DEAF ART: WHAT FOR?

A critical ethnographic exploration of the discourses of Deaf visual artists

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Acknowledgements

Authors Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol. The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

SIGNED: **DATE: 15th April 2004**

Glossary… terminology, places and spaces

Deaf

Deaf (with an upper case D) is usually used to refer to people for whom a sign language is their first or preferred language. They consider themselves as having a distinct community and culture and regard themselves a linguistic minority. Deaf collective existence is vital to Deaf people. For the purpose of this study, the use of Deaf has predominantly been employed; this is in line with the literature considered and the fact that all those considered, to some extent have affiliations with the Deaf world.

Oralism

Oralism is an approach to education of Deaf children that is based on the exclusive use of a spoken language as the language of instruction and communication: the approach specifically banned and excluded the use of sign languages in oral educational settings. It was not limited to the last century as is often suggested: it preceded the last century and continues to the present day.

Mainstreaming

Refers to the current trend in education for Deaf children, whereby Deaf children are sent to mainstream schools; they are often part of a small minority or even alone. Although it may be argued that this is the most appropriate educational setting for children who prefer, and are able to use a spoken language, there are issues surrounding this form of education based on the grounds that most Deaf mainstreamed children do not have access to their own language and culture and community, this does not correspond with the fact that by law and international guidelines, all children need: freedom of association with

their culture, freedom of expression and their rights as individuals respected.

Cochlear Implants   These are advertised as a cure for deafness by the medical bodies that develop them. Cochlear implants are surgical implants with an electro-magnetic device which is claimed to stimulate the auditory nerve on the basis of regaining some level of hearing as well as improved lip reading and speech skills. Controversy surrounds this 'advance' due to the fact that the children whom it is imposed upon have no choice in the matter, which is ethically tenuous. Further matters of considerable contention are: the status of the evidence that has been used to justify the implanting of very young children; the implications and costs of privileging and promoting this particular intervention; and the failure by government to invest to the same degree in alternative interventions based on the use of signed languages.

BSL   British Sign Language

ASL   American Sign Language

RNID   Royal National Institute for the Deaf

RAD   Royal Association for Deaf People

NDCS   National Deaf Children's Society

Gallaudet   Gallaudet University was founded in 1864 as Gallaudet College; it has a rich and interesting history. The institution is named after Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, with Edward Miner Gallaudet being the first university president. It is renowned for the Deaf President Now protests in student

protest that led to Gallaudet having its first Deaf president, Dr. I. King Jordan. It is the leading liberal arts college for Deaf and hard of hearing students.

Dorothy Miles   Dorothy Miles (1931-1993) was a central figure in sign language poetry and combined sign and written forms of creative expression. Much of what we see now in the way of BSL/ASL poetry and theatre work is indebted to her legacy and impact upon the British and American Deaf communities she influenced so much.

Clayton Valli   was a significant figure in the American Deaf community; he was born Deaf and is particularly remembered for his contribution to Deaf cultural life. His poetic works have drawn international recognition for signed poetry; not only for their aesthetic beauty, but also for his contribution to literary scholarship.

ARTSIGNS   can be found at www.artsigns.ac.uk, and is an online BSL/English glossary for art and design vocabulary.

Resonant   A Deaf women's art group, aiming to empower Deaf women artists to become practicing professionals in their own right, based on sharing experiences, developing cultural value, inspiring co-operation, support and appreciation.

Deaf Art Escape   A Deaf arts initiative aimed at organising creative weeks and weekends for practising Deaf artists, providing the space and time for Deaf artists to create new art

Lighthouse   Is the venue for the annual Wolverhampton Deaf TV and Film festival, a three day free event consisting of a choice of feature length and short films, discussion panels and an art exhibition of works by Deaf artists.

Vision Sign	Is an association that celebrates Deaf moving image culture. Its aim is to help promote new Deaf creativity and the work of Deaf artists in a variety of fields in the hope of creating new careers. Additionally, Vision Sign hopes to introduce a mainstream audience to the world of Deaf creativity and expression, to promote awareness of Deaf culture, whilst breaking down barriers between Deaf and hearing communities and to encourage integration.
DABU	Deaf Arts Bournemouth University, 28th February, 2004. The day looked at new developments in Deaf Arts and how people have been taking the reins and running their own arts projects and establishing their own companies.

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Abstract

This thesis explores 'Deaf Art: What for?' This is a BSL expression, which can be translated as; what is the role/function of 'art' in Deaf lives? There is very little documentation regarding this topic; thus in the first instance the researcher was required to assess the current state of discourse by gathering together existing documentation.

This project employs a critical ethnographic methodology, utilising participant observation, ethnographic interviews and group discussions. Its focus is predominantly on the notion of catalytic validity, whereby a non-Deaf researcher investigating Deaf people is 'obliged' to produce a piece of work which 'gives back' to that community thereby contributing to the process of empowerment and liberation. Through the same process, the research also foregrounds the question of how to maintain integrity when researching Deaf people and Deaf communities.

The artist informants 'framed' the research by describing the kind of data which they felt, their community needed to uncover, they also suggested ways in which it might be collected and presented. Thus the thesis contains two sets of research. The former presents one of the first descriptions of historical Deaf art discourses. The latter explores more deeply the issues surrounding contemporary Deaf art which were of concern to the Deaf artist informants, including the lack of discourse about Deaf art. In addition to this, there is a section devoted to the visual, representing examples of works by Deaf artists around the world throughout history. This is intended as a space where minimal interpretation on the part of the researcher occurs, the reader is encouraged to encounter and experience the works personally, no mediation or analysis is offered.

Throughout the research project, the need for suitable definitions came to the fore, and it is suggested that Wittgenstein's later philosophy concerning 'Family Resemblances' can be useful when contemplating these essentialist notions of 'Art' and by implication 'Deaf'. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that there is

more to assessing Deaf art discourse than there might at first appear. The Deaf art world potentially stands as a model for understanding the wider Deaf world, as a microcosm of activity reflective of the wider Deaf space. In this respect, art should be regarded as a significant cultural indicator.

The thesis goes on to detail how, in the process of investigating the budding discourses of Deaf visual artists, the research facilitated the creation of a set of public presentations and workshops of Deaf visual arts in Britain. Whilst such events were not necessarily anticipated from the outset, they raise important implications for discussion about the nature of catalytic validity itself.

The thesis, then also offers catalytic possibilities by embodying several aspects of that discourse itself, serving as a text on which Deaf art discourse can then begin to build. It is proposed that this is the first, not the last word. The future of the research is contingent upon a collaborative framework, whereby meaningful dissemination is of utmost importance if catalytic possibilities are to be fully achieved.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Beginnings

This introduction serves a number of functions. It sets out where the research came from whilst indicating what follows. It also intends to consider some of the vital issues that arise in a study of this kind, including the incorporation of artworks and the inevitable issues that arise when cultural encounters are involved. It is felt that these issues demand attention at this early stage for they are the foundations upon which the project is built.

1.1 The situation

> There is no other field in the struggle of life which can do more for the deaf
> than art, to secure recognition from the public and through this to bring them
> upon a common footing.[1]

Given the strength of Tilden's assertion, one would expect this belief to be reflected in work with d/Deaf people and in Deaf Studies itself. Despite this, there is in fact little research into this field.

> Art Historians have yet to focus their trained eyes on Deaf art… to deliver an
> analysis of its themes and methods, to inventory the many artists, and to
> present their works in book form. Deaf artists have yet to be recognized in
> the larger art world…despite wide attention to the art of other groups such as
> African Americans and Native Americans. Perhaps with the growing
> recognition of the distinct culture of the DEAF-WORLD the minorities' art will
> finally receive the attention it deserves.[2]

As an art historian recently introduced to the Deaf space, a study such as this represents a convergence of interests. The surprise was in the realisation that art could be such an important asset to a community, and yet without such literature existing.

A brief overview of the situation follows in order not only to enlighten the reader further   but also to highlight the fact that this project marks new territory on

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[1] Douglas Tilden (1860-1935), Deaf sculptor, in Albronda, (1980)
[2] Lane Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996: 143

several levels. The initial search for literature on British Deaf arts proved unfruitful. Only one relevant work is housed in the National Arts Library at the Victoria and Albert, 'Visual Journeys Silent Conversations - the work of Aaron Williamson and Joseph Grigely' 2000. This comprises a single handout for; 'a series of gallery talks, performances and a display organised to coincide with Deaf Awareness Week [by artists] Joseph Grigely and Aaron Williamson'.

The second work on British Deaf art is Arthur Dimmock's biography of A.R. Thompson (Dimmock, 1991). There is also a pamphlet listing Deaf and Deafened Artists here in Britain, compiled by Redfern.[3] Additional literature exists but this is predominantly American or European in content, indicating a severe lack of discourse on British Deaf art and artists.

I propose that this is a reflection of a larger issue that will emanate from this study. This issue finds its roots in both oppression and hegemonic tendencies that seek to classify people and objects in a value laden way. Quite simply, we (society/ies) are adept at accepting a certain set of cultural constructs and ignoring others. The distinction between 'weed' and 'flower' is a way of thinking, conditioned by inherited prejudice (Maizels, 2001: 28), resulting in other ways of thinking being obscured by cultural conventions. By implication, we can determine that 'the existing systems of classification enable some ways of knowing, but prevent others' (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992:5). Here, Hooper Greenhill makes the lucid comparison between *art* institutions and *education* institutions. The relationship between artworks (and the cultures from which they come) are seen as similarly artificial to the relationships between school subjects, in that, hypothetically speaking, some are considered more important than others, thereby given more time and attention. These distinctions are not necessarily based upon anything other than arbitrary prejudice or inherited misconceptions. This raises the question; could this be the reason why Deaf art in Britain is

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[3]Along with a pile of leaflets, letters, documents, exhibition paperwork, personal correspondences later tracked down at Shape. There are also various unpublished dissertations, both undergraduate and postgraduate that informed my study at this stage- again, they required some serious tracking down, but were insightful and useful and I am currently considering how best to make these works accessible to the wider public in some sort of web based British Deaf Arts archive, however permission from the authors and those involves must be sought and funding secured.

practically undocumented and under researched? Can it be attributed to the fact that Deaf equals deviant, wrong, disabled, less important? In light of this, it is useful to view Deaf arts as one might other minority arts in that the process of recognition and development is overshadowed by the more urgent issues which surround oppressed communities. The point here being that what we see and what we know is not necessarily the 'truth', it is a way of seeing and believing which could, in turn, obscure other more 'truthful' ways of understanding. However the more pressing issues will clearly take priority for the meantime.

1.2 The Project

Such apparently non-existent discourse requires exploring, uncovering and recording. That which has been signed, written or said must be gathered, retained, written down, recorded and meaningfully disseminated. Only then will there be a basis for the discourse to grow and evolve. This has been, and remains, a task of enormous proportions. This research marks a beginning, as an MPhil thesis and as such situated within a set of limitations.[4] It should therefore be viewed as the instigation of a discourse. In light of this, what follows is pioneering in itself and is a valuable and significant contribution to the field. It does not claim to say everything nor to say it perfectly. It does however claim to present the first piece of research of its kind.

 The project operates on a number of levels. Firstly, it represents a historical piece of research; the crucial bringing together of scattered information, retrieval, analysis and narration, encapsulated in Chapter 2. Secondly, it gathers the views of contemporary Deaf artists requiring deep involvement with that community. A critical ethnographic methodology was employed and is discussed fully in Chapter 3. True to ethnographic frameworks, it was the Deaf artist informants that both led the research and guided the researcher in directions they felt appropriate and useful. The current views of Deaf artists and other professionals active in the

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[4] As a self funded student the financial limitations cannot be denied, time and geographical limitations clearly restrict the potential of the project, all of these shall be considered in fuller detail elsewhere.

field, were then analysed in light of the researchers theoretical background, and shall be presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.3 How the Artworks will function

It must be clarified at this early stage that this project does not intend to survey British Deaf art and its artists as a biography. Such a compilation would be dull and unnecessary in the face of the biographical nature of the existing discourse. It is also not intended for the researcher to comment upon British Deaf artists' work. The illustrations included in Chapter 6 offer some examples of Deaf art and are intended to reflect the diversity of creativity within the field. It would also be potentially contentious and wholly inappropriate for the researcher to voice her opinion on the works when meaning is so intrinsically bound up with intention and communication issues based on a shared set of commitments and concerns.[5] Understanding and interpreting works done by Deaf artists (as a hearing or Deaf person) is thesis-worthy in itself and shall not be tackled here.

The subject of art criticism with reference to Deaf art and artists has been tackled by Roth (1999).[6] Roth discusses situations where the critic has the power to destroy the artist, particularly those artists from minority communities. He suggests that there are a number of stereotypical ways for people to talk about a Deaf artist's work. Firstly, he explains that some critics do not even refer to an artist's deafness, pointing to the fact that omitting deafness entirely is common and doesn't help the artists' cause. Secondly he refers to the apologetic critics, asserting that their patronising tone does not support the artists either. He also condemns those critics who see deafness as a debilitating handicap that the artist overcomes, suggesting that something needs to be transcended because it is 'wrong' in some way. Similarly, to ascribe some special wisdom to the Deaf artist is an unfair assessment in Roth's eyes. He does indicate the fact that the critics that are successful are the ones that make no value statement on the impact of deafness upon a given piece of work.

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[5] See Wollheim (1987) and Schier in Harrison and Wood (eds) 1992
[6] Robert Roth, 'Deaf Art Criticism', Deaf Studies Conference Proceedings, 1999

This paper leaves the researcher feeling uncertain about the notion of cross community criticism; it is on these grounds that I shall refrain from comment upon the works. Translation and interpretation are involved in a number of ways in a critical ethnographic project of this ilk. The images then are perhaps the only 'neutral' space where an observer can make their own judgements and assessments of the works. Information regarding the artworks is superfluous to our experience and appreciation of them. Thus, following the example of the Collection de l'Art Brut at Lausanne, Switzerland, - the images will be presented as images on their own. They shall be numbered so should the reader wish to learn more they may refer to the list of illustrations in Appendix F.[7]

There remains one further matter which has informed the project throughout, and that is the vitally important issue of 'otherness'. The Deaf space is potentially a political minefield for a hearing researcher. Issues of self and other, difference and diversity and the inevitable 'power' dynamics cannot be avoided. Exploration of 'otherness' is vital at this stage.

1.4 The concept of them and us

What follows should be regarded not only as the situating of the self, but also a comment upon some of the issues that arise when contemplating 'otherness' and 'other' communities. Rather than a deeply theoretical discussion of the concepts and ideas in the literature, it is more an indicator of attempts to address issues of otherness and the ethnocentrism that is often employed within this area. Above all, it might be considered a warning - an important element throughout the entire study. It is vital to distinguish between the boundaries of difference, otherness and the all-important 'us and them' in a way that is least destructive to the community in question. This topic, addressed at this early stage, serves as a basis for the entire endeavour.

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[7] This reference to the collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, Switzerland is not by any means intended to be referential to the contents of the Museum (Dubuffet's collection of Art Brut) but refers to the careful curation of space, where the visitor is given minimal information about the works, is not told which 'way to go' or 'what you are meant to see', but is left to construct their own experience and tackle the works in their own way. I have enormous respect for this mode of display and feel that it forces the audience to actually spend time with the objects and confront them, make sense of them, and build up individual relationships with them; rather than being spoon fed.

The existence of the 'other' […] does not mean the presence of a natural or material essence of the alterity [the other can exist without me], only its discursive character might. In other words, the 'other' is not a natural other, but only an 'other' within the language and classification systems in which we take part, even if in different temporality and spatiality [ ][8].

It is Skliar's belief that frequently used words like difference, diversity and otherness, identity, must be given careful consideration due to their unstable meanings. He suggests that problematic words like this have no fixed meaning, but are entirely dependent upon whose mouth is pronouncing them and on the discourse event in which they take part. In this respect, Skliar refers to Nietzsche's ideas suggesting that meaning explorations have at least four aspects in one, the *word* itself - a combination of letters with a more static attributed meaning in the dictionary, additionally, we also have the unstable meanings, marked mainly by the effect of *experience, difference* and *change.* Skliar points out that these aspects are affected by the nuances of the *temporality* and *spatiality*[9] in which the words are evoked. Thus these words last - yet what they say does not necessarily. . This is like seeing things, a notion popularised by John Berger: 'The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe' (Berger, 1972: 8).

Inevitably then, words such as 'minority', 'otherness', 'culture', 'difference', 'diversity', 'oppression' and so on will feature in this project, and through certain historical and cultural influences, run the risk of becoming value laden. It can be argued on this basis that every word embodies the person who says it (or signs it) and the meaning intended, just as 'every image embodies a way of seeing' (Berger, 1972: 10).

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[8] Skliar, 2002: 32. Translated from Spanish by Janie Goncalves. [ ] additional information was applied by the translator. The use of '…' was also her choice.
[9] Temporality and spatiality - *temporalidad*, *espacialidad* being Skliar's terms for the historical time and specific space circumstances in which events take place.

It is this sense of, everything I see I see from me,[10] that needs careful consideration. Realising this can undeniably aid us in clarifying some of these confusions regarding difference. What is difference? It is Skliar's sentiment that 'difference' is defined by its relation to the objectifying self. In this light, is it the 'other' that is of interest or is it the relationship between the self and the other that takes precedent.

The other is then always specific, in a vain attempt to make otherness identifiable. What is not the same as me is different. If we assume that our knowledge of the world and perception of it is rooted in embodiment and space and time, these logical phenomena say that you can't have the same thing in two places at the same time. An object, for instance, cannot be on the table and under the table at the same time. That is logically impossible. By implication something that is alien to me - in them - cannot be in me at the same time. As if there are no elements of the other in the self. This is clearly deluded, but might explain that 'difference' makes someone 'other' to my 'self'.

Difference and otherness have then become historically perceived as deviant or wrong. If we construct our 'selves' as the starting point, or 'normal' of all our perception and identity making, then what is 'different' to us is, by implication, 'abnormal'. The relationship between these two entities - the self and the other, us and them, normal and abnormal, suggests that we should be aiming at sameness - that the ultimate situation would only arise when all these things balance out and everyone is 'like me'.

Dirksen Bauman has explored this line of thought with specific reference to the notion of DEAF-WORLD, and as a suggestion to move away from a positivist approach towards a more phenomenological approach:

> In a world populated by positivist bodies, deaf people are simply hearing
> people without the hearing. There is thus no real difference between deaf

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[10] This echoes some of the sentiments discussed by Merleau-Ponty and his phenomenological approach - In the pages that follow there will be contemplation of the phenomenological approach when making sense of embodiment and Deaf people and DEAF-WORLDS.

and hearing worlds, because the world itself is an objective presence; it is always "out there" ready to be taken in by the senses. In this view, deafness necessarily means that one takes in less of this world. Period. This reduced range of experience is compounded tenfold as the primarily means of communicating is through phonetic languages. In such a realm, the deaf person possesses less of a rational mind and soul and is closer to the animal world than those who speak and hear.[11]

This is seeing 'us' as passive receivers of passing phenomena, and a positivist approach would therefore see Deaf people as faulty receivers - Phenomenology might be useful if we want to shift away from this positivist outlook.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1974) sees the body and our bodily insertion into the world as being the sight for shifting away from this passive receiver and regards embodiment as more like an active participant (Crowther, 1993).

The point here then is that there is a specific Deaf way of relating to the world…the perceiving body with its emphasis on visual, spatial, kinetic perception and language.[12]

This is a call for further research regarding embodied perception and a phenomenological approach to understanding the DEAF-WORLD. Perhaps then we will stop seeing Deaf as lacking or deviant versions of us, and begin to understand how much of identity is based on perception and how much of perception stems from embodiment.

We must return to Skliar's point: having set up this rather ethnocentric perspective on 'difference'. Skliar proposes that 'difference' and 'otherness' are natural and healthy, and that we must stop aiming for sameness and accept the differences for what they are. We must stop equating sameness with equality, because they are not the same things, and equality can be conducive to diversity. Clearly some sort of shift is needed in the field of Deaf Studies, whereby more researchers can begin to view Deaf people in this way. Ethnocentrism is an obvious downfall in

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[11] Dirksen-Bauman, 2002: 3
[12] Dirksen-Bauman, 2002: 4

areas of research such as this, hence the inclusion of this discussion at this early stage.

1.5 Hearing researchers' self-definition?

Another criticism often directed at researchers in a situation such as this, where an outsider observes another culture, is the ulterior motive of self-definition. Might it be the case that I can only define myself by whom I am not: whom I am different to?

> Man has no need for "others" except insofar as they act as foils for himself. The "others" who define his normality and his masculinity are but negative shadows, silences that lie behind the confident assertions of his sexuality, his sanity, his reasonableness, his self-discipline, his intelligence, his able-bodiedness.[13]

This line of thought has been explored in great detail by the late Said, in his epic study of 'Orientalism' (Said, 1995). In short, Orientalism is set up as a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient. It also tries to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self (Ibid.).

1.6 Self and Other

This project employs a different approach- whereby the distorted image of otherness described above, be reassessed from the very outset. Whether my perception of the Deaf world is more or less about my perception of myself or my own self-definition is ultimately left to the reader.

1.6.1 Self

Being honest and transparent about myself and my standpoint is essential in a work of this kind. I am a hearing, female, art history graduate. I have learned BSL to a certain level, I have Deaf friends and my supervisor is Deaf. This project

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[13] 'Branson and Miller, 2000:250

has evolved within the Centre For Deaf Studies at Bristol University. Thus much academic discourse surrounding Deaf Studies in general has been available to me, along with everyday interactions with Deaf people. However, it must be clarified at this early stage that my interest here is with the role or function of art in Deaf lives. I will always be a spectator of this world. I am not and never will be in it. The aim is to support the Deaf people and the Deaf community - to provide ammunition and information upon which to forward their campaign. The researcher role is one of information gatherer.[14] Additionally it is felt that writing in an entirely Social Science style can lose some of the resonances of meaning that the Arts and Humanities writing styles encompass, thus I will attempt to straddle both here. For the discipline of the ethnographer is of utmost importance in the application of ethnography. Who the ethnographer is and where the ethnography is coming from clearly dictates ones interpretation of a particular ethnography.[15]

1.6.2 Other

The d/D clarification has already been mentioned, pointing to the fact that;

> The type or degree of hearing loss is not a criterion for being Deaf. Rather, the criterion is whether a person identifies with other Deaf people, and behaves a Deaf person.[16]

Perhaps the most mystifying concept, for outsiders to grasp is the constant reference to the 'Deaf Way'.

> We have frequently had the experience that deaf people questioned about such and such a happening will simply shake their head and say 'it's the Deaf

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[14] It is interesting if we look at the work of Harris (1995) where we see recent issues re. Researching Deaf communities pointing to the fact that there is more to accessing and being accepted by Deaf communities than linguistic factors. There are just some avenues in the Deaf community that will never be open to me, from this example not all hearing researchers are aware of this.

[15] Clarification of my role within this field has been greatly helped by research done by other hearing people - Ernst Thoutenhoofd in particular greatly influenced my understanding of where I fit into the bigger picture. This section is thus indebted to his PhD

[16] Padden and Humphries, 1988: 95. See Ladd (2003) p. 41-43 for and 'overview' of this comment.

Way'. They are very clear in the divisions between what deaf people accept and what a hearing person will understand.[17]

The Deaf way signifies a system of meaning sharing, a method of making sense of the world, that is not open to hearing people.[18]

And in America, this Deaf Way is termed DEAF-WORLD[19]:

Generally we can say that the inhabitants of the DEAF-WORLD are people who possess DEAF-WORLD knowledge and who share the experience of what it is like to be Deaf. But within the overall definition there are distinctions to be made. For one thing, the extent of a person's hearing is not the central issue in deciding membership in the DEAF-WORLD. There are people who have very limited hearing or none at all but choose not to be part of DEAF-WORLD. Conversely, there are many Deaf people who hear well enough to use a telephone and speak well enough to be understood, but choose to live in the DEAF-WORLD.[20]

So how does a hearing person fit into this DEAF-WORLD?

…Deaf people like all people have a need for being, at least part of the time, with others who share the same language and culture, values and concerns. In this regard, the DEAF-WORLD maybe likened to a revolving door that spins at its own rate. If you are able to walk in and keep up the pace and more important are committed to staying the course, then you are more than welcome. Most hearing people however, only want to go around once or twice and then exit back to their own circle of friends… The DEAF-WORLD has its own rate of spinning; it may slow down here or there, for some 'outsiders' but when it returns to speed, it is the newcomer's responsibility to keep up.[21]

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[17] Kyle and Woll, 1989: 9
[18] Thoutenhoofd, 1996:56
[19] Deaf Way, DEAF-WORLD and Deafhood are not straightforward in meaning or interchangeable, for the sake of this section however, we are concerned with a Deaf space unique to Deaf people so these concepts suffice
[20] Lane, Hofmeister and Bahan, 1996:5/6
[21] Lane, Hofmeister and Bahan, 1996: 6/7

Clearly, hearing people need to find a way to 'keep up'. This question concerns the nature of Deaf and hearing relationships, on whose terms the relationship rests, and whether indeed there is space for such relationships. The ratio of hearing:Deaf people working in Deaf Studies suggests there is an array of people trying to make sense of these 'spinning doors'. The dynamics of this involvement are worthy of attention. Deaf Studies is the area of research that looks at Deaf people, their language, as well as the Deaf community and culture.

> Deaf studies could be seen to be moving along a path between deaf focused research and deaf-led work. Importantly, Deaf studies can be a domain of study for people who are not from within the linguistic minority.[22]

What then are the pros and cons of this interface where members from the linguistic minority meet non-members within an academic framework?

