizona. I grew up mainstreamed in school and have my bachelor's degree of fine arts in illustration from the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York, and have exhibited my work at the Pyramid Arts Center in downtown Rochester. I have had a lifelong love for the arts, especially theatre. I am currently a first-year graduate student in Boston University's theatre scene design program, with career goals of becoming a director-designer and establishing my own Deaf repertory theatre."

Artist's Statement

"As an artist, I like to reinterpret artistic themes rooted in the Renaissance - early Baroque (Giotto, Michelangelo, et cetera) and before, which are well known throughout the art history of a Hearing world reliant on the spoken word as communication. I take such themes and try to create a strong affinity with the experience of the Deaf outsider, who becomes isolated, even forcibly detached, as an invisible spectator to major literary, biblical, and mythical events of the mainly inaccessible Hearing world. One becomes such a Deaf outsider, or compelled to empathize with such, while being a viewer of my work—or so I hope. The dark mood of my work is influenced by Caravaggio's biblical paintings, Goya after he became Deaf, and Schiele. I try to imply, with my painting style, my distaste for the trappings of Realism."

ROBIN TAYLOR, B. 1952**Biography**

As the daughter of a traveling salesman, Robin Taylor spent the first eight years of her life crisscrossing the United States with her family in a dusty dark green Mercury.

It was when she flunked first grade, after a sixth month stay in Seattle that Robin was diagnosed with Scar Tissue Damage and put on a new experimental tissue shrinkage pill. After one and a half years she regained most of her hearing but developed a pronounced stutter. At age 15 her mother enrolled her in a youth acting program and by 17 she left home to pursue Acting as a career.

Robin holds a BFA in Acting from United States International University School of Performing Arts, in San Diego and an MFA in Acting from UCLA. She has taught Movement for Actors at Pepperdine University in Malibu, CA.

During the early 1980's Robin had a tumor removed from her right (temporal/mastoid process) which left her hearing impaired. She continued to perform on both stage and television: On Broadway, A Chorus Line, and Sally Marr & Her Escorts; Off-Broadway, Nonsense; On Television, The Rockford Files, Off the Minnesota Strip (which was the movie of the week), General Hospital, Law & Order. Robin was one of the last Warner Brothers Contract Players.

In the 1990's Robin began to retreat from the theater world and

found an outlet for her creative expression through sculpture. Her performing background still inspires her many pieces, which grace the homes of writers, actors, doctors, sound designers and even an Emmy Award winning director. She has shown in Los Angeles, Kansas, Vermont and London.

Robin sculpts from her own history and theatrical background. She works with Polich Art Works and Tallix Foundries.

Artist's Statement:

"The philosophy behind my sculpture comes from a very private place. Many of my works deal with the emotional frustration of being between two language worlds and I use my past history, medical events and daily life experiences to create them.

"My name is Robin Taylor and I'm a Hard of Hearing Artist. With my hands I connect my voice to these two worlds and tell my story. Maybe yours is a part of them too."

MARY J. THORNLEY, B. 1950**Biography**

Ms. Thornley, who is a resident of Vancouver, BC, was born in 1950 and grew up in Elkhart, IN, where she attended public school. She received her BA from Indiana University at South Bend in 1987, and her MFA from the University of Washington in 1990.

In 1992, Ms. Thornley received an Independent New Works Program grant to produce "The Enigma Unravelled: She was a Native Signer," an exploration of the influence of Deaf culture on art, past and present.

In 1999 she participated in a group show titled 'Works by Deaf Women' in New York. She is currently artist-in-residence at Gallaudet University.

Artist's Statement

"Currently I begin a painting by laying some lines on stretched and gessoed canvas. Then I add forms with color and rotate the canvas. I do this repeatedly, losing and finding the image, building up the color in washes. I work primarily in charcoal and oils. I focus on deaf life or deaf experience, and the works are projections from these ruminations."

My goal is to leave a body of work that says 'Deaf artist!'"

RON TRUMBLE, B. 1951**Biography**

Ron Trumble was born deaf in a hearing family and was raised in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, attending public schools after four years at the Florida School for the Deaf. Ron Trumble received his BFA in 1979 from the School of American Craftsmen at Rochester Institute of Technology with high honors. He was an understudy for the part of Orin in the Broadway production of Children of a Lesser God while he had a woodworking studio in New Rochelle, NY in 1979.

Trumble is a member of Nexus, a twelve-member woodworking cooperative, as well as owner of his one-person company, Trumblewood.

