

**Deaf Artists'  
Exhibit**

***Deaf Studies IV Conference***

*at Holiday Inn  
Crowne Plaza Hotel  
Boston, MA*

**April 27-30, 1995**

**Gallery Guide**

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## Introduction

### **The goals of the exhibit**

To have Deaf artists, and "Deaf Art" become an important and necessary component in the area or field of Deaf Studies.

Art is an excellent medium in educating both Deaf and hearing people about the Deaf experience. To offer some thought-provoking perspectives about being Deaf in many ways we as Deaf persons may not think about. Some works will be culture affirming and others will show the horrors of oppression. To offer personal perspectives by the artists, basically what it means to be Deaf.

To provide sources for scholarly and academic discussions related to De'VIA, the Deaf View/Image Art set forth in a manifesto created by a group of Deaf artists during Deaf Way, at Gallaudet in 1989. (See the next page for a copy of this manifesto.) Do the elements considered necessary to make art Deaf art as defined in that manifesto apply to all the works in this exhibit? Do all the works in the exhibit have a place in what is "Deaf Art"? There might be some works that are debatable.

To provide this rare opportunity for both Deaf and hearing people to see the power and purpose of the subject matter in a mounted exhibition.

### **The purpose of this Gallery Guide**

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  
April 10, 1995*

## 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 Deaf Way.

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

(Information courtesy of DawnSignPress)

#### *Biography*

Chuck Baird, a native of Kansas with three artistically gifted older deaf sisters, attended the Kansas School for the Deaf. At 13, he created an oil painting that won a National Scholastic Art Award. He subsequently won several first-place honors in the regional Scholastic Magazine Contest.

Mr. Baird attended Gallaudet University, in Washington, DC, for two years before moving on to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), which had just been established as a college of the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), in Rochester, NY. Mr. Baird received his BFA in Studio Painting in 1974. He served as Visual Arts Coordinator for Spectrum - Focus on Deaf Artists before joining the National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD) in 1980. He remained with NTD for eleven years, working both as an actor and a set designer.

Mr. Baird's career with NTD was capped by his work in NTD's interpretation of *The King of Hearts*, Phillippe de Broca's cult film classic. In the role of the Painter, he painted new sets every night in front of a live audience. He moved to California in 1992, for a year and a half stint painting full-time for DawnSignPress of San Diego, producing a series of paintings in the vein of Deaf Art.

He is currently working on a 150-foot long constructive collage/mural of Deaf history and language for the Learning Center for Deaf Children (TLC) in Framingham, Massachusetts, that is slated to be completed in time for the school's 25th anniversary celebration, in June of 1995.

#### *Philosophy*

Mr. Baird's style has evolved over the years... and Robert Rauschenberg's assemblage style is giving him inspiration for his current project at TLC. Also, he admires the pop artists Larry Rivers and Jim Dine for their individual styles. Like many Deaf painters, Baird went through a period of commenting on cultural oppression. Chuck states that he is now working on developing a style that he can call his own.

### Susan "Vito" Dupor

#### *Biography*

Susan "Vito" Dupor was born deaf in 1969 and has an

older brother who was born hard of hearing. She grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, where she attended "hearing impaired" mainstream programs from kindergarten through Grade 12. In 1987, she enrolled at 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 a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1991. She worked for a year in an animation studio, then decided to enter the Joint Educational Specialist Program of the University of Rochester and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, from which she received a Master of Science in Deaf Education in 1993. She currently works at NTID's English Learning Center and is a NTID drawing teacher. When not teaching, she paints and spends time with her husband, who is a woodworking furniture designer, and their two dogs.

#### *Philosophy*

Ms. Dupor states that throughout her childhood, creative art served to help her deal with the lack of genuine socialization that accompanied her mainstreamed education. "My emotions and experience growing up deaf are seen and felt in most of my pieces. Today, constant exposure of the Deaf culture at NTID is an ongoing inspiration to create new paintings with Deaf themes."

"Creating any art form is truly therapeutic. At times when I was a sprouting adult, I was often frustrated to discover the inequality and condescension of the hearing society and would vent those feelings in my artwork. There are times that I desire to show the audience that others and I had pride in being Deaf by expressing those feelings through art that there is nothing wrong with being non-hearing.

"In deaf history, deaf people often been deprived of direct communication with hearing people and I feel I have subconsciously attempted to get my messages across to various audiences quicker through figurative art.

"Deaf history, culture and education has become an everlasting source of inspiration for my artwork. Many artists inspire me and I am especially interested in the American Social Realism painters of the Great Depression era. They emphasize a lot on social issues which is similar to my goals in my art."

### Lee S. Ivey

1957-1995

(Courtesy of Betty G. Miller)

#### *Biography*

Born deaf in 1957, Lee S. Ivey showed artistic talent from an early age. She attended the North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganstown, and graduated from Gallaudet University in 1992 with a Bachelor of Arts in Studio Art.