1.6.3 The interface

To assess the issues surrounding this interface it is interesting to turn to both Deaf and hearing people in the field to gain a greater understanding of the issues involved. Doug Alker (2003), a significant figure in Deaf activism, suggested that one of the problems the Deaf space has, is that too much time is spent talking amongst themselves (ourselves) and that all this talking is happening to the wrong people. He believes very strongly that these conversations must move away from 'internal banter', and that Deaf people need to be talking 'out there' not 'in here'. His concern is with the interface between Deaf people and academic debates. The evidence and research carried out by hearing researchers is exactly what Deaf people need to support and back up their challenge. They need particular types of proof, they need the answers, and the academic institution is where these answers lie. In this sense then, the interface between Deaf peoples and hearing researchers is problematic but necessary. The question remains why such a large proportion of these researchers is hearing.[23]

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[22] Kyle, Deaf Studies in Perspective 2003
[23] To answer this question in the fullest sense we also need to bear in mind the history of the Deaf world and the ideology Oralism that was imposed upon them. This will be explored in greater detail in 2.1, for the meantime however it is necessary to contemplate

Sutton-Spence (2003), in an unpublished opinion piece, suggests that;

> Hearing people within the academic world have a huge advantage over deaf BSL users in the matter of publication… They have experience of the way academic papers are written... They have the language necessary for the writing… They have read far more widely so that they know about other …research in general…[24]

Other issues identified by Sutton-Spence include the idea that being Deaf does not exclude a person from research, yet a Deaf person is obliged to 'play by the same rules' and, more importantly, that those rules were written by the hearing academic institution. This is not to say that Deaf people cannot play this game. There are clearly successful Deaf academics. However, there are so many issues surrounding language of publication and the need for interpreters, which requires funding and generally penetrating a hard world of publications in your second language, that this task is problematic from the outset (Ibid.). Whether this is an issue arising from the inadequacies of the current education system or relating to how Deaf people whose first or preferred language is a sign language is almost irrelevant in this context. This issue is that there is clearly an issue when Deaf people are expected to become fluent in the use of the written form of a spoken language which is not 'theirs'.

This interface between 'them' and 'us' is evidently a politicised and problematic one. We must look to people like Alker (2003) to remind hearing researchers to continue their work and supply that information; the specific types of proof and answers. Only then will the interface become less problematic. At this point we can begin to work together in collaborative partnerships, and to clarify the role of the hearing researcher (information gatherer as opposed to world changer, perhaps) and move on with the liberation agenda in a Deaf informed/led way where Deaf people fulfil a variety of roles within the research process rather than the stereotypical tokenism of a 'native' field worker to validate the research.

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it on this level. Thus situating the research and the researcher more fully. The background shall be incorporated at a later stage.

[24] Sutton-Spence, 2003: handout

1.7 Summary

The intention of this section is to enlighten the reader as to some of the issues that come into play when a researcher encounters an 'other' community. A conscious and concerted effort has been made to address ethnocentric bias throughout this project and retain some sort of integrity. If we do not admit and move away from this way of thinking and knowing, we are never truly going to be able to make any sense of other communities and the dynamics of diversity. Throughout every stage of this research project this line of thought has remained vitally important to the researcher's attitude and place in the field. It stands as a basis for all that follows.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Background

2.0 Introduction

Traditionally this chapter is a means of the researcher demonstrating knowledge of the present state of the research topic. The researcher might be expected to identify trends in research activity and be critical about these (Phillips and Pugh: 2000). Because literature on British Deaf arts is virtually non-existent, a central part of the research project is to seek out and gather together documentation that enables the beginnings of a British Deaf arts narrative.

This chapter documents the results of that seeking out and gathering process. However, it is essential to introduce the reader to the existing discourses surrounding Deaf people and Deaf communities prior to considering their artworks. On these grounds, situating the Deaf predicament historically and contextually will constitute section 2.1. It is clear from this section that Deaf people are visual people; a discussion of their language, culture and creative expressions will suggest this. The relationship that this culture has with its cultural attributes shall be considered in 2.2 where a more specific focus on Deaf art emerges. This shall be based on what minimal documentation exists regarding it. What is clearly missing from these discussions is a more Arts based exploration. Section 2.3 then is a more general assessment of the link between art and society as documented in art historical and sociological literature. There will be specific case studies in relation to art functioning within deracinated or uprooted communities and the notion of artist as agent. The Aboriginal artist, the Latin American artist and the artist in the midst of Modernity shall be considered. This tripartite background review shall serve as a springboard for the data chapters that follow.

The objective here is to set this scene in the least reductive way possible. Outsider writers are commonly criticised for summarising communities in a way that belittles and reduces significant events to sweeping statements. Baddeley & Fraser (1989) refer to the challenge of writing about something or someone from the outside, and that in embarking on this task one runs the risk of

'oversimplification'.[25]   These accounts do history and Deaf people very little justice. It is on these grounds that I would like to direct the reader to Appendix A 'Inside the Museums, deafness goes on Trial'. This extract from Dr. Paddy Ladd's recent publication is exemplary of a 'Deaf Way'; it manifests the storytelling and the vivid creation of a scene common to sign language users. It is written by a Deaf academic for a Deaf (and potentially hearing) audience. There are reasons for including this piece; who better to summarise Deaf history than a Deaf person? And what more appropriate way to do it than through an extended metaphor utilising both art and museums.

2.1 Deaf people, Deaf Communities and History

The importance of history to any community is indubitably significant, more so for what might be termed as broken communities. History is commonly written by those people who won the victory and in this light is rarely an objective account. There appears to be a slight irony in this situation. I suggest, that the Deaf space is broken and history is essential when a community to attempts to rebuild tself. However, Jackson opens his book by stating that a heritage like that of the Deaf world,

> …does not have a long history unless it is written about, or painted, or built as a permanent structure, and herein lies the greatest difficulty in looking at the history of deaf people, for their language, British Sign Language, is a visual gestural language where no written form exists…[26]

Thus the history of Deaf peoples is limited to that which has been written down or passed down through history. There is information available, but that is not to deny that much has been lost in the hands of time - that might never be recovered. An exhaustive discussion of all that has happened within and to this community is not necessary. Here, the reader will find a set of different discourses related to Deaf people and their worlds throughout history.[27]

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[25] Baddeley and Fraser, 1989: introduction with reference to writing about Latin American minority communities.
[26] Jackson, 1990: 1
[27] Should the reader wish to read a potted history of Deaf people and the Deaf community in chronological manner, I would suggest, Lane, 1984, or Ladd, 2003 for

2.1.1 Different Models of deafness

There are distinct differences and diversities amongst Deaf people. We cannot see deafness or Deaf people as an homogenous entity. There is a certain set of social constructions of deafness that we must explore and comprehend if we are going to make any sense of the Deaf people, and their communities' place in society in recent years or today.

Notably, these models have been constructed by the hearing hegemony. Our understanding of deafness has shifted throughout history, and the different models below can be seen as reflections of different beliefs emanating from different eras (Lane, 1984).

If we look back to the eighteenth century model of deafness we see the dominance of an educationalist and civilising mentality. This was not so much about the civilising of the Deaf, but the good doing of the hearing, in a religious and soul-improving way. It was the hearing educationalists who this perspective was really about not the Deaf people. In this light, Deaf people were the responsibility of a civilized society. The philanthropists and charity social workers played their martyr-like roles under these circumstances (Ladd, 2003).

Then we move to the more medical model, which was bound up with wider modernity thoughts. Deafness here is regarded as an illness that could be cured by medical, clinical and scientific advances. It is loaded with the power structures and myths attached to modern medicine (Ibid). The medical model pathologises deafness and is concerned with the single characteristic of 'hearing loss'. As suggested by Brien (1981) this can be summarized as the 'Deaf as deficient' approach. It is this medical model that shall be considered in more depth as the basis of Oralism, and the oppression contained therein.

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detailed well informed accounts of the happenings in Deaf history from Graeco-Roman times to the present day.

We must then address the social model; according to which society disables Deaf people. In this model, the responsibility for access and integration issues is a problem that society has to deal with, and is not the fault nor responsibility of the Deaf individual (Ibid). Finally we must turn our gaze to the cultro-linguistic model as put forward by Ladd (2002); which is encapsulated in a concise example.

> If a disabled child receives a terrible education and upbringing, the tragedy or scandal operates on the *individual* level. It is a scandal for that individual. If a Deaf child receives such an education, it is a tragedy not just for the child themselves, but for the language community that the child will grow up to be a member of… Instead of encountering someone who will grow to be a valuable member of that community, to whom they can pass the responsibilities of running any one of the 250 Deaf clubs in the UK, or indeed any Deaf event, they encounter a 16 year old who cannot read, write sign properly, is often ashamed of being Deaf, who has no knowledge of Deaf history and culture. So the damage done operates also on a *collective* level.[28]

This collective level described by Ladd is significant, for it is in the Deaf world's collective existence that Deaf culture and the Deaf community is founded. Stokoe (1965) is regarded as being the first researcher to describe the Deaf community as a cultural group, and since then the notion of Deaf community has been debated by many (Baker and Cokely, 1980; Brien, 1981; Ladd, 1988; Lane, 1993, Lane Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996; Padden and Humphries, 1988). This concept of the Deaf community depathologises Deaf people and the notion of deafness as a disability. Attempting to summarise the complexities of the Deaf community is an ambitious task. Baker and Cokely illustrated this in 1980, through the construction of a diagram as shown below in Figure 1:

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[28] Ladd, 2002, Holten Lee Review
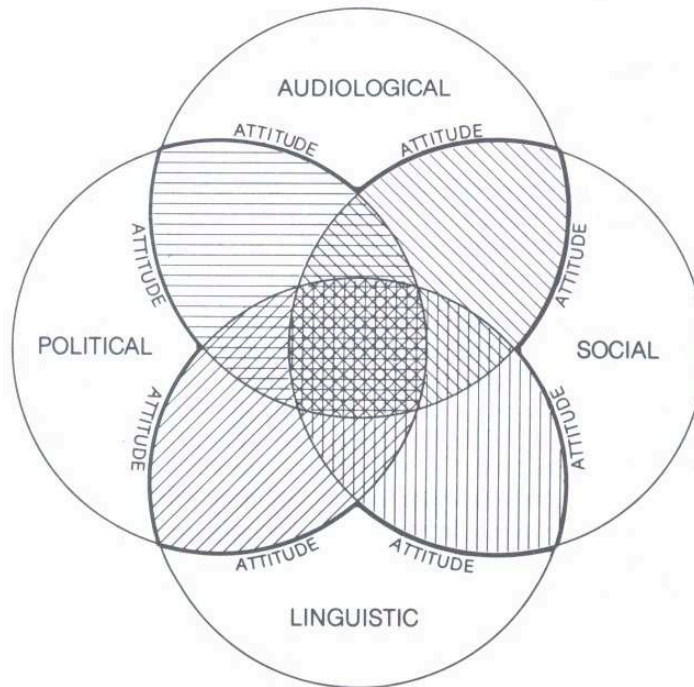
Figure 1 - Avenues to membership in the Deaf community[29]

From this illustration, we can see the different aspects or ingredients that make up the central core of Deaf community membership. Within this diagram, people satisfying all four avenues would be considered as 'core' members of the community; whereas other people may be considered as 'peripheral' members. As Padden (1980) proclaims, 'A Deaf community may include persons who are not themselves Deaf, but who actively support the goals of the community and work with people to achieve them' (Padden, 1980: 41). In this light, the artist informants involved in this study have different levels of commitments to the Deaf community, incorporating some core and some peripheral members.

Seemingly equal weighting is given to the outer circles leading to the central core of ultimate Deaf community membership. It is reminiscent of a scientific more quantitative measuring device and is not an accurate representation when we think of all the other factors that come into play when judging the extent of someone's commitment to their community. Its inclusion is justified

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[29] Baker and Cokely, 1980:56

by the fact that there are few other attempts at 'ingredients' for this concept and on these grounds it remains useful for readers in Deaf Studies. Turner (1994) represents the first critique of the Deaf culture concept; he draws attention to the fact that definitions of Deaf community and culture are circular.[30] This critique is undeniably true; however the likes of Stokoe (1994), Lane Hoffmeister and Bahan (1996) have challenged it, claiming that this circularity can be circumvented by shifting the analytical focus, and the reader is referred to their texts for further explanation.

2.1.2 The Social and Cultural Model

Culture has been realised as one of the most difficult concepts to define or grasp by many. One of the earliest definitions of culture was proposed by Edward B Tylor:

> Culture… is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.[31]

Regardless of issues, it is undoubtedly agreed that culture is inextricably bound up with identity:

> Culture comes to be associated with the nation or the state; this differentiates us from them…culture in this sense is a source of identity.[32]

With regards to a specific 'Deaf Culture' I would refer the reader back to the earlier discussion of DEAF-WORLD and Deaf Way. We can see the terminology relating to Deaf Culture emerging in the early 1980's in the works of Padden (1980).[33] Deaf Culture then was taken to mean; 'members of the Deaf culture behave as Deaf people do, use the language of Deaf people, and

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[30] I refer the reader to the article for further exploration of this viewpoint.
[31] Mindess, 1999:18
[32] Said, 1994:xiii
[33] Although as, Humphries suggests, 'before we talked culture, culture talked. Deaf people have always maintained a discourse that was about themselves, their lives, their beliefs, and their interpretation of the world, their needs, and their dreams without mentioning the word culture.' (Humphries, 2002:1)

share the beliefs of Deaf people towards themselves and other people who are not Deaf' (Padden, 1980: 93). It is also suggested that the notions of Deaf culture and Deaf community are inextricably bound, in that one presupposes the other, that they are in fact, 'facets of a single entity' (Brien, 1981: 46).

If we are to assume that Deaf Culture is inextricably linked with the Deaf Way (Kyle and Woll, 1980) or DEAF-WORLD, members of this culture could be said to share an ethnicity (Lane, Hofmeister and Bahan, 1996).[34] The use of Sign Language is clearly bound up with notions of Deaf culture and ethnicity, there are a common set of misconceptions when it comes to hearing people's understanding of this language. These misunderstandings are based on poor Deaf awareness and deserve mention below.

What is Sign Language?

Sign language is *not* a universal language. There are some 200 sign languages each with its own full set of linguistic and grammatical rules. There is some form of 'International Sign' employed in certain situations - this however is not a 'full' language and lacks the richness and density of the individual languages themselves. There is a common misconception regarding fingerspelling, one does not spell every word. The BSL fingerspelling alphabet is only used in specific situations - names and places to name a few. There also exists an enormous BSL dictionary that does not purport to include every BSL sign - but a small sample;

> The vocabulary of BSL…does not consist only of those established signs
> that can be listed in a dictionary. Of equal importance are the lexical
> resources used by fluent users to create new vocabulary.[35]

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[34] Notably, the opening of this book is done in a Deaf way- that it is not a physical space, so much as a way of being or an ontology. The very personal introductions and situating of selves- detailing the authors parents, school, onset of deafness, links with Deaf community or DEAF WORLD are exemplary of this 'Deaf way' this introductory revealing of the self is essential in the Deaf community, so that it can be established at an early stage where an individual fits into the larger heterogeneous Deaf world.

[35] Dictionary of British Sign Language/English, 1992: xi. The introduction to which is a clear discussion of the nature and grammar of the language, the Deaf community and Deaf culture and Sutton-Spence, R. and Woll, B. (1999) The linguistics of British Sign

Additionally, the bodily movements and facial expressions are all part of this language - they make up the grammar and syntax and are implicit to the meaning. English then is most Deaf peoples' second language. The language of Deaf people is a site of heated debated and contestation. Many misunderstandings regarding Deaf people and their lives stem from misunderstandings about sign languages. It is also a space where language rights and ownership issues are at the forefront, for language is implicit to any healthy community. If one aims to attack a community, it is the language they aim for, and this was the case with Deaf communities under the ideology known as Oralism. Oralism and its effects shall be discussed at a later stage. For the meantime however, we shall stay with the notion of sign languages and look to history, where it is clear that sign languages existed and were respected by outsiders to the Deaf world.

Hearing and Deaf co-existence

There are specific examples that suggest the successful co-existence of Deaf and hearing people utilising sign language freely. There was a time before the Oralist ideology where Deaf people and their language might not have been labelled with such a patronising and derogatory tone inspired by the Gramscian hearing hegemony and the medical models set out above.

Additionally, recent research, (Miles, 2000) reveals that there was a flourishing sign language community based in the Turkish Ottoman Court between 1500-1700. It is suggested by Miles, that some 200 Deaf people were members of the court, and their sign language was regarded with the highest respect - to the point that sign language was even employed by the Sultan under the auspice that it was more dignified than spoken language. Surely this situation cannot have just appeared out of nowhere; it must have its roots in a wider cultural context (Ladd, 2003:99).

Language: An Introduction. I would recommend these as a starting point to the lay reader should they wish to learn more on this topic. pp 2-133.

Another illustration of this seemingly 'utopian' dream of Deaf peoples living a healthy existence and Deaf and hearing living and communicating without barriers is the case of Martha's Vineyard. Groce's (1985) work reveals the fascinating situation where a Deaf 'gene' resulted in large proportions of Deaf people inhabiting Martha's Vineyard in the 17th century. It is not so much this percentage of Deaf people that is of interest to this project, but the fact that people rarely distinguished between the Deaf and hearing members of society. Groce actually states that:

> The most striking thing about these deaf men and women is that they were *not* handicapped, because no one perceived their deafness as a handicap[36]. As one woman said to me, "You know, we didn't think anything special about them. They were just like anyone else…" [37]

In the 1830's Berthier[38] employed a political and cultural strategy to increase the presence and status of Deaf people and their language in France. This came in the way of annual banquets, where the press and famous speakers (signers) would appear. It was here that speeches were actually given in sign language because it was considered sublime and deeply linked with Nature - and interestingly they were recorded and printed and hence are accessible to us now. This indicates that Deaf discourses did exist and more than that, it was tied up with high culture and art. However the medical models and normalising tendencies of majority society were taking hold. The education system was under attack - 1880 saw a crucial date in Deaf history in Milan.

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[36] If we look at this statement in relation to earlier comments in relation to 'Self and Other' and Berger's thought we can see the notion of 'the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe' (Berger, 1972: 8) Here Deaf people were not seen as disabled because deafness had not been attributed as deviant by cultural medical and clinical constructions.

[37] Groce, 1985:110

[38] Berthier- was a leading Deaf Parisian in the 1830's, alongside a number of other French figures who are vital parts of the Deaf world's history, notably, Abbe de l'Epee, and his successor Sicard, who were instrumental in the establishment of Deaf schools and the sign languages used to educate within them. For further information regarding these key figures' concepts of sign language please see Lane 1984.

2.1.3 Oralism and its effects

> Education is the way that a culture ensures its survival, determines its cultural health, plans for its future. If you want to wipe out a culture, the best way is to wipe out the language. And the best way to wipe out a language is to prevent it being passed on to the next generation. Thus education is the battleground for all minority cultures.[39]

So it was in 1880, at a congress in Milan, that education was the target this was a key moment in Deaf history where sign languages were effectively banned. It was here that Oralist tendencies peaked and Deaf children were compelled to receive their education through an 'oral' approach, where they were encouraged to use whatever residual hearing they had, to lip read, and develop their speech skills, rather than use sign language. (Erting, 1994; Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996) This was clearly based upon the medical and clinical models described above, where deafness was deemed pathological and deviant. Regardless of this oppression, it must be noted that cultural values continued to develop in a stifled manner almost in spite of the educational system. It was within specific sites that this culture continued, namely, residential schools and the Deaf Clubs. Here Deaf people came together as a collective and instinctively resisted the ideologies imposed upon them (Ladd, 2003).

The knock-on effect of this oppression cannot be underestimated. 'Oralism and the suppression of sign language have resulted in a dramatic deterioration in the educational achievement of Deaf children and in the literacy of the Deaf generally' (Sacks, 1991: 28). It is also suggested that the effects of Oralism reverberated throughout all aspects of Deaf people, their culture and their lives. The effect Oralism had on creativity and the production of arts and expressions of this culture shall be considered in the pages below. It is necessary at this stage to understand the oppression more clearly. The Deaf community and Deaf people in the wake of Oralism can be seen in this respect.

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[39] Ladd, 2002

From a certain perspective, the entire Deaf community is one big pinball trapped within a game it didn't design. And how is this pinball to liberate itself? The answer, of course, is that it must grow arms and legs, wrench its way out of the machine, find an audience for itself on the public stage, and then speak and be heard…[40]

2.1.4 Theorising the oppression

It is important here to suggest that Deaf people can be considered as a disenfranchised group in society. Although we can begin to move towards understanding liberations and the process of regaining Deaf peoples rights, we have to remember that Deaf people have suffered oppression at the hands of the hearing majority and in this light can be labelled as an 'oppressed' community. (Baker-Shenk, 1986: Lane, 1993)

Colonialism

The Colonialism model can be useful if we are attempting to make sense of the Deaf situation more clearly. Colonialism can be summarised as a situation in which, 'one not only controls and rules the other, but also endeavours to impose its cultural order on the subordinate group' (Merry, 1991: 894). The relationship between Colonialism and oppression must be explored in more depth - there is not the space to do so here. It is however essential to understand the difference between physical oppression and the more damaging, psychological oppression - where the oppressed are actually convinced of their inferiority.

This inferiority might manifest itself in 'infantilisation' (Ladd, 2003) where the oppressed are not only made to feel like children, but see themselves as such. A dependence upon other people, and a reluctance to take responsibility for issues such as archiving, recording and organising (hence the lack of existing discourse) could be symptoms of this 'infantilisation' internalised. The impact of colonial encounters reverberates on a number of planes. Fanon, in his work

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[40] Bechter, 2002:4

(1968) raises the significant point, that, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly "In reality, who am I?" With colonial oppression this feeling of isolation and anonymity is bound up with wider existential questions. And only under a colonial power are we forced to ask those existential questions. In the case of the Deaf world, people were forced to ponder, why were they Deaf, what is the point of being Deaf, who they once were, who are they now and what will they be in the future. The colonial space thus being destructive to a previously healthy language using community on several levels.

Audism

Lane (1993) refers to this oppression and prejudice of Deaf people as 'audism' that can be equated with sexism or racism. As a result of this audism, Deaf people's language and culture have been denigrated as abnormal. Based upon this assumption, Deaf people have been subjected to audist attitudes that have resulted in the denial of their language and their culture. This has obvious impacts upon their traditions and beliefs which results in an ongoing power struggle with the hearing majority (Ibid).

Dysconscious Audism

Dysconscious audism is a further theoretical tool that might help us make sense of the oppression more clearly. Gertz explores this notion at length in an unpublished paper written for the Deaf Studies Think Tank, 1999. It is suggested here, that you need 'consciousness' to become a fully fledged member of a community – and that when your consciousness reaches a certain level of understanding about your community only then can you contribute to social change. Here it is useful to look at Bechter's metaphor of the pinball machine, in that it is only through a certain collective consciousness that Deaf people will be in the position to wrench themselves out of the machine. Deaf people are conscious of their unequal status (the fact that they are trapped) and might have potential support for some kind of collective action. Like other oppressed people trapped in their relative machines and

being controlled by their relevant ideologies, there is another layer to the entrapment. King's notion of dysconscious racism[41] says that people don't think critically enough about things like racism, rather, they *accept* and *perpetuate* the assumptions due to limited understanding and experience.' (Gertz, 2002:4)

Dysconscious racism (with reference to the Black community) is then, a form of racism that implicitly *accepts* dominant white norms and privileges (King, 1998 cited in Gertz, 2002: 5). Gertz takes this model and applies it successfully to Deaf peoples, and suggests that there is 'a form of audism that tacitly *accepts* dominant hearing norms and privileges. It is not the absence of consciousness but an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking about Deaf consciousness. And it is because of this acceptance of hearing hegemonic powers that Deaf people are still victimized, or more likely, perpetuate this victimization and thus remain within the confines of this elaborate pinball machine.[42]

The perpetuation of this oppression has crucially been re-assessed by Deaf people; thus they might be seen to be moving away from accepting the majorities' power and be seen to be working their way out of the pinball machine. During the 1970's[43] the awareness regarding these failing models of deafness grew. It became clear that these models and the ideology of Oralism were failing Deaf people and this realisation emerged hand in hand with the wider de-colonisation process. There were a number of factors implicit to this self-awareness and wider liberatory movement including; greater visibility of Deaf people in the media, the recognition of various sign languages throughout Europe, the establishment of Interpreter training, increasing numbers of Deaf professionals, the much needed rediscovery of Deaf history, as well as the setting up of Deaf Studies Courses and increased academic attention given to

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[41] Cited in Gertz, 2002
[42] These are my italics throughout- in order to highlight the 'accepting and perpetuating' nature of dysconsciousness.
[43] This was in line with a number of other minority groups who were reassessing their place in society in the 1960's and 70's. This occurred amongst an open-minded 'hippie' era where it was accepted even fashionable to be different or diverse. A concern with human rights and protest culture respected identities such as gay and black to the point they became popularised even fashionable.

the field. Deaf people were beginning to shake off the different models imposed upon them, and were standing up and being counted as people failed by Oralism.

The legacy of Oralism is certainly still present in the lives of d/Deaf people and their communities; there are new sets of threats to bear in mind. I intend to make brief mention of these before returning to the subject in hand.

2.1.5 A new set of threats

Despite the move towards wrenching themselves out of the pinball machine, the future for d/Deaf people is not straightforward. With 95% of Deaf children currently being mainstreamed[44], Deaf schools and Deaf colleges being closed down[45], as well as scientific 'advances' in the way of cochlear implants and genetic engineering.[46] The organisations representing Deaf people represent deafness rather than Deaf people, thus the strong Deaf communities' voice is being lost amongst the wider concerns surrounding deafness, these are a whole new set of threats. Deaf peoples are fighting a constant battle to regain the power they have lost, to restore a history and a heritage and to uncover all that has been lost in the process of oppression and identity destruction. Passing all of this information on to the younger generation and inspiring them to take up where they left off is the crucial next enterprise.

