

ELEMENTS OF A CULTURE: VISIONS BY DEAF ARTISTS

BRENDA SCHERTZ AND HARLAN LANE

INTRODUCTION

An entire genre of vibrant, eloquent minority art has largely escaped the attention of art scholars and the general public, and that is Deaf Art. Deaf Art is art—oils, watercolors, acrylic, pen and ink, video, photography, sculpture—that is an expression of Deaf culture. Deaf Art communicates not the sensory experience of silence, but rather the values of Deaf culture. These include the beauty of sign language and its painful oppression, the breakdown of family life when hearing parents cannot communicate in sign language, the joys of Deaf bonding, and the abuses of audiology when the Deaf difference is treated as deviance. Deaf Art often includes the expression of turning points in the artist's acculturation to Deaf culture, such as the discovery of language, or turning points in the history of Deaf peoples, such as the 1880 Milan Congress prohibiting signed languages in Europe and America. In short, Deaf Art is like other genres of minority art (for example, African-American art) in engaging viewers aesthetically while communicating universals of minority oppression and bonding and a unique vision that broadens viewers' understanding of their humanity.

Deaf Art has largely escaped attention in the United States for the same reason that Deaf culture had done so until recently. The very large number of formerly hearing Americans who are clearly disabled by their deafness (an estimated 20 million) has overshadowed and miscast as disabled the smaller linguistic minority (less than a million) who are born Deaf or early become so, acquire American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language, marry Deaf and integrate into the society called (in ASL) the DEAF-WORLD.¹ The history of the American DEAF-WORLD reaches back to the founding of the United States and earlier to the DEAF-WORLD in Enlightenment France. This is a rich and complex culture with unique mores, values and

knowledge. Ever since the Gallaudet Revolution of 1988 and the drama *Children of a Lesser God* (more about these below) hearing Americans have been discovering what the Atlantic Monthly has called "the new ethnicity," but most have yet to discover its art.

Deaf artists, for whom being Deaf is a significant aspect of their lives, express their Deaf experiences in *Elements of Culture: Visions by Deaf Artists*. Northeastern University has organized and implemented this first National Touring Exhibit of Deaf Art upon which this article is based. More than two decades ago, Northeastern established a program of teaching and research in American Sign Language, soon joined by an interpreter education program. A cadre of Deaf students attends Northeastern, and it is the site of events of particular interest to the DEAF WORLD, notably the annual ASL Festival.

The flourishing of Deaf Art is a facet of a revolution in thought concerning Deaf people that is taking place, a change in construction as sweeping as the change that put African-American citizen in place of slave property; that put gay minority in place of homosexual sufferer; that put equal partnership for women in place of narrowly stereotyped roles such as nurse and housewife. In this revolution of thought, deafness-as-disability is increasingly replaced by Deaf as linguistic minority. To quote the former secretary-general of the United Nations: "For me and my colleagues, Deaf people are not a disability group [but] a linguistic minority. And I understand that recognizing Deaf people as a linguistic minority goes hand in hand with respect for the Deaf Community."²

ELEMENTS OF CULTURE: VISIONS BY DEAF ARTISTS

Deaf artists have been expressing the Deaf experience since the beginning of recorded Deaf history in eighteenth-century France.³ Deaf artists, like other

artists, have been strongly influenced by events in history, and their work reflects not only the individual perspective but also the universal experiences of an oppressed minority group.

The oppression of sign language that began in the 1860s⁴ was made official at the 1880 Milan Congress, a pivotal event in the “war of methods” between the oral and manual schools in the education of Deaf children. The shared educational experiences of Deaf children, particularly those brought up in the oral tradition, are popular themes among Deaf artists. Artworks dealing with the oppression of sign language that accompanies oral education often express very strong emotions.

During the heyday of oralism, it was believed that sign language was a primitive and fundamentally flawed method of encoding a spoken language. In many schools for the Deaf in the United States the use of sign language was perceived as an obstacle to the acquisition of English-language skills by Deaf students, and as a consequence all lessons were given in spoken English; that is, using the oral method. Sign language was strictly forbidden, and punishment for students caught using signs was often swift and harsh. This is the background for Betty G. Miller’s groundbreaking *Ameslan Prohibited*, a pen and ink drawing of a disembodied, shackled

pair of hands with dismembered fingers (Fig. 1). Sandi Inches Vasnich addresses the same theme in her batik, *Silence*, a portrayal of a pair of figures whose oversized folded hands seem to consist entirely of tightly interwoven fingers (Fig. 2). Being compelled to sit with hands folded in this manner actually was a technique to prevent students from signing. The “Silence” of the title is reinforced by the absence of mouths on the two faces.

In Betty G. Miller’s *Bell School, 1944*, named for an oral school in Chicago, the students are given the mechanical jaws of marionettes, a recurring image in Miller’s early work. The emphasis on the unused hands in this work indicates the forbidden nature of sign language. The letters on the background spell out the sounds required of Deaf children in speech training. Uzi Buzgalo, in his *I Want to Ride*, uses the image of a carousel to represent the signed, accessible language that is kept beyond the reach of the Deaf child (Fig. 3). The child in this work appears to be drowning in a pool of water, a metaphor for the difficulty the child faces in surviving the oral education environment. In this work a triangle represents the child, his parents, and the pathology of the cycle of oppression.