His current designs are influenced by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles Rennie Mackintosh, both of whom designed furniture for the interiors of their buildings. Evidence of their influence emerges in little details, such as the back panel of a chair that extends its slats to the floor, which strongly resembles Mackintosh's style. Trumble does not, however, allow the trends to dictate his designs. "If I don't like the newest trend, I go my own way," he says.

Artist's Statement

"Mostly I make tables, beds, and tables of various inlay designs. I am the original maker of 'Cutting Books' (wooden cutting boards disguised as books) that are sold nationally. I currently work full time at Berkeley Mills Furniture Company, three blocks from my shop. I still work part time doing my stuff for clients and on speculation - which I later hand over to a store that sells my work on consignment. I am currently researching quilt making where I transfer quilt block design into veneers and inlays for dining and end table tops, cabinets and drawer fronts."

GUY WONDER, B. 1945

Biography

Guy Wonder is an artist who was born Deaf to a Deaf family in Washington State. He credits a Deaf teacher at the residential school in Vancouver for encouraging him to do original work. In 1969 he was one of the first 70 students to the newly opened NTID. He got an AA degree in art, and went to New York where he did freelance work and later joined the design and display staff of Bloomingdale's where he worked for 5 years. While in New York he created theatre sets, make up, costume and poster design for New York Deaf Theater. He also was involved with the Museum of Modern Art, giving lectures and tours.

Guy Wonder moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1990, where he became Member of the Board of Directors of D.E.A.F. Media, Inc. and DCARA. He was the Artistic Director for Visual Arts of "Celebration: Deaf Artists and Performers '91 and '94". He is also a principal presenter in the "D.E.A.F. Media at the Oakland Museum Project." He has produced theater sets and costume design for Sign Rise Theater and Ohlone College. He also gives arts workshops for Deaf people with AIDS and HIV nationally. Mr. Wonder was a member of the original May 1989 De'Via group.

descriptions of artworks

CHUCK BAIRD, B. 1947

Grant Thy Spirit, 1999

Oil on canvas, framed with feathers, 24" w x 36" h

"This is a portrait of Danny Lucero standing and holding his own personal blessing feather with his finger and thumb in the handshape 'F' for feather and spirit. While I am not a scholar and am not certain of the symbology, I like the sense of 'spirit' that appears to be signed in the way Danny moves the feather. The background of this painting is a sunset view of a locale called the 'Valley of the Gods' in the southeastern corner of Utah. Danny is an acquaintance of mine who is part Navajo. I may have some Native American blood in me, and this is part of the reason I feel Danny and I hit it off from the beginning. I have been to Sedona, AZ, every summer for 10 years, and the history and culture of the Native American peoples of that region have made a deep impression on me."

PLEASE BUT, 1999

Mixed Media, 11" h x 11" d x 36" w

This three dimensional wood curving is constructed in such a way that the train crossing gate can be moved. The gates are in the extended-index-finger hand shape used to denote the number one, and there is a notepad on which is written the words "PLEASE BUT."

The inspiration for this work is a classic deaf joke. A Deaf person who has waited a long time at a closed railroad crossing but can see no trains coming approaches the crossing attendant to ask him to open the gate. Unsure of his command of English, he first signs to himself how he should make the request, and then writes it as an ASL gloss: "PLEASE BUT."

Be My Valentine, Love Series, No. 3, 1999

Mixed Media, 14" w x 17" h

"This work incorporates one of my own chest x-rays, with two thin painted pieces of wood and oil paint on two pieces of wood sculptures with handshapes for 'heart' glued on a thin piece of wood cut out to show the movement of the sign."

Remembering the Fitzgerald Key, 1999

Oil on canvas, 18" h x 36" w

The Fitzgerald Key was a mechanical technique for teaching English grammar that was widely used when I was in school. It was based on the theory that the structure of any sentence could be analyzed and that this analysis was a useful way to teach English to deaf students. The Fitzgerald Key was phased out during the 1960s and 1970s, but will be immediately recognized by many Deaf people.

IRENE BARTOK, B. 1965

Divine Power, 1995

Photograph 18" w x 20" h

"I took this picture of a carved stone door knocker in the shape of a hand near Major Lake in northern Italy. It influenced the way I see things in my life. It made me look back on my childhood: I was born deaf and as a child, I had a very frustrating period growing up.

"This stone door knocker, set against a stone door, has connotations of 'Eternity.' In the form of a woman's hand, it is symbolic of a 'mother,' an Angel of Good from whom anyone who knocks at this door will receive a roof over their head, food to satisfy their hunger, and a bed to rest. The ring on her middle finger has a universal meaning - love from the heart. The ball that the hand is holding represents a world, a universe that the hand is always in touch with.