This brings me to my final point regarding the Deaf space, and that is the significant question of how to maintain it? We must bear in mind that there is a 90% rule in play here - 90% of Deaf people will marry Deaf people, 90% of the children born to these couples will be hearing, and 90% of Deaf babies are in fact born to hearing parents (Kyle, 2002). This might seem like an irrelevant set of statistics to quote in a project such as this. But when artistic endeavour and creativity is ultimately so contingent upon the community and the artists' background - we have to appreciate the struggles and difficulties experienced

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[44] See glossary
[45] The recent case of Derby College being exemplary of this.
[46] See Ladd, 2003: 158-161 and 454-457 for an in depth discussion of these issues

by Deaf people in the matter of maintaining their history, their stories and their heritage. This fragmented and split generational issue could have implications far beyond mere communication and identity issues. How are stories passed on or histories retained? This is something that Deaf people, and the Deaf community needs to think through well if their future is going to overcome the new set of looming threats. With technology on their side, the Internet and email, and mobile communications developing in Deaf Ways[47], the campaign has the potential to take the newly discovered history, arts and language ownership onto greater things. It is significantly a matter of whether some sort of (research based?) coalition can set itself in motion utilising the new developments and overcoming these new sets of threats. Only time will tell if and how this will be achieved.

Based on all of the above, Deaf peoples and the Deaf world have been contextualised for the reader, on these grounds it is important to return to the creativity of these people, and assess how Oralism impacted upon Deaf art and artists. As suggested by Padden and Humphries (1988), it seems that Deaf people have begun to reassess themselves, to make sense of themselves in the face of societies (mis-) understanding of them, 'they have found ways to define and express themselves through their rituals, tales, and performances…' (Padden and Humphries, 1988: 11) Perhaps the reason that so much of these Deaf expressions come about in a visual manner is related to Deaf peoples apparent visual intelligence? (Sacks, 1991: 40). There is a clear bond between Deaf people and the visual.

> The ideology underlying art and the sign-method are exactly the same. I
> see pictures mentally, and think in gesture.[48]

The next section shall then focus on the visual expressions of Deaf people, how Oralism impacted this sector of a community's life, and the potential for this area to play its part in the liberation process.

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[47] For example the WISDOM Project at Centre for Deaf Studies. Wireless Information Services for Deaf people On the Move, and Deaf Station which can be found at -. www.deafstation.org.
[48] Tilden cited in Albronda, 1980

2.1.6 Oralism and Art

What role did or does art play in this tangled history of oppression? What impact has all of the above had upon creativity and artistic endeavour?

> We came to depend on hearing people to help us and we felt obligated to hearing people for their help. This is hardly the fertile environment for great thinkers and artists, for achievements and leadership.[49]

If you take away a people's language, the implications are million fold, as Sacks realises when he talks about the imprisonment of minds and souls (Sacks, 1991: 54) For, 'It is only through language that we enter fully into our human state and culture, communicate freely with fellows and acquire and share information.' (Sacks, 1991:5) On these grounds, much of what comes forth from a healthy language using community has been lost in the case of the Deaf space.

In line with the project at hand, artistic output was greatly damaged and diminished by the decisions taken in Milan. 'The infamous Milan Congress of 1880 actually advocated the banning of art in deaf schools as, like sign it was supposed to detract from auditory communication' (Dimmock, 1991:vii). This is not only a possible reason for the distinct lack of discourse, but reminds us of similar situations where creativity has been the target of powerful controllers. National Socialist art, and the impact of political ideologies on artists endeavour, for instance, with communist manifestos such as those of Ceausescu in Romania more recently are examples where creativity has been banned and controlled for the sake of a greater controlling dogma. Yet sometimes it is the culture (the arts, and creative expression) of these oppressed cultures that is the most important part of their existence. Thus a brief examination follows based on the Deaf peoples relationship to their cultural attributes.

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[49] Alker, 2000: 22

2.1.7 The culture of a culture

> Society cannot exist in its fullest vigour unless the importance of art as a
> constructive force in human progress continues to be recognized. Art
> makes a state wealthy by showing that life in it is worthwhile.[50]

There is a distinct cultural importance of these cultural attributes to Deaf
peoples. Let us look to poetry and performance at this point - for it is far more
widely documented than the visual arts to which this study pertains.

It has been suggested that the cultural space is that of celebration space, a
space for developing cultural voices, strengthening connections, and gaining a
sense of belonging.[51] Sign language literature and performance is an
important facet of Deaf Culture - the story telling, the language games, the
humour, performance art and poetry and Deaf theatre (Padden and Humphries
1988; Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996: Peters, 1996).

Kennedy and Peterson reveal this with respect to language-based
expressions, illuminating that poetry can be seen as reflections of the language
and culture of the American Deaf community.

> Poetry is a reflection of the times in which people live… it is a reflection of
> our struggles, achievements, experiences and emotions…poetry has a
> rich history in America and is an ever-expanding avenue of expression in
> American Deaf culture…[52]

What then, is sign language poetry for? Sutton-Spence's book (in press)
surveys this question at length with explicit reference to Dorothy Miles[53]. Here
it is suggested that sign language poetry serves many roles: It shows hearing
people the beauty and complexity of sign language and makes them respect
the culture [54] Sutton-Spence goes on to say that poetry is empowering, it can

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[50] Tilden, in Albronda, 1980: dedications
[51] West, D. Unpublished Msc Dissertation
[52] Kennedy, D. Peterson, L. 1999
[53] See glossary
[54] Sutton-Spence, in press

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empower the poet and it can empower the poet's audience. Additionally, poetry is to enable capable Deaf people to realise their potential through their creativity. It is suggested then, that poetry can empower the individual and the group. According to Clayton Valli[55], 'Empowerment is highly needed in Deaf people, to increase in strength and assertiveness and to create pride in themselves'[56].

> These poems empower the deaf community by writing about deafness and sign language in a positive way. They are optimistic and show deaf people as people as people in control of their own destiny. They do not deny problems faced by deaf people. Some of the best poems are the ones that identity the role that hearing people have played in oppressing deaf people.[57]

It can then be deduced that poetry plays a significant role in the lives of Deaf people; it serves its functions within the wider self-definition movement as well as reflecting the issues raised by oppression. Poetry in the Deaf world, reflects people's lives, celebrates and empowers yet explores and represents the problems faced by the community in a Deaf way.

2.1.8 Summary

It has then been established that there is a complex and tangled history of Deaf people and Deaf communities which has resulted in them being trapped in an elaborate 'machine' or 'game'. Within this game, their place in society has shifted and zig zagged between private and public, medical and cultural, fact and fiction, healthy existence and severe oppression generally at the hands of others. It can also be concluded that cultural attributes such as poetry manifest Deaf expressions and could potentially be a way for Deaf people to wrench themselves out of the machine that they trapped are within. This example of the American National Theatre of the Deaf furthers my suspicion of culture informing the wider aim to achieve change on several levels.

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[55] See glossary
[56] Valli, 1993: 143 cited in Sutton- Spence, in press
[57] Sutton-Spence, in press

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> In the Deaf world, many of the social and economic improvements over the last twenty-five years are often credited to NTD (National Theatre of the Deaf). Although there has been no controlled study to measure the impact of NTD on the betterment of life for Deaf people, there are credible studies and books that recognise NTD as a major force in bringing about change.[58]

Let us then see the story of Deaf history in these terms, as a story of both hearing and Deaf, self and other, of history and the present, of power and subordination and of the role of the 'institutions' within this. This section has contextualised the Deaf situation. It has also clarified some of the factors that have led to the minimal discourse surrounding Deaf arts. The situation we see in the British Deaf arts world is a direct symptom of all that has been described above, and must be regarded as such. It is then at this point we can turn our gaze to the more urgent matter at hand; the existing discourses surround Deaf art and artists.

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[58] Baldwin,1993: 114

2.2 Deaf Art - existing discourses

Based on the contention that there is a severe lack of discourse regarding Deaf arts, it might be useful to begin this section on a positive international note; a recent journal dedicated to Deaf arts is indicative of the level at which this discourse functions; in my eyes it is highly positive that the World Federation of the Deaf, begin their February 2003 publication with a contemplation of art in a wider cultural way. Carol-lee Aquiline ponders…

> Art imitates life… or is it Life imitates art? I can never remember, because at times both seem to be true… So, what of the arts of the Deaf community? Does our artwork, in whatever form, express our culture? Is there such a thing as Deaf theatre, Deaf art, Deaf literature? If yes, how do we define it? What will Deaf and hearing people 100 years from now understand about our life by looking at paintings, photographs, theatre, literary manuscripts and other forms of art we are creating today?[59]

However, it was established in Chapter 1 there is a distinct lack of material on this topic. This section then serves as a springboard for the clearly necessary methodology and data chapters that follow. What has been collected below is a set of literature that makes mention of Deaf art. Much is European based, there is also a slim section specifically on British Deaf art, and this will be followed by an exploration of goings on in America. Incorporating American discourse into this section needs some clarification. The situation in the USA is far more advanced that that of Britain.[60] Thus we might be in a position to look to America to see what possible futures there could be for Deaf art here in Britain.

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[59] Aquiline, 2003: 2
[60] This could be for a number of reasons. Possibly due to the size of the Deaf community - or the fact that irrespective of the education policy there was Gallaudet College (See glossary) which has been a setting for Deaf people to come together and an important way of maintaining and perpetuating Deaf communities and Deaf Studies. Gallaudet acted as a melting pot for Deaf worlds in that it was the only liberal arts college for Deaf people, it wasn't Oralist, and it was tertiary education. That intellectualisation included exploration of deafness, individually, as a community and culturally.

2.2.1 Deaf Art history

It is neither my intention nor my prerogative to list famous successful Deaf artists throughout history. I will however, give a brief account so that the reader can appreciate their relative importance and prominence. Deaf art has been scantily documented as part of mainstream art history; especially since art historians have rarely been concerned as to whether an artist is Deaf or otherwise. Recent research does suggest that Deaf artists sporadically appear throughout the pages of the history of art and the history of the Deaf. And as we might expect, there is little mentioned during the Oralist regime and more so since the Deaf Resurgence (Mirzoeff, 1996). These references span as far back as the first century, where we know of a Deaf artist; by the name of Quintus Pedius - a respected member of a highly cultured Roman society (Bernard, 1993: 76).

There is little mention of Deaf people, let alone Deaf artists until the 15th century, when, as Bernard suggests, a certain philosophical and cultural atmosphere developed, which considered Deaf people and their role in discourses surrounding the contemplation of human nature. It was at this point that the likes of Leonardo da Vinci suggested that the depiction of bodily gestures and the study of physiognomy could be greatly enhanced if artists observed the gestures and movements of sign language users (Bernard, 1993; Mirzoeff, 1995). Other Renaissance Deaf artists included Bernardino di Betto Biagi (1454-1513) who contributed to great works such as the Sistine Chapel and worked under the patronage of respected members of society such as Innocent VIII and Alexander VI (Bernard 1993). There is also evidence that Deaf artists were successful in Spain, with Juan Fernandez Navarette (1526-1579) being known as the 'el Mudo; the Spanish Titian'.

Finally Claude-Andre Deseine (1740-1823) deserves mention, for he not only won the Prix de Rome, but also sculpted commissioned busts of Mirabeau, Robespierre among others, in 1791. It is not necessary to continue this list of European Deaf art historical figures, it is intended only as a brief section to contextually situate for the reader the fact that Deaf artists were not of any

lower respectability or any less successful than their hearing counterparts - their work sits high up there within the art historical canon- just not necessarily labelled as 'Deaf'.

Mirzoeff (1995) is the only person to have attempted to deal with such issues, with a remarkable in-depth exploration of Deaf people, Deaf artists, sign language and visual culture in France from Louis XIV to 1927. Especially the relationship between deafness, art, politics, the French Revolution, and marginalisation of the art objects themselves. He believes that Deaf artists are not a footnote to high art: but that they played a specific and equal role within the history of art, as we know it. He points out that Deaf artists were in fact in a position where they could use the cachet of 'high art' to resist being categorised as 'primitive', that the 'high art' space was one where art was used as a vehicle for Deaf people to demonstrate their intellectual capacities (Mirzoeff 1995).

He identifies a remarkable body of Deaf artists, indicating that there was a flourishing artistic sign language community and culture in nineteenth century Paris. This has been documented because of the encounter between mainstream art and the concepts surrounding sign language itself. It has been suggested that the Academy actually advised artists to imitate sign language as the best means of representing gesture.[61] Thus the role of art in past Deaf lives really cannot be underestimated. Not only was it a tool to prove their worth and capability, but it was also highly interwoven with the political climate of the time. 'People saw art and activism as two faces of their expression of a deaf identity.' (Mirzoeff, 1995:12) and again, 'deaf artists were also political activists - and saw no contradiction in this dual role' (Mirzoeff, 1995: 261).

It is also Mirzoeff's contention that Oralism had a profound affect upon these Deaf creators, that Oralism and the banning of sign languages destroyed Deaf art to a certain extent and that it only re-emerged once sign languages had been re-introduced.

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[61] As did Leonardo de Vinci (Mirzoeff, 1995)

2.2.2 British Deaf Art history

There is very little data on Deaf visual artists in the UK, few and far between writers so far to have acknowledged them in any way. However it is possible to analyse some of the scantily documented historical data and extrapolate information about Deaf artists to use as a lead into the whole subject. In 2001, The British Deaf History Society published some useful data in 'Deaf Lives'[62] - a set of 150 biographies of Deaf people throughout history. Noticeably, of these 150 historical figures, at least one third of them are noted for their contributions to the field of 'high' art; from engravers to miniaturists, portraitists to Royal Academicians. If we are to include other figures that were successful within wider creative spheres, including, performance, poetry, textiles and architecture - the percentage rises. Half of the entire Deaf people listed in this collection, were famous or at least excelled within the 'arts' sphere.

This might appear to be a rather arbitrary quantitative exercise - yet, there does appear to be some significance. Why exactly there is this high proportion of creative people within Deaf history is questionable. One might assume that these figures are a true reflection of reality, which implies that a large proportion of Deaf people were involved in creative pursuits - whether this is because they were particularly gifted in this field; or they were unable to access other avenues; or this was a space they could be equal/prove themselves in; can only be speculated. It could however be suggested that it is not so much the true percentages being revealed here - but those dependent upon uncovering a history – dependent upon old records, documents, memoirs, diaries, artefacts and evidence. We know that low literacy as well as the impact of Oralism in the colonial sense, all but destroyed much of this documentation - how is a scattered community to retain these stories and keep their past safe when under the control of the hegemonic forces?

> No other kind of relic or text from the past can offer such a direct
> testimony about the world which surrounded other people at other times…

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[62] Jackson and Lee. 2001

> To say this is not to deny the expressive or imaginative quality of art, treating it as more documentary evidence; the more imaginative the work, the more profoundly it allows us to share the artist's experience of the visible.[63]

The paintings, etchings, engravings and sculptures, however have a greater power- they are the very objects that cannot be covered up by history, they are tangible objects, and their existence cannot be denied, part of them is their creators and on these grounds their authorship can not be denied. Whether then these figures should be seen as true reflections of Deaf peoples role in the arts- or whether they are indicative of an evidence-based (objects themselves) understanding of history - can only be speculated. However, what ever the reason may be, all we are given in this context is a brief biographical history.

Bredberg's article is one of the few articles devoted solely to a Deaf artist. Her exploration of Walter Geikie is an interesting mechanism to gain insight into the wider experience of Deaf people in the early nineteenth century, it is his life more than his art that she is concerned with; believing that by discussing his work alongside his life, there is some possibility of art objects being 'evidence that sign was recognized and used as part of the schooling of deaf students at the time' (Bredberg, 1995: 21). So here an analysis of art and artists is in fact a means of assessing a wider educational history, where art is a cultural tool in the uncovering of a lost history. Bredberg notes that Geikie's deafness is omitted from contemporary writing about him - a pattern, which is beginning to emerge. It appears that these historical figures were successful artists in their own right regardless of their deafness, or means of communication. This omission of the 'Deaf' label, seems to have been picked up on again and again, one can only assume that the 'Deaf' element was extraneous to the artists' success. That is unless the 'Deaf' was significant to their status or downfall; 'A.R. Thomson, a portraitist whose skills were not in doubt, but whose disability - he was a deaf-mute - had in 1940 been considered to disqualify him from the art world' (Harries, 1983: 174).

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[63] Berger, 1972: 10

These Deaf individuals of the past are slowly being uncovered as the last ten years of literature suggest, chiefly because of the work of Deaf amateur historians. This indeed began in the Deaf Resurgence, and texts like Gannon (1981) and Lane (1984) validated Deaf history per se, so that the rediscovery of Deaf art was begun. It is almost as if, until being Deaf became admitted and accepted (links with the post Oralism liberation movement, shifting social constructions and disability rights etc.) only then will the 'Deaf' label take its place in the Deaf artist. At the present time, this burgeoning discourse is however limited.

The common formula for the Deaf artists' story is a short compilation, mostly biographical in content.[64] Whether they were born Deaf or whether deafness came later in life, their education and career, maybe a mention of certain pieces of work, possibly historically situated, and sometimes comment upon the contribution made and the impact on the Deaf community at large. Jackson (1990), Gannon (1981) works are exemplary of this formula.

All of the above, with Arthur Dimmock's biography of Tommy [65] (Dimmock: 1991) and his articles in Deaf Arts UK are a basis and foundation for future ventures and research to be built upon. Britain has yet to attempt to move beyond this biographical/personal experience/background detail in relation to British Deaf arts. However, given the general Deaf Resurgence, the time for more detailed art specific discourse is coming closer.

Art clearly served a purpose in the history of the Deaf and the history of art, the question then appears to be whether or not art can still serve these functions. Is there still some space within the art world for Deaf people to prove their capabilities? Or is it the case that the art world with all its complexities and dependencies on English and reading and writing and theorising conceptual frameworks has evolved to the point where it is no longer accessible to Deaf

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[64] See Jackson, 1990 - in particular sections, 'The Late Eighteenth Century', p 24-31 and ' Artists in the 1800-1850's' p 73-81
[65] Which literally goes into details of his childhood, his pastimes at school, his sexual encounters and the very pubs he used to drink in

people? Is there still a space for Deaf political activism to be enhanced or at least go hand in hand with Deaf art worlds? To answer these questions, we must turn to the artists themselves. As a precursor to this venture, my research now investigates the current existing discourses. Once this has been established, we will be in a better position to assess what exists and on what level, in the way of current British Deaf arts discourse.

2.2.3 Contemporary British Deaf Arts discourses

> Deaf art, which had contributed so much to the advancement and status of deaf people through the centuries, still maintains a presence through the work of Trevor Landell, who became the first deaf student to graduate with a masters degree from the RCA. Landell is probably Britain's only deaf professional artist who paints for a living and exhibits regularly. He lives in London.[66]

This statement written in 1990 is insightful in that it suggests the bountiful history of Deaf art, and the apparently dwindling present state of it. In that Deaf art has contributed much to Deaf lives, and now we have only one Deaf artist. To suggest that there is only one professional practicing Deaf artist appears ludicrous. Although the Resurgence has to some extent taken hold - it has clearly not reached it climax. If we are to assume that we are still in the first stages of decolonisation, this is hardly surprising. The situation has evidently improved since 1990, and there are a number of living and practising Deaf artist based across the country, who have been through formal arts training and are currently exhibiting and selling their work. I am hesitant to go in to much great detail regarding contemporary practicing Deaf artists in this section, for it is their thoughts and feelings that will feature in the data chapters. This section then shall explore only published findings and the correspondence I have had with people who play a leading role in the field, so as not to pre-empt the data itself. Again, publications are minimal. A leading figure in the London Deaf art world informed me that:

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[66] Jackson, 1990: 425

I'm aware of the paucity of literature referring to Deaf Arts, but "Framed, Interrogating Disability in the Media" is useful… It gives many articles by a wide range of both Deaf and disabled practitioners…

…Also there was an article written by me for MAILOUT magazine about ten years ago… Plus British Deaf News may have sporadic articles on Deaf Arts including Deaf Theatre, especially the Theatre special in British Deaf News June 1993! Also DAIL used to have a Deaf Arts supplement, which ran for many months, but again it was during the nineties, then funding ran out, and it was then we decided to print Deaf Arts UK …[67]

This might then enlighten the reader as to the level at which Deaf arts is reported, a series of articles scattered amongst disparate journals and entirely dependent upon funding. Currently we can see the quarterly publication, Deaf Arts UK as the only ongoing publication devoted to Deaf art(s) run by Shape. That is not to belittle the work that has been achieved, for many of the contemporary artists owe a great deal to the organisation Shape, which has done enormous amounts for the Deaf artist in the Resurgence process by way of promotion and training.

Shape

The only manifestation of active Deaf arts promotion during the last 20 years can be found in Shape. Shape is an arts organisation, which works to provide access and participation throughout the arts for people who are usually excluded, including blind and visually impaired people, children with disabilities, Deaf and hard of hearing people, homeless people, and other people who are excluded.

It is Shape's thought that everyone deserves to have a right to, enjoyment of the arts and equal access to the arts, creativity and self expression and to be recognised as artists, training and opportunity of employment in the arts,

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[67] Personal correspondence with John Wilson

equality of access to information on the arts and to be accurately represented in the arts.[68]

Deaf arts is a specific section within Shape's wider disability arts concerns and has its own Deaf Arts Officer. What is Deaf Arts? John Wilson, Deaf Arts Officer says…

> Deaf Arts is an expression of Deaf Culture. It is about Deaf language, Deaf history, Deaf politics and the view of the world seen by Deaf people. It is about art created by Deaf people, controlled by Deaf people. It is not only for a Deaf audience, but it is something special to Deaf people. This is what I am working towards.

Shape's Deaf Arts Officer mission statement says that it is their aim:

> To promote and develop the involvement and participation of Deaf and hard of hearing people in the Arts and cultural industries, and encourage the development of Deaf Arts through cooperation with agencies at a local, regional and national level, with particular reference to participatory art forms, Arts appreciation and access to every level of the Arts.[69]

Three broad aims of the Deaf Arts Programme set up in 1992 include:

1- To promote arts and culture in the Deaf and hard of hearing communities;
2- To open up and extend access to the arts for Deaf and hard of hearing people;
3- To create opportunities for employment in the arts at every level for Deaf and hard of hearing people.

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[68] Shape London Vision and Values Statement, in The Deaf Arts Programme Report, 1996-7
[69] Shapes Two-Year Report, 1994, John Wilson

As John Wilson informed me, Shape are currently involved in wider ranging activities indicative of the present state of activity in the Deaf art world. Amongst their projects, one can find:

Projects with Schools for 'The challenge of Deaf art is to transmit past traditions to Deaf youth and children, to nurture their identities in uncertain times, and, most importantly, to free their imaginations for the future.' (Murray, 2003: 3)

Deaf Film and Television

Deaf Arts Agency: set up to meet the demand for Deaf artists, actors and performers with a database established to enable details to be passed to companies offering employment opportunities to Deaf people.

Deaf theatre: National Deaf Theatre weekends; National Deaf Forum; National Deaf Forum Theatre Tours; Deaf/Blind Forum Theatre project; which includes many drama workshops for Deaf children; in 2003 they secured funding for National Deaf Theatre to include annual Summer Schools, Youth Theatre and Master classes.

Collaborations with the likes of the Museum of Moving Image – weeklong film festivals for Deaf people and the National Maritime Museum

Signed performance in theatre: established SPIT (Signed Performance in Theatre) in 1994 to encourage and facilitate sign language performances for Deaf people

Deaf Awareness Training

Arts Management courses and training for Deaf People in partnership with educational institutions such as Birkbeck College, City Lit and Tate Modern amongst others.

Signing and Singing: established Sign Song training courses and weekend events with a well-known Sign Song performer; several residential projects on opera, with music-making, drama, singing, signing, and dance in Deaf and hearing schools in partnership with English Opera and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

Deaf Visual Arts Exhibitions,

Julius Gottlieb Gallery, Oxfordshire, 13th June- 4th July 1994

Deaf Expressions, at the School of Pythagoras, St John's College, Cambridge, 11-22 October 1996; and an exhibition for Deaf children and young people at the Grafton Centre, Cambridge 9-22 October 1996

Deaf Eyes, a lottery-funded project involving paid commissions by established artists, painting workshop course for Deaf artists, seminar by medical research professors on findings of brain scan research on BSL users to provide inspiration for artists, concluding with major visual art exhibition in London, 29 May to 14 July 2001

Deaf Dance: a year-long course for Deaf people at Sadlers's Wells Theatre, London

Deaf Cabaret: Shape Deaf Arts initiated a series of Deaf cabaret-style shows from 1992 in various venues including Richmond, The Rocket on Holloway Road, London until "New Faces" in 1996, an event for new performers in a mainstream theatre at the Lyric, Hammersmith. Deaf Cabaret has been established as a regular event organised by a range of Deaf and disability organisations, often with advice and guidance from Shape

Advice and Information: takes up some 75% of the work of the Deaf Arts Officer at Shape

Signing Poetry: established several Signing Poetry workshops all over Britain using well-known Sign Poets. The Deaf Arts Officer of Shape was elected onto the Executive Council of the Poetry Society and was awarded a grant to established poetry skills workshops for Deaf people

Deaf Arts UK magazine (1996 first issue- now quarterly): each edition produced by a Deaf editor using news and copy provided by Deaf people.[70]

Shape's role in the Deaf arts field, is then vital, and can be seen as one of the manifestations of the Deaf resurgence discussed in 2.1. How then does this relate to the wider liberatory agenda? In correspondence with Maggie Woolley, a leading figure in the establishment of disability arts, the initial motivations behind Shape and their work were revealed. It is useful to refer back to these original intentions, for organisations such as Shape as they grow and evolve and the original objectives shift and change with current needs. Thus looking back at the original hopes for Shape may be helpful when trying

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[70] Information offered by John Wilson

to establish the level of discourse from then till now. Maggie clearly set the scene for me, addressing a set of issues that must be bought to light in these pages. Initially, she constructed the situation over the last twenty years in which she has been involved in the field. I was interested to learn if Deaf arts at this time was intertwined with the decolonising process in the eyes of the Deaf political activists. It appears not to have been high on their liberatory agenda:

> …in the 80s and early 90s, the Deaf Movement did not support arts development and most activists were rather scathing about Deaf artists and Performers. I think the real political will, in terms of creation and liberation' was to be found amongst Deaf artists, performers and allies who were prepared to really work for Deaf Arts at that time.