The printmaker Joan Popovich-Kutscher also makes frequent use of triangles, for example in her *Confusion*

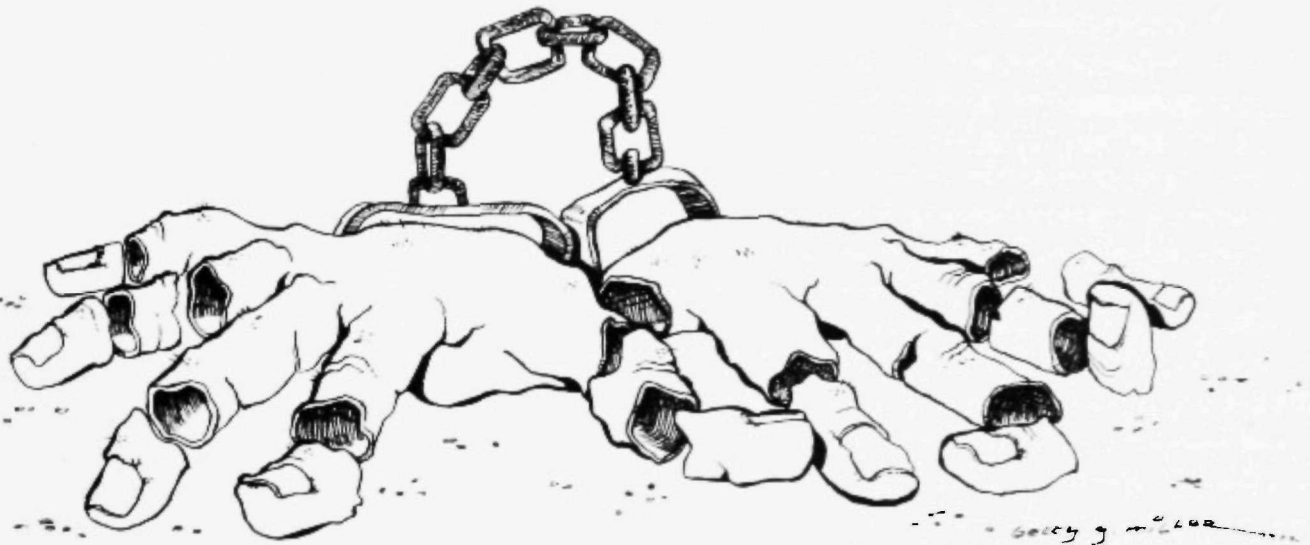


Fig. 1. Betty G. Miller, *Ameslan Prohibited*, 1972, pen and ink, 23x15 (courtesy of Sandi Inches Vasnich). Photo: Colortek.

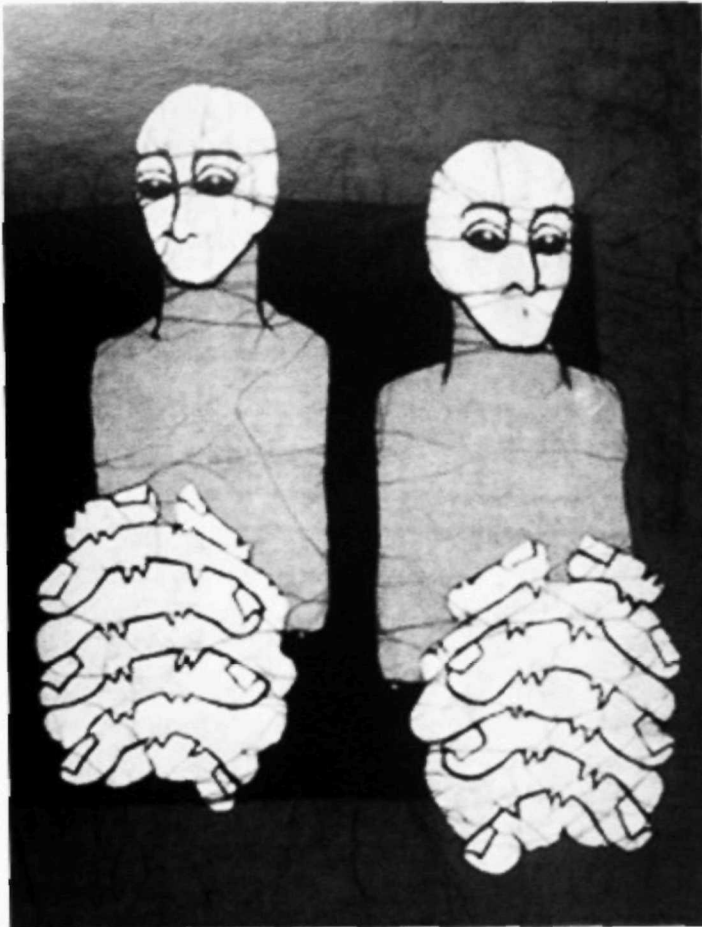


Fig. 2. Sandi Inches Vasnick, *Silence*, 1989, batik, 21x16. Photo: Colortek.

of *Mood*, where a triangle represents "three major parts of my life, my parents, the hospital and the school for the deaf." Popovich-Kutscher was kept in an institution for mentally retarded children even though her parents knew that she was only deaf, and this delayed for many years her formal acquisition of language. Rope is one of the most common recurring symbols in her work; it represents the oppression of having her hands were tied down so that she couldn't express herself. Popovich-Kutscher also uses acute angles, for instance the "sharp points" in *Effect Point*, to represent pain in her life (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5).