"The hand also represents our language, and it is ironic that this hand-shaped door knocker is set in stone, which calls to mind the phrase 'stone-deaf.' If my hands don't exist, then I become helpless as an artist. This hand has a seemingly divine power in which all these elements come marvelously together. This is proof of how powerful a hand can give me as a Deaf individual and artist."

JEFF CARROLL, B. 1967

Deaf Like You, 1998

Plaster of Paris, 14" h x 12" w x 7" d

This work is one of 8 small pieces that Mr. Carroll created specifically for DEAFESTIVAL '98, a major arts festival in Louisville, KY. The idea for this work came to him a few years earlier in a conversation with some friends. A Deaf man who was just beginning to realize his true identity used the phrase "Deaf like you" and that remark brought to the artist's mind a large mural at Gallaudet University created by Chuck Baird. In the spring of 1998, Mr. Carroll embodied this idea in the form of a plaster sculpture.

CONNIE M. CLANTON, B. 1947

Expression of Hands, 1998

Intaglio, 14" w x 14" h

The background is blue and purple and contains golden writing. The larger hand is offering support to the smaller hand. The hands in black express a poem by the artist's daughter, Natalie Denise Clanton:

"Sign Language is wonderful. It is a wonderful way to express yourself with your hands. I couldn't imagine a world without speaking hands. Just imagine a world without hands that can express themselves with the help of us. It is a great way to show how you feel without using your voice."

Deaf Woman, 1998

Intaglio, 14" w x 14" h

The woman, shown in profile, is from the past and shows how far we have come. The words "deaf woman" are written vertically on the lower left of the subject's body.

Cherish ASL, 1996

Intaglio, 14" w x 14" h

"I wanted to express how we do value our language and communication. The meaning of this work is obvious - two hands signing and fingerspelling 'Cherish ASL.'"

Hands, 1998

Collograph, 11" w x 9" h

"These hands are parts of a community that shares many things."

Talking Hands, 1998

Collograph, 11" w x 9" h

"The spiral on the hands gives off a spiritual feeling that is long lasting. I enjoy drawing hands expressing thoughts and feelings."

SUSAN DUPOR, B. 1969

Transportation Hub, 1995

Oil on masonite, Diptych 10 1/2" w x 8 1/2" h

"The diptych is an analogy of prostitutes and ABC card peddlers who are often seen in metropolitan areas. During my residency in Chicago, I traveled around the city by public transportation and would occasionally encounter a peddler trying to sell ABC cards to the passengers. It was embarrassing. I personally thought they were giving deaf people the reputation of being beggars, while many other deaf people were trying very hard to prove themselves equal to hearing people in the hearing world. Those people selling cards just reverse the whole struggle and image of deaf people."

...push the red button, 1995

Oil on masonite, 18" w x 15 1/2" h

"The cymbal-clapping chimpanzee was a personal icon of my childhood. When I was growing up, my parents would occasionally take me to an audiologist to have my hearing tested. The audiologist would take me to a heavy dull room, where he would seat me, encase my head in bulky earphones, and then instruct me to push a red button whenever I heard a sound through the earphones. Those earphones were very heavy, and my ears felt like they were sliding off my head. When he left the room and closed that heavy door, locking me in, I was all alone in a room with dull green walls perforated with countless holes. There was a toy cymbal-clapping chimpanzee on a shelf that appeared neurotic and filled with anxiety, and it seemed to stare at me until the end of the testing session."

Divergence, 1997

Oil, six panels 9" w x 71/4" h

"Zoology has always been my passion. I find it heartbreaking that numerous species are endangered due to human encroachment and exploitation. The evolution of primates fascinates me because they are the closet cousins of ours in the Animal Kingdom. In this series I examined the remarkably diverse hand forms that are a result of Natural Selection. Like the other primates, we humans use our hands endlessly, and hands are the primary tools of communication for Deaf people."

Musical Chairs

Oil, 27 1/2" w x 23 1/2" h

"This is a memoir painting about irony. Deaf children in the 'mainstream setting' public schools I attended were expected to attend music classes. One frequent activity was playing musical chairs. The lights were switched on and off simultaneously as the music was played on and off. There was a lot of excitement in playing this game although the music was not relevant."

Coexistence, 1998

Oil on canvas, 36" w x 27" h

"This painting is about the emergence of the bilingual and bicultural philosophy in Deaf Education. Here, two young deaf women are shown conversing in American Sign Language, while formal rules of English grammar - verb tenses, sentence structures, and the like - are printed across the canvas. Educators and activists who advocate bilingual-bicultural education are trying to that deaf people can master two languages, ASL and English."