She continued in more detail;

> …When I joined Shape, Deaf people were under-represented in the organisation and in the Arts generally. I felt that Shape could be a good base for strategic development in Deaf Arts. There was a need for: Audience development both in mainstream and popular Deaf culture, Professional development, and support for development of native Deaf Art forms.

At this time, there were clearly blurred boundaries between the Deaf side of things and the disabled art world. This is still the case with funding bodies, Maggie's explanation here is insightful on these grounds.

> In the mid eighties you would get occasional Deaf artists performing in Disability Arts Movement Events but the Deaf Audience did not attend such events in droves. More often than not, the Deaf performance did not reflect Deaf Arts and was geared to the particular mixed disabled and non-disabled hearing audience…. Needless, to say disabled people found arts events in the Deaf Community linguistically and often physically inaccessible. The only Deaf visual artist visible in Disability Arts was Trevor Landell.

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Again, Trevor Landell was considered to be the only Deaf visual artist practising, and the rest of Deaf arts in the 80's and 90's seem to have been tied up with a wider disability arts movement. But, as Maggie's suggests,

So it wasn't that Shape set up Deaf Arts "separately". Rather, Disability Arts and Deaf Arts existed separately anyway.

It appears that no one had distinguished this, and thus they were both presented together as part of a wider disability issue. In this light then, it seems that we can assess the point at which Deaf arts diverged onto its own path away from more disability arts based programmes, and until this had happened there appears to have been little potential for art to play a role within the wider liberatory discourse. Although it was noted by enlightened people such as Maggie;

That the arts represent the point of expression, celebration and change within a living culture. The choice for all people to participate in the arts as creators, facilitators and audience is therefore essential to a healthy culture.

It seems to have taken some time to get Deaf arts functioning autonomously. This line between Deaf arts and disability arts in a fine one, and an interesting one to explore, in some peoples eyes, based upon distorted social models, linking Deaf arts with disability arts might take away some of the integrity that Deaf arts could potentially have. That it is 'only' another factor of disabled arts and thus is not akin to the more ethnic based arts discourses, Black art, Aboriginal art or even political art. The connotations surrounding this disability arts discourse, suggest more therapeutic community based projects. However, these preconceptions have been addressed by a number of Deaf and disabled artists and are worthy of brief mention here. At this point we shall turn our gaze to Aaron Williamson, a leading international performance artist, in his work, Aaron seems to align himself more with the disabled artist than

with the Deaf community artists[71]. On these grounds, he is an interesting figure to explore, for his deafness clearly informs his work even though he is a 'non-Deaf-community' artist, yet the 'disabled' aspect of his being, seems to have more potential for the conceptual parody and table-turning mockery that he so ingeniously incorporates in his performances.[72] With respect to a recent project, Aaron explained a piece of performance work with a group of disabled artists in terms of parody.

> We spoke a bit about how some 'normal' people expect disabled people to be somehow childish - or at least that must be why being patronised is such a common 'disability experience'. But here we were 'playing up' to those prejudices with tongues in cheeks and challenging stereotypes by exaggerating to the point of absurdity the way disability is too often perceived.

It is interesting to turn our gaze to Aaron and his work briefly, although he has not been an 'informant' in the strict sense of the word, and he will not feature in the data chapters that follow. Conversations with him throughout this project have been vital to my understanding of the area and hugely insightful as to a non-Deaf community member entering and achieving within the mainstream international arts sphere.

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[71] The issue of Deaf people as disabled is complex and a sensitive topic which has been excluded as this project emerged within a set of limitations. Should the reader wish to explore this issue further they should consult Ladd (2003) and his assertion that Oralism resulted in some Deaf people accepting the ideology to the point that they more redily embraced the disability constructions and do not align themselves with the Deaf community as such. Aarons focus on sonic barriers rather than sign language creative is reflective of this allegiance with the disability model rather than the Deaf community.

[72] Epitomised in a recent project with the Arnolfini, where Aaron, Elaine Kordys and Eve Dent came together with a group of disabled artists from Art and Power and created a piece of live art exploring 'How is the disabled body perceived? What is the role of live art within this debate? How can we challenge perceptions of disability?' '100 years of art and power' was the result of this project, it consisted of an apparently spontaneous birthday tea party held in the public forum, this was an experiment for the artists, with themselves and importantly with the way people perceive disabled people.

2.2.4 Aaron Williamson

Aaron Williamson was born in Derby in 1960 and his deafness has been a huge part of his life. He is an internationally renowned performance artist and has exhibited, toured and been seen in and around a number of top arts institutions. His work mingles disability politics and performative bodies. He is interested in the alienation of an artist and the revolt of 'keeping up appearances'. His work ties in with much of this project, in that he addresses his deafness and depicts himself as 'other'. He takes this deafness to the extreme, parodies it and presents himself as disfigured and disabled. It is as if he is trying to refigure himself through his performance, and as he said, this social staging of disfigurement, is not giving an answer, but revealing a complexity. It is the subtle paradox between the attractive and terrifying, between difference and deformity that the he confronts in his challenging works.[73]

> As an artist I feel that my engagement with performance, objects, language and space is entirely transformed through the experience of becoming profoundly deaf over the course of some twenty years. Informed by this radical personal alteration, my art practice co-ordinates within an interdisciplinary approach to the arts that allows and emphasis on disability rather than on valorising ability in the traditional disciplinary craft sense.

Some of his most latest work, as documented in his recent publication,[74] documents a project that was inspired by the advent of speech recognition software which could be seen as the 'holy grail of computer technology': an advance in system software that 'hears' voices and recognises the content of what is being said and instantaneously translates this into a written format. Clearly there is some kind of problem here for people with speech difficulties. There is a distinct sense of the artist dreading the arrival of this new age of computer technology - in that it would entirely exclude him from the benefits

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[73]Aaron suggested this at Invisible Bodies: A Discussion Forum, as part of Arnolfini's In-between Time Programme, with Fiona Winning, Marcus Coates, Tracey Warr and Aaron Williamson, February 14th 2003
[74] Williamson, A. and Hunt, I., (2001) Hearing Things, London: Bookworks

based on the fact that much 'deaf-speak' would not be recognisable. Thus the failure of it was a huge success to him.

So his works parodies this potential medium for communication, and certain works of his- like 'Divination' reveal the meaninglessness of sound (specifically a wax ear being melted into water) or in other cases, the sound of a table being dragged across the floor. These sounds were put into speech recognition software to promote and prompt language without having to have any input on the artists' part. The result being a series of meaningless 'poems' pointing to the death of the author, the meaninglessness of sound and most important the link between sound and language. In this case sound is arbitrary, nonsensical and entirely uninformative.

Other sculptures contemplate the concept of erosion - and in conversation Aaron suggested pondering the difference between losing ones hearing or gaining ones deafness - which way round is it? He utilises depleting surfaces and erosion in his work to symbolise the gradual onset of deafness in his life.

It is his aim to take peoples perception of disability and turn it on its head, (this can be seen in 5 smoking televisions and more recent work with Art and Power at the Arnolfini Friday 25th July 2003) where we see a stinging mockery of the patronising 'disability space'. If you exaggerate stereotypes you force people to reassess their constructions of others – it is about the re-appropriation of perceptions of minority groups. As if there is some kind of political control possible through parody and pastiche.[75] Where it has been taken to another level - critically and conceptually.

Could there be a space where Deaf artists here in Britain could start addressing their deafness in a more conceptual way through their art? It has happened in America - where we need to turn our gaze - we must take a small diversion into the realms of American Deaf art - is this a model we will follow in

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[75] Information gleaned from discussion followed by conversation with the artist- 16th July 2003- giving a talk at Bristol Wickham Theatre, Drama Dept, University of Bristol, organised by Live Art Forum South West

the footsteps of? Or is what is happening there distinctly American? Is there some relationship between them and us? Looking to America is essential to our understanding of the potential futures for British Deaf arts.

2.2.5 America, De'VIA

What follows intends to assess the current state of Deaf art in America, the art, the discourse and the distinct difference between the American situation and that in the UK.

The American Deaf art discourse is noticeably further developed than that of the British situation. This could be for a number of reasons, it is useful at this stage to consider the situation in America as a potential model upon which a British Deaf art discourse can be based. If only as a reaction to it, having a solid basis to base ones own developments on is useful in the establishment of new and developing discourses. The transatlantic dialogue is a tenuous one and is often discussed amongst British artists, many of the Deaf artists I spoke with were keen to discuss this topic. This dialogue between them – the Americans - and us can be seen from a number of perspectives- where America can be leading the way, laying down a route for the British to follow, or creating role models for British Deaf artists to look to, yet, the American situation might also be seen to overshadow and eclipse the British 'way'.

This dialogue is worthy of further consideration; is America leading the way in a way that could be beneficial and influential to the British situation - or do the advances in America belittle the efforts of those here in Britain. This topic of debate is rife amongst the Deaf art Circles here, as will be suggested in the data chapters that follow. This discussion is limited to a 'brief overview' of the goings on in the American Deaf art world. Should the reader wish to explore this area in more detail, they should turn to Sonnenstrahl (1993), which is a detailed illustrated overview of the situation. Regardless of the fact that the American situation is mature in comparison with what is happening here, it is still felt that more needs to happen; there is a sense of urgency with their recent discourse:

Why has the Deaf Art movement been ignored by both historians in general, and art historians in particular… The answer is simple… We have no recorded historical documents separating us and our achievements from the general population. There are no books on the Deaf experience in art as reflected by the works of Deaf artists.[76]

Sonnenstrahl suggests then that part of the pride and heritage of Deaf communities involves learning about the collective identities and cultural characteristics revealed in art. She points to the fact that, 'We need to demonstrate our creativity and skill to both hearing and deaf people if we are hoping to establish our place in history' (Sonnenstrahl, 1993:21). So although there is a far more advanced discourse in America, we still see frustration regarding the level of it, and the fact that creativity is an important part of identity establishment, yet this creativity is still very much under-recognised.

Art then plays a critical role in establishing an individuals and communities place in history and in bonding members of any culture, however, it is 'when the DEAF WORLD sees itself and its culture reflected in the works of its artists that Deaf art is most effectively a bonding force in Deaf society…' (Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996: 139).

We must assess the Deaf art situation in line with the wider Deaf situation - if we assume that the art world is inextricably linked with the wider cultural world. How does Deaf art in America link to wider Deaf arts and Deaf lives? It was Stokoe's linguistic work in the 60's that started the move towards language recognition and greater respect of ASL in America. 1967 saw the establishment of the NTD (National Theatre of the Deaf) as well as close captioned television in the 80's (Schertz and Lane, 1999), the same year that 'Children of a Lesser God' came to Broadway. The world of research and literature must be considered too - the 80's saw the publications of three epic books, Gannon's, 'Deaf Heritage' (1981), Harlan Lane's 'When the Mind Hears' (1984) and Padden and Humphries 'Deaf in America, Voices from a culture'

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[76] Sonnenstrahl, 1993: 19-20

(1988) - each of which had a significant impact on the community and their self awareness.

In this climate then - historical contextualisaton being vital - that we have to see Deaf art in America emerging. A vital moment for American Deaf arts was in 1975 when 'Spectrum' was set up, the first forum devoted to the discussion and debate of Deaf artists, where Deaf artists (visual and performing) and art historians were not only initiating the discourse, but continuing it, recording it and publishing it. Significantly this came from the artists themselves. By this point, the discourse was clearly underway, it was not in the hands of facilitators but the artists, a team of artists working together, and they were thinking deeply about art in relation to deafness, both politically and culturally.[77]

The intention of 'Spectrum' was to begin the establishment of a National Touring Exhibition, the public display and dissemination of the work being essential, it has been put forward that the motivation behind this exhibition idea was 'in building a larger audience for Deaf art and a larger public awareness of the culture from which it springs' (Schertz and Lane, 1999: 36).

It was during the Spectrum era, that the Deaf arts movement in America concretised a set of objectives. An actual artistic community set up, in Austin, Texas, and during 1977 and 78 a 'conundrum of the philosophical debates were waged concerning classifications such as what is it, who created it' (Durr,1999: 50). So we can see that this has achieved some kind of level where the art is linked with the culture and the Deaf commentators are seeing the art space as a wider social space with its own set of dynamics including the potential of influencing the public awareness through this wider art space.

Durr compares the Deaf art movement in America with that of other disenfranchised group movements, specifically referring to the Native American art movement and the work of Frida Kahlo whose work often

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[77] Compare this situation, with the assertion that in 1990 here in Britain, only one professional Deaf artist lived and worked in the capital

engaged in resistance art 'regarding women, cultural identity and disability' (Durr, 1999: 48).

The establishment of De'VIA was the next crucial moment in the history of American Deaf arts. In 1989, a group of the original Spectrum members took the whole movement a stage further and at the first international Deaf Way conference they came together and created a manifesto; the De'VIA manifesto which stated,

> 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

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alternative media when used as fine arts such as fiber arts, ceramics, neon, and collage.[78]

Durr thematically analyses two of the leading figures in American d/Deaf arts; Betty Miller and Susan Dupor, placing their work in two categories, affirmative art and resistance art.   Where resistance art,

> …Serves a very important social vehicle to express rage for people who have been powerless and often suffocated with fear of the consequences of resisting in other ways. Through resistance art, the articulation of unspoken rage allows for the possibility to evolve politically and socially form the victimisation to affirmation and activism.[79]

And affirmation art,

> Involves members of a disenfranchised group celebrating and highlighting the positive aspects of their culture.[80]

So not only is the Deaf art movement in a mature state of discourse, debate and critical thinking, but documentation regarding it exists. The cultural impact of creativity and the role art plays within this is part of the Deaf art discourse in America, and has been understood more clearly in recent years. Ann Silver, one of the leading members and founders of De'VIA questions some of the more sociological issues involved in her life and art.

> How does being Deaf affect my work, artistic and otherwise? To what degree has ASL and Deaf culture shaped my art? Can I separate Deaf Art from my work? Why do I want to pursue Deaf Art? Does my being a Deaf artist ghettoise me in negative way in the art world? If it were not for

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[78] This manifesto was 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, fibre artist; Nancy Creighton, fibre artist; and Lai-Yok Ho, video artist.
[79] Durr, 1999: 62
[80] Durr, 1999: 49

ASL, would there have been an art movement and an art genre germane
to the Deaf Experience?[81]

Written some 5 years ago - this list of rhetorical questions is suggestive of a
certain moment in time, where maybe these questions are still somewhat
irresolvable, yet the recognition of them is surely a move towards resolving
them. If these questions were being contemplated in Spectrum and De'VIA's
founding days, and they are being further recognised now, what does that say
about the future of Deaf art here in Britain, where the initial consultation and
raising of such debates seems to only just be emerging. Britain then has a
long way to go, and might not necessarily follow the same path and the
American experience. Its is however still of use to assess the American
situation, as the advent of the Internet and email has impacted upon the Deaf
world in a profound way, turning individual Deaf lives and communities access
to a wider international dialogue where they can start to assess each others
advances and either incorporate them or react to them - either way utilising the
others advances for a the hope of a expanding and growing field of Deaf arts
discourse.

2.2.6 Summary- Collecting a Culture

The summary of this section utilises American discourse on the grounds that it
can aid our comprehension of the wider discourses, and potentially how to
situate British Deaf arts within this wider discourse. It appears then, that
Britain remains in a 'biographical rut'. Where the documentation and literature
that does contemplate British Deaf artists is entirely biographical by nature. Is
the biographical nature of Deaf arts discourse just a part of the DEAF WORLD
as suggested by Lane Hoffmeister and Bahan - 'when members of the DEAF-
WORLD meet, they introduce themselves and their companions… They give
capsule life-histories so that each can see how the others are connected to the
DEAF-WORLD network…' (Lane Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996: 5). Is this just
the Deaf Way? Is that enough? Does this 'It's the Deaf Way' argument stand
up in the bigger picture in the art world and the academic world?

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[81] Silver, 1999: 37

It appears that we are still involved in the collecting stage - unearthing and uncovering the names and the works - not yet at the point where these artists and objects can be surveyed critically or analytically. Collecting and beginning to catalogue- but not thinking about or having any discourses around them really… what we see is a list of names and places - there is almost a manic need to collect and find this culture. To increase this list and these names and create a longer list. Humphries discusses this topic with an eye for the crux of the whole debate; inclusion of his words seems vital to our understanding of this topic.

> I view the discourse and rhetoric of the past 40 years among Deaf people
> as a search for "voice" [82]

Humphries (2002) sees Deaf people now as 'coming to voice', which points to the subsistence of individual and group sensibilities, which involve;

> Developing and sustaining a voice, one that sustains the individual and
> the group alike…it seems to me that it is as much about processing
> identities and creating artefacts in the process that help us to hold and
> circulate among us and among others those notions we wish to project
> into public space.[83]

In Humphries' opinion, this search for a voice is indicative of the recent and current state of discourse, regarding the wider Deaf Culture. He perceptively points out that,

> If we are to claim that there is such a thing as "Deaf Culture" we must
> quickly find some artefacts of it. There must be art and literature that is
> "deaf"… the near panic that we felt when we realized that we would be
> asked to produce these examples of our difference… they had to be darn
> good examples too… we needed to collect as much as we could as fast
> as we could… we have been "collecting ourselves".[84]

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[82] Humphries, 2002: 2
[83] Ibid
[84] Ibid

He then goes on to say there is some level of choice within this manic collecting phase. What to keep private? What to make public? For, 'We are involved in the distribution of our private world' (Humphries, 2002). He discusses an incident where he publicly raised the topic of criticism and quality control as regards making this private world public. The response baffled him. It seemed that people didn't feel the need to employ criticism or quality control when it came to selecting and displaying examples of their Deaf art:

> Clearly criticism was a luxury we could not afford. At just the point when
> we were starting to go public with our art, it seemed to be nuts to be
> discriminating. We needed all we could get as fast as we could get it…
> and damn the aesthetics.[85]

In this ironic tone, he realises the sticky issue between quantity and quality - clearly being an advocator of quality - yet empathetic of the Deaf peoples instinct to go for sheer quantity and weight.

> It is unfortunate to me that Deaf literature and art are still at the stage of
> finding and cataloguing and perhaps analysing to some extent. We need
> to talk culture to elevate the greatness in our art, and literature. Starting
> from within with the development of a notion and process of art and
> literary criticism…If all our art and literature is about convincing the rest of
> the world that we have a culture or about telling the world how much pain
> it has caused us, we are bound by our relationship to the other and not
> free.[86]

And until the collection is dealt with critically it is no shape to be projected outwards. Until it has been critically edited, selected and understood as a high quality collection - then there is a very blurred message to be projected. What is there - needs to be understood before it can be communicated to the outside world and it needs to be understood as something about the Deaf space and not so much about the hearing world. And until it is communicated to the

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[85] Ibid
[86] Humphries, 2002:5

outside world coherently - with an eye for quality - those 'damn good examples' and relevant conceptual/analytical tools will not be listened to because maybe the level of the discourse just isn't high enough to interest the outside world.

To conclude, if the state of British Deaf art discourse can be understood in these terms, as in the early collecting stages, then it is on a path to developing further in the future. Clearly, if we are to follow the example of America, the artists then need to be the ones to take this into their own hands. The discourse will never truly evolve in a productive way unless it comes from them. Simultaneously, the critical and analytical tools need to be created whereby we can begin to look at this work from a wider more art theoretical based perspective. This is the role that this project might support. Whereby the theoretical background of a hearing arts researcher might be made sense of by Deaf artists, to the point where they might be inspired to think about their work on a deeper level, and begin to initiate that discourse that began at the Spectrum artistic community discussions some 30 years ago in America.

Having given a summary of Deaf visual arts discourses and some of the areas which exist, I now move to an examination of the link between art and society and the work of other 'colonised' peoples, and see what light can be shed of the Deaf visual arts experience.

This next section is entirely informed by my Arts background, and I am merely putting a set of ideas on offer, should the Deaf artist, facilitator or researcher wish to think about Deaf art in a more theoretical way. I am by no means suggesting all that follows be directly imposed upon the Deaf art discourse here in Britain. The ideas shall be presented and it is in the hands of the readers and potential dissemination audiences how they choose to relate these arts based frameworks to a deeper and fuller understanding of British Deaf arts.

2.3 Art and Society

> Art objects have been seen to play a major role in the patterns of interaction which bring the political systems to life. The ideas, which get expression, are more than passive reflections of politics; they are philosophical reflections on the nature of political authority and its place in the world.[87]

This is a vast and multi-faceted topic. It would be over ambitious to try and cover every aspect of the relationship between art and society in a study of these proportions. This subsection then, focuses on a set of ways in which art has been documented as functioning in society/ies and a several of the issues involved in this relationship. It by no means intends to cover the entirety of the topic, but should set up a series of ideas and issues, as well as particular case studies that intend to inform the reader with respect to the rest of the project.

2.3.1 The ontology of Art

Any discussion involving the word 'art', particularly when lay people are involved, inevitably raises the much pursued question, 'what is art?' This question has been raised in relation to this study constantly, thus clarification of it is an important aspect of the project. On these grounds what follows is an exploration of the philosophies and lines of thought that can be useful when trying to come to terms with the essence of art, These searches for essentialist definitions cannot be avoided; What is art? What is Deaf? And what is Deaf art? Have featured in every conversation relating to the research project. Mine, however, is an anti-essentialist viewpoint regarding definitions of 'art'. This shall be illustrated with reference to Ludwig Wittgenstein, and his assertions of 'what makes a game a game' in relation to the notion of Family Resemblances.

It is suggested that the employment of Wittgenstein's Family Resemblances will allow us to cease questioning what art is, and take the discourse a step

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[87] Layton, 1991:92

further whereby we will be in a position to think, talk and be critical about art. Thus the discussion below firstly clarifies what I mean by 'art', and secondly can be regarded as a model upon which to base any search for an essentialist definition. Ultimately- there is no answer to the question, 'What is art?' And by implication, to what is Deaf? And to what is Deaf art. Throughout this section it might be useful for the reader to imagine the word art as interchangeable with the word Deaf - this way, it will become clear, that an anti-essentialist perspective might be beneficial when contemplating the wider discourse. The assessment of art is an obvious one to contemplate, for this question has been deeply considered by many, hence it is a useful tool in our unpicking of 'What is Deaf? and What is Deaf art?'.

2.3.2 What is Art?

In questioning, what is art? We are searching for a definition. We are questioning what kind of thing art is; the ontology of art in other words. There have been a vast array of commentators on the subject, suggesting different means for deciding exactly what art is. If we pose the question 'What is art?' a possible response to this would be - something made by an artist. We must then enquire 'What is an artist?' Surely this is someone who makes art. So again we return to what is art? And so on. It is Wollheim's (1980) sentiment that we can only have an ostensive definition for art; in that 'art' means what it is used to mean. This is worthy of further interrogation.

It has been suggested that there be some extrinsic property that denotes art objects as art. That it might be the institution that nominally states whether an object classifies as 'art' or not, and that it is the placing of such an object within an institution that validates it as such. Danto's, 'The Art World' (1964) begins this exploration - with particular reference to the difference between an art object and a real object. What is the difference between two objects that look the same, yet one is called a work of art, and the other an everyday object?[88] His suggestion is that:

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[88] Think about Warhol's Brillo Boxes

To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an art world.[89]

Danto's work was later developed by George Dickie, (1993) who suggests that there is some kind of non-exhibited property of an object that makes it art, and that is the system that is functioning within the art world, that 'furnishes an institutional background for the conferring of the status on objects within its domain' (Dickie 1993:211) Put more simply, it is the institutional conferral of status upon an object that makes it 'art' within this line of thought. Duchamp's 'Urinal' is exemplary of this and exactly the point he was making. This then could be called nomination (albeit from a powerful position) whereby because someone names something 'art' it qualifies as 'art'.

This arbitrary scheme could then be responsible for what the majority of the population know as 'art' via museums or galleries. In this sense, 'art' can be viewed as a somewhat mythical creature in that it is based upon arbitrary stories and fiction. Art is art because someone with authority says so and places it in the institution. Thus the selection and display of an object can qualify it as 'art'. Without question, much 'art' exists beyond the confines of the 'Art-World' or the institutions which can hardly be regarded as anything but 'art' - Outsider Art, Naïve Art, Art Brut, political art and folk arts to name a few.

It could be speculated that this arbitrary imposing of status and order upon objects is responsible for *the* history of art as we know it. Additionally might this 'art world' be responsible for the many fictions in relation to what has entered the history of art (inclusions) and what has been left out (exclusions). Has 'art' become lost in the 'history of art' as suggested by Preziosi (1996)? And isn't this 'history of art' a spatio-temporal journey through the powerful institutions of museums and galleries that has evolved from Alfred Barr's 1939 diagram?

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[89] Danto 1964; 177

If it is on these grounds we settle for our definition, we are looking at a linear map of a very western, white, heterosexual, male, able-bodied story? This 'institution' is comprised of its own hegemony and is thus loaded with political motivations and ideologies. As Johnson argues, today we are experiencing some kind of 'art dictatorship' - where networks of artists, museum bosses and dealers/collectors control artistic production. He compares this 'dictatorship' to that practised by Stalin in Russia (Johnson 2002:13). Mirzoeff too suggests that, 'the overtly neat categories of interpretation used by art historians need to be more carefully examined' (Mirzoeff, 1995: 258). We don't necessarily need to rule out the accepted story, but realise that there might be many stories. This institutional theory then appears to be flawed on a number of levels.

It is Morris Weitz (1956) I turn to at this point - who under the influence of Wittgenstein's thought offers us a useful way of coming to terms with this, what is art? Again, I would suggest the reader see the word 'art' here as interchangeable with the word Deaf. This way it will become apparent that the anti-essentialist standpoint can make better sense of this futile endeavour when attempting to find an essence in everything.

2.3.3 Family Resemblances

Weitz, (1956) puts forward the case that 'art' is an open concept, that there are no necessary and sufficient conditions for 'arthood'. Necessary in the sense that, to be human we need a body, and sufficient in the sense that, just because you have a body doesn't mean you are human. Thus there are no necessary and sufficient conditions that lead to art having any one definitional essence. Art is beautiful, makes me happy etc… but so too is a sunset.