The painful period in the history of Deaf people that began with the 1880 Milan Congress lasted over 80 years. Only in the 1960s did progress towards the elimination of negative connotations of sign language

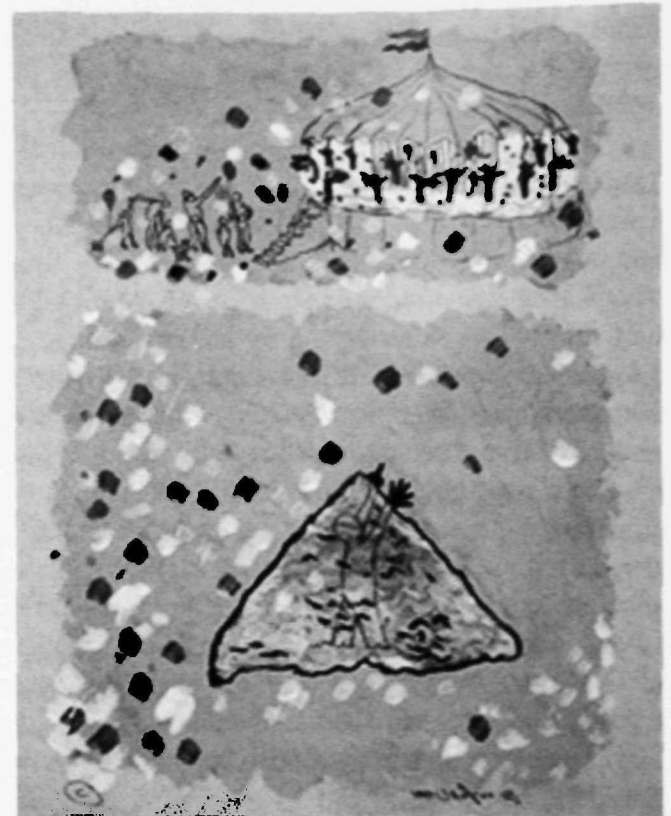


Fig. 3. Uzi Buzaglo, *I Want to Ride*, 1997, acrylic on paper, 33x38 (courtesy of Steve and Nancy Bock and family). Photo: Arthur S. Aubry.

begin. This was chiefly due to Dr. William Stokoe, Jr., chair of the English department at what was then Gallaudet College, whose research into the linguistics of American Sign Language established it as a distinct language in and of itself. His peers, both hearing and Deaf, largely ignored the 1960 publication of Stokoe's initial findings related to the linguistics of American Sign Language. The times, however, were beginning to change and the 1965 publication of Stokoe's second work finally began to attract attention.⁵ The newfound validation of ASL profoundly affected Deaf people's concept of their own language.

Technical developments in the 1970s had profound impact on the Deaf community. Open captioned television began in 1972 on the Public Broadcasting System with Julia Child's *French Chef* program. This

Brenda Schertz was born Deaf in a Deaf family and is a member of the Deaf Community. She organized her first exhibit of Deaf Culture Art in 1993, and is a co-director of the First National Touring Exhibit of Deaf Culture Art. Harlan Lane is hearing and is the other co-director of the touring exhibit. He is a strong advocate of culturally Deaf people. Among his published books are *When the Mind Hears* and *The Mask of Benevolence*.



Fig. 4. Joan Popovich-Kutscher, *Confusion of Mood*, 1999, etching/aquarelle on handmade paper, 10x10. Photo: Spike Mafford.



Fig. 5. Joan Popovich-Kutscher, *Effect Point*, 1993 etching/aquarelle on handmade paper, 7x7. Photo: Spike Mafford.

led to the development of closed-captioned technology that became generally available in 1980. Distribution of the Teletypewriter (TTY) began in 1968 and TTYs were in widespread use among Deaf people by the early 70s.⁶ The first TTYs were old Teletype machines fitted with modems that allowed Deaf people to type conversations over regular phone lines. Before the advent of the TTY there was no way Deaf people could use the telephone independently. Betty G. Miller celebrated the TTY in her neon work, *TTY Call* (Fig. 6).