Sss-speech, 1998

Oil on masonite, 6" w x 7" h

"Speech Therapy is often one component of a deaf or hard of hearing child's individual educational plan (IEP). The outcome sought is the ability to speak clearly and correctly. For some children, these classes are a complete waste of time, but others manage to develop some skill. One of the drills in my speech class was to get the 's' sound right. We were given circular paper things to put on the tip of our tongues to help us form the 's' sound."

Narcissus, 1999

Oil, 27" w x 19" h

"An adolescent girl signs 'I Love You' to herself. The mirror image is symbolic of Narcissus, who in Greek mythology falls in love with himself upon seeing his reflection in a pool of water and is subsequently turned into a flower."

Child and TTY, 1997

Embroidery, 10 1/2" w x 11" h

"A couple of years ago, I worked as teacher at a summer camp for deaf children. The youngest camper was an adorable but mischievous five-year-old from a hearing family. One lesson was to introduce the TTY to the younger deaf students, and for this I

used the camp's compact portable TTY. This boy was fascinated with the TTY, and I believe this was probably his first encounter with the device. He formed the phone handshape and acted out putting the phone on the TTY. He seemed to know how important it is to be able to communicate with the world around him."

A Lesson, 1999

Embroidery, 12 1/2" w x 9 3/4" h

A "Deaf can do it" reminder to deaf students in a hearing dominated world. The word "can" is made into a pun.

PAUL JOHNSTON, B. 1952*Spirtualism, 1998*

Watercolor, 22" w x 29" h

"This work is based on the stylized expressive and experience parts of the communication in the body soul."

Structure II, 1998

Watercolor, 22" w x 29" h

"How a group of signing hands work together:"

Unity of Communication, 1998

Watercolor, 29" w x 22" h

"Each visual communicator shares visual information and language."

Lyric I, 1998

Paper, 24" w x 24" h

"One noble image is a visual musical instrument inside the arm using the communicative hand."

Lyric II, 1998

Paper, 14" w x 35" h

"One artistic image is a visual musical instrument inside the arm using the communicative hand."

1998, 1998

Paper, 16" w x 15" h

"This is a visual learner; depending on visual language seen through the true eye."

TONY LANDON MCGREGOR, B. 1958*ASLized Mimbres Fish, 1995*

Woodburned Gourd Art, 13" h x 11" d

Classic southwestern images from the Mimbres culture and "sleeping beauty" turquoise stones adorn this large lidded gourd bowl in an imaginative juxtaposition of two cultures, Deaf and southwestern Pueblo Indian. Creating a new frontier in DeVIA art, the American Sign Language (ASL) sign for "fish" is blended

with a stylized Mimbres (ancient Southwestern Indian tribe) fish image. This new style appears in many of Tony's gourd artworks as well as drawings, prints, and paintings. Tony's woodburned gourds with ASL/Native American motifs are probably the first artworks to incorporate De'VIA symbolism into a specifically southwestern art form.

Native American Deaf Experiences, 1999
Mixed Media (woodburned gourd w/inlaid turquoise stone),
9.5" h x 13" d

This mixed media artwork consists of the 26 alphabet signs that overlap with many classic southwestern Pueblo Indian animal images from New Mexico and Arizona. One large circular design includes the famed San Ildefonso Pueblo feather designs and a water serpent, while three smaller circular designs illustrate the artist's sentiments about marvels such as the Rancho de Taos Church, the Taos Pueblo and Monument Valley. The checkered band between the circular designs is characteristic of the Santo Domingo Indian style.

ASL Eagle Over Hands Monument, 1999
Mixed media (Watercolor and Ink) 20" w x 24" h

This mixed media painting depicts an eagle, formed from multiple images of the ASL eagle sign, soaring over the southwestern country (monoliths looking like hands surrounded by desert mountains and canyons). The proud Deaf American eagle is beginning to show its true colors and is unafraid of expressing itself in ASL. The artistic concept is that the eagle is free from oppression and is soaring high due to society's growing acceptance of ASL.

BETTY G. MILLER, B. 1934

Ameslan Flag, 1974
Acrylic/Mixed Media, 23" h x 40" w x 4" d

This is an American flag painted in acrylics on canvas on wood, with Dr. Miller's revised version of the national anthem "Oh, Can't You See...?" using stick-on letters, and relief shapes of ears on the red-white stripes. The "stars" on the blue square shape of the flag are all eye buttons. It stresses the oppression that kept Ameslan (now called ASL) unrecognized as the natural visual language of the deaf.