Lee was especially talented in sculptures made from poly-

form modeling compound, oil paintings, and drawings. She began her formal studies on Deaf experiences during her last two years at the Gallaudet Art Department. Her mentors were a Deaf Russian artist, Alexander Nazarov, who was an artist-in-residence at Gallaudet University in 1992, and Dr. Betty G. Miller, a Deaf artist. They were her greatest influence in her work. Her senior thesis in 1992 was a clever and beautiful sculpture piece titled "Deaf President Now," which was in 1993 purchased by Gallaudet University. It is now on permanent display in the office of the university president.

Her last exhibit was part of a student art show at the Gallaudet Art Department Gallery in Spring, 1992.

After graduation from Gallaudet, Lee worked as a freelance Interpreter for deaf-blind people, while continuing her artistic development. During her last year, she concentrated on oil painting. Lee died of cancer at the age of 37 on January 3, 1995.

#### *Philosophy*

Lee's work depicted her personal experiences, protesting oppression on deafness, and experiencing love, pain and pride for ASL and Deaf Culture. She believed in providing services to the Deaf community with love and passion, through persistence in her work as an interpreter, and expression of truth through her art work.

### **Betty G. Miller**

#### *Biography*

Dr. Miller, currently a resident of Washington, DC, was born to Deaf parents in Chicago, Illinois. 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. 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, with a theme titled, "The Deaf Experience" which were held in Takoma Park, Maryland, 1989, at Gallaudet University, in 1989, 1990, and 1992; and in the Capitol Hill area in Washington, DC, and in Chicago, Illinois, 1992 and 1993. Her artworks were also exhibited in a first of its kind in USA: a group art show with eight Deaf

Artists whose art works were related to their Deaf experience at the Northern Essex Community College, Haverhill, Massachusetts, September, 1993. Her most recent exhibit, 1995, was held at the Colonnade Gallery, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

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

#### *Philosophy*

"Much of my work depicts the Deaf experience expressed in the most appropriate form of communication: visual art. I present the suppression of Deaf Culture and American Sign Language as I see it... This oppression of Deaf people by hearing is actually cultural, educational, and political. One aspect of my work... shows the beauty of Deaf culture and American Sign Language. 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."

### **Ralph R. Miller, Sr.**

1905-1984

(Courtesy of Betty G. Miller)

#### *Biography*

Ralph R. Miller was born deaf to hearing parents who placed him in the Illinois School for the Deaf at the age of 5. There he began to develop his artistic talents, although he did not have the unqualified support of his teachers. When the time came for him to choose a vocation, and he said that he wanted to become an artist, his then teacher stared at him and advised him to abandon the idea. "No. There is no future in art. It's better that you learn carpentry as your vocation."

Nevertheless, Ralph, being a determined person, continued drawing and painting. After graduation from the school for the Deaf in 1925, he went immediately to Chicago, where he briefly attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Compelled to leave school and become self-supporting, he began work as a sign painter, then an illustrator, and finally a graphic artist. He remained in this career for the next 60 years. Unfortunately, he had only a few exhibits of his work which included Charter Day Exhibits at Gallaudet University during the early seventies, and at Spectrum: Focus on Deaf Artists Arts Festival in Austin, Texas in 1977 and 1979. During his last 15 years, he was a freelance illustrator, working at Gallaudet University on children's books of Signed English, and related topics.

#### *Philosophy*

After seeing the works of his daughter, Betty G. Miller, on Deaf experiences, he started creating his own work which

depicted humor, culture and tragedy in the Deaf world during the late seventies and early eighties. An example of his work in the current exhibit is "The Deaf Picnic, Austin, Texas" which includes 24 signs in the scene. Betty G. Miller said of Ralph that "his Deaf mentor and coach, Robey Burns, encouraged him to pursue his talent, making him determined, and established a philosophy to do what he was destined to do despite his deafness. He was a typical gentleman, who was always willing to support and provide services as an artist to many organizations including the Deaf Clubs, AAAD, and NAD."

## Elizabeth A. Morris

### *Biography*

"I was born profoundly deaf to hearing parents in 1969 in Dallas, Texas, and have lived in Dallas for 23 of my 25 years. I was originally exposed to American Sign Language when I was two years old. However, Standard Essential English (SEE) was used for my childhood education in Richardson, Texas. In 1992, I graduated from the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Advertising Art and a minor in Sociology.

"I interned with Beckett Publications, a baseball card monthly magazine, as a Macintosh Artist. Later, I worked for Gator Group Creative Communications, a small advertising agency, as a designer/production artist. One particular project I completed was a well received design for the Human Rights Campaign Fund entitled, 'We The People.' The design conveyed unity throughout the use of colorfully designed and illustrated eyes. The design was also incorporated into a multimedia video presentation at the actual 1993 Black-Tie Dinner. I am currently employed by TravelHost Magazine as a graphic designer and Macintosh production artist, doing the layout and some design work on their Power Macintosh.

"Also, I have contributed to the Deaf community in Texas. Angel Ramos, editor, selected me as designer for the Texas Deaf Caucus newsletter. I helped make the 'Kaleidoscope' one of the most satisfying and well designed publications in the Deaf community for Texas Deaf Caucus.

"Neville Brody is my inspiration. His works transform the look of magazines, advertising and retail outlets worldwide into explosive, repetitive, colorful style and the unusual use of type. He gave me the confidence to push ideas as far as possible, to experiment and take risks. He gave me the opportunities for the research and development of new ways of communicating."