The National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) was established in 1967 and one of its objectives was to be "an instrument which could positively influence social attitudes toward deaf people".⁷ NTD In its 1971-1972 national tour, "presented the Deaf experience in several of their works, for example in its original company piece, *My Third Eye*, a play in five parts about ASL and Deaf people. One of those segments, co-directed by the late beloved British Deaf actress and poet Dorothy Miles, features a ringmaster who displays two caged hearing people and explains their bizarre ways to the audience ("They see with their ears and sign with their mouths!")".⁸ This reflected a new and changing consciousness among Deaf people about their language and culture.⁹

Betty G. Miller's February 1972 one-woman art exhibit *Silent World*, held at Gallaudet's Washburn Arts Building, "may have been the first exhibition in the U.S. devoted to art expressing themes from the DEAF-WORLD. Since much of the work was highly critical of hearing oppression, the exhibit was controversial among both hearing and Deaf audiences. It also introduced many future Deaf leaders to Deaf Art for the first time".¹⁰ Miller's *Ameslan Prohibited*, included in this tour, was shown at *Silent World*.

The performance of NTD's *My Third Eye* at Gallaudet during the same weekend that *Silent World* opened gives some indication of the fresh cultural richness of the times. In *Sign Me Alice*, Gilbert Eastman's adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* (the basis for the film *My Fair Lady*) first produced in 1973, Eastman ridiculed the artificial signing systems then being developed.¹¹ Artificial signing systems were during this period being developed by hearing persons who believed that using signs in English word order, as opposed to the grammatical structure of American Sign Language, would result in improved reading and writing skills in deaf children. This was as stilted and artificial as employing a French vocabulary but an English word order.

The art colony *Spectrum – Focus on Deaf Artists* was founded by a group of hearing artists in Texas in 1975 with financial assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts. Betty G. Miller left Gallaudet to join them, and in 1977 *Spectrum* was officially launched with 22 Deaf performing and visual artists.¹² First based at a ten-acre ranch, *Spectrum* later moved to a renovated warehouse in downtown Austin. *Spectrum*'s first theater production was "A Play of Our Own," by the Deaf playwright Dorothy Miles, a comedy about a young Deaf woman who brings a hearing boyfriend home to meet her family. The American Deaf Dance Company choreographed works for Deaf dancers to perform independently of music.¹³ Betty G. Miller and Chuck Baird started an archive of slides containing works by Deaf artists in the U.S., and under Miller's direction the Spectrum Visual Arts Institute published a newsletter as well as hosting summer conferences on Deaf arts.¹⁴

Into the midst of this Deaf cultural resurgence came

a 1975 piece of federal legislation, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142), which had a profound influence on the subsequent history of the culture. Intended to provide choices for the educational placement of Deaf children, this law made the traditional education of Deaf children at schools for the deaf the least-favored approach, instead giving preference to placement in local educational programs that were frequently not able to accommodate their language needs.¹⁵

Susan Dupor's *I Interesting Hamster* reflects the experience of a Deaf student who spent years in mainstream programs (Fig. 7). The juxtaposition of the hamsters and the students is a metaphor for the "caged" environment of the self-contained classrooms typical of these programs. In mainstream schools, the term "Hearing Impaired" indicates a pathological disorder, and deaf students' audiological and speech development are of paramount importance. Dupor indicates this by



Fig. 6. Betty G. Miller, *TTY Call*, 1997, neon assemblage, 30x24. Photo: Betty G. Miller.



Fig. 7. Susan Dupor, *Interesting hamster*, 1993, oil on masonite, 49x49.5. Photo: Spike Mafford.



Fig. 8. Betty G. Miller, *Bell School*, 1944, 1972, oil/mixed media, 44x44 (courtesy of Tom Humphries). Photo: Spike Mafford.



Fig. 9. Thad Martin, *Articulatus (Read My Lips)*, 1994, ceramic, 34x78x48. From left to right, "aah," "ooo," "err," "ege," "mmm," and "uhh." Photo: Thad Martin.

portraying the students' heads in faceless cross section. Despite the twenty-year gap in between them, and fact that each was created independently of the other, there are striking similarities between this work and Betty G. Miller's *Bell School, 1944* (Fig. 8). Dupor's painting *PL 94-142* also relates to this experience; in this work the subjects cover their faces as if embarrassed by their deafness.

Thad Martin, who was educated exclusively in hearing schools, reflects on his experience in his ceramic grouping *Articulatus* (Fig. 9). This work, which consists of six ceramic heads ranging from 28 to 36 inches in height, tells of one Deaf person's experience, in the artist's words, "from an awakening to one's sense of self, through a struggle for footing in the hearing world, to an affirmation of one's wholeness and acceptance of the journey to come."

Barriers to communication are another linking theme in the exhibit. The effortless communication that



Fig. 10. Susan Dupor, *Family Dog*, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 56x57. Photo: Spike Mafford.

most hearing people take for granted is for Deaf people a rarity. Very few families of Deaf children acquire enough sign language skills to effectively communicate with their children. Susan Dupor expresses feelings typical to deaf children isolated in non-signing families in her *Family Dog*. The faces of other family members are blurred, indicative of the similarities between lipreading and viewing a TV program disrupted by static. In her bronze sculpture *Avenue of Loss*, Robin Taylor deals with the same issue of communication barriers inside the family. Here, the mother's arm turns into stiff pieces of wood "because she uses no ASL- and has no language skills to communicate" (Fig. 11). In *Family Dog*, the family members are depicted in cold blue hues with their hands tucked under their arms to signify their unwillingness to learn sign language. The barrier is given visible form by the bright yellow table separating the child from the rest of the family, and emphasized by the child's pose as the dog of the title, an object of affection but not one from which communication is expected. Similarly, the bars between the mother and daughter in *Avenue of Loss* embody the communication barrier.