TTY Call, 1997
Neon Assemblage, 21" w x 21" d x 26" h, old TTY, hand/phone / half-figure

This is an assemblage of an old TTY, painted orange and with the stick-on letters GA and SK on the TTY's readout line, which is lit up by a neon light. In addition, on the back of the TTY is a half figure piece in a collage and surrounded by a swirl of blue and purple neon light. There are also pieces of curled neon lights on each side of the TTY. On the keyboard of the TTY is a hand, placed as typing a TTY message.

A Tribute to a Deaf Artist, 1999
Neon/Acrylic/Mixed Media, 21" h x 31" w

This work is a collage of photocopied pieces of Harry Williams' work, with other materials and acrylic painting plus a few pieces of neon lights on the canvas. It is a tribute to the many young visual deaf artists who have passed away from terminal diseases before their work could reach a peak of excellence or gain them recognition of their professional talents.

Untitled, 1993
Acrylic/Mixed Media, 32 3/4" w x 34 1/2" h

This is a portrait of a person, almost certainly deaf, with an enlarged ear and surrounded by cochleas, hearing aids, and other devices. It clearly stresses a pathological view of deafness. The wires running through the hands may be the artist's way of saying that one must choose between the pathological approach and one's Deaf Identity.

JOAN POPOVICH-KUTSCHER, B. 1951

No Free Way to Protect, 1993
Photo-etching aquarelle on handmade paper; 16" w x 20" h

"My parents did not understand me and they did not try to use sign language with me. They were not willing to listen to me. They totally ignored me and denied me education. Because I was not learning anything I could not express myself."

Confused Emotion in Life, 1990
Photo-etching aquarelle on handmade paper; 7" w x 7" h

"I was confused emotionally because my parents did not share their love or care for me which was because I was deaf."

No Way Out, 1993
Photo-etching aquarelle on handmade paper; 7" w x 7" h

"When I was tested at a year and a half old and my parents found out I was deaf but they refused to believe it. The Superior Court of Los Angeles had me officially diagnosed as being retarded. My parents and the court wanted to have me committed to the hospital for mentally retarded for life. When the hospital realized I was just deaf, it took a long time for me to get transferred to the California School for the Deaf."

What Is Saying, 1991
Photo-etching aquarelle on handmade paper; 11" w x 15" h

"Most people around me were hearing and they did not use sign language. They were talking to other people and I did not understand them. I was always asking my sister what other people were saying, and my sister would tell me what they were talking about."

Tight of Open Feelings, 1995
Photo-etching aquarelle on handmade paper; 16" w x 20" h

"When I was transferred to the California School for the Deaf, Riverside, I lagged behind socially. Whenever I got frustrated, my behavior was based on the ways a mentally retarded child would react, with grotesque postures and unusual facial distortions. I was not well liked and I was frustrated about my social life. I could not share anything with other students. Finally, I learned appropriate ways to socialize with other students and had more of a normal interaction with them."

Point Lose Class, 1994

Photo-etching aquarelle on handmade paper, 7" w x 7" h

"I was frustrated with the learning process. I was not interested in class work because I never received any education while I was at the state hospital but I was very interested in art. Later in my life I appreciated the value of education and pursued a college education."

ORKID SASSOUNI, B. 1971

Book # 1, 1997-1998

8" x 8" book with 27 Black and White Photographs

Book # 2, 1998-1999

6" x 6" book with 31 Black and White Photographs

PAUL SETZER

A Person's Life Is Mixed of Sound and Vision, 1999

Acrylic on canvas, 12" w x 36" h

This work represents a person who is hard of hearing.

A Soldier's Life, 1999

Acrylic on canvas, 12" w x 36" h

This represents a person who was a soldier who lost his or her hearing on the battlefield.

A Person's Life Is Vision without Sound, 1999

Acrylic on canvas, 12" w x 36" h

This represents a person who is profoundly deaf.

ANN SILVER

Will the Real Goya Please Stand Up? (Food for Thought Series), 1996

Mixed media, 20" w x 16" h

Was there such a thing as a d/Deaf identity in Goya's heyday? Were the artist alive today, just how would Goya feel if he were regarded as a "late-deafened artist"? And would he classify his work as Deaf Art?

The idea that if d/Deaf artists are recognized—living or dead, all they might have been written about them is heaps on their medical condition—and their ability to overcome functional

limitations or societal barriers might pass unchallenged.