Weitz utilises the theories and thoughts of Wittgenstein, when he suggests that the notion of a 'game' and 'family resemblances' might make sense of this open concept. Wittgenstein talks about the language games in which the word 'game is employed'.

> Consider for example the proceedings that we call 'games'. I mean board
> games, card-games, ball games, Olympic games, and so on. What is

common to them all? Don't say: there *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games''- but look and see whether there is anything common to all. For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all* but similarities, relationships and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look. Look for example at board games, with their multifarious relationships, now pass to card-games; here you find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear. When we pass next to ball games, much that is common is retained, but much is lost. Are they all 'amusing'? Compare chess with noughts and crosses. Or is there always winning and losing, or competition between players? Think of patience. In ball games there is winning and losing; but when a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, this feature has disappeared. Look at the parts played by skill and luck; and at the difference between skill in chess and skill in tennis. Think now of games like ring-a-ring-a-roses; here is the element of amusement, but how many other characteristic features have disappeared! And we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way; can see how similarities crop up and disappear. And the result of this examination is; we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing; sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail…. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family; build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. And I shall say; 'games' form a family.[90]

In Wittgenstein's question, 'what makes a game a game?' He suggests that there are sets of similarities that crop up and disappear, a complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing, and we can call these relationships family resemblances. Perhaps this needs some clarification. For example, some games have balls, teams, referees, winners, rules and/or bats. But not all games have all of these. All games have some features in common, but like art, there are no necessary and sufficient conditions that make a game a game. This overlapping and criss-crossing of similarities is

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[90] Wittgenstein, 1953: pts 65/66/67: p. 31-2

referred to as family resemblances and can be seen more clearly in Hanfling's diagram, Figure 2.

GAMES

A   B   C   D   E   F   G

FEATURES

1
2
3
4
5
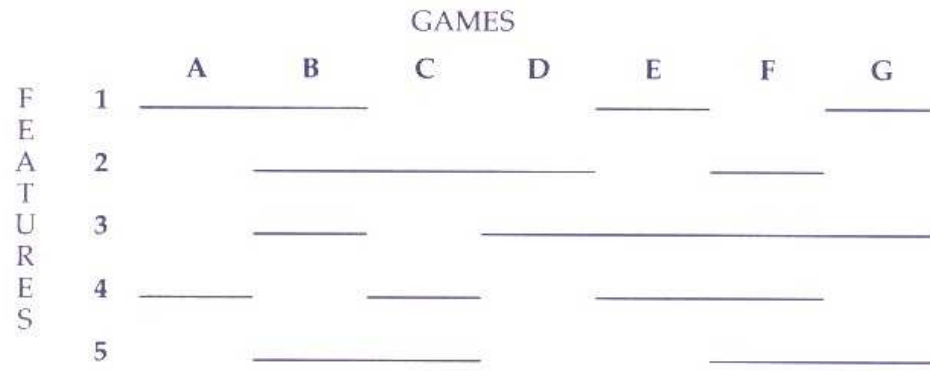
Figure 2 - Family Resemblances[91]

Whereby, the letters stand for games (chess, tennis, solitaire, the stock market) and the numbers for properties (skill, competition, a winner, teams) and thus the lines illustrate the features they have in common. It is clear that no set of features is common to all the games, but they are related none-the-less. In my eyes this Wittgensteinian approach as espoused by Weitz, is an extremely useful way of incorporating the multiplicity and diversity within 'art', and ceasing the inevitable unfruitful search for any one intrinsic nature or essence. So if 'games' form a family, and if 'art' forms a family, might it be suggested that 'Deaf' forms a family, and by implication 'Deaf art' is a family of its own. This way we are incorporating the multiplicity and diversity within, yet again, ceasing the inevitably unfruitful search for any one intrinsic nature or essence. At which point we can take out the essentialist spanner, and the machine can begin to progress into the future.

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[91] Hanfling, 1989: 65

2.3.4 Art and Agency

Based on the discussion above, we can admit that we are never going to define art as anything other than a socially accepted term that is held together by a set of 'family resemblances'. We can then begin to explore art more deeply. Specifically, we must examine the elements that form relationships between 'art' and 'society' or 'objects' and 'peoples'. What shall be incorporated here then is the possibility of art serving a cultural function; communities perhaps thinking with, in and through images - the possibility of art objects having agency. By which I simply mean having the power to shape ideas and create new forms of social relations, or at least being instrumental towards some sort of change. Art has its basis in social life how it discharges its function is worthy of contemplation.

Art then does not come from a void; clearly art objects are fundamentally embedded in the society from which they come. And in this light they can be useful in revealing both the spirit and the institutions of that society and/or era. Panofsky's (1957) study of the relationship between Gothic art and Scholasticism is a prime example of such an assertion. His interest is with the interplay between art and the cultural or social factors at a given time[92] (Loftus 1988). This is a somewhat Hegelian viewpoint, debated by another art historian, namely Saxl. Saxl's (1970) assertion was that if we are to consider objects along side the histories we are trying to make sense of, these objects have some kind of independent life of their own - where things that might remain undiscovered become unearthed through the contemplation of the art object. Baxandall (1972) was also influential in this field of the artists' social role, his concern was predominantly with the more practical elements including the technical materials available to artists at given times and different ways of seeing (Loftus 1988). It has been suggested then, that these art historians reveal the important point, 'that artworks are in themselves unique documentary evidence of aspects of the society in which they are produced' (Loftus 1988:124).

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[92] it is this idea that will be developed in respect of Deaf visual artists in the data chapters that follow

This project however demands a broader exploration than the art historical world, so it is necessary to return to the field of social science advances again. Fyfe and Law introduce their monograph as some kind of 'plea for the visual to be taken seriously in sociologies': (Fyfe and Law, 1988: 6), it is suggested that the visual is 'marginalized in sociology' (Ibid.: 3) suggesting that few sociologists have tackled this topic; Duvignaud (1972) and Wolff (1981) being exemplary of the ones who have.

Duvignaud stresses how, 'we cannot separate the imagination from the general influence active at the time when the work of art was created, because it is impossible to detach the imagination from social reality' (Duvignaud 1972:64). By this he is suggesting that our society and life experience limit our social reality and thus our imagination – so in the same way we can only dream what we know; we can only paint/sculpt what we know. Wolff too highlights this point, although her concern is more with the fact that art has to be seen as historically situated and produced, and not descending as divine inspiration to people of innate genius. (Wolff 1981:1) It is the continuous process of interaction between art and social and political structures that is the focus in Wolff's work (Loftus 1988: 129). [93]

Whether utilised as a religious attribute, a state power mechanism, to visualise the political (Kevin O'Neill, in Dalsimer, A. (ed) 1993) for propaganda means, or a regime installing art in its own image; art,[94] clearly embodies the society in which it is created. In this light, we need to consider the context in which art is created to understand the art, and simultaneously, the art might tell us about the society form which it came - a cultural indicator in one respect. Could this embodiment - this reflection be reassessed to the point where the art has the power to create or lead the way in constructing that society? So instead of

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[93] Historical epochs clearly do have some sort of artistic trends, thus indicative of this societal interaction but this is by no means saying that society is homogenous at any given time- Duvignaud points out that many aesthetic attitudes co exist even when the period calls for a single style of expression (Duvignaud 1972:65).
[94] As suggested by Loftus, 'Visual images' might be a better term than art here, for visual images such as posters and advertising, graffiti or printed matter, all embody the society from which they come yet might not be considered art (Loftus, 1988: 129).

reflecting, art actually becomes an agent.   So are artists agents of change, or do they reflect a change that is already occurring within any given society? Wolff suggests that it may be the case that culture determines historical development, not vice versa. (Wolff 1981:57) It is this line of thought that demands further exploration.

At this point, we can explore these ideas in relation to other minority communities, utilising three case studies. In light of Wolff's comments and the wider project with relation to Deaf art, can artists drag the downtrodden community towards a higher vision of itself? Is art a possible tool in the rebuilding of broken communities?

2.3.5 The Art of Minorities

In our exploration of Deaf art and its function within society, I propose that it is useful to assess the art of other 'colonised' communities. As we know, there is very little documentation explicitly regarding Deaf arts. We are then forced to look outside of the Deaf Studies discipline, and find some kind of comparable communities; communities that have been deeply affected by a hegemonic power, communities that have fought over time to re-gain some of what has been lost in the hands of others.

2.3.6 Aboriginal Art

Significantly throughout the 1880's Aboriginal land was taken up by 'gadiya' (white man), who carried out dehumanising policies of subjections, maltreatment, slavery and dispersion (Ryan and Ackerman, 1993). This began as a geographical colonialization, where the ownership of the land was denied, followed shortly by the indigenous languages, resulting in the dislocation of many language groups from their traditional territories (Ibid).   Ryan and Ackerman (1993.) document this in relation to the art of the Kimberly in their recent exhibition catalogue, 'Images of Power'. As Ryan reveals, the artists of the Kimberley are products of their past, where, 'knowledge of the past is not just a vague memory of distant events but traumas which are branded in their minds and which have shaped their lives.' (Ryan, 1993: 1) It is not so much the

history of this specific oppression that informs this project, but the impact this had on the art and its effect on social change.

> Art in a secular context has grown out of colonialization, dispossession and massive dislocation… Art is a means of empowerment for its makers, a political tool in the fight to regain sovereignty over land and to be allowed to remain themselves.[95]

Ryan suggests a certain amount of empowerment emanating from the 'art' space, in that the artists have the power to make decisions, to choose what the make and for whom, have the authority to decide how much of their art they reveal or decode (Ryan and Ackerman, 1993). The most important thing here being, that for these oppressed community members - art served and still serves a distinct purpose in their lives, 'the creation of art is a concrete response to such drastic, irreversible social change' (Ryan,1993).

This model of art playing a significant role in the wider identity space can be found in other communities and other areas where we can see a similar link between artistic output and social adjustment.

2.3.7 Latin American Art

It is insightful to observe the relationship between art and cultural identity in contemporary Latin America, as documented by Baddeley and Fraser (1989).

The history of interference and exploitation in Latin America can be summarized as a Southern European hegemony, which again resulted in a history of colonial oppression threatening and destroying the indigenous cultures. (Ibid) It has been suggested that it the concern of artists in this situation is to give authentic expression to their own voices, whilst seeking to locate their own cultural identity at the same time. (Ibid) Again, detaching the art from the historical framework from which it came would be to lose the sense of context. 'The way to understand contemporary Latin American art must be to see it in the context of reality, the 'monstrous reality' of world

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[95] Ryan: 1993: 2

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politics.' (Ibid) For art does not come from a vacuum, or from a void. And to a certain extent art must always be situated within these larger realities.

Again we can see art fulfilling an important role in the process of identity recovery/discovery. The argument put forward is that the art could be a way of exposing problems of cultural identity, and in this sense, displays a common felt sense of searching, of displacement, of incongruity, of not belonging. The artists are also considered as reclaiming their own landscape and it inhabitants and the varied cultural traditions of those inhabitants *through* their art (Baddeley and Fraser, 1989).

These processes found in colonialism and art can also be located within some artists operation in the Western tradition. Cézanne is a particularly informative example, it is to him we shall turn for further exploration of this field.

2.3.8 Cézanne case study

It is necessary to examine one further example, whereby Cézanne can be seen to be utilising the 'art' space to rebuild his community in Aix, which was 'broken' by Modernity. This example is reliant and informed by the researchers art historical background and is an exemplary case of the power of the artist and the power of a picture in the wider 'art serving a social function' debate.

Cézanne's work is laden with an intricate matrix of memories; personal in the sense that, 'his paintings commemorate landscape as the site of an idyllic childhood' and communal in the sense that it, 'frames the communities story of its origin within a specifically Latin landscape' (Smith,1998:12).

This section intends to survey and analyse this coinciding of memories in Cézanne's life and work. It raises issues relating to the past, the present, the Golden Age, exile, identity and communality. Above all theories of collective memory as contemplated by Halbwachs (1992) shall be incorporated. 'Collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present' (Halbwachs, 1992: 34).

In a simple sense, it seems that Cézanne attempts to inscribe his personal experience of his native surroundings into a structure of commemoration. This is established in ritual, in Virgil's writings of the Golden Age, and in the myth of Latin Provence. There is a certain necessity for people to have histories; a past, which makes sense of their present. In the same way a 'self' requires an 'other' for identification, so a 'present' requires a 'past'. As Halbwachs reveals, the present is only conscious of itself by its past. And by imaginatively reanimating that past, one preserves something that, 'would otherwise slowly disappear' (Halbwachs,1992: 24).

In the case of Cézanne, this past is so deeply rooted in his experience of the Provençal landscape; one can barely view one of his landscapes without acknowledging this subliminal link. It is arguable that Cézanne projected his own feelings onto his surroundings, so that the landscape itself actually contained his own sentiments, and in turn his depictions express these 'smeared' emotions and contain therein a 'little bit of him' (Smith, 1996:20). His paintings, in this light, can be seen as a blank template, which the artist 'uses' to make sense of his personal experiences. Experience perhaps needs some clarification at this point. Experience is indeed a matter of tradition in collective existence as well as private life. (Benjamin, 1939) What is perhaps at the crux of this debate, and essential to our understanding of 'memory' in life and art, is that 'where there is 'experience' in the strict sense of the word, certain contents of the individual past combine with material of the collective past.' (Benjamin, 1939) By this Benjamin is referring to the fact that an individual and a community needs a story. This story is constructed upon generations and generations of adaptations. It is difficult for any person or group to retain an identity without a solid basis. This is not without its fictitious aspects; we all base our notions of self or our identity upon stories of some sort, but always on stories of our community, so that you cannot really have a community-based identity without some elements of fiction.

The features of Cézanne's landscapes can then be seen to evoke the sense of experiences of a personal past. It is a past that needs to be recollected. This is a perfect example of collective memory. It is important to bear in mind that

'collective memory' is always socially constructed. Individuals may remember, but 'they have to be located in a specific group context to actually recreate' (Halbwachs,1992: 22). This is clear when we assume that everything in human experience is related to some sort of social context.

Cézanne's context requires further explanation. His childhood comprised of an idyllic lifestyle in the depths of the Provençal landscape. Nature had specific significance for Cézanne; it was a silent witness to his communities evolving from generation to generation. This identification with nature is a common conception in relation to Cézanne and his work. In a letter, Cézanne is recorded pronouncing his adoration of his native soil; 'when one is born down there … nothing else means a thing.'[96] Perhaps the nature we see in his works was the only 'constant' in a swiftly moving world of modernity being colonialised by industrialisation. In this respect, perhaps Cézanne can be understood as searching for an alternative to Modernity in his work. It has been suggested that Cézanne was seeking a personal alternative in nature and a historical alternative in the past (Smith, 1998).

Those attachments Cézanne felt towards Aix, were both emotional and physical, and evoke Hippolyte Taine's (1864) idea that the artists' environment and race can have profound affects on his way of seeing and style. As Cézanne wrote, 'the old memories of our youth, of these horizons, of these landscapes of the unbelievable lines which leave in us so many deep impressions.'[97] These childhood days left impressions so deep and this can be attributed to the density things gain when remembered over long periods of time.

Literature was also a passion of Cézanne's, especially his Virgil. He spent 8 years at school gaining an understanding of Virgil and other classical authors such as Horace, Tacitus and Lucan. He translated Virgil's writing himself to ensure he got a pure version of the original and there are apparent parallels to be found in Cézanne's work and the fictional notion of the early community he

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[96] Cézanne writing to Philippe Solari, 23rd July 1896, cited in Smith, 1996: 20
[97] As above

had read in Virgil. This was in a sense, his belonging to a wider cultural history - an ancient past. Employing, as it were, a history to make sense of 'his' history as it were. It is at this point that nostalgia for his youth coincides with nostalgia for the Golden Age. The landscape of Provence had a commonly accepted affiliation with Latin identity in Cézanne's time. This is in distinct contrast to the 'present' which was an 1800's swiftly changing Parisian capital; one that was eradicating history and communities for the sake of modernity. Eradicating a history, which Cézanne evidently was so utterly reliant upon. Hence his evocation of the Golden Age in the face of Modernity.

This link to the Golden Age was not just Cézanne's invention; his whole pre-modern community shared the concept of the Golden Age as a tradition to establish a root to their existence. Cézanne's ideas were then common to his social group. These stories of the Golden Age, might be slightly fantastical or fictional – yet they 'provide an individual with a template onto which he can map his personal experience and acquire a history that makes public sense and fixes his identity.' (Smith,1998: 12) This can only be understood within a certain community, and it is because of these common understandings that a community gains an identity. An identity founded upon communal memory. A community, in this case 'whose central plank is the notion that the landscape is inhabited by the souls of ancestors' (Smith, 1998: 20).

This attempt to create a sense of belonging and history with reference to Virgil, could perhaps be Cézanne trying to provide an alternative to his present experiences, persistent in trying to find an identity or place within the world to escape form his continuing sense of isolation. If we are to see Cézanne as a victim of his society, lost and isolated by the deracination imposed upon him by Modernity. Maybe through his art he is literally looking back to the time when he had a sense of belonging - his communality of childhood, and also looking back to a time when his community and the rural Provençal community thrived, untouched by the mechanical and synthetic world of modernity. So the function of art here can be seen as explicitly playing a role, a purpose. Art in Cézanne's case was identity exploring, connected with the past, community making, trying, through his art to reconnect with what had been lost to him

personally, and to the wider community in the face of the anonymous crowds, fast moving factories, machines and streets and capitalism of Modernity.

The point of this final art section should be clear, it is really to draw together all of the above in reference to a more 'agent-like' role of the artist. Cézanne serves a distinct function here, for his work is part of the canon of art history, it has been widely documented and is very much accepted within the art world institution. It is also clear from the theory surrounding Cézanne's work, that the art space is inextricably bound up with the rediscovery and maintaining of an identity. Again, there have been no detailed descriptions or analyses of any of Cézanne's works, like Gell (1998) this research is interested in the more social rather than symbolic aspect of art.

> I view art as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it. [98]

This 'art' as a system of action is elucidated at length by Smith with relation to Cézanne as proposed above. It is important to note that it is not only in the case of Cézanne that we see this phenomenon occurring. A further discussion of Pissarro re-iterates this point. Another institutionally accepted artist, whose work is exemplary of this 'art' functioning as a means to change the world. Pissarro's work was highly original in its time and his art works were instrumental in creating a certain type of audience. What is particularly significant is that his was a political vision of originality - in that he resented the academic artists and the reality of fetishization/commodity - he was consciously reacting against this through his art where Pissarro's work came to gain sense as paradigms of an anarchist set of values (Smith, 1992). Based upon these thoughts, it is clear then that art serves a useful purpose in these individual and community lives, further more discussion of Cézanne and mention of Pissarro suggest that this view is accepted and validated to a certain extent, for they are clearly amongst the most crucial figures of their time in the eyes of the history of art as we know it.

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[98] Gell 1998: 6

2.3.9 Summary

Having elucidated my view on 'what is art?', and posited the fact that art functions within a certain cultural context, art appears to have played a role in the empowerment of identity recovery. Art serves a function, it must be clarified at this stage that not *all* art objects do, but those that do, do so with a certain level of poignancy. All that is above serves as sufficient contextualisaton for the next chapter. We must focus now on the British Deaf arts field, and observe what discourses are emerging. There is clearly some kind of 'role of visual depiction in social life' (Fyfe and Law, 1988: 1) as documented by many of the above art historians and sociologists; how then can we begin to assess this role in relation to the Deaf community. We must remember that we have a community that has been hardly documented - with very little recorded and archived regarding art, surely this 'social role' is not just a thing of the documented cultures and communities mentioned above? To answer this question, we need to begin another journey and assess whether this model can be applied to the British Deaf art world; building upon what we have uncovered in relation to existing British Deaf arts discourse. This can only come about by talking to the artists and those involved in the field themselves. The objective in doing so, being to find out how best to support their cause by employing Critical Ethnographic tools, assessing what is there, and reflecting on it in light of all that has been set up in this section.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.0 Methodological considerations

Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people.[99]

This chapter examines methodological considerations; the theoretical background behind my chosen methodology and a description of the process of data collection. There will also be an exploration of more subtle issues such as the role of the author, the rhetoric of ethnography and the fine line between fact and fiction that inevitably arises when writing an ethnography. These nuances aspire to keep us close to the subject in hand: myself, the artists and the artworks within a broader sociological creative field. Ethnography is a journey in itself, incorporating highs and lows, and as Coffey suggests, the elements of massively engaging adventure, discovery and surprise far out-weigh the traumas (Coffey, 1999). The important thing to bear in mind throughout this section is that I have acquired my knowledge of this methodology by doing it, and 'being in it', in this respect we could lable the process, retrospective ethnography (Bryman, 2002).

3.1 Theoretical Background

We cannot embark upon exploring the data collection stage until we have clarified the principles that govern ethnography in light of those who are specialists in the field. It is important to note at this stage that the literature referred to in this chapter is multi-disciplinary. I found no one 'way' entirely useful by itself, the combination of anthropology; sociology, cultural geography, feminist participatory research and educational research thus comprise the basis of this section.

3.1.1 Ethnography

Ethnography has its roots in Social Anthropology aiming,

> To study a society or some aspect of a society, culture or group in
> depth… which depends heavily on observation and in some cases

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[99] Spradley, 1979: 3

complete or partial integration into the society being studied…this enables the researchers, as far as possible, to share the same experiences as the subjects, to understand better why they act in the way they do and to see things as those involved see things.[100]

Once this knowledge is gained, the ethnographer must make sense of this information, and in turn, build some kind of 'culturescape' and convey this to an audience by way of writing (Geertz, 1973).

The aims of ethnography are achieved through a combination of strategies, including, participant observation, ethnographic interviews and focus groups. Consistent then within all of these methods is the important endeavour to find out how the community in question define their worlds, and refrain from imposing my theories upon them (Spindler and Spindler, 1992). The intention of the ethnographer must be to move away from more ethnocentric descriptions of communities[101] and attempt to see alternative realities whilst constantly being aware that we will ultimately always be 'seeing' from within our own reality. In other words, we must strive to move away from being 'culture-bound' (Spradley, 1979). To achieve this, it is vital that ethnography be understood as an holistic approach; it is not just Deaf art I must immerse myself in, but the language, the politics, the history, the lives and friends.

Ethnography does come with a set of criticisms. It runs the risk firstly, of resulting in mere subjective descriptions, invalidated and thus useless. Alternatively, the researcher can become preoccupied with representing a community in 'their' terms, that the 'their' becomes overtly significant and results in further oppressing the community in question by over compensating, and objectifying to the point where the chasm between subject and object inevitably results in an increased distance.

These descriptive narratives within ethnographic research can be criticised on the grounds of validity and lack of concern for empowerment, particularly when

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[100] Bell, 1999: 13
[101] As discussed in chapter 1 with reference to Self and Other

oppressed peoples come into the equation, and in this light, reveal weaknesses within the methodology. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983)

On these grounds, ethnography still appears to be situated within the academic framework of the researcher, rather than on the terms of those being studied, (Quantz, 1992; Ladd, 2000). Thus as suggested by Ladd (1998), when carrying out research with Deaf people; members of a minority-oppressed community, critical ethnography might prove more useful at dealing with the power issues that will undeniably come into play.

3.1.2 Critical Ethnography

Critical ethnography, by implication is critical of the downfalls of ethnography, and in this light, seeks to improve upon the principles mentioned above. Not only does the critical ethnographer seek to represent another culture in their terms, but also the ethnocentric bias mentioned above must be addressed within the remit of critical ethnography. The focus then for critical ethnography is social inequity, and this must be addressed with the least amount of bias possible. Thus demanding a greater sense of robust research design, transparency on the part of the critical ethnographer and above all increased attention to validation issues.

Simon and Dippo (1986) outline three principals of critical ethnography, which are crucial to our employment of it;

> That the work must employ an organising method which defines one's data and analytical procedures in a way consistent with its project

> It must be situated in part within a public sphere that allows it to become the starting point for the critique and transformation of the conditions of oppressive and inequitable moral and social regulation.

> It must address the limits of its own claims by a consideration of how as a form of social practice, it too is constituted and regulated through historical relations of power and existing material conditions.

Additionally, it has been suggested that the critical ethnographer adhere to six tenets (Lather, 1986), which will further validate and verify their processes. If the critical ethnographer is to incorporate these six strategies, it is hoped that she might move away from ethnocentric bias. These are, Triangulation, Respondent Validation, Judgement Sampling, Catalytic Validity, Typicality and Reflexivity.[102]

Critical ethnography, in this light, must be seen as an inherently political enterprise, it is unquestionably value-laden, as is anything concerned with power, legitimacy, combination and oppression (Cohen and Manion, 2000; Cook and Crang, 1995). As Quantz (1992) suggests, critical ethnography is by implication tied up with a wider liberatory, democratic and emancipatory discourse. This discourse is not without its problematic elements.

3.1.3 Empowerment through research

Cultural descriptions can be used to oppress people or to set them free.[103]

Having the power to liberate a community, by definition, means that you are also in the position where you can further oppress them. This might not be intentional oppression, but it is a risk that the critical ethnographer must face.

This empowerment must take place with the intention of positive change of some sort. With specific reference to this project, change might take its shape in two ways, simultaneously. Both of which can be seen to harmonize with each other to a certain extent, and this appeals to research done by Gatenby and Humphries (2000). Their paper is based upon Feminist Participatory Action Research and it is proposed that 'change' can be achieved both by empowering the women involved in the research and by distributing

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[102] All of which have been addressed in the process of this research project, and each of which shall feature at the relevant occasion. These tenets shall be elucidated on when they become instrumental within the data collection and analysis process. Individual discussions of them now would only serve to distract the reader from this construction of a theoretical background. Significantly reflexivity has been an essential element of the research project, and Catalytic Validity the guiding force.
[103] Spradley, 1979: 13

information which has the potential to change the actions of others. In this respect, I might have the power to directly empower the group of artists, by approaching them, taking them and their work seriously and documenting, recording and archiving their thoughts and feelings. At the same time I will also be left with a tangible research project that can then be disseminated into hearing worlds and art worlds, thus potentially changing lay peoples attitudes at the same time.[104]

Based upon this assumption, Cook and Crang wisely advise the researcher to question their motives. Am I 'indulging in a heroic mission to make the world a better place for 'them', hoping to discover a 'true' or new self via a detour through the 'other' (Cook and Crang, 1995:18). This is not my intention. It is however, the way an outsider might perceive the enterprise, and thus something that bears consideration throughout. What are the motivations behind an attempt to empower another community? What are the implications of the self in the wider sense, and how will my own motivations and epistemologies influence or affect the research process?