Communication, pride in Deaf culture and cultural conflicts were the themes of *Children of a Lesser God*, which came to Broadway in 1980. The play won Tony awards, has been performed all around the country, and was made into the 1986 movie with William Hurt and Marlee Matlin. The made-for-television Hallmark Hall of Fame film *Love Is Never Silent*, based on the novel



Fig. 11. *Avenue of Loss*, 1998, Bronze, Stainless Steel, Copper on Marble base, 15x12x8. (Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Bruce). Photo: Ray Block.



Fig. 12 and Fig. 13. Orkid Sassouni, *Being Deaf and Free-Spirits*, 1998-99, book of photographs, 3.5x4.5 photos in 14.5 x 8 book. Photos: Orkid Sassouni.





Fig. 14. Chuck Baird, *Art No. 2*, 1994, acrylic, 24x30 (courtesy of Jaime Harter). Photo: Colortek.

In This Sign, appeared in December 1985. The nationwide exposure of the play and films have helped to make the general public more aware of Deaf people.

The city of Rochester, New York, where the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology was founded in 1967, was a hotbed of cultural activity in the 1980s. Among other developments, Rochester saw the 1985 establishment of Deaf Artists of America (DAA), a professional organization created to provide a clearinghouse for Deaf artists. DAA published an artists' directory and a well-designed newsletter as well as sponsoring conferences. The DAA Gallery organized more than 20 exhibits before the closing in 1992.¹⁶ A 1987 meeting in Rochester on ASL Poetry led to ASL Literature conferences in 1991 and 1996. "These gatherings of poets, storytellers, playwrights, literary critics, and others, promote the creation, study and teaching of the literature of DEAF-WORLD culture."¹⁷

The 1980s also saw a profusion of books about Deaf Culture and Deaf people sending a wave of materials that went to the mainstream public promoting even greater awareness about Deaf people. We saw the publication of two major books about the history of Deaf peoples. Jack Gannon's popular history *Deaf*

Heritage was published in 1981; Dr. Harlan Lane's *When the Mind Hears* came out in 1986; and *Deaf In America. Voices From a Culture*, by Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, appeared in 1988. Scholarly studies had been written earlier, but these became the volumes that were in every educated deaf household and provided a shared knowledge of Deaf culture and history.

The *Deaf President Now* protest at Gallaudet University in March 1988, now known as the Gallaudet Revolution, brought Deaf issues to the nation's televised evening news. Despite applications – for the first time in history – of two qualified Deaf candidates for presidency, the Gallaudet University board of trustees appointed a new president who was hearing and had no knowledge of sign language or of Deaf people. The decision infuriated students, faculty, staff and alumni. After a well-publicized one-week protest, the new appointee declined the position and the board selected I. King Jordan, the Deaf former dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, as the seventh president of Gallaudet. This was an enormous victory for Deaf people and a new sense of empowerment spread to Deaf people all over the country. Since then, Deaf people have had greater political and career expectations.

Orkid Sassouni, now a photographer whose work

is included in the present exhibit, has said that she thought she was the only Deaf person in the world until she saw *Deaf President Now* on television. This prompted her to enroll at Gallaudet and learn sign language. Sassouni has created a collection of black and white photographs of Deaf people using "the fine art of sign language" (Fig. 12 and Fig. 13). As late as the 1960s many Deaf people avoided signing in public because of the negative attention it drew. Deaf people have come a long way; they are no longer embarrassed about sign language.

One year after the *Deaf President Now* movement, in May of 1989, the *Deaf Way*, a spectacular international arts festival and conference celebrating Deaf culture, literature and art was held at Gallaudet University. Immediately before *Deaf Way*, a four day workshop co-facilitated by Betty G. Miller and Paul Johnston and involving seven other Deaf artists defined and developed the concept, name and written manifesto of Deaf View/Image Art, also called De'VIA. The De'VIA Manifesto states that "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 experiences. 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."

Recent works of Deaf Art seem increasingly to emphasize sign language and handshapes in their work. Chuck Baird's painting, *Art No. 2* and his multimedia *Heart* show the signs for "art" and "heart," respectively (Fig. 14 and Fig. 15). In both works, Baird uses his own hands as models. Tony Landon McGregor incorporates three ASL signs, "butterfly," "fish" and "bird" into his gourd work, *Three Southwestern Signs* (Fig. 16). In contrast to the negative emphasis that the hands are given in Vasnick's *Silence* and Miller's *Ameslan Prohibited*, they are celebrated in *Heart* and *Three Southwestern Signs*. The hand is the major focus of Irene Bartok's photograph *Divine Power* (Fig. 17). And Paul Johnston states: "I am infatuated with the shape and the gestures of the hand," and plays with these in his visually lyrical semi-abstract watercolors. His artful combination of musical instruments and hands in *Poetic Hand 1* and *Poetic Hand 2* emphasizes this visual lyricism (Fig. 18 and Fig. 19).