### *Philosophy*

"The philosophy of my work suggests a framework to empower us with the ability to transform our language. It

is also a role of the practical experience of living through the transition from perception to reality and explores the impact of technology and deaf culture history. My art works are poised between environmental awareness and the perception of reality. I have become more aware of the power of science that is taking place in the world of 'deaf life.' It is my hope that my work will awaken the hearing world and especially hearing parents of deaf children to the pride of Deaf culture."

## Ann Silver

### *Biography*

"Born genetically deaf into a hearing family in Seattle, Washington, I attended public schools. Since professional support services did not exist, I was not mainstreamed. My early education was 90% guesswork, 10% art."

Ann received her BA in Commercial Art from Gallaudet University in 1968. In 1977, she graduated from New York University with a Masters Degree in Graphics Media. She worked as an art director of several major book publishing companies in New York City, a stay that had spanned 16 years. During this time, Ann established a museum consortium under the Department of Education at the Museum of Modern Art; where one hundred twenty museums cooperated together to provide accessibility for Deaf patrons years before the ADA was passed. Ms. Silver was also a museum docent at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Museum of Modern Art. As a result of her efforts, Ms. Silver received the prestigious New York State Governor's Art Award in 1979. Currently, she is residing in Seattle and is a Ph.D. candidate in Deaf Studies/Deaf Art at the Union Institute, Cincinnati, Ohio. Ann Silver has the distinction of being one of three founding members of the Deaf Art Movement in the late sixties and the early seventies along with Betty G. Miller and Harry R. Williams.

### *Philosophy*

"I fuse scholarship, art, and sociopolitical philosophy. My artwork deals with issues of language identity, communication accessibility, power/powerlessness, and representation. As a Deaf woman who faces a world that still has no place for artists 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."

## Marjorie Stout

### *Biography*

Born hearing in 1959, the artist began to lose her hearing at an early age. She attended public school mainstream

programs in Virginia and Massachusetts before attending Greenfield Community College in Greenfield, MA, where she studied drawing and painting, photography and in 1982 earned an Associate of Science in Arts. She then attended the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and in 1990 graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting.

"I have always felt inclined to draw and paint, as far back as I can remember. I owned a black and white camera as a child, and I was an avid photographer. I felt moved by certain images, and proceeded to document them. Art has become a way of communication for me. I always disliked having others tell me how to draw or paint, making 'suggestions' to my works, when all I really cared about was expressing myself. I always resisted and I never took an art class until I was in college, and had discovered a very good art program.

"On my mother's side of the family, everyone is an artist, both visual and musical. My late grandfather was a well known composer of classical music and I had a lot of exposure to music when I was young with hearing ability. I had identified with my grandfather in many ways, and he was a major influence on me which has in some ways set the theme for this particular body of work.

"Picasso, Max Beckman and German Expressionists were influence on me because of the freedom of shape and expressions that were put out that I've identified with. As a photographer and painter, I am very spontaneous."

#### *Philosophy*

"I hope to communicate my experiences in life through my work. The major parts, are, of course, related to Deafness. I feel that my degree, or type, of Deafness and my experiences, are unique and the way I see the world to come out through my photography and paintings. For me, it is a way of communicating to all without having to speak or hear. I want others to understand and identify with my expressions and also to appreciate visually a work of art.

"In the future, I plan to document the course of my life and experiences throughout in order for personal expression and also to educate others about the varying issues of Deafness. I also plan to continue my work in Human Services but hopefully return to school in Art Studies and Education."

### **Eddie Swayze**

#### *Biography*

Eddie Swayze, who believes that he has been "into art since birth," was born and raised in Ithaca, NY. He entered the Rochester School for the Deaf at age three, and remained there until he was twelve, when he transferred to mainstreamed classes in the Rochester public school system. He

enrolled in NTID and cross-registered with RIT, from which he received his BFA in 1989.

Among artists who have influenced his work, Mr. Swayze cites first the Dadaists Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia, then such others as Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol, Naum June Paik, and the performance artist Laurie Anderson.

Mr. Swayze is also an ASL poet. His gave a performance entitled "Rock This Mess Around" at the Hendricks Dance Project in Rochester in August, 1993. His most recent performance was at the Genesee Reading Series, in Rochester in March 1995.

"My plans are to complete my 'Techno Art' thesis and receive a Masters of Fine Arts degree from RIT, then hopefully become an art or art history teacher, and continue to exhibit my work as much as I can."

#### *Philosophy*

"I first created art work, using geometric and cubist shapes on the hands, faces, ears and so on, that represented the modern society we live in, and the oppression that exist among us. Now, my 'Techno Art' series are mixed-media 3-D sculptures that has found technology based junk, functioning electronic devices, and collage of computer generated image print-outs in them. The new 'Techno Art' series focus on the existence of high technology in our society."

### **Mary J. Thornley**

#### *Biography*

Ms. Thornley, who now lives in Vancouver, BC, was born and raised in Elkhart, Indiana, where she attended public schools. She received her BA from Indiana University in 1987, and her MFA from the University of Washington in 1990. In 1991, she participated in a traveling exhibit organized by Very Special Arts, Washington and also had a solo exhibition at the Switzer Gallery in Rochester, NY.