3.1.4 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher[105]

At this stage it is insightful to turn to the work of Bourdieu. Bourdieu's background was Sociology, and it was his concern that the ethnographer was a 'disembodied chronicler' who describes rather than interprets and therefore has no real place in the field.[106] He was concerned with the failure for self-recognition, stating that this needed to be addressed. If we are attempting to create the purest account possible then in Bourdieu's eyes, we must know ourselves, we must know the subject and the object and the relationship

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[104] It appears vital to contemplate which part of this two pronged dissemination process is more pressing, and in my position as a hearing researcher am I even in a position to undertake dissemination within the Deaf community? Yet, could the case be made that such should precede dissemination within the hearing world? This shall be discussed further in Chapter 7.

[105] England 1994, cited in Bennet, 2002: 89

[106] As suggested by Kieran Flanagan, Sociology Department, University of Bristol.

between the two and we must at least attempt to know the unconsciousness of our being and our viewpoint.[107]   Bourdieu suggests, in his terms, reflexivity relates to the disposition of the actor, in that the researcher is both the subject and the object in the field of enquiry. (Denzin, 1997; Coffey, 1999) It is only by being subjective and admitting this inevitable subjectivity that the researcher can eventually move towards a more objective viewpoint[108].

Reflexivity says that the researcher should be aware of her culture and of the self within this culture. Although this is a well documented topic, Coffey (1999) still claims that research methods texts remain relatively silent on the ways in which fieldwork affects us and vice versa. Coffey's points to the fact that there is a distinct difference between the somewhat fashionable 'personalised' text and genuinely acting upon the implications of the self within the field. It is suggested that a self-modified outlook is not sufficient, and that the researcher must seriously consider the personal, emotional and identity laden nature of the entire process. This is similar to Cook and Crang's (1995) assertion indicating the admission of gender, class and colour is not sufficient reflexive practice. Instead we must regard the research process as an encounter, taking into consideration where all involved have come from, where they are going to and why.

Based on this, how much disclosure does Reflexivity demand? Whose tale am I trying to tell? Am I not running the risk of self-indulgence if I get too tangled up in thinking and discussing me? Reflexivity in this light has been misunderstood as mere navel-gazing, narcissistic and egotistic (Bennet, 2002: 141). Based on this, it becomes clear that Reflexivity is a useful tool to employ; yet we must refrain from over complicating the matter. There are clearly some important implications within the notion of Reflexivity, yet we must

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[107] Which is exactly the point that Carlos Skliar made in chapter 1, where the relationship between the subject and the object is that which needs considerable amounts of attention.
[108] But never entirely objective.

assure that it doesn't become inflated and in turn, detrimental to the research process[109].

To summarise, as Bourdieu (1993) perceptively points out - Reflexivity it is not a simple thing to do. It is his thought that, "it would be optimistic to imagine that a researcher would be able to identify and account for all the external forces and internal impulses acting upon them." (Ladd, 2003: 273) There is then this challenge, to aim for some methodological cleansing through the recognition of the self.   However, there will inevitably be power issues, bias and intellectual and academic shadows ever-present in a piece of research to be submitted to the Academy. We should acknowledge this as a challenge and work towards overcoming it. As Cook and Crang conclude, this self definition, 'does not fit together in a dedicated pattern, but is always a compromise, always pragmatic, always in flux and never pure.' (Cook and Crang: 1995:8)

3.1.5 Participant Observation (i) [110]

Clearly one must observe before one participates. 'For it is only in feeling at a loss about how to conduct oneself, and adapting by watching and learning the rules that one learns how to behave in a particular way' (Spradley, 1980: 53). This is no enlightenment exclusively relevant to a piece of ethnographic research- this is just what humans do.

The difference when this observing and participating is in the ethnographic sense; is that there are additional purposes to my learning the rules. I, as critical ethnographer have another purpose altogether. By this I mean that I am both insider and outsider simultaneously (Spradley, 1980: 54): my two roles can be constructed as;

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[109] There is a point when the researcher has to 'get over it' so-to-speak. This is a vital moment to acknowledge in the research process, for the sensitive researcher can become disabled by self-analysis at which point the project grinds to a halt. It is clearly necessary to consider reflexive practice to a certain extent, however indulging in it results in the researcher verging on paranoia and over self-consciousness. The 'get over it' moment is a crucial stage in taking responsibility for your work and your project.
[110] The notion of Participant Observation demands some clarification before it can be discussed with reference to the actual research process. Here then is a brief summary of what is involved in the activity, which shall be expanded upon with direct reference to the Deaf art field in section 3.2.2

1) To engage in activities appropriate to the situation

2) To observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation.

The majority of participants in any situation are only there for the former reason, my role, as researcher has to also encompass the latter. Thus the sentiment I hope to convey to the reader is distinctly in tune with Spradley's objective to 'use yourself as a research instrument'. (Spradley, 1980: 57) I must observe a situation from afar to learn the rules and elicit how to engage in it, at which point I must observe the situation from within. This process might be more conducive to certain type of person; the quality of observing, absorbing the rules and engaging are not intrinsic to everyone. By this I only hope to suggest that my own personality and experience in life does, I believe, equip me to undertake such a role.

3.1.6 Summary of Theoretical Background

To summarise, the best way to learn about ethnography is to do it. Ethnography can succeed or it can fail, and there are various factors which contribute to its success. Ethnography is not a list of ingredients, but rather a set of questions that can be asked in almost any situation. How you use ethnography and what you use it for is the interesting element of this methodology. Ethnography by definition is messy business; it is not a smooth path to collecting qualitative data. Importantly, this is reflective of the social lives it seeks to understand. Social activity is based on human beings, who are unquestionably unpredictable and messy which is exactly why ethnography is the perfect methodology to work with. These unpredictable creatures cannot be analysed with clean-cut tools, which would only serve to continue a reductive, taxonomic and compartmentalising tradition, which is a wholly synthetic way to understand and interpret messy phenomena such as people, communities or cultures. That is not to say that critical ethnography is the *only* way to advance our understanding of communities and cultures, it is however the most appropriate for this situation and this project.

3.2 The Process

At this point, the reader will have an understanding of the chosen methodology and the reasons for employing it. What will follow is a closer look at the research process and the data collection specifically regarding this project. It is often suggested that the research process is a simple three-part procedure where access to the field needs to be gained, followed by an attempt to take in a new world-view and way of life, finally the researcher must travel 'back' to the Academy and make sense of this through some sort of analysis and write up an account of this culture (Cook and Crang, 1995). What needs to be acknowledged is that all of these activities, in reality, happen simultaneously and often have to be juggled in a skilful way. 'Reading, doing and writing should be thoroughly mixed up in the process of ethnography' (Cook and Crang, 1995: 4).

This juggling process for me has spanned almost two years[111] and has not necessarily been 'an easy ride'. Research objectives have grown and evolved in that time, and inevitable changes have occurred. Although I sought to plan for every eventuality, situations have arisen that I could never have predicted. What follows is a description of the process; readers can judge for themselves how well issues of validity have been addressed and the success of the overall venture.

3.2.1 Creating the Field

How does one create a field? Is the field already there or is it a matter of me constructing it? If it is already there, how do I enter it? Will my presence in the field contaminate it? (Coffey, 1999)

My early concerns regarding access to this field were predominantly based on the fact that I am an outsider. It had been made clear to me that there was a Deaf art world that was worthy of consideration, and that this research urgently needed to be done. I had seen some of the artworks and knew it did exist,

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[111] From the moment I started learning BSL to the present day.

however I had very little idea of what it would be like to be 'in' that field, to be a part of that field. I had little confidence in the fact that people would welcome me into the field, let alone open themselves up to me and discuss their lives with me. The early days of a research project like this are filled with questions and anxieties that can only be relieved by actually getting out there and getting involved, meeting the people, seeing the artworks and becoming part of the Deaf art scene. This requires participant observation.

3.2.2 Participant Observation (ii)

As described in 3.1.5, one must observe and learn the rules before one participates, at which point, one is engaged enough to observe more closely. This challenge then, required a prolonged sense of contact with the Deaf creative community. It was necessary to go beyond purely visual arts, thus my interactions and observations spanned the wider Deaf creative field. Much time (and money) was devoted to this: I frequented art exhibitions in London, was invited to Private Views, travelled to Wolverhampton for Film Festivals as well as observing Gallery and Museum tours where BSL opened up the audience to Deaf participants. Additionally, I attended one-off courses[112] as well as the 5th International Conference on Deaf History.[113] I was involved with a project with the Arnolfini in conjunction with Aaron Williamson and Elmfield School for Deaf children, I observed a course on Deaf Performance and Literature as well as attending a study day on Dorothy Miles, furthermore I attended Deaf theatre performances, saw the Israeli Deaf dance group 'Bat Kol' and also become a familiar face around Shape, spending days exploring their archives and having numerous crucial conversations with John Wilson and other people involved and knowledgeable in the field.

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[112] Workshop on Learning, Teaching and Assessments for Lecturers teaching Art, Design and Communication to Deaf students, organised by the University of Wolverhampton at the London Institute

[113] 5th International Conference on Deaf History - Past Accomplishments and Future Visions, Paris, France, 30th June - 4th July 2003, where an entire day of the programme was devoted to International Deaf Arts presentations (there was no research presented about the British Deaf art scene). One or two of my informants were also there as delegates which made for a nice few days of conversations. Thanks to the Centre for Deaf Studies, Bristol University for funding this trip - without which I would not have been able to attend.

Being seen in all of these situations was not sufficient. I had to interact and become more than just a familiar face, which was daunting with my minimal amount of BSL in the early stages of the project. I was also loathe to mention the fact that I was connected with 'Bristol University and the Centre for Deaf Studies' due to the simple fact I was immediately pigeon holed as an academic 'researcher' with all of the sensitive connotations attached to that status.

An advantage of carrying out research in this field was that I was in a position where I was able to participate as an 'art' person ahead of 'researcher interested in Deaf issues'. This - 'I am an art person and I am interested in what you do' was entirely genuine, yet maybe was an 'easy way in'. This is something that has only been realised with the benefit of hindsight.

Significantly, due to the circumstances surrounding this project; the Deaf art world and the artists were new to me - I was in the fortunate position of seeing it all with new eyes. Had I been a member of the community for sometime before the seed of research started to grow - I would have had enormous difficulties in seeing this world with fresh eyes. It would have been a matter of making the familiar strange as opposed to making the strange familiar (Spradley, 1980). Being a newcomer to a community has its trials and tribulations, yet the benefits ultimately far outweighed the problems; 'The less familiar you are with a social situation, the *more* you are able to see the tacit cultural rules at work' (Spradley, 1980:62). Thus I observed the rules, engaged in the game and was thus able to observe more closely. This whole process was however dependent upon a crucial set of 'Gatekeepers', my reliance on these relationships is worthy of further exploration.

3.2.3 Supervisor/Gatekeepers

Amongst these Gatekeepers, were my Supervisor, Dr Paddy Ladd, John Wilson (Deaf Arts Officer for Shape), Maggie Woolley (a leading figure in the Disability Arts Movement), Cathy Woolley, her daughter, (an artist, a facilitator and very useful contact) and Sheila Cragg (an Interpreter who works in the Deaf art field and is known and trusted by many of the artists.)

My supervisor fulfilled a set of different roles from the very instigation of this project; firstly that the project be Deaf-led, secondly that this project be Deaf informed, and thirdly that the role he fulfils within the Deaf world[114] means he has a certain amount of sway over the Deaf informants. He knows many people involved in Deaf arts personally, and if he doesn't - they know him. Thus his role in introducing me to people, putting me in touch with organisations, suggesting relevant situations to observe, and being able to 'validate' my presence to Deaf informants was crucial throughout.

The others mentioned above played vital roles in creating access for me, and having their approval and support was a benchmark in the project. Not only did they approve the topic in its conception, they offered ideas as to how might be best to go about it, who might like to be involved and how best to approach them.

3.2.4 Contact with informants

Approaching potential informants demanded careful planning and validation from those mentioned above. Had I directly approached the artists, I fear I would have been 'another hearing researcher' and would have met a negative response. It was not me who initially contacted the informants. The group of gatekeepers mentioned above, very kindly forwarded my 'invitation'[115] to be part of the research to the artists they knew and the people they felt might like to be involved.

The fact that certain members of the Deaf art world had three or four people approaching them with respect to my project, not only flattered them and their work, but also immediately gave me a 'good reference'. This raises further issues with regard to gatekeepers, and that is the responsibility I have to them and the trust that they put in me. How do they know that my motivations are genuine, and how can they trust that I will not abuse the power they have exerted on my behalf? What responsibility do I therefore have to them, and

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[114] Prolific International academic, National Union of the Deaf founder and member, Activist and campaigner for Deaf rights to name but a few.
[115] See Appendix B

how can I keep them involved in every stage to maintain their continuing approval? Importantly, what effect might it have on the gatekeepers, and our relationships, should the research 'go wrong'?[116] I shall return to these issues in chapter 7.

3.2.5 Selection of informants

At this stage then, I was in the position where a number of Deaf artists were contacting me for further information regarding the project. All communication at this stage was by email and informal and 'chatty' in tone. My contention in these communications were very much in the vein of, 'I don't know what it is like to be a Deaf artist, that is why I am asking you.' This aspires to Spradley's point that 'ethnography must start with a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance' (Spradley, 1979: 4). Reiterated rather amusingly in Barley's epic tale of the realities of research; 'The only hope is to pass oneself off as a harmless idiot who knows no better' (Barley, 1986: 17). It might be useful to briefly consider the presentation of the researcher at this stage.

Clearly, the role that the researcher plays, and the person I chose to reveal is intricately interwoven with the artists' initial impressions of me. This ties in with the researcher playing a role (Cassell, 1988: 97, cited in Cook and Crang, 1995: 24). Where the researcher can adopt a certain identity that fits in with the group of informants, as long as the researcher isn't compromising their own values and beliefs too much - and not 'inventing' a whole new identity then that is considered reasonable. It must be admitted that we all have several identities and in this situation the most appropriate one can be stressed. This application of 'different selves' is referred to as 'Impression management' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 83).

Whether it was specifically me that the artists responded to, or whether it was more the fact that someone was finally interested in their works and

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[116] By 'go wrong' I am referring to a situation that occurred during this project. It came totally out of the blue in the final stages, and I am still struggling to make sense of it. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity need to be respected, however it is necessary to say that two artists who were involved, withdrew from the study. I will make further mention of this situation in section 3.4.5.

worldviews - I will never know. Either way, an interested group emerged (predominantly women which is perhaps worthy of interrogation), and it really did 'emerge'. There was no point when I 'hand-picked' artists.[117] These artists approached me based on the invitation sent by my supervisor or gatekeepers. A couple of people pulled out before the research got underway due to personal reasons, and others joined at later stages due to other commitments. The final group of informants consisting of Rachel, Rubbena, Omeima, Linda, Ailsa, Niall, Cathy and Sheila; for the purposes of this study shall be referred to as Deaf (and one hearing artist, BSL interpreter and friend to the artists) all working in different media and playing different roles within the wider Deaf art world as exhibition curators or facilitators, group project co-ordinators, art therapists, students or professional artists.[118]

Meetings were arranged. I stressed that during our 'conversation' or 'interview' it would be nice to have a look at some of their works and I would like to film it if they didn't mind. Other than that, the date, time, venue and other external factors were in the hands of the informants. At this stage, they were all informed that they could pull out at any stage, that if they wished to remain anonymous I would respect that, all tapes and transcripts would remain confidential and that I would not put anything in the project without their validating it.

3.2.6 Interview Preparations

Preparation for the interviews was minimal. Based on my time spent in the field I had a vague idea of the 'hot topics' and the 'raw nerves'. Although I did not construct a formal list of questions, I did have an idea of the kind of discourse that was present, the kind of issues I hoped might come up and the areas within Deaf arts that were current topics of interest (recent group projects/exhibitions). Thus it was possible to develop a list of possible areas

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[117] This relates to judgement sampling - one of the six tenets of critical ethnography. I would like to suggest that 'judgement sampling' occurred on the gatekeeper level, and thus determined the group of artists. I did have additional conversations with fellow students Tomato Lichy, and Deaf artists, Zebedee Jones, Aaron Williamson. These have not been quoted for time and space reasons, but their ideas and thoughts have clearly informed the project.

[118] Pertaining to one of the six tenets- 'Typicality' (Spradley; 1980)

for discussion. The benefit of doing this was double fold. Not only did it serve, as a back up should the interview not progress naturally, it also served a greater methodological function. At this stage I had to be prepared to discuss any or all of these topics, in BSL with someone whose sign language I was not familiar with.[119] My use of BSL is clearly not linguistically or grammatically anywhere near that of a Deaf BSL user - thus it was useful for me to see how a Deaf BSL user might sign certain ideas and topics. This is what I did, it was filmed, and watching the video prior to meeting individual artists proved extremely useful when in the actual interview.

3.2.7 The Interviews

The aim of the ethnographic interview is to encourage informants to talk about their worlds, in their way, in their terms. The obvious difficulty here is that many of these things can be taken for granted by individuals. How do you get someone to reveal something that they might not even know is there - let alone think it worthy of conversation? I found myself constantly asking for further explanations, picking up on minute details, nothing can be taken for granted in this situation. It was interesting too, that I had many unexpected and serendipitous connections with some of my informants that made for greater rapport.[120] Rapport being vital at this stage, this is obviously based on the dispositions of those involved, and it is fair to say that I struck up individual relationships with each of the informants at this interview stage. These more subtle details are all recorded in my fieldnotes and diaries from the time.[121]

3.2.8 Fieldnotes and Diaries

Constant writing of personal observations was an essential part of the research process. It was on the pages of my notes and diaries that I expressed my

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[119] I chose not to work with an interpreter as I felt that this would distance me from the informants and affect the data generated.

[120] For instance one of them lives just round the corner from where I was born, others had similar interests to me, or geographical connections, a few informants brought their children with them, and as an experienced child-carer this made for a nice connection point.

[121] Although these do not compromise data within the pages of this thesis, they, like all the emails, text messages and communications serve as a large body of huge unused data archives.

feelings in relation to the research and the researched and thus allowed me to see the unfolding and evolution of the project (Bennet, 2002: 146) These written counterparts to conversations could not be written within the actual interviews, for signing and writing simultaneously is practically impossible. Thus much of this personal discourse was reliant upon the 'ethnographers bladder'[122] (Cook and Crang,1995: 35), or on the bus or on the tube directly after the event.

The field diary served a different purpose altogether, it was more a space to voice my doubts, fears, concerns and feelings regarding both academic and personal life. Looking back on it, it appears to present more of the anxieties and worries that inevitably arise, yet the more comfortable I felt within the field, the less I seemed to write in my diary.

3.2.9 Coding and Analysing Data

Typically, the ethnographer is then faced with a pile of notes, tapes, and correspondences. Before indicating how I negotiated those, it is necessary to explain in more detail the transcription process and additional validation issues that arose. It was my intention from the outset to maximise the informants' involvement. Thus their role in generating data superseded the initial interview.[123] Problematic elements arose when it came to translating and transcribing data generated in BSL. These issues shall be addressed below. It is significant that the original tapes from our conversations were not regarded as the final stage in a process.

On return from an interview, I sat down and watched the tape from start to finish to get an overall understanding of all that was discussed and recorded it. I then looked back at the tapes more closely, writing a detailed 'summary' of the event. This was an exceptionally time consuming task, allowing for about 10 hours for every 1 hour of tape. This was only a summary and by no means a word-for-word detailed transcript, and often I found myself asking

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[122] Regular trips to the toilet to note down vital information.
[123] This is the application of 'Respondent Validation', one of the six tenets (Spradley, 1980).

BSL/English interpreters for assistance in deciphering exact meanings. I then returned these summaries to the informants so that they had the opportunity to correct things, make adjustments and add in any changes, comments or further pieces of information. Once I had received all of the amended summaries I was in a position to further navigate the content.

At this point I went back to the tapes and realised that the amended summaries were quite removed from the original conversations. They were now in English and contained additional information offered by the informants. Thus I accepted the tapes were the starting point and progressed in written form. The amended summaries went back to the informants again, and what was returned formed the basis of my data. These summaries were entirely approved by the informants, and were now a more detailed set of discussions which represented a validated set of quotes. It was also explained to the informants at this stage that not everything could be included: the data collected was inevitably double the size of the entire research project.

The artists then dictated which sections were to be pursued and what areas were focused on. I made it very clear to them that it was interesting for me to know which parts were worth pursuing in THEIR eyes, and many of the themes that have emerged are due to this informant based selective process.[124] It was these that I focused on in the 'coding' part of my analysis. Traditionally, the researcher spends time getting to know the data generated at every stage of the process and from every informant, making sense of what discourses emerge from it, drawing out themes and finding typical strands of thought.[125] This was achieved by an elaborate colour-coding process, experimenting with themes and ideas, shifting and playing with groupings of ideas, reading and re-reading sections to make sure I clearly understood the meaning. Barley discusses this process as being similar to the endeavour of gold mining;

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[124] This brings in a certain dilemma regarding ownership. This is something I have struggled with and have yet to entirely resolve. Whose project is this? Whose decisions are more valuable? Whose responsibility is it to make those decisions and other issues surrounding ownership revealed in my poster, (see Appendix C)

[125] This is called, 'Triangulation', another one of the six tenets (Spradley, 1980).

> I remembered having read somewhere that gold mining consisted of shifting three tons of rubbish for each ounce of gold extracted; if this was true, fieldwork had much in common with gold mining.[126]

One picks ones way through the morass of data by a process of constant error and revision (Barley, 1986: 128) until the themes and strands within the data reveal themselves. At which point, the researcher is in a position to lift a selection of relevant quotations that support these themes for potential inclusion in the 'data chapters'. At this stage, once the quotes had been lifted *out of their original context*, it was appropriate and in tune with the wider project, to return these to the informants for further validation and give the opportunity to take back any comments, change the wording or clarify any points. It was at this stage that the informants were given the choice regarding anonymity and confidentiality. They were all happy to be named in the project, and pleased to have their work included. Thus through this research design, the researcher was left with a series of quotes and excerpts that revealed a set of themes and issues indicative of the wider Deaf arts discourse, validated by the informants.[127]

3.3 Writing and Ethnography

3.3.1 Writing an Ethnography

Certain aspects of the research process can potentially be taken for granted and fail to gain critical attention within many of the many texts devoted to ethnography. Writing is one of these aspects that is apparently taken for granted. It has become explicitly clear as the project has developed, that data collection alone is all but nebulous until it is concretised in a written form thus gaining the potential for dissemination. If we assume that 'The meaning of a word is its use in a Language' (Wittgenstein, 1958: (pt 43): 20). Research, like a word, finds it's meaning in its use, pointing to an element of reciprocity should meaning be fully communicated. This *use* is dependent upon it comprising of a shared language, a medium accessible to the reader. This is

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[126] Barley, 1986:108
[127] See Appendix D for an informants response concerning validation.

clearly written English in my case. However, we must be more self-critical than this. English written by whom and for whom? With what motivations? Who am I trying to persuade? What is the 'gaze' of this author/narrator/traveller? What is my literature background? These are just a few of the points tackled by Atkinson (1990) and further by Clifford and Marcus (1996); the implications of which are pioneering in the field of ethnography, especially when the encounter of 'self' and 'other' is being addressed.

> It is entirely obvious to any contemporary scholar that there can be no neutral language of description: and that is especially clear when the social and cultural domains are in question.[128]

So in the simplest sense the 'I' cannot be taken out of the textual constructions of written ethnographies - I am implicated in all the modes of writing that take place within this study. This holds true to all cultural descriptions - so in turn everything I read has an author/narrator/voice implicated in it. Yet, this must not be seen as invalidating a piece of research. What I read, what I write down, what I write up and in turn what people read into my research - all has a shadow of the researcher there. Being aware of these issues can then enhance our critical eye when it comes to the rhetoric of textual constructions (Atkinson, 1990).

3.3.2 Ethnography and Language

Thus, the importance of language in ethnography cannot be ignored. Language comes into every aspect of the research methodology; everything that is said, written, conveyed, communicated, understood, thought and felt-takes its form in language. The issue here is the problematic nature of language in general. Specifically relevant because this project incorporates the philosophy of Wittgenstein, who was one of those to rethink assumptions tied up with language. Language could be seen as, 'a tool for constructing reality' (Spradley, 1979: 17). Although it appears that Spradley rethought this assumption in a later publication with McCurdy;

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[128] Atkinson, 1990: 175

Most people think of their language as a tool. They have thoughts they wish to express, and language is the handy medium by which to do so. Language is simply a way to classify natural reality they feel and to put it into a format that can be communicated. Yet once a language is learned, might not the way it represents experience affect how people perceive the things around them… Whorf argued that there is a remarkable correlation between the way people speak and the way they perceive their worlds…Whorf argued that language actually shaped the way people could think about new experience. [129]

Language and society is the topic being exposed - Whorf and Sapir's investigation explored these notions of language and perception; which one creates or reflects the other? Does language represent our perception like a simple tool, a coding system for passing phenomena, or does language shape our perception and our understanding of the world? This exploration has the potential to continue, but word counts limit me, therefore I can only draw attention the fact that language is the vehicle through which I have discovered everything here and clearly the means by which this is being written and channelled to a reader. Yet is it clearly not without its problematic elements.