Visual representations of sound, whether of its



Fig. 15. Chuck Baird, *Heart*, 1999, mixed media, 14x17 (Courtesy of Lisa Weyerhaeuser). Photo: Spike Mafford.



Fig. 16. Tony Landon McGregor, *Three Southwestern Signs*, 1999, wood-burned gourd, 18x12.5. (Courtesy of Steve and Nancy Bock and family). Photo: Spike Mafford.



Fig. 17. Irene Bartok, *Divine Power*, 1996, photograph, 18 x 20. Photo: Irene Bartok.

presence or absence, or of instruments for the making of sound, are also frequently encountered in Deaf Art. The artist Harry Williams was known for including violins in his works, as in *A Violin Becomes an Artist*, where he incorporated fragments of his own name at the top of the sheet music, much as if to say he considered himself a composer of visual music (Fig. 20).¹⁸ Uzi Buzgalo uses waves of colors and dots, along with musical notation, to make music visible in his *Color in Wind* and *In the Light* (Fig. 21 and Fig. 22). Perhaps because of Buzgalo's dance background, his work depicts Deaf people as having "internal music." For Marjorie Stout, too, sound is a major ingredient of her work. Of her *Sound*, she says "The strong white line shooting up in the center is the equivalent of a sharp blast of high pitched sound that I sometimes get, in the midst of a vast deep space of constant flat tones and pitches." In *Black and White: Deafness with Noise*, Stout depicts auditory static "floating and lingering."

The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) banned disability-based discrimination in places of employment, in state and federal agencies, and in public accommodations. This was much broader and more powerful than Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of

1973, which had prohibited discrimination in programs receiving federal funds. Title IV of the ADA mandates that all states provide a 24-hour telephone relay service for local and long distance TTY calls. While there were already some relay services in operation, they were often operated on a part time basis; quality varied tremendously from state to state; and many states had no such services. For the first time, Deaf TTY users anywhere in the United States could reliably make telephone calls to people who did not have a TTY.

This lowering of societal barriers is reflected in Alex Wilhite's abstract works. His *Red Sea* has a lone shape floating in lake of blue water surrounded by the color red, but the barrier represented by the color red appear to be dissolving in the lower right corner (Fig. 25). Wilhite acknowledges the ongoing temptation to fly from communication difficulties in his *Spaced of Wings* and *Waterstream II*, where abstract figures appearing to move away from negative energy and towards more positive forms of energy (Fig. 26 and Fig. 27).

While the first Deaf Studies programs saw their beginnings in 1972 and 1973, it was not until 1990 that national conferences on Deaf Studies appeared. The



Fig. 18. Paul Johnston, *Poetic Hand I*, 1998, watercolor, 22x29 (courtesy of Clayton Valli). Photo: Arthur S. Aubry.

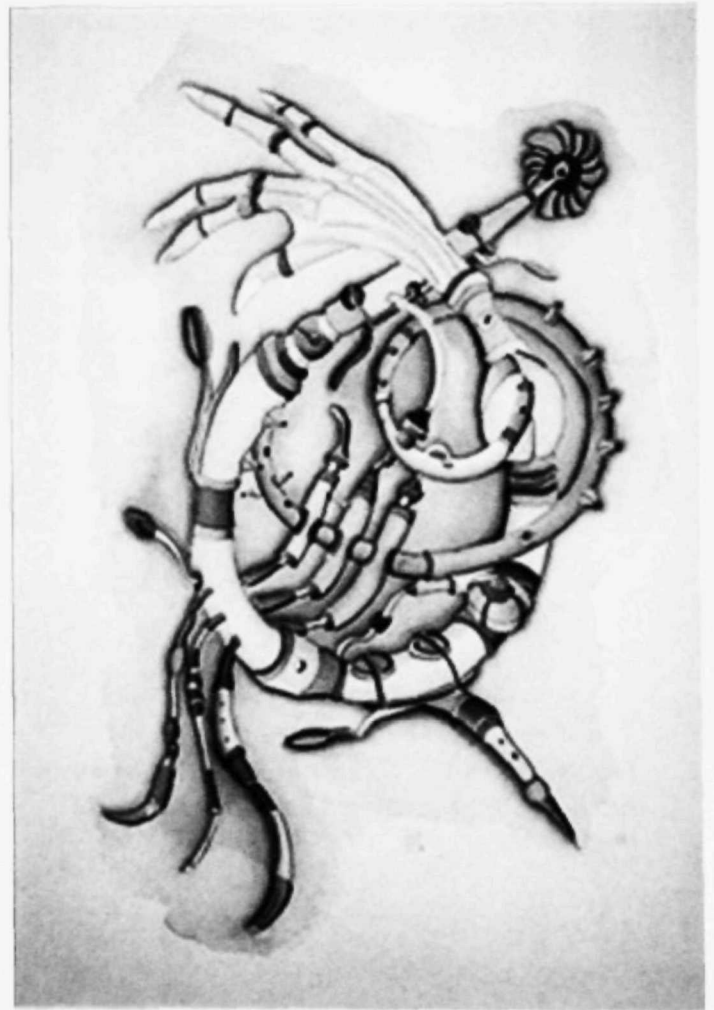


Fig. 19. Paul Johnston, *Poetic Hand II*, 1998, watercolor, 22x29 (courtesy of Betty G. Miller). Photo: Arthur S. Aubry.