In 1992, Ms. Thornley received an Independent New Works Program grant to produce "The Enigma Unravelling: She was a Native Signer," an exploration of the influence of Deaf culture on art, past and present. In the same year, she was curator and participant in "The Power of Silence: Artwork by Students at the Northwest School for Hearing-Impaired Children," an exhibit at the Pacific Arts Center.

"I became involved in art as a child. I was always drawing, and I used either hand. Sometime in childhood I saw Picasso's 'Guernica' and was much disturbed by it. I guess that's an 'influence'!

#### *Philosophy*

"For the past four years I have concentrated on images that relate specifically to my experiences as a deaf person. I've

tried to explore the universal aspects of human experience combined with the unique events of my own life. The happenings that set people apart interest me, as well as the psycho-social interactions that occur and the meanings behind them. I work primarily in charcoal and oils.

"In 1992 through 1994 with the support of grants, I developed metaphors for deafness. I wanted to make deafness 'visible' and relate it to art history. I then used the metaphors to comment on current modes of treating deafness in popular media.

"My goal is to lay bare new areas of artistic portrayal. Approaches to understanding 'disability' have rarely encompassed art, art history or art criticism."

### Harry R. Williams

(Courtesy of L.K. Elion, Author, *My Eyes Are My Ears: Homage to Harry R. Williams*, coming soon from DawnSignPress)

#### Biography

Deaf since infancy, Harry R. Williams began drawing at an early age to get his parents' attention. His artistic gifts were praised by Felix Kowalewski of the California School for the Deaf at Riverside. While matriculating at Gallaudet University in the late 1960s-early 1970s, Williams joined forces with Ann Silver to found the Deaf Art Movement, as a protest against the dearth of Deaf themes in painting and to affirm a commitment to expressing Deaf identity in art.

Despite years of financial struggle and personal frustration, Williams achieved some notable success. His illustration, "My Eyes Are My Ears," became the cover of a book for the First International Ecumenical Seminar on the Pastoral Care of the Deaf. Awarded the top prize by the Newport Art Festival in California in the late 1970s, his winning entry was hung in the Newport Beach Courthouse.

Williams strove to engender symbols and images that reflected his pride in his deafness within a deceptively "hearing" context. His violins and music sheets, lyrical and laden with hidden meanings, are designed to draw hearing people and deaf people closer together.

Harry R. Williams's only solo exhibit, in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1990, was sold out. He died of AIDS in April 1991.

## Descriptions of Artworks

*In alphabetical order by artist*

### Chuck Baird

*Art No. 2*, 1993

Acrylic, 24" x 30"

Loaned to the exhibit by Vicki Bradham, Kansas City, MO

This is the second in the "Art" series, the first of which is on the cover of his book "Chuck Baird, 35 Plates." These are crisp illustrations, seemingly drawn in mid-air, of the sign for "artist," a concept that is essential to Chuck. "Art is my whole life. When I sign 'art', a ray of light represents the ray of Hope. Those flying objects in front of myself represent my various mediums." In the first painting, the sign is seen from the viewpoint of the signer/artist, but in the present work, it is seen from the viewpoint of the receptor/viewer.

### Susan "Vito" Dupor

*Family Dog*, 1991

Acrylic, 61" x 58"

This work is expressive of feelings typical to isolated Deaf children living with non-Signing hearing families. The faces of the other members of the family are blurred, likening the experience of lipreading to the experience of listening to a TV program disrupted by static. The deaf child, who wears hearing aids, is made analogous to a family pet that is patted on the head while being told "Good girl, good girl."

*I Interesting Hamster*, 1993

Mixed Media, 48" x 48"

The juxtaposition of the hamsters and the deaf students is a metaphor of the experience of the "caged" environment of mainstreamed deaf students' self-contained classrooms. The use of the label "Hearing Impaired" introduces one of the critical issues in education of the deaf, because of the artist's belief that the term "Hearing Impaired" is a pathological disorder label in mainstreamed schools. Deaf students' audiological and speech development are stressed in their education. The flowers in the background, although not the varieties normally seen at a wake, are symbolic of death.

*Regionalization*, 1993

Oil on Canvas, 30" x 29"

The artist recalls that when she was in a mainstreamed elementary school, many of her deaf classmates lived far away



**Susan "Vito" Dupor, continued**

which reduced her ability to socialize with them after school and over the weekends. The "Deaf Child" signs are posted in areas where deaf children live to warn drivers who would otherwise be unaware that the children in the vicinity might be deaf; Deafness is an "invisible" condition.

*Glenna and Nike*, triptych, 1994

Oil on masonite, right and left: 24" x 14",  
center: 24" x 13"

"An independent deaf woman is about to learn from her hearing dog that there is a message from afar. The artist has long been fascinated by the breathtaking sunrises and sunsets visible in the rural area where she lives in upper state New York. The silhouette of telephone poles stands out to signify the power of man's creation and his constant ability to fix the negative side effects of his inventions. This painting reminds us that the invention of the telephone left the D/deaf feeling cheated by their inability to use them until they eventually were able to utilize enabling tools, such as TTYs and hearing dogs."