3.3.3 Writing up and writing down

There are additional issues in the writing process. First, I am engaged in 'writing down', taking notes, jotting down observations and listing appearances. I am then engaged in a process of reading these - literally, and 'reading' them in the sense of making sense of them based on what I have written down.

Second I am engaged in a 'writing up' process - this is a more constructive activity, a process of consciously making sense of and polishing what has been 'written down'. At this stage, it can be assumed that what is 'written down' constitutes some form of raw data - but this original 'writing down' has to be seen for what it is. My writing up is based on what I wrote down, and what I wrote down is not without its fictions - the very act of writing is a textual

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[129] McCurdy and Spradley, 1979: 50

construction, the 'readings' and inferences were there from the very start (Atkinson, 1990; 61). This might appear like an obvious point; my highlighting of it intends to suggest that I am aware of the issue and the criticism it might attract. The research process outlined above requires much 'writing down' and 'writing up' - and there is little one can do to resolve this issue. Raising it as a question could then be the beginning of the shift towards resolving it.

3.3.4 Fact and Fiction

There is one final issue that demands attention with regard to writing and language in this project. It too is best explored by a duality; fact and fiction (Atkinson, 1990). This section might be useful to allude to, particularly in terms of this author and her background. The crux of the question rests on a simple question; ethnographic writing; fact or fiction? An obvious way to commence answering this question would be to acknowledge the science versus aesthetic (art) debate, the positivist versus post-positivist (interpretative) argument, the quantitative versus qualitative (experience) contention - all of which might be carbon-copied onto a 'fact' versus 'fiction' polarity. Mine is clearly an arts, post-positivist, interpretative, qualitative and thus by implication, in some peoples eyes, a 'fictitious' outlook. How does this affect the current writing endeavour? Whether this Enlightenment distinction between the creative act of writing and constructing can sit comfortably alongside a quality, robust piece of research could be debated at length. I however have no qualms about admitting my background, my history and my narrators 'gaze' – and I admit this in the hope of adding to the quality of this project, clearly not attempting to invalidate my own enterprise, or anyone else's.

'Quite unlike its pristine and logical presentation in journal articles... real research is often confusing, messy, intensely frustrating and fundamentally non-linear.'[130] In this light, is it possible to see any piece of written research as entirely 'factual'?

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[130] Marshall and Rossman, 1989: 21 cited in Cook and Crang, 1995:13

3.4 Additional Issues

3.4.1 Art and ethnography

Here we must turn our gaze to the few subject specific issues that have emerged in light of this project. There are pros and cons to any research project's subject matter. The area of art comprises its own set of dilemmas.

There is a distinct problem when discussing the subject 'art', as has been suggested. Many of the conversations in this area resulted in a contemplation of, 'What is art?'. This caused for some long and circular debates which might have detracted from a more pressing topic. Despite this, it was not my prerogative to hinder these discussions. It must just be noted that much time was devoted to this topic of discussion.

Additionally, the subject matter within arts discourse is hugely subjective; there is no one 'truth' or 'right answer'. In this light, many of the conversations adhered to this subjectivity and often questions weren't entirely resolved.

It has also been necessary to seek advice externally regarding the theoretical discussions of 'art', much of which exceeds my supervisor's expertise. This is not detrimental to the project itself, it further validates it on an inter-faculty level. It is however detrimental to the Deaf led angle of the project, and must be admitted and made clear.

'Good informants know their culture so well they don't think about it' (Spradley, 1979: 47). In this case, generally speaking, artists like talking about their work, but they have done its lots before. Issues arise here of how do you encourage someone to talk about issues they know so well, simultaneously allowing them to move away form 'the usual spiel?'

On a more positive note, visual aids are a useful 'way in' to topics for discussion. They are a good starting point. Every one of the conversations was based on and around images, be they in a studio, at the artists home or in

their local café. Seeing the works led me to ask questions like, 'tell me about that painting/sculpture… why have you given it that title?' and so on. Thus opening up new paths and topics for consideration. It felt like the art objects had the power to inspire thoughts and jog people's memories when it came to processing information.

Finally, in the artists' eyes, I am part of the 'art world' institution. I am then legitimising their works and their status with an institutional stamp of approval. This can work in two ways. Potentially if I disclose too much about my background and my knowledge of the art-world, I might overwhelm informants and they would feel the need to impress me. At the same time, it can fill the artist with confidence and allow them to talk openly on common ground, for I might be an outsider to their Deaf experience, but I am not a layperson to their art worlds.

3.4.2 Translation and Transcription issues

Working between two languages means translation and interpretation issues cannot be avoided. Translation competence needed to be addressed at an early stage, 'The more an informant translates for your convenience, the more that informant's cultural reality becomes distorted.' (Spradley, 1979: 20) For the most part this was addressed through objectives such as 'framing the topics for discussion' and respondent validation. Regardless of the tools employed to mitigate against these distortions, cultural realities are always going to be bent when an non-native language user is involved. Additionally, English, nor any other spoken/written language, is not ideal when it comes to re-presenting BSL[131]. How does one represent the richness and complexities of a visual-spatial gestural language on paper? Tackling a language with no written form proved problematic, which lead me to contemplate how we represent spoken languages (in written form) on paper. In constructing the

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[131] Others who understand translation and its theories in more depth have tackled this more fully. This topic has been of great interest to the REMEDES (Research Methods in Deaf Studies) seminar series (which I have attended and presented a poster at, see Appendix C), funded by the ESRC and based at the University of Central Lancashire. Discussions surrounding this problematic area of how to incorporate BSL in its purest form in academic texts continue without resolve as yet.

summary for the only hearing informant, Sheila[132] it became apparent that even in this situation there were complications.[133] Much is lost between the original event and the written interpretation, and this matter of loss needs some justification. How much loss can you get away with? And how can you reduce the loss of meaningful content? An examination of the shifts between languages might reveal to the reader the amount of potential 'losses' within this translation process.

My background **English** - Artist's background **BSL/English/Other** - My thoughts **English** - Artist's thoughts **BSL/English** - My reading **English** - Conversations with artists **BSL** - The literature **English** - Conversations with supervisor **BSL** - The emails **English** - Conversations within the field **BSL** - Topics for discussion **English** - Questions framed **BSL** - My fieldnotes/diaries **English** - The interviews **BSL** - Summaries **English** - The tapes **BSL** - Return to informant **English** - Back to tapes **BSL** - Informants' validation and thoughts on it **English** - Back to tapes **BSL** - Informants' validation and selection of topics **English** - Coding and Analysis **English** - Writing 'up' as Data chapters **English** - Submission to the University of Bristol **English** - Dissemination potentially **BSL/English**

Figure 3 - Language Shift Diagram

Clearly there will be some sort of 'loss' occurring. However, these losses were predicted and in turn have been addressed. The final quotes and excerpts that you will find in the following two chapters have been validated at great length. The informants have had plenty of opportunities to change, take back or alter the content.[134] They have all finalised and approved not only the content, but the wording and the application. On these grounds I hope to have dealt to some extent with this 'loss' working with the resources available to me. This mechanism involves moving far away from the original BSL tapes, however we

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[132] Our interview was carried out in English and recorded onto a Dictaphone; in all other cases I filmed the event with a DV camcorder.

[133] One does not catch the sighs, the pauses, the facial expressions, the giggles, nor the ums an ers and emphasis in writing up a summary

[134] See Appendix D for validation of respondent

are yet to reach an agreement regarding how to analyse in BSL or present BSL data in an academic format. Technological advances must surely resolve this problem in the future, and create the space where we can move away from this 'on the researcher's terms and in the majorities' language' for if we are ever going to carry out truly empowering research not only according the institutions rules, then we need to find a way for Deaf people to be re-presented in their language, retaining the natural and cultural aspects as well as the richness and complexity. At this stage, my only option seemed to be an ongoing process of stringent respondent validation.

3.4.3 Videotaping Issues

There is a further element of the research process that demands clarification. Throughout the study, I had access to a hand-held DV camcorder and a tripod. Every official interview or conversation was recorded this way. I decided from the very start to exclude myself from the shot[135]. This was for several reasons; the concern here was with what the informants had to say/sign, thus the clarity of their BSL was of most importance. On some occasions informants had young children and on other occasions there were two people in the shot. I could not possibly have fitted into the frame without taking away from the detail and richness of their BSL. Thus my questions and responses are not recorded on film. To overcome this problem detailed notes were taken before and after the interviews and the data was observed on video as soon as was possible after the event in an attempt to not lose any information, even that which was 'off-screen' particularly my own contributions and questions.

3.4.4 Time and Space

This project functions within a certain set of time limitations. It is an MPhil spanning eighteen months, which has clearly determined the parameters it covers. Additionally there have been financial limitations. This project, although supported financially in small ways, has essentially been a self-

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[135] This raises an additional issue of how I signed the questions; this can, to a certain extent, be assessed by my preparation for the interviews, the responses given and this is ultimately all dependent upon the level of competence in the language of the informant.

funded venture. I have maintained constant employment throughout which has tied me down to Bristol. The informants involved were conveniently all London-based, yet had the resources been there, it would have been possible to leave Bristol for longer periods of time, travelled further, searched more widely and perhaps incorporated second, even third phase interviews

3.4.5 Loss of informants

Two artists withdrew abruptly in the final stages of the research project, I have respected their wishes and excluded all of their thoughts, comments and art works. For anonymity and confidentiality reasons they shall remain nameless. This option was available for all informants, which was made clear from the outset. Attempts made to understand why this had happened had to be conducted in English, and by the end of this process I was none the wiser as to their reasons. It is a shame that it was too late in the project to travel to meet them and work through the process. This is one of the characteristics of social research and on these grounds deserves mention; it is clearly not an unproblematic methodology. One informant, Linda, warned me of the potential difficulties in carrying out ethnographic research as a hearing researcher in the Deaf space;

> If you do encounter anger, which you will because the anger is there, all you have to do is step into it…whatever you do, anger will be stirred up- that in itself is really useful…. If you can detach enough and be able to realize that that's not necessarily directed at you - that anger is there and it's probably good that it is stirring… The anger is there and it's part of the art. You are just going to have to find a way to draw fire and not let it actually hurt you. Get your flak jacket on at the same time - come on - go for it, 'I am impervious!'

How much of the problem was caused by having to conduct enquiries with the two artists in English (via drawn out emails and text messages) is not easy to estimate. What can be said is that had we been able to communicate in our first languages or face to face, the problems might have been resolvable.

3.4.6 Catalytic validity and unexpected developments

Finally I must describe an unexpected development with respect to the notion of catalytic validity. Upon beginning the research and finding an apparent lack of discourse in the Deaf art world, I was keen to establish the beginnings of some sort of discourse. I was aware that by raising questions about Deaf visual arts, I was in a position to be implicated within this discourse, although what forms that would take would only be revealed through the research itself.

Several of the artists spoke early on about their frustrations concerning the lack of Deaf visual arts discourse. As will be found in Chapter 5, many of the informants suggested that what was needed was a discussion based group forum. One of the informants put forward the idea that 'we' organise such an event as part of the research project and bring the artists together to inspire discussion. Although group work itself was not a significant part of the research design due to time and financial limitations, the integrity of the research and its critical ethnographic principals required that I support their wish of helping to facilitate a collective discussion. I contacted my various connections who were knowledgeable in the field of organisation regarding venues and potential funding for such an event. Serendipitously, one of my contacts, Maggie Woolley replied that;

> The good news is that I may be able to offer "paid for" venue and facilities
> for the kind of event you seem to be talking about here… The catch is that
> it relates to an event at Bournemouth University…Seems to me that a lot
> of the problematic stuff like money and venue could be sorted at this end
> and you would get the chance to do the talk and discussion you need.[136]

Simultaneously a group discussion was being planned, with the space, the venue and the funding potentially provided. One of the artists sent an email to a group of practising Deaf artists eliciting who was interested in being involved;

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[136] Personal Correspondence, email dated Fri, 30 May 2003

The reason I am emailing you wondered if you would be interested to say what you think 'Deaf art' was and is today... It would be a good excuse for us to meet again...talk about art and art and art!!

What you think?[137]

A group was established consisting of Rubbena, Rachel, Ailsa and Omeima. Ideas started flowing, conversations began, emails and sms conversations were had and plans were being made for how the Bournemouth offer could be utilised most efficiently. I made it very clear from the outset that I was happy to support this enterprise, that I would video-record it and offer them any assistance they might require. However this was *their* space so I refrained from contributing to the content.

A second fortuitous development emerged, during a discussion regarding the approaching Bristol Deaf Film Festival[138] with one of the organisers. The kind offer of a room, equipment and a programme slot within the festival programme was made. I informed the relevant artists of this offer, and they were pleased to accept it, thus the 'Deaf Artists Working Group' was formed. This event then served as a 'dry run' for events in Bournemouth. A 90-minute workshop was led by the four Deaf artists on the topic, 'What is Deaf arts?' with 20 people, almost all Deaf, attending. In the process of discussion, each artist displayed and discussed examples of their own work. The topic 'What is Deaf Arts' was brainstormed leading to audience-involved discussions regarding the different commitments to the Deaf community, the distinction between art and arts and debates surrounding the issue of membership to the Deaf art world.

The second event in Bournemouth was part of a wider symposium devoted to Deaf arts across the spectrum (DABU). A more formal, 45 minute PowerPoint presentation, designed by all four artists was presented.[139] At both of these events, the artists presented original and exciting papers and discussions; they took the matter into their own hands, instigated new levels of discussion and

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[137] Personal Correspondence, email dated Sun, 25 May 2003
[138] Vision Sign, at the Watershed, Bristol, October 2003
[139] See Appendix H

worked as a team to initiate this discourse within a public setting. My role was strictly to observe and film both events, thus they are recorded and archived and serve as a basis for future research and discussions in the field. Additional data regarding these unplanned but exciting happenings can be found in section 5.3.4, incorporating the artist informants' views and feelings concerning the discussion forum and its future.

3.5 Summary of Methodology

> Human beings are complex, ambivalent, inconsistent creatures; not even the brightest and best organised of us lives in a sharp-edged world where we have all consciously and consistently sorted out our attitudes and beliefs on all conceivable subjects…Underneath the mess of language lies a mess of thought and a tangle of behaviour. If our research tools cannot recognise ambivalence an inconsistency as real and important, they will not help us to a very profound understanding of human thoughts and behaviour.[140]

It has been suggested that critical ethnography is the most appropriate tool to employ when researching vulnerable communities. It has also been explained how the data was collected and the research process has been examined in detail. Importantly, through the investigative process issues surrounding the nature of carrying out research with Deaf people became a larger part of the project than I anticipated. Consequently, a set of challenges emerged, many of which would be present in any form of social and critical ethnographic research. Some however are more specific to this project and more explicitly to the Deaf community, and these were explored further by way of a poster presented at REMEDES seminar series.[141]

It has been my objective throughout that this project be informed and led by Deaf people. It is hoped that my supervisors' status, consistent contact with those in the field and the constant process of validation has moved towards achieving this. Ultimately, the thesis will be made available to all the

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[140] Alan Hedges, 1985: 85, cited in Cook and Crang, 1995: 11
[141] See Appendix C

informants and should there be any future in it, their collaboration, validation and criticism will be absolutely vital. What follows in the next three chapters is the result of all the processes described above; the artists words, thoughts and art works. All that is here is from the minds and voices of the artists. Any mistakes or wrong turns are therefore my responsibility.

Chapter 4

Identifying Deaf visual Art discourses

4.0 Introduction

This research project is an embodiment of co-operative, dialogical praxis; allowing the informants to guide me towards the issues they felt needed investigation. This chapter records aspects of their advice as research data *per se* and illustrates their collective thought processes. These were generated through interviews, meetings, discussions and correspondence between the artists and myself.

4.1 Artist informed Methodological considerations

4.1.1 Advice regarding the dynamics of the Deaf Art World

The first stage of the research involved gaining an overall understanding of what I had to contend with. Linda, who is heavily involved in the Deaf art scene, had invaluable advice to offer on a number of levels, and outlined some of the central internal politics and cultural conflicts.

> …There are quite a few splits amongst Deaf artists, as you might expect in any group anyway, and there are certain people if you put them together either might use the opportunity to point-score off each other- or they might just completely clam up because they wouldn't want people who they disagree with so strongly to know what their thoughts are… so how to work with this… perhaps interview people on their own as well as in groups, give people the opportunity to say what they really think in confidence, because some of it is acrimonious, not everybody is involved in these arguments, but it is worth bearing in mind.

She continued:

> There is not just one group that are 'the Deaf artists', when I was saying before about arguments and splitting I was thinking in particular about some people who are not necessarily active in any particular circle or community but they call themselves Deaf artists and they do put their Deaf experience

into their work...but there are other differences too ... like other cultural backgrounds that come into it- people might hang out or work together because they share an Asian background, or because they are women...

This indication of different cultural backgrounds did end up being a big part of my conversations with many of the informants, and a more detailed discussion of it can be found in 5.1.1. The forewarning of elements like this enlightened me as to possible topics for discussion and prepared me politically so as not to endanger the research.

Practical reminders at this early stage were also vitally important. As Sheila, a hearing person trusted by a number of Deaf artists, noted:

> Its going to be difficult, the people that I know are really busy, you know the art that they do - they can't live off it so they often are studying or working or have kids or are already really stretched... I am just wondering if there is a way to make it easy and attractive, in that its really worth spending time with you when they already have so many things to juggle...in fact thinking about it, that might be your main obstacle...

This observation helped me to identify specific ways to make the project both accessible and attractive to each individual. I became aware that the Deaf community have different cultural strategies in respect of both communication issues and winning cultural trust. As was described in 3.2.3 this is where the gatekeepers' role was so crucial.

4.1.2 Recommendations concerning the role access and gatekeepers

Invaluable advice was given about the best way to access the field, others' influential roles and the importance of gatekeepers, contacts and networking within the field. Sheila identified this early on, and made it very clear to me that certain people could make or break the whole endeavour. It was in an early conversation with an informant that gatekeepers negotiating access was suggested.

> The only thing that I think is really good and would definitely help you is to have a few different people introduce you… it might help to foster more trust, if you are being put forward from different angles by people who were already trusted… If one person mentions you it might not have any impact, but if three people all mention your name then you are more likely to get a positive response…Who you know is always on the cards too… I'd kind of go round it that way- as you probably have done and as you would in most social situations… I would just do it that way… from our own point of view that's how we work…

This gatekeeper issue was particularly relevant in light of my supervisor and his role in the community as described in 3.2.3. Rachel, an artist who has played a large role in this project, suggested that:

> An introducing forwarding word from Paddy Ladd, already known in the Deaf community might help attract audiences.

Gatekeepers and networking was not only vital in the early stages but the process also helped me to believe that the project was of interest to Deaf people and that I was not another hearing researcher exploiting the community.

4.1.3 Advice on subject specific issues

Explicit advice was offered with respect to BSL terminology and the Deaf art world. Rubbena, a London based artist, suggested some very useful terminology advice when we were discussing the 'role' of art:

> You wouldn't really talk about 'role' that's the wrong word- 'role' is more linked to role-model and people. The language of Deaf culture would say - "Deaf Art - what is it? So straight away you can see there is a space for interesting discussion - What Is Deaf Art. Or you can say "Is it Deaf art or art by Deaf people?"… Yeah, which one are we supposed to be focusing on.'

Early awareness of these issues was a significant part of the research itself. I was also advised regarding anonymity and confidentiality issues. As Sheila insisted:

Its such a small number of people all together, some views are going to be recognizable …it would have to be a question in the interview - how much they want to admit to what they say and how much they are happy for their artwork to feature.

This fed into an issue specific to ethnography with visual artists - how to anonymise someone yet still include their works were difficult methodological considerations.[142]

4.1.4 Guidance regarding my role in the field

Given the emphasis placed on learning Deaf cultural modes of gaining entry and trust, I had to ask, what is the best way for me to enter the Deaf art 'space', and what is the best way to behave? The artists themselves lead and guided me.

Ailsa, an artist and art therapist, suggested:

…Little things like sms [using text messaging] and absorbing the 'Deaf Way'. And I think that many people will be excited, happy, interested to talk to you- it's not often that people ask about Deaf arts. Maybe it will help them to look at themselves, and see their experiences. It's the same with all hearing people, some Deaf people will have issues with them, will be angry, but not all of them - its about attitude really, Deaf attitude, and that differs greatly.

Sheila explained more about what 'attitude' might mean:

…its good that you have thought about it… it could raise questions like…"why are you doing this?"… "So what are you going to do with this? Bit of training here and there - get yourself a nice little career out of it…" that could upset people… there is that possible viewpoint…

However she also assured me:

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[142] As it turned out, the majority of the informants were happy to have their names and artworks included, having validated everything they had said/signed. It was in up to the artists whether or not they wanted to have biographical details included. Those that did sent me their own personal profiles for inclusion in Appendix G

Just remember that who is asking has such an effect…its not only a hearing thing - its also about who you are, I mean this conversation has been how it has been because of who we are, it goes a certain route because of how we are with each other, so you can never really predict what you're going to get…

Cathy, an artist, facilitator and curator, affirmed the project and some of my anxieties by saying:

There is something useful in someone starting - taking the first step into something new… my theory is that you always have to do something - to have something - from which you can then start to criticise… when something is there, you can start evaluating around that - you have to start somewhere…you are involving Deaf people so Deaf people will lead your research…

Rachel also warned me of the criticisms and Deaf and hearing politics that might come my way:

But the problem is that, and this isn't just for Deaf artists, this is Deaf people in general, complain complain complain, but never take action. That's why hearing people end up doing it, which ends in tension…How can they complain if they never do it themselves? It's a little irresponsible and arrogant. We need faith and confidence in our own actions. Its an interesting attitude there… it might be linked to upbringing - how Deaf children are brought up - maybe if the parents and teachers just do everything for them and don't' give them responsibility - when they get older they don't' quite know what to do.

She also pointed out a wider issue:

Like when you write this… the final product, people will look at it, and could be like 'o that's a hearing persons research - its not a true representation of Deaf people'… because in writing it becomes an English hearing thing - I understand it must be hard for you…

Niall, the most experienced artist, commented that the use of interpreters could create distance and therefore distrust from the informant. In part this reflected the Deaf cultural view that a hearing researcher might be more genuine, have the right attitude, if she could sign. This confirmed my own feelings behind the choice to not work with an interpreter. Apart from language and cultural issues, having an interpreter would also serve as a barrier on a personal level. As Niall remarked when talking about his time at Art School and working alongside hearing students:

> In the group critical sessions they (the other students) would each take it in turns to write notes and I fitted in well. If I'd had an interpreter I think my interaction in the group would have been less as I'd have concentrated on the interpreter not the people…the contact I had with people was vital, that just wouldn't have happened with an interpreter.

Advice such as this also strengthened my commitment to keep Deaf people involved at every stage.

4.2 Deaf Artists Perspectives

Having absorbed the advice I received, the next step was to find out what Deaf artists though this project should be.

4.2.1 What would you do if…?

In almost every case, I proposed the question…'if you had the time and the resources; how might you go about researching Deaf visual arts, and what would you focus on? The answers to these questions directed the research and resulted in the thematic focus within the next chapter. In fact it was one of the informants who came up with the title of this thesis through this mode of enquiry. Omeima, another London based-artist, talked about the visual space being a questioning space and that this might be interesting to research:

> …the visual being linked to questioning things and making people realize the 'what for' questions - what does it mean, I would like to research that later.

That she would personally like to explore the 'What For' of the art world, for the visual is a space to question things. Ailsa brought up another key area for study, which was mentioned in 3.4.6 will be discussed in more detail in 5.2.4.

> If I was to get my hands on funding - the first thing I would do is bring all the Deaf artists together - a group of them, in one place, and set up a theme - and a discussion - because one problem I have seen is that Deaf artists are anxious about coming together within confined spaces and actually having a discussion…

She continued:

> …to have people all together, next to their works, you can begin to see how they were brought up, the internal politics of D and d… and then how all these factors affect their work. If you brought them all together, it would open the floor for discussion- there is a problem with Deaf artists, they only go so far- they don't delve deeply enough. They get stuck – we need to take it further. So yeah, setting up a group - that's what I think needs to happen … That should happen more often, then discussion will get going and support will start.

Rachel agreed and added:

> Then see if they do know about Deaf artists. And it would be interesting to see what is Deaf artists' reason for being an artist - is it for education - a tool for communication - informing or awareness - or for their own reasons, for personal development or whatever…

> …Deaf artists themselves, I would like to know who is it for, what to they expect of the audiences, do they want them to be shocked, or give praise, or do you want them to know the real story behind the artwork?

This was extremely important, because it illustrated how Deaf cultural values operate, that the artists were actually concerned with the overall advancement of their community over and beyond creating buyers for their works. Rachel also

took this further. It seems that she is interested with the 'audience' as much as the 'artists'.[143]

> If I was researching I would like to meet many Deaf people not just artists, but a general group of Deaf people and ask them what 'art' means to them – what they see in art - what that word 'art' encapsulates for you. I think we as Deaf artists need to bridge a gap, to stimulate and educate the community in a more social environment i.e. Deafway in the US. To encourage them to see contemporary art in a new and abstract light and to help build their confidence, to break away from their school experiences, i.e. I cannot draw, am not very good. It doesn't have to be real like a photograph, but a scribble can be classified as art...

Niall's response to this question was more specifically concerned with dissemination and the future of the research:

> Have you seen that book? Deaf artists in America - the big one? That is years and years of research - collecting together information and meeting artists and summarising it all and bringing it together - that's a really good piece of research. Its an important piece of history for the future - recording it all and writing it all down - we need that here - maybe you could do that?

He continued:

> Maybe you and John Wilson and Paddy Ladd, Arthur Dimmock etc. - can bring all this information together, summarise it all and bring out a book on British Deaf arts.

Significantly the other three names Niall suggested were all Deaf people. Other artists bought this up also. Omeima revealed specific practical purposes for such a book:

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[143] This study is situated within a set of limitations and this aspect of exploring the audiences' notions of 'What is Deaf arts?' hasn't really been explored. The topic was pursued by 'The Deaf Artists working group' (Rachel, Rubbena, Ailsa and Omeima) in their slot at the Bristol Deaf Film Festival, Oct. 2003. The festival was discribed in 3.4.6.