Kellogg's Deaf Studies, Not Pathology (Food for Thought Series), 1996

Mixed Media, 16" w x 20" h

The breakfast cereal box is more than just food; it is a metaphor for packaging in everyday life and a form of entertainment. As a satirical interpretation, my work is an intersection of two cultures and languages: hearing and Deaf—as well as English and ASL. A bi-bi amusement to feast one's eyes on, that is.

Deaf Identity Crayons: Then & Now (Crayon Box Series), 1999

Mixed Media, 20" w x 16" h

Centuries ago we were a box of crayons, not human beings. Because pathological, medical and audiological viewpoints have prevented us from being seen in a linguistic-cultural context, archaic labels have been embedded in our language and literature—some of which still exist in this day and age.

The 20th century has witnessed shifts in terminology notwithstanding. As it has taken decades to remove the poisonous power out of the anomalous descriptors given to our unwitting community, we must not allow hearing people to define who we are, how we should be identified, or what is semantically apropos for us.

ETHAN SINNOTT, B. 1974

Beethoven, 1997

Oil on canvas, 36" w x 24" h

"Beethoven came about after having visited Vienna, Austria, three years ago. I had read the Heiligenstädter Testament, a series of letters Beethoven wrote (but never sent) to his brother expressing intense torment and bitterness over his unwanted Deafness in 1802. The harmful stereotype of Deaf people as dumb, undesirable, and even retarded has endured throughout centuries and civilizations; even Aristotle stated that Deaf people were incapable of reason and logic. Such widespread perceptions are no more different in today's America than they were in ancient Greece or 1802's Vienna.

"As a Deaf artist I became riveted by those letters, and was hurt by the idea Beethoven would impose upon himself the unnecessary stigma of being Deaf. With stark violence, Beethoven strains to hear the music in his head, futilely willing himself like a god suddenly powerless to hear something, anything.

"Deafness is not a handicap, but a unique culture and way of life. The only handicap is the stereotype forced upon Deafness by ignorant minds. Beethoven did not have to damn his Deafness as a tragic fate."

The Last Supper, 1997

Oil on canvas, 36" w x 24" h

"The Last Supper is my reinterpretation of a classical Renaissance theme according to the contemporary Deaf outsider's viewpoint.

Biblical and mythological stories were a popular genre among painters and sculptors throughout the Renaissance, and became artistic conventions of their era.

"The moment during The Last Supper I have chosen to portray is Jesus' revelation that he would come to be betrayed by one of his twelve disciples. Instead of the usual full-frontal and linear arrangement of the same scene found in Renaissance paintings, I set the scene up as if being observed by a Deaf outsider in a Hearing world. Jesus' back is turned to the viewer, who cannot see his face and what he's saying. The disciples' violent, vehement protestations—as human nature tends to shy away from fallibility and culpability—become more mysterious, confusing even, with everyone talking over each other. Judas is not made so clear-cut; it could easily be a table full of Judases. This dramatic event, as it unfolds, is an absurd, bizarre spectacle to the Deaf person who obviously cannot hear what is obviously being spoken."

ROBIN TAYLOR, B. 1952

Silent Scream, 1998
Bronze relief, 1 1/2" h x 13" w x 4" d

"Silent Scream is based on an incident when I was 10 year old when I was in terror. I knew I was screaming. I felt the pressure pushing down on my chest. But I couldn't hear my voice! (It was due to my continuous infections and scar tissue damage, which returned and hemorrhaged in my 30's)."

Trapped, 1999
Bronze/stained steel/ wire and acrylic, 12" h x 12" w

"Trapped is about the frustration, physical pain and inner loss and rage we all feel sometimes. (It's a personal piece for me). The Wire Mask represents our façade. Our emotional and physical covers. The little girl is that very private fear inside all of us."

Avenue of Loss, 1998
Bronze, Stainless Steel, Copper on Marble Base,
15" h x 12" w x 8" d
(Limited Edition of 12)

"Avenue of Loss deals with (depending on your point of view) a hearing mother trying to communicate with her deaf little girl who is following the river of her heart (the doll), chasing the doll and leaving the oral world and continuing on her own road. And the mother's own hand turns to stiff wood (because she uses no ASL and has no language skills to communicate) and all she can think is that her child is headed down the drain and lost forever. That's why I named it 'Avenue of Loss' - no communication!"

MARY J. THORNLEY, B. 1950

Milan, Italy, 1880 II, 1994
Oil on canvas, 37" w x 39" h
This painting shows ASL (American Sign Language) being

executed by a firing squad, and is based upon Goya's *The Third of May, 1808*. Thornley's painting, however, refers to the infamous Milan Congress of 1880, where sign language was banned in deaf schools worldwide, and many signing deaf teachers were dismissed from their posts. Only recently has sign language begun to be reinstated as a valid language in its own right.