*Pussy*, 1994

Oil on masonite, 32" x 16"

Men in many cultures use language - Sign language included - to degrade women, who they perceive as merely sex objects."

*Bite the cord that feeds you, vortex and duel*, triptych, 1995

Oil on masonite, right and left: 6" x 7.5",  
center: 11" x 14"

This triptych shows multiple views of a rebellious deaf grade school girl destroying body style hearing aids. It may be true that many D/deaf can recall a childhood event in which they consciously or subconsciously tried to reduce the power of their hearing aids that the hearing authorities have applied to their bodies like "harnesses."

**Lee S. Ivey**

*New Cycle*, 1992

Oil on Canvas Board, 20.25" x 28"  
(Courtesy of Betty G. Miller)

The oil painting of a long tree-like branch which includes fingers, hand and ear indicating her experience of life as a Deaf woman. At the top of the branch is a new green leaf, which indicates the beginning of another life, a new cycle, and expresses her continuing pride in being a Deaf woman artist.

**Betty G. Miller**

*Read My Lips*, 1986

Brush & Ink/Watercolor, 28" x 20"

On loan from Nancy V. Becker, Winchester, MA

This represents a parody of a hearing person, who could be a speech therapist, trying to coax a deaf person into trying to lipread. The exaggerated lip movements give the hearing person a clownish appearance.

*Hot Dog, Ice Cream, Baz Bawl*, 1986

Brush & Ink/Watercolor, 28" x 20"

This picture represent a dialogue between the much hated speech therapist and the mind of the deaf child during one of those endless speech lessons. Hot Dog, Ice Cream, Baz Bawl represents words typical of those practiced in a speech lesson, probably during a sound discrimination test.

*Mirror, Mirror*, 1986

Brush & Ink/Watercolor, 28" x 20"

This work, again, has cultural oppression as its theme. The artist takes from the Snow White story the magical mirror that answered the wicked Queen's question: "Who is the fairest of them all?" and twists the question into "Who is the most oppressed of them all?" The multiple answers, mispronounced, are "Gallaudet," "Deaf people," "ASL," and "visual abilities."

*Untitled*, 1993

Acrylic/Mixed Media, 32.5" x 34.5"

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.

**Ralph R. Miller**

*Deaf Picnic, Austin, Texas*, 1977

Acrylic on canvas, 32.5" x 34.5"

(Courtesy of Betty G. Miller)

This work "...depicted a typical Deaf Picnic that took place in a country location in Austin, Texas. Furthermore, most of the figures using ASL are recognized and understood, shown with humor and tendencies of human behavior."

**Elizabeth A. Morris**

*False Hope for Deaf Children*, 1994

Computer Color Output, 20" x 24"

"Hearing parents upon discovering that their child is deaf immediately cling to the promise of technology in hopes

**Elizabeth A. Morris, continued**

that their child's deafness can be overcome. The idea of a cochlear implant for their deaf child was implanted into their heads. The wire sparking on the side of the deaf child's head emphasizes that of ripping apart the culture which we want to preserve. This deaf child's cry shows her sadness over her parents' inability to accept her as she is. A single road with a sign saying wrong way represents the isolation and confusion of identity. This quote 'Not my choice...Cochlear Implants' is a message to hearing parents who have the 'right' to make decisions about their deaf child."

*False Image of Cochlear Corporation, 1994*  
Graphic Color Output, 20" x 24"

"The colorful and powerful images of cochlear implants that encourage a promise that implants will actually allow the children to speak. It markets a 'bionic ear' for surgical insertion in deaf children over the age of two. My intention was to use the powerful image of cochlear implants in my work to show the promise is false and hypocritical. The series of distorted images of the deaf child represent the fear that science is taking the place of 'Deaf life.' The speech processor on the road emphasizes a look-alike scorpion crawling as the electrode tail weaves its way, crushing cells and destroying membranes in the inner ear. It is almost like trying to destroy 'Deaf pride.'"

*Technology Changes Our Perception of Reality, 1994*  
Graphic Color Output, 20" x 24"

"Is there really any benefit to being severely hearing impaired instead of being totally deaf? I see a problem with the implants even when they work. So much time is spent learning to listen and speak, that implanted children do not learn about the world in which they live. That seems such a waste. I wanted to present more the idea of creativity and interaction. I scanned an original image of the cochlear implant. All subsequent images came from manipulating this one image. The main tools used were filters and Photoshop 3.0. It developed unique image-processing looks that combined abstract typographic forms, giving impression to the hearing parents' visual identity. There is only one choice as we move deeper into this revolution that touches every aspect of the deaf human condition."