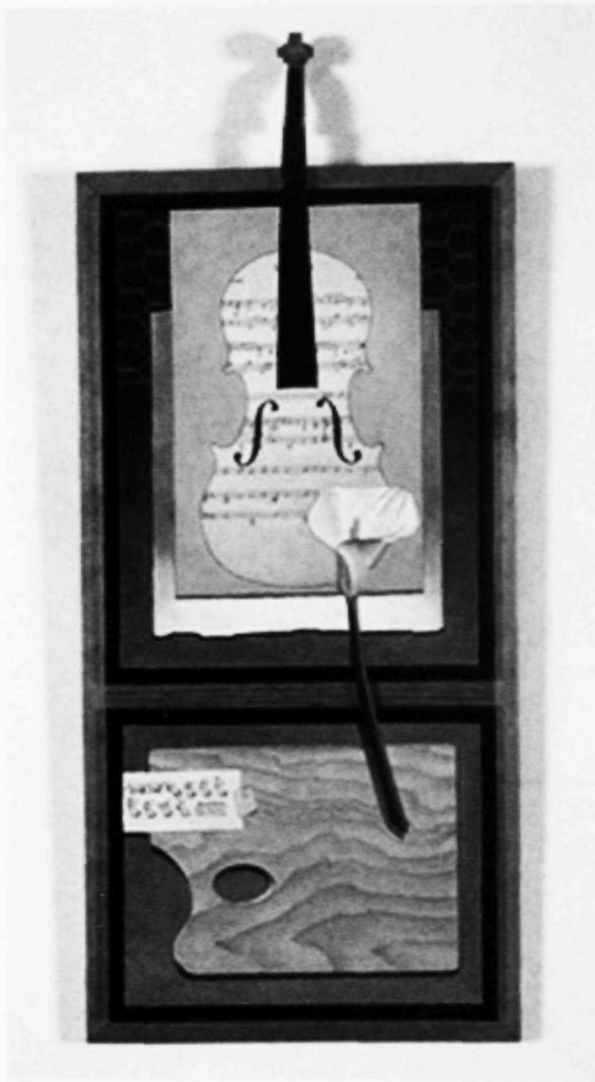


Fig. 20. Harry R. Williams, *A Violin Becomes an Artist*, 1983, oil on wood, 18x40x1 (courtesy of Betty G. Miller). Photo: Spike Mafford.



Fig. 21. Uzi Buzaglo, *Color in Wind*, 1997, acrylic on paper, 30x35. Photo: Arthur S. Aubry.



Fig. 22. Uzi Buzaglo, *In the Light*, 1997, acrylic on paper, 30x40. Photo: Arthur S. Aubry.

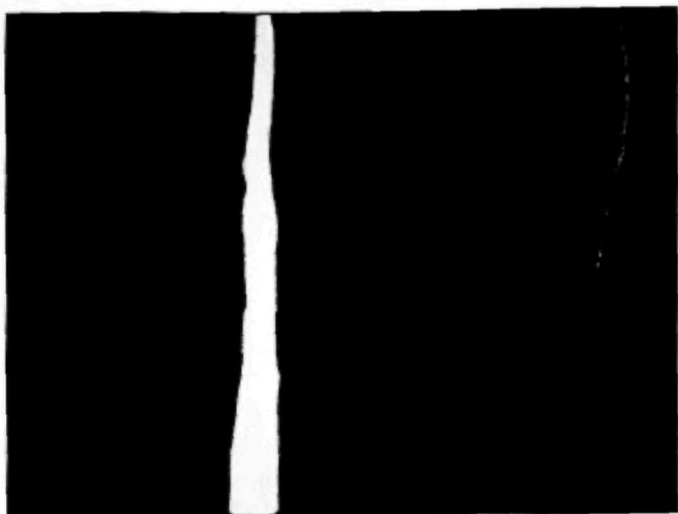


Fig. 23. Marjorie Stout, *Sound*, 1990, acrylic, 36x48. Photo: Spike Mafford.



Fig. 24. Marjorie Stout, *Black and White: Deafness With Noise*, 1990, acrylic, 36x48. Photo: Spike Mafford.