Two Deaf Musicians, 1997
Oil on canvas, 37" w x 39" h

"Deaf people enjoy music too; it's not a hearing thing. Therefore it's appropriate—and overdue—to render two deaf players cubistically sawing away at their instruments."

RON TRUMBLE, B. 1951

Podium, 1999
Appleply, 46" h x 20" w x 20" d

The top part of this piece is shaped into the silhouette of a pair of hands which appear to be holding a book. It is made of lacquered appleply maple. The curator of the Deaf Studies VI exhibit asked Ron if he could make a stand that would hold two small books of photographs, and this ingenious piece was the result.

"DEAFized" Dresser, 1999
Wood and bronze, 40" h x 32 1/2" w x 22" d

The bronze pulls of this dresser are molded from an African American doll with the hands signing "dresser." Trumble went out to Toys R Us for the most perfect pair of hands, and commissioned another artist to make the bronze pieces. Notice that left and right pulls are anatomically correct. The piece is made of lacquered hard maple, English sycamore, and beech. The drawer bottoms are done in a colored dye, which is Ron Trumble's trademark. "At last a piece of furniture that shows ASL in a 3-D form— a mirror image of ASL on a functional object." Trumble had made two dressers in the past very much like this one in design and this is his third "Deafized" piece.

GUY WONDER, B. 1945

Gossip, 1999
Mixed media, 45" w x 47" h
A collage of several materials including wire mesh to form the bodies of the crows whose wings contain hands and fingers.

descriptions of films

SUSAN DUPOR, B. 1969

To Have/To Find, 1991

16-mm transferred to VHS format, 5 minutes

This is an animation of the artist's personal story about dreams and confidence, with her dog, Lucky.

VICTOR NOTARO, B. 1958

Footwork, 1994

VHS video, 5 minutes

"I've always liked tap dancing and I wanted to show the rhythm of the music through the movement of the foot."

Cable Surfing, 1994

VHS video, 5 minutes

"This is an evening with a bored man channel surfing which was common for Deaf individuals in search of something interesting to watch in a time when we did not have captioned TV."

Oz, 1994

VHS video, 5 minutes

"A story about dreams and fantasy."

Star, 1993

VHS video, 5 minutes

"This is what I imagined what a drug experience would be like."

Tripod, 1995

16-mm film transferred to VHS format, 5 minutes

"I wanted to convey a paranoid feeling throughout this film: 'and it could happen to you!'"

Connie, 1994

VHS video, 5 minutes

"Connie had a Deaf brother but she was hearing herself. Connie could sign well and often socialized with Deaf people. She eventually died of AIDS. I made this film about her because hearing people who learn sign language and enjoy being with Deaf people earned my respect."

The 3 Skeletons, 1991

8mm film transferred to VHS format, 5 minutes

"An animation about skeletons."

TRACEY SALAWAY, B. 1961

Flying Fingers, 1995

7 1/2 minutes, VHS tape

"This work uses computer-generated animation to create a story about 'barriers.' A barrier is an obstacle, impediment or hindrance. It is an enclosure or feeling you are behind prison walls. It appears as an enigma. There is a feeling that there is no freedom to roam! For example, looking through a glass could represent a visual barrier and the probability that what you are seeing is unreachable. Breaking through the glass represents breaking down the barrier! As I explored this theme in terms of more narrowing topic, a conceptual form of communication. We are in a signing environment. Go find out and see what might creep underneath your skin!"

DAWN SKWERSKY, B. 1969

He Says, She Signs, 1995, 10 minutes

He Says, She Signs is a 16mm, b/w, dramatic short about a relationship between a deaf girl and a hearing boy in college. Even though he is hearing, can he really hear her? Can the relationship work?

Starring: Julie Thompson, Rick Mauran, and Jason Acaro

Director; Producer; Writer: Dawn Skwersky

Director of Photography: Ramon Fabregas

Editor: Yeong Chen

Someone She Loved, 1995, 12 1/2 minutes

Someone She Loved is a 16mm, b/w, dramatic short. A deaf couple's relationship is the focus of the film. As we follow the couple, the loving and tender moments start to escalate into violence. The boyfriend becomes aggressive, demanding, and abusive. Towards the end, the girlfriend needs to decide between staying with the boyfriend she loves or leaving to save her life.