**Ann Silver**

*Hearing-Impaired: WRONG WAY/Deaf: RIGHT WAY, 1992 (RoadSigns Series)*  
Mixed Media, 20" x 16"

*Cultural-Linguistic Crossing / BI-BI, 1992*  
(RoadSigns Series)  
Mixed Media, 16 x 20

**Ann Silver, continued**

"The public at large still lacks major signposts leading to ASL/Deaf culture. Solution? Roadsigns as an intermediary. I use roadsigns to attract attention and to remove age-old perceptions about us as Deaf people shaped by the educational system and other means through which the public receive information. It is instant education for the uninitiated. In other words, ASL/Deaf Culture 101. I use typical street and parking signs to shape cultural consciousness and popular opinion in ways that statistical reports, legal action and the educational system cannot."

*Deaf Studies Soup: DS National Conference, 1995*  
(Soup Series)  
Mixed Media, 20" x 16"

*Progress Soup: Manual Alphabet, 1995*  
(Soup Series)  
Mixed Media, 20" x 16"

"Deaf Soup or Deaf Art? It all depends on your point of view. To admirers of pop art, even the most ordinary items are considered art.. soda bottles, money, cartoons, phones, even cans of soup. Warhol was responsible for turning the soup can into an object of art. Warhol showed the public that a can of Campbell soup can be chic. From that perspective, my intention is to elevate and glamorize deaf studies. When a part of American culture is being marketed, it is essential to promote deaf studies academically."

Progress Manual Alphabet Soup is a spoof of the alphabet soup with hands spelling all over the bowl of soup instead of white letters spelling out the alphabet. Also, it plays the pun on the brand of soup from Progresso.

**Marjorie Stout**

*Sound, 1990*  
Acrylic, 36" x 48"

"Sound deals specifically with the ringing in my ears, and of the silences that occur simultaneously due to my Deafness. There are endless tones, pitches and volumes of ringing. While some pitches are scant, others are very high pitched, and bold. They float, linger and interlap over the other."

"I have always felt musically inclined (part of my family heritage) but unable to produce any kind of music that would be very pleasing for others. Sound is, in a sense, a musical composition that is visual, instead of being heard, and expresses my experience and perceptions by the visual imagery."

**Marjorie Stout, continued**

*We Are Brothers*, 1990  
Acrylic and photo, 36" x 48"

"The Deaf Community is very close within its members of Deaf and Hard of Hearing. *We Are Brothers* portrays this concept. The photograph of the two boys give a sense of humor and show the closeness they have of each other, as they are both Deaf, and they are brothers."

*Culture Shock*, 1990  
Acrylic and photo, 36" x 48"

"I have been touched by the extreme differences between the Deaf and Hearing worlds since I first became involved and acquainted with sign language. Although my father is also Deaf, I grew up in what I perceived to be a Hearing culture, as opposed to Deaf Culture. But I never quite belonged to Hearing Culture, and this was first realized when I bought a TV and decoder after having watched as television in over ten years. It was overwhelming to really experience both Deaf and Hearing culture for the first time. In *Culture Shock*, the young girl in the center of the photograph is a metaphor of my being caught between two worlds—the Hearing and the Deaf—not quite fitting into either one. The images in the painting convey my feelings of the differences of both worlds."

*Deaf Way*, 1990  
Acrylic and photo, 36" x 48"

"My personal perceptions and experiences of Deafness are projected in this painting. The photograph is a silhouette of a person with darkness and lighting surrounding. The images are reminiscent of the static and movement of sound I hear in my ears from constant ringing. There is a sense of isolation but inner strength. The text is difficult to read, as my experiences in communication has been difficult and never felt complete. The many layers of paint have impeded the communication process and also produce a sense of shyness. There is a felling of push and pull, in my world of high pitch noises and intensity of silence."

*Black and White: Deafness with Noise*, 1990  
Acrylic, 36" x 48"

"The shapes and tones of the black and white images in this painting represent and convey the continuous flowing of ringing in my ears, combined with the difficulty of hearing outside sounds. The text with black on black paint is equivalent of sound that I can barely hear, if at all. The white shapes are bold and undetermined, with white particles floating alongside as I attempt to identify the tones and pitches of this condition."

**Eddie Swayze**

*A.S.L., triptych*, 1991  
Acrylic on canvas, 30" x 35" each piece

This triptych, consisting of the fingerspelled letters "A" "S" and "L," reflects the pride many Deaf people take in American Sign Language in spite of its oppression.

**Mary J. Thornley**

*Milan, Italy, 1880 (After Goya's 'Third of May, 1808')*, 1994  
Oil on canvas, 39" x 33"

"In composing this piece I worked from a tiny black and white reproduction of the original work by Francisco Goya, thus the choice of colors, etc., is all 'mine' although the composition is 'borrowed.'"

I choose this way of representing the oppressive attitude that existed toward sign language dating from the 1880s. And that the edict carried out in Milan, Italy in 1880—that sign language would no longer be used with deaf children but only 'oral' methods—was still in force in the year I was born, 1950.

"Goya's painting was about an execution of a group of people. Mine is about the attempted execution of a language (and culture, and thereby also a group of people). ASL, in Milan, Italy in 1880, was figuratively taken out behind the town and shot."

*Signing Mona Lisa, Split Image*, 1993  
Oil on canvas, 31" x 39"

"Some viewers will be familiar with my past work in representing the Mona Lisa as a 'native signer.' In this work I divided the image of the Mona Lisa, placing the two halves at opposite ends of the canvas which places the signing hand in central focus; another way of looking at the Mona."