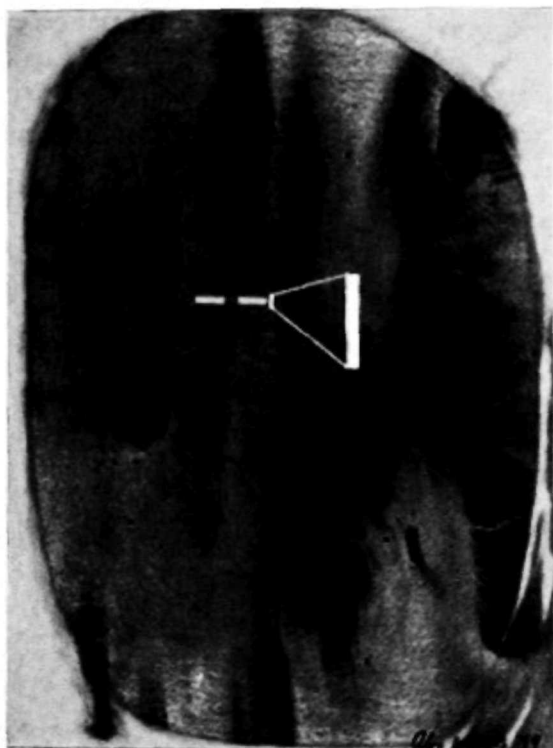


Fig 25. Alex Wilhite, *Red Sea*, 1999, acrylic on canvas, 24x18. Photo: Spike Mafford.



Fig. 26. Alex Wilhite, *Waterstream II*, 1999, acrylic on canvas, 80x18. Photo: Spike Mafford.



Fig. 27. Alex Wilhite, *Spaced of Wings*, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 18x80.
Photo: Spike Mafford.

first two national conferences were both held in 1991, the first in Dallas, Texas and the second at Gallaudet. Since then conferences have been held at two-year intervals, starting in Chicago in 1993. In 1995 the conference was held in Boston, in 1997 at Gallaudet University, and in 1999 in Oakland, California.¹⁹

Deaf Art exhibits, while not originally designed into Deaf Studies conferences, became an integral part of these conferences beginning in Chicago in 1993. That Deaf Artists' Exhibit, as with other exhibits before it, has not yet been documented as conforming to the criteria of Deaf View/Image Art. The first group exhibition that is known to be exclusively Deaf View/Image Art was *Perspectives of Deaf Culture Through Art*, which consisted of 32 artworks by 8 Deaf artists and was mounted in September 1993 at Northern Essex

Community College in Haverhill, Massachusetts. Deaf Artists' Exhibits have accompanied the Deaf Studies Conferences in 1995, 1997 and most recently in at the Pro Arts Gallery in Oakland, California in April 1999.

Ann Silver was closely involved in the development of the initial Deaf Artists' Exhibit in Chicago, as is natural given the strong links her artwork has with Deaf Studies. Silver expresses political protest and highlights cultural sensitivity through modifications to such familiar graphic symbols as road signs, license plates and brand name product packaging. She likens the medical and pathological views of Deaf people to the archaic labels of the older style box of crayons in *Deaf Identity Crayons: Then and Now*, (Fig. 28) while the second box shows politically appropriate terms for different groups within the Deaf community. *Hearing-*



Fig. 28. Ann Silver, *Deaf Identity Crayons: Then and Now*, 1999, mixed media, 20x16. Photo: Spike Mafford.



Fig. 29. Ann Silver, *Deaf & Dumb 1903, Deaf, 1993, 1993*, mixed media, 16x20. Photo: Spike Mafford.



Fig. 30. Ann Silver, *Hearing-Impaired: Wrong Way, Deaf: Right Way*, 1992, mixed media, 20x16. Photo: Spike Mafford.

Impaired: Wrong Way/Deaf: Right Way and *Deaf & Dumb 1903/Deaf 1993* makes similar side by side comparisons of what Silver considers correct and incorrect terminology (Fig. 30 and Fig. 29). Silver has cited the deaf artist Morris Broderson, whose work was exhibited in 1960 at the Whitney Museum in New York, as the first influence on her creation of Deaf Art, after seeing his work incorporating fingerspelling at a speech training center in Seattle.

Several Deaf artists who had been unaware of the De'VIA manifesto have been stunned to discover the existence of such a statement when they received a call for entries for a Deaf Art exhibit. Emerging Deaf artists who have had little contact with the Deaf community until after the first few exhibits may nonetheless have already produced works of art that reflected their Deaf experience. Often these works have been considered "private" pieces, not meant to be shared, but were brought out after the artists discovered the Deaf Art genre and exhibits devoted to it. Artists who had not already done so found that they were inspired to create works relating to the Deaf experience.

One objective of *Spectrum - Focus on Deaf Artists* was the creation of a touring exhibit of Deaf arts. There have since been tours by Deaf performance art companies, including both theater and dance, but the First National Touring Exhibit of Deaf Culture Art is the first visual art exhibit to tour the nation. As such, it is another major step - and surely far from the last - in building a larger audience for Deaf Art and a larger public awareness of the culture from which it springs.

Special thanks to the artists for permission to reproduce their works: Chuck Baird; Irene Bartok; Uzi Buzgalo; Susan Dupor; Paul Johnston; Thad C. Martin; Tony Landon McGregor; Betty G. Miller; Joan Popovich-Kutscher; Orkid Sassouni; Ann Silver; Marjorie Stout; Robin Taylor; Sandi Inches Vasnick; and Alex Wilhite.

NOTES

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