Starring: Margaret Arnold, Robert Schleifer

Director; Producer; Writer; Editor: Dawn Skwersky

Look At Me So I Can Hear You, 1993, 5 minutes

Look At Me So I Can Hear You is a 16mm, b/w, dramatic short about a deaf girl who doesn't know sign language and is the only deaf person in her mainstreamed school. The film shows VISUALLY the confusion that is felt when the girl doesn't know what is going on.

Starring: Christine Duffy Skwersky

(Note: Christine was my brother's girlfriend at that time, and my brother plays HER brother in this short film. She is now my sister-in-law.)

Director; Writer; Producer; Editor: Dawn Skwersky

CSDF students

Masks made by the students at the California School for the Deaf, Fremont.
9 masks, approximately 9" x 10" each

Yekaterina Belorusets, b. 1979

"I was born in Russia. The black side of my mask shows the frustration of not understanding my family and being isolated from other deaf people. The white side of my face shows the freedom and happiness I feel now that I'm able to learn and communicate. I feel free."

Jenamarie Daviton-Sciandra, b. 1981

"My mask resembles how I feel as a hard of hearing person. It also resembles how I feel about my life. The knots symbol the confusion that I struggle to understand. No one can understand what it's like to be able to hear and speak and not hear and not speak. Only people who are hard of hearing can understand how it feels to be in two worlds; that I don't feel 100% part of either world. This is me as a hard of hearing person and just as a person alone."

Carlos Diaz, b. 1979

"The mask is gold because the Deaf are #1. The xx over the mouth means I can't speak. The metal plates over the ears means I can't hear. The brain shows that by learning to communicate, the light finally goes on."

Jan Epitacio, b. 1981

"One ear is covered with a metal plate... I can't hear. I put a zipper on my mouth—the hand in the wave is pulling it shut. The water represents silence and the need to use sign language. My larger than normal eyes are happy when I see sign language!"

Laben Hur, b. 1980

"I remember when I was a kid I told my mother I wanted to go to a Deaf church. I attended my parents' church, but I didn't understand what was said. I longed to go to the Deaf church. Now I can go to a Deaf Church and understand it all because of ASL."

Tim Lopez, b. 1981

"The American Flag stands for freedom and equality. With ASL the deaf are now free to be themselves and can do everything other people can do but hear."

Bekah Mandel, b. 1984

"I wanted my mask to symbolize two worlds; the hearing world and the deaf world. I live in both worlds, the deaf world because I am deaf, and the hearing world because my family and the rest

of the world is hearing. Day and night fit best for this theme. The words that are secretly written on the mask relate to the issue of two worlds. For example, "A ray of sunlight gives the star its twinkle." "A starry night gives you the warmth of the day." I believe these show that there is always some kind of connection between these two worlds like a bridge.

Ronz Ian Reasol, b. 1979

"The puzzle pieces show the frustration of not understanding what's going on... not being able to communicate with my family. The upper person is making fun of me—in my old mainstream program—because they didn't understand the deaf. The shadow of the hand goes both ways—I'm pushing others out and they're oppressing me. I don't want my tears of frustration show. The piece on my mouth shows me trying to understand lipreading. Puzzle pieces at my ears shows my lack of hearing."

Meuy Saelee, b. 1980

"The face is behind the door. I am wanting to be out to experience new things but I am Deaf and not allowed to go out. I am discriminated against because I am deaf. The hand won't let me communicate and be free. I'm still frustrated with my family. Tears show that."

acknowledgments

The conference committee wishes to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts by the exhibit's curator, Brenda Schertz. We thank her for her care and expertise in mounting such a significant and spectacular exhibit for the benefit of both the conference participants and community alike.

We are deeply indebted to many people for the help without which the exhibit would not have been possible. It is not possible to name all of them, but special thanks are due to:

John Dunleavy for his time and patience editing this brochure.

The participating artists, for their patience, flexibility and cooperation, and for the loan of their works.

Gail Wright, of the California School for the Deaf at Fremont, for encouraging her students to participate in the exhibit.

Nancy Bloch, of the National Association for the Deaf, for the loan of works by Betty G. Miller; Lesley Kushner and Lewis Merkin for the loan of works by Susan Dupor; and Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Bruce for the loan of works by Robin Taylor.

Sally Hambrecht for her donation of wine for the reception.

John Dunleavy, Hedy Udovich Stern, Ron Trumble and Guy Wonder, for serving as Gallery tour guides.

Ron Trumble for the dresser and podium specially designed and made for this exhibit.

All the volunteers who have so eagerly assisted with many different aspects of the exhibit.