*In The Beginning Was The Word*, 1991  
Charcoal on paper, 18" x 24"

"Anthropologists have pondered the question: which came first, spoken or gestural language? My work argues in favor of the latter. I chose a biblical theme; in early religious paintings gesture predominates. If God is The Word, and if gestural language was 'first,' then God can be aptly represented as a hand."

*The World As Earmold*, 1994  
Oil on canvas, 31" x 34"

"In some circles hearing aid technology and surgical techniques are seen as 'solutions' to deafness. Actually hearing aids and surgery create their own unique auditory environments that are neither deaf nor hearing. Hearing children

**Mary J. Thornley, continued**

grow up unimpeded by the maintenance auditory equipment requires. So do deaf children whose parents are accepting enough to 'let the child be deaf.' But those children who are deaf and employ some form of technology to utilize hearing must largely plot their lives around the availability of batteries, wires, earmolds, etc..

"For some time I've been fascinated with earmolds. When I was a child earmolds were glass, not the soft plastic used today. Once I was fitted with earmolds I was told to wear them everyday, taking them off only at night. What other article have I worn as much or as long? And why, when they were so consistently uncomfortable, ill-fitting and useless?"

*Why People Are Afraid of Me*, 1994

Oil on canvas, 30" x 31"

"When I have to tell strangers, usually in a public place, that I am deaf they look at me as I were something like this painting; a green monster rising out of the deeps. I've done a series of paintings in which I used the 'ears where the eyes should be' theme. It refers, of course, to accessing language by visual means. The fish in the painting also has the switched senses; hearing people sometimes behave as if they think my deafness is contagious."

**Harry R. Williams**

*Lily*, (date unknown)

Oil, 48" x 48"

(Courtesy of Dawn Sign Press)

Harry R. Williams had a tendency to represent the ear in the form of a lily. The massive black background represents death, thus the picture appears to represent death of the ear. This may be interpreted to mean "my ears are dead or broken;" it may mean that the long oppression of the Deaf culture by the hearing is dead or dying ("the ears" instead of "my ears"); or it may simply represent the artist's increasing preoccupation with his own approaching death.

*My Eyes Are My Ears*, 1974-75

Oil, 8.5" x 10"

"My Eyes Are My Ears" was the title of a documentary on Deaf people produced in the 1970s by KRON-TV of San Francisco and featuring as narrators two Deaf people, Jane Norman and Peter Wolf. Williams adopted the phrase and it has virtually become his. In a televised interview, he once explained that the butterfly made him think of freedom and lightness, the very feelings that sign language offered him. The hand in the lower left half of the frame forms the letter "A" of the American manual alphabet, and is meant to evoke Alice Cogswell and the well-

**Harry R. Williams, continued**

known statue of her being taught by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, one of the founders of the American School for the Deaf.

*"A Deaf Man's Best Friends Are His Ten Fingers"* (date unknown)

Oil, 8.5" x 10"

The idea of using this phrase came from John Darcy Smith, a Deaf friend of Williams's who was one of the pioneers of the Deaf Art Movement (DAM). The torn folded paper harks back to the artist's earlier "Wrinkled Paper Series." Holding up a solitary rose as an embodiment of beauty, the hand is shaped like the letter "F" in the American manual alphabet: "Flower."

*Mouth In Hand Series*, 1973-74

Oil, 8.5" x 9.75"

This work was painted after Williams's graduation from Gallaudet University, a Deaf centered environment, when he re-entered hearing society. His frustration over failed communication between himself and hearing people is expressed as a mouth behind bars inside an open hand, forbidden to speak. Williams was known as an "oral failure," a deaf person who was unable to talk intelligibly despite years of speech training. That label is seen by culturally deaf people as a badge of honor; passing for 'hearing' is frowned upon. Williams was fluent and voluble in American Sign Language, but few hearing individuals he encountered could converse with him. The open hand seems to offer the possibility of friendship and chat but is thwarted by the prison in its palm. Implied in the violent red backdrop is a no-man's land, a hellish limbo. Note the thumbprint next to the artist's signature, which he for a time affixed to his paintings before discontinuing the practice.

*Music Notes Series*, 1975-78

Oil on wood, 16" x 20"

This striking painting is reminiscent of the scene in Steven Spielberg's film "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," where the timbres of music played to communicate with extraterrestrials are flashed in color tones on an electronic screen. A notation in one of his sketchbooks suggests that Williams may have seen the movie, and embraced the idea that musical notes may have an exact match in certain colors. With its flowing dots standing in for musical notes, this is a symphony for the eyes. Lest anyone wonder why colors have been substituted, the ear behind the barbed wire encased in a dark orb like an eye, is an indelible reminder of the artist's deafness. The wooden board refers to sound being carried to the feet of deaf people through vibrations.

*Wrinkled Paper Series*, 1974-75  
Mixed Media, 24" x 30"

This work is from the period when Williams was intrigued by the Buddhist paintings of Morris Broderson. The green leaf overlapping the paper and the circle appears to represent peace between deaf people and hearing people. The leaf linking to the paper—an object Williams associated with communication—implied that art can be a bridge between deaf and hearing people.

## Acknowledgments

I am 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:

The magnificent staff at Gallaudet University Regional Center, Kathy Vesey, Director, for asking me to set up this exhibit; Chris Facchina, as an equal partner in the planning for the exhibit, for keeping me updated on tasks I needed to do, and for keeping track of all communication channels; Mark Sommer for coordinating efforts with DawnSignPress and trying to keep everyone calm during those frantic moments; and last, but far from least, Tracey Gallerani for her cheerfulness and invaluable assistance with the printing needs of the art exhibit.

The loyalty and patience of the participating artists who were very accommodating to certain arrangements and for loaning their works to this very special exhibition.

Mary J. Thornley, a participating artist, for allowing us to use her work, "Milan, 1880 (After Goya's Third of May, 1808)" for the conference poster.

Dawn Sign Press for agreeing to install spectacular pieces of Harry R. Williams' work in the exhibit.

Betty G. Miller, who besides loaning a number of her works to this exhibit also assisted with the biographies of Ralph R. Miller and Lee S. Ivey.

L.K. Elion, for providing Harry R. Williams's biography.

Nancy V. Becker and Vicki Bradham for loaning works by Betty G. Miller and Chuck Baird to the exhibit.

John Dunleavy for his support and editorial assistance.

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The Deaf Community News, for providing continuous coverage of the Deaf Studies Conference and the Deaf Artists' Exhibit.

Sue Burnes, Pat Ward Costello, John Dunleavy, and Kristin Johnson for serving as Gallery tour guides.

All the volunteers who are so eager to assist with many different aspects of the exhibit.

*Brenda Schertz*

## Notes

## Revisions

(to replace sections of page 9, 16 and 17)

### Ann Silver

#### *Biography*

"Born genetically deaf into a hearing family in Seattle, Washington, I attended public schools. Since professional support services did not exist, I was not mainstreamed. My early education was 90% guesswork, 10% art."

"Ann Silver received her BA in Commercial Art from Gallaudet University in 1972. In 1977, she graduated from New York University with an MA in Graphics Media. She worked as a designer and an art director of several major book publishing companies in New York City, a stay that spanned 16 years. In 1979, Ann helped establish a museum consortium for the Museum of Modern Art's Education Department. For her efforts, MoMA received a prestigious 1984 New York State Governor's Art Award. She was also a museum docent at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art. A resident of Seattle, Ann is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Deaf Studies/Deaf Art at The Union Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio. Along with Betty G. Miller and Harry R. Williams, Ann Silver has the distinction of being one of the three founding members of the Deaf Art Movement (DAM) in the late 1960s-early 1970s."

#### *Philosophy*

"I fuse scholarship, art, and sociopolitical philosophy. My artwork deals with issues of cultural identity, communication accessibility, oppression/empowerment, and representation. As a Deaf woman who faces a world that still has no place for artists 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."

*Hearing-Impaired: WRONG WAY/Deaf: RIGHT WAY*,  
1992 (RoadSigns Series)  
Mixed Media, 20" x 16"

"The public at large still lacks major signposts leading to ASL/Deaf culture. Solution? RoadSigns. I use street, parking and warning signs as an intermediary to attract attention and to remove ages-old mislabels and misconceptions about us as Deaf people that have been shaped by the educational system and other means through which the public receive information. As labeling and terminology define everything in a verbal society, RoadSigns serve as an instant education for the uninitiated— in other words, ASL/Deaf Culture 101. If my 'wrong/right' speak can help shape cultural consciousness and popular opinion in ways that statistical reports, legal action and the educational system cannot, then I have accomplished something."

**Ann Silver, continued**

*Cultural-Linguistic Crossing / BI-BI, 1992*  
(RoadSigns Series)  
Mixed Media, 16" x 20"

As a 'visual bite,' art is one of the most efficient and immediate ways to cross cultures and languages. It is for that reason I use RoadSigns as a visual weapon and also a propaganda tool to draw viewers' attention."

*Deaf Studies Soup: DS National Conference, 1995*  
(Soup Series)  
Mixed Media, 20" x 16"

"Deaf Studies or Deaf Art? It all depends on your point of view. To admirers of Pop Art, the most ordinary items are considered art— soda bottles, money, cartoons, phones, even cans of soup. Andy Warhol was responsible for turning the soup can into an object of art. He showed the public that a can of Campbell's Soup can be chic. From that perspective, my intention is to elevate and glamorize Deaf Studies. When ASL/Deaf culture is being marketed, it is essential to that Deaf Studies be promoted not only academically but also artistically.."

*Progress Soup: Manual Alphabet, 1995*  
(Soup Series)  
Mixed Media, 20" x 16"

"Various cultures have their own trademark cuisine — soul food, Chinese, Tex-Mex, Italian, French and Japanese, to name a few. Does our culture have Deaf food? As a bi-bi spoof, Progress Manual Alphabet Soup replaces white-lettered ABC's with fingerspelled hands. Also, it plays a pun on the brand of soup from Progresso. My work gives viewers food for thought: As art imitates life and vice-versa, does art imitate food?"