I mean a book would be useful to many Deaf artists for things like the Arts Council, its very important to show that it's an important subject. A lot of Deaf people apply for funding and get rejected again and again… they don't understand, if you have a book or publication and Deaf people can put it forward to the Arts Council when they apply for funding, if your work can show that Deaf art is a useful and interesting thing their way… then that is important really.

Interestingly, and seeming to confirm my own research rationale, the question of research dissemination was closely aligned in the minds of the artists with the 'future of Deaf arts'. Omeima identified another practical purpose on the grounds that such a book would be a basis for future projects:

It would be nice to link up to schools and to encourage people and teach them the value of art. For example if a school wanted to have information …we could send someone along... It's all about increasing the positive Deaf role model - it's very important.

This allusion to positive Deaf role models is particularly important when it comes to potential dissemination. How is the best way to create these role models and reveal them to the necessary audience? Omeima had a final comment concerning Deaf cultural aspects of such a text should the future ventures take shape.

The most important thing is the visual really, to make the research visual… it really needs to be visual, visual links to words are very important for Deaf people…

Although this is not something that can be accomplished by the style of an MPhil dissertation, dissemination ideas will be further explored in Chapter 7.

4.3 Lack of Deaf Art discourse - why?

I decided to follow the advice I had received regarding the need for the development of Deaf artists discourse. The first step was to identify why was it so hard to locate a specifically Deaf art discourse. A number of different possible explanations were offered.

4.3.1 The English Language

Much of the lack of discourse was put down to the linguistic issue, that English is the majority of Deaf peoples' second language. Cathy made a point of this in conversation:

> A BSL user with English as a second language may feel excluded or lack understanding of modern art criticism. Deaf artists may not be able to access all this highbrow musing and inaccessible use of verbal and written English and their artwork be dismissed or misunderstood as a result…

Omeima elaborated:

> People forget that English isn't everyone's first language - its exhausting, some of the artists just get so tired of constantly looking up and checking what words mean, it's a pressure…

> …I think that there is one thing there, for a lot of Deaf artists … that is the language barrier … that somehow art is linked with English and their English must be of a very high standard. So there is a barrier there, and to increase access means breaking down that barrier. For some people English is their second language - and for some reason they think this will effect their art work - but I have to tell them no, its all about the visual, not English…

She suggested that the problem extended into other areas:

> It's linked to a lot of Deaf people have barriers, language barriers, like a lot of the application forms require a high level of English - but without the funding its difficult to get space, materials, exhibitions etc. It's a bit of a struggle I

think, for hearing people it's easier, they are successful with funding all the time, but only a few Deaf people are successful with applications for financial support.

4.3.2 Other issues

Other factors that might be preventing the development and growth of British Deaf arts discourse were suggested. Including the relevance of disability issues as Cathy described:

Its difficult for disabled artists, its hard for them to break into the mainstream art world. To be accepted… Its difficult, but if you look at Black artists now… like now- they have finally been recognised and given respect by the mainstream art world, but disabled and Deaf artists are still stuck with all those connotations with community art, being of a lower standard like its some special thing that is distinctly different from 'fine' art. It's a problem.

Rachel found the issue of definitions to be important:[144]

I think **'art'** itself is very broad; it could include film, acting and other things. So I think Deaf people need to be educated, so when they say - I am a Deaf artist, they can see whether they fit under that umbrella term. It's hard for them to see themselves as an artist, and see the 'skill' as 'art' they don't realise.

She also highlighted the importance of access issues:

We may not know what Deaf art is, first of all…we are quite individualised and isolated artists; not often we meet and share in groups. Lack of support from the community too. Not enough awareness or information going around. Maybe access to exhibitions needs to improve? BSL interpreters - they interpret talks, but they are all the posh London galleries, like Royal Academy and Victoria and Albert, but they don't interpret places like Saatchi

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[144] This issue came up time and again, often off camera, in casual conversations or unrecorded meetings and interactions. There was a constant enquiry on the personal level of 'what is art' and 'what is Deaf'. Many of these moments contemplating 'what is art' will remain private, only to the informants and me.

or Goldsmiths University or whatever - their shows - the grassroots/raw art things. It's difficult for Deaf to access those things - so the majority of Deaf assume art to be all fine art and painting.

Rachel went on to describe the lack of self-confidence felt by many Deaf people and the impact this might have on the Deaf arts discourse:

I think Deaf people sometimes are frightened to make the move - they feel overwhelmed by the organisational things… The idea is nice until you realise you don't have any support or encouragement… they think it is easier for hearing people - to book rooms, phone around etc - they think its harder for Deaf people these organisational things - but really Deaf can do the same.

I would also add, based on Rachel's comments and my experience over the last couple of years, that there are wider recording and archiving issues and responsibility issues. This is all implicated in the bigger picture of oppressed communities. Colonised and degraded without the self esteem to consider their heritage, history and lives worthy of recording, pandered to and patronised, these people never needed to take on that organisational responsibility issue. If it happened at all, which as Chapter 2 has shown has been very rarely the case in the 'Oralist Century', someone else did it for them.

These are some of the factors, which contribute to the distinct lack of discourse. However, within these limitations, something is growing - but what exactly is it?

4.4 Existing Deaf Art discourse

I begin with aspects of the discourse as it is manifesting in the USA, because the UK artist all referred to this in various ways.

4.4.1 Existing American Deaf Art discourse

The majority of existing discourse seems to be based upon the American experience as suggested in Chapter 2. There is a discernable sense of awe and envy about American Deaf artists progress, and the majority of artists mentioned this without prompting. What is going on in America, what has gone on; the

artists, exhibitions, publications etc. are all part of the lives of the British artists I interviewed. Whether or not this trans-Atlantic relationship is a positive or negative thing, a dialogue or a shadow, an inspiration or an overpowering guide could not be resolved during the research project.

Niall began talking about USA and De'VIA and the quality of the work there- because quality is a concept of particular importance to him:

> America is on its own really, I have some material from Deaf Way II. Their take on Deaf art is very forthright. It's about signing, hand shapes, oppressions, cochlear implants, some are very proud of sign and use that in their work. I should say that the quality is usually very high.

Omeima felt strongly that the American movement had a profound effect on her and her work, looking to the American artists for inspiration and when constructing a positive role model:

> Really it was through Paul Johnson, an artist…and Betty Miller, I stayed with her for a bit. She is my role model and changed my life I guess, in lots of different ways…

She noted how the De'VIA group had had similar effects on other Deaf American artists:

> They came together and wanted to exhibit work and really since then have become positive role models to other artists…

She related this also to the strength of American Deaf culture generally and how it could help people locate their strongest Deaf identity.

> My close friend in America had a very strong sense of his own Deaf identity, and it changed my life, it made a big difference to my life. He helped me accept my deafness more. Before I didn't think of my deafness, I was just Omeima, but now I can say I am Deaf, its still hard to say but it's more acceptable.

She also linked this explicitly to the subject matter of their work:

> …I think people don't understand about 'Deaf', Deaf art means art linked to the Deaf experience, well, that's in America really, where Deaf culture is very strong and they show that it is linked to the Deaf experience. Communication, oppression, access, and many different areas. In Britain it's different though.

American artists, being more experienced professionals are positive role models for the British artists on the professional level too. Role models are a popular topic within Deaf spaces, and this trans-Atlantic dialogue discourse seems to be centred around the idea. As Omeima continued:

> With Betty Miller one of my favourite times… was when we visited an art gallery and she said, "I am waiting for you, I am waiting for you to put together and exhibition." I said, "I am not ready, I am not confident." and she said, "its not about confidence – you'll be fine."… Without her and her encouragement nothing would have happened, I believed my work wasn't that good, but she told me it was. She is a very encouraging woman, people call her 'grandmother of Deaf art', and she is my role model…

She made another point about role models for ethnic Deaf Britons in general which extends beyond Deaf art into most areas of Deaf UK life:

> In fact very few ethnic minorities have role models here - they all seem to be in America. It's important for everyone to have role models, all different cultures, and people to look up to… It's not a matter of copying that person, it's more about inspiration - that someone has achieved and been successful, and that positive inspiration is valuable. A lot of people can get negative and think they can't achieve, but that positive inspiration is needed…I think that the important thing is that children need to see that they can grow up and achieve…

This role model aspect came up again and again and is discussed further in Chapter 7.

However, others, like Rubbena, felt that American culture differed from the British 'Deaf Way' in an important respect:

> I think the American way of thinking is different to the English way of thinking... America is so much about labels - which group do you belong to? Small d? big D? where do you fit in…they throw you away if you don't fit in. I think English have problems with labels, we are not so obsessed with these labels, we believe in who you are.

Rubbena's caveat is important because it acknowledges an uncritical adoption of another culture's values, however well intentioned, brings its own dangers.

4.4.2 Existing British Deaf Art discourse

Facilitators

Rubbena made her own assessment of the present discourse and state of Deaf art in Britain:

> Its like there was some sort of secret there - in the Deaf community in London, some sort of gap, like something going on there that they wouldn't talk about. And that's really what made me think about 'What is Deaf art'. We talk about Deaf linked with people like John Wilson, you know, like the Deaf Art linked with Shape exhibitions.

There is clearly some level of reliance upon the work of Deaf art facilitators to create this discourse. Initially for Rubbena it was through these facilitators that she began to contemplate Deaf art, what it incorporates and who fits into it; it was only later when she began studying art theory that she began to perceive Deaf art as a wider movement and think more critically about it:

> So at that time I just thought it meant Deaf people getting involved in art. So when a Deaf person comes together with art that makes Deaf Art. That was my perception of it at that time. When I studied, I found out about things like Feminist art, Gay art, Surrealism, Picassos time, Post Modernism, so that made me think about Deaf Art - where do I put that, where does Deaf Art fit

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into this wider picture of art? I realized I don't belong anywhere really - not even in Deaf Art…it made me think about lots of things - like sound, what does sound mean… and that coincided with my hearing loss - before I had 75% loss, but then, around that time it increased to 90% loss, so I really couldn't hear nothing.

It was the study of art at a more conceptual and analytical level that encouraged Rubbena to contemplate Deaf art on a deeper level. She found that those facilitating Deaf art seemed to be directly affecting the levels of discourse:

The current state of Deaf art, isn't necessarily in the hands of Deaf artists… but in the hands of the facilitators…

She referred to an example of the role or reliance upon the facilitators' role:

I was asked … to write something… and they edited what I said… my theories about the relationship between here and America - the whole section on De'VIA. They just put in the pretty descriptive stuff… I thought it would be their role to raise these clever political points - maybe I was wrong, but what's the point otherwise? I never got angry or critical there, it was just a statement about what I had observed.

This was not so much a criticism of the current facilitators, but a more subtle observation regarding the level of discourse that the facilitators are establishing. If they are content with the 'pretty descriptive stuff', it might hinder the advancement of the discourse if the ambition isn't there to challenge the artists to delve deeper theoretically and analytically. As Rubbena went on:

I don't know why or what but there is some kind of problem happening there - I can't see inside the mind of Deaf Art mechanics kind of thing.

During the course of the research project, I observed several examples of ways in which a deeper level of political Deaf art discourse was diminished at the hands of others - not the artists - yet the artists seem to be relying on someone leading the way. It can be speculated that those leading the way aren't setting the standards high enough; aren't ambitious enough; aren't setting a challenge for the artists to

rise to. This could then be attributed to the 'self-esteem' issue mentioned earlier. If one does not have the confidence to take it a step further, to bring the discourse up a level, due to the negative attitudes of colonialism, one will never have the confidence to speak.

Quality

The issue of Quality was also an issue that affected Deaf art discourses in the UK as discussed by Humphries (2002). The attitude that 'just because its Deaf art doesn't make it good art - not all Deaf art is good' - it has to be of a high quality. Niall felt particularly strongly about this:

> There are a million types and ways of Deaf art - from d to D - but that isn't the important bit - the important bit is the quality. The quality has to be top standard, so that the reaction is good and we show off Deaf culture at its best. Only then will the respect and recognition come with it.

It is worth noting that again Deaf artists see themselves as 'ambassadors' for their community and culture. He went on to explain with examples:

> So, why is this all-important? I went to Italy 2 years ago for a Deaf art exhibition, the artists were patronised and the art of varying quality which were exhibited without any order. The displays were just 'slapped up' and I did try to explain these things but they had no idea. There was no respect for professional quality; they just wanted to fill wall space. There were speeches from Mayors and councillors and the like, which were all very patronising. Very much of the "Deaf people can paint, isn't that wonderful" sort of ilk. The quality wasn't important as long as Deaf people had painted them. Attitudes like this should have died out years ago, we have education and language and can achieve anything, but this was at the beginning of the 21st century!

He contrasted this with what he experienced at Deaf-organised events:

> Sweden (Deaf Art Now!) did much better at 'quality control'. They were more selective so the quality was higher. Deaf Way II was in the main, good.

He also made a connection with quality in other areas of Deaf Studies:

> It's very important that Deaf art is of a high standard to show Deaf Culture at its best in the same way that Paddy's research is showing it… we need to link the two, the art and the academic research. Paddy's notion of Deafhood is recognised and of a good quality, so we need to link it with the art, but the art has to be of the same quality. It's easier then to work together and support that research.

Cathy highlighted another aspect of this problem:

> One perhaps controversial issue with some Deaf art exhibitions is that, when you club together a group of Deaf artists, you are clubbing them together because they are Deaf, not because their work is of the same standard, or a high level or has a certain depth within it… so for example, Deaf Eyes, that was strange because you had a massive selection of different artists - There were very young and inexperienced artists and then you have people like Niall…who is an amazing artist and put a lot of thought, thinking and experience into their art.

She went on:

> If you clump them all together, all these different standards, then accomplished Deaf arts will then be merged with amateur artwork and perhaps becomes distorted and loses its quality as a result. So at the Lighthouse[145] Exhibition, I deliberately chose those three artists whose work contained a similar depth and quality with themes and ideas all linked on some level. All three men also were of similar age/and experience… and then I left it up to people to decide whether that was a Deaf thing or not. They were Deaf but their artwork was not necessarily a comment or analysis of Deaf identity. So my putting them together really leaves it up to people or the audience to answer that question and have their own ideas.

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[145] See glossary

Value

The issue of value seems inextricably linked with quality in the art world. Is a work valuable or expensive strictly on the grounds that a Deaf artist created it? Is there an intrinsic level of quality that determines the value of an artwork? Have Deaf audiences ever had the opportunity to contemplate the value of art and the price of a piece of work? This was something Rachel felt strongly about:

> I sometimes… notice the response from the Deaf audience - that they may not be able to recognise the value of art, seeing it as expensive and think that they cannot afford it, whereas in the hearing art market you might get away with it from a wider audience with more experience in buying art.

What is Deaf? and What is Art?

Informants offered a set of opinions and ideas based around the question, *What is Deaf art?* Much of this came in the way of informal discussions based on 'What is art?' and 'What is Deaf?'. Suggesting that if we come to a conclusion regarding each of these questions and put them together, only then will we find out what Deaf art is. Much discussion emanated regarding how 'Deaf' a piece of work was. Cathy's take on the existing discourse was interesting, and was concerned with this different extents of putting 'Deaf' into an artwork. With reference to the Lighthouse exhibition she described some of the curating details that lay behind the final exhibition.

> One of them was … a Deaf person with no Deaf identity - but it is growing on him now…he didn't really want to make explicitly Deaf work, because he isn't culturally Deaf... so his photography doesn't really have that element to it, but then he realized he could maybe get funding if he went for the Deaf angle and made a film about a Deaf person experiencing discrimination. Some of the film worked well some of it didn't - but he'd made that step or jump into exploring Deaf issues and the Deaf experience through his art for the first time.

Omeima talked much about the characteristics of Deaf art in relation to exhibitions, and from there the need to discuss these issues and share experiences:

> I do enjoy talking about art, some other friends of mine don't, but Cathy and me we always talk about art. That's why I set up Deaf Women's Art Exhibition (Resonant), I believe there are a lot of barriers and with my experiences I can share and talk about them. Its good to get together as a group.

One of the most significant findings from the study was the extent to which questions such as; What is art/arts? What is Deaf? What is Deaf arts? Who is a Deaf artist? These were virtually the main discourse topics. There are no easy essentialist definitions of these terms, they occupy shifting and sliding boundaries and criteria. Ailsa, was the only artist interviewed who felt that it really need not be this complicated. It may be significant that she was the only artist to come from a Deaf family:

> I believe that we should use words that are simple; Deaf arts aim is artworks by Deaf people.

So who are the people and how do they see 'Deaf' in their work? Is it really this simple?

4.4.3 The role of Deaf identities in Deaf Art discourse

The informants all talked about the presence or absence of 'Deaf' identities in their work to albeit differing extents. Even if they felt that the Deaf identity element was extraneous to their work, it was discussed. This is a reflection of the wider diversity within the Deaf arts world.

Niall in particular seemed to have given this subject much thought:

My 4th year was all my own project work and during that time I found "my style", which felt completely right. I've been with that style of windows and buildings ever since…the windows are all about Deaf culture and the influence of those nuns. The windows are also all cottage type windows, this links to my Irish roots…I feel that my artwork has the Deaf experience within it. School, windows, communication but obviously, its open to varying interpretations.

When talking about a recent visit to his old school, Niall revealed the reason for the centrality of windows to his work, and an obviously emotional element of his past that is still evident in his work today. During the visit:

We went into the boys' dorm and next to it was what had been the nun's bedroom and there was the window where we had been constantly watched. We were oppressed and were not allowed to sign and if we were caught signing then we were punished. Can you imagine? Deaf not allowed to sign, it was awful. So we used to watch the windows to check if we were being watched. The nuns were with us twenty-four hours a day and were in control, in class, at meals, the whole time. So that's the significance of the windows.

He went on:

Some people when they look at it will latch on the Deaf experiences or the Deaf issues as we've both been there.

Ailsa also mentioned the issues surrounding this 'concretising of Deaf identities in work' issue. It is interesting to notice her use of 'Deaf Awareness' a term that was new to me in this usage. Deaf awareness always had the connotation of something constructed to teach 'hearing people'. In this passage, Ailsa is suggesting that it is more to do with how aware one is of one own deafness; which can be contingent upon your upbringing and various other factors. When discussing one of her friends, Ailsa suggested:

She didn't grow up in a Deaf family, she grew up oral - no signing - so that affects her 'Deaf Awareness'[146] and what she put into her art - much of it had hearing aids and things about Oralism, audiograms or whatever.

By this she was implying that Deaf from Deaf families who had an upbringing that was more cultural than medical were more free to move beyond this to other subjects. She went on to say:

Its different for everyone - some artists feel like they have to put Deaf things in their work - make it full of Deaf awareness and show something - teach people about deafness through their art, and others like me… just don't, just do their own thing, develop their own process, aside from the Deaf experience.

This kind of discussion about what it means to be a Deaf person, came up again and again. There are evidently multiple ways to be a Deaf artist, and some may not be mutually compatible.

4.4.4 Building on the existing discourse - future what?

As regards the future, many informants felt that there is a need to create a discourse space with no barriers. This seems to be where the discourse needs to be going. There is some level of discourse emanating from the space, yet there is a distinct need to break down barriers, bring people together and reassess issues, some of which relate to the wider art world. Cathy, who is more involved with facilitating Deaf art exhibitions and group projects, informed much of this perspective. It is her thought that the future of Deaf arts is:

About bringing them together again, to make new work, but mostly to explore the collaboration opportunities, setting up the space for people to create without barriers, without access issues, without language barriers, just get on with it. Secondly it's about giving people the opportunity to exhibit in a nice old professional gallery - a good opportunity, to show a new audience, and to influence that area.

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[146]

Without which the movement could potentially stagnate, as Rubbena powerfully suggested.

> The problem of where Deaf art is going possibly lies in the hands of the younger generation of artists, but there is an element of 'stuck in a rut' there - it needs to move on… …There is a problem too with the new artists… because to a certain extent they aren't standing anywhere – and they make us look weak… the young students… start university now, they don't develop over the years, except those artists who just expand on the De'VIA thing, so it looks more and more blatantly De' VIA. No new young artists are getting involved… so we can't really move on… any art world has got to move on.

The natural progression then is to assess what the issues are that are preventing this 'moving on'.

4.5 Other issues in Deaf Art discourses

The themes identified below are not the only ones which emerged; however they are the ones the artists addressed most closely.

4.5.1 Internal Community Issues

This is neither an attempt to highlight nor criticise Deaf artists in general nor any of my informants individually. Anger, bitterness and politics exist within any community, and in my opinion are healthy challenging and human. These pressures become magnified in minority-oppressed communities because of the small scale of them and the pressures put upon them (Ladd, 2003). There is however a fine line where the issues and politics verge on the very edge between healthy and destructive, and damaging to that community, leaving a group so tangled in their own irresolvable differences that the possibility for progress is hindered.

For me not to mention the internal politics would be to obscure a major part of the Deaf art-world and that in itself might be considered oppressive. The politics are a necessary stage in a process, or a reflection of the wider Deaf community and the internal politics there. By including and raising these issues it is felt that this

assists the process of moving and the artists involved agreed, they were all happy for me to include their thoughts on these subjects.

Linda observed:

> I have noticed that people who come to the community and culture later often express a lot more angriness and bitterness. Perhaps they haven't had the comfort or security of a Deaf family or a Deaf school or community and it all has got to come out somewhere, which could be why you find so much of the activists and political stuff going on there.

When we were discussing what happened during a recent group project, Cathy observed:

> Yeah, there were discussions there - in the evening mostly, there was talks, conversations and discussions that got really heated… talking about everything… deeply… …But some of the debates got really deep and heated there… (someone) was there and s/he was always asking questions - really militant questions… very angry it was quite funny…

It may have been significant that the person in question grew up orally mainstreamed with no access to the Deaf community. Ailsa described another aspect of the same experience; another Deaf cultural feature, which highlights the difficulties of living in a small community:

> There are too many issues there, like with [one person in particular] s/he should have come to a [recent group project], s/he should have been there-but s/he wouldn't come because of some personal argument with someone in the group. And that's really sad. S/He should have been able to come - and we could have all been a group - but it is the Deaf Way - that if you have a personal problem with someone, then you just avoid it. It's really sad…

She thought it might also be linked to the fact that:

> [the] Deaf experience is one of low confidence, of thinking that hearing people are higher or better than them.

This in turn affects how easily people can cope with negative emotions:

> The politics are there, and that can both positive and negative… I felt like something was missing there [recent group project], within our relationships, bonding or whatever, we didn't connect, like after I sent a few emails to try and stay in touch - but I got no replies… I feel like - what happened there, what happened in [that recent group project] Maybe it was a bad time, people come home angry, had a bad time, I don't know… It's like one person did all the talking, and another was silent, but the other Deaf didn't encourage that person, make them feel better.

Rachel too illustrated some of these issues:

> Its like there is a start line, and everyone is at the ready and the idea is nice, but they wait for something - for each other maybe - before progressing - something holds them back - and then if one person makes it to the end - its like the crab theory[147]- crabs in a basket, if one gets near the top, then all the others pull him down. It's tied up with personal conflicts. And that links to organisations too, RAD, NDCS, they are all very separate - wary of each other - There isn't enough positive feedback - these people need praise when they achieve something, and all they get is complaints and moaning.

Issues of membership of those who grew up mainstreamed without contact with the Deaf world, were of concern to Rubbena too:

> I was afraid to get involved with the Deaf community…I was not confident, because I felt discriminated against by Deaf people. I thought it was better not to get involved, you know - maybe they are right, and maybe I don't belong with them.

This then comes directly into her artwork:

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[147] The crab theory is a common image in Deaf cultures, and can be found in other minority groups

> That's why I started creating installations, because that works there - don't you think that is what Deaf people are doing? Covering themselves up because they don't want too much truth. They can't cope. Like they need to contain themselves or they can't carry on living in this hearing world…
>
> The world is big, the whole world, not just an English hearing world… the more barriers you build up the more protection you have.

All these issues are simultaneously part of Deaf art discourses, and factors hindering the further development of these discourses. The artists perhaps need to realise that all this is healthy and natural; that its part of the Deaf art discourse process and that once they see that they can proceed more easily.

4.5.2 'Englishness'

Rubbena suggested also that the issue might be less to do with concerns about Deaf identity, and more to do with questions of Britishness. She suggested that there is the overriding 'Englishness' within the British Deaf art circles:

> If you get them all together it will be very interesting to see where that conversation gets to, even in Gallaudet, the English art folk were very stand offish and intimidated - English people didn't want to get involved. Too much English pride, its sad. The Americans like to be big and powerful, 'we are the first'. And everyone else will follow. I don't think that's a good way of looking at it. I think English are individualists. We aren't like the Americans, we are careful of how we box and label things.

This led me to something that I had not anticipated, and one of the central findings from this study - the issue of labels within the Deaf space which may or may not reflect human beings' obsession with taxonomy and by implication the wider anti-essentialist debate that addresses human desires to impose order on chaos.

4.5.3 Labelling issue

Rubbena addressed the issue of what makes a Deaf artist a Deaf artist:

I think most typical of Deaf art is Deaf artists trying to stereotype themselves - making themselves seen and heard as being Deaf or deaf. Like having a hearing aid or something in a work or art - or the word DEAF - or speech and language things… they are stereotyping themselves.

However, Ailsa, being from a Deaf family, was aware of cultural distinctions within the Deaf community. She questioned the need to stereotype all Deaf artists:

Some Deaf art then is clearly linked to 'Deaf aware', you can see that strong link, some Deaf art you can see immediately that it is Deaf art and is linked to Deaf aware - you know the hearing aids, Oralism, focus on the ear, oppression etc., some you wouldn't have a clue - "ah that's Deaf nothing" there is nothing that would make you think it was done by a Deaf artist.

Omeima felt there are also external pressures from the hearing world (funding bodies in particular) in respect of labelling:

I never say that my art is 'Deaf art', it's just art; Deaf artists are all-different, have different aims…some of them are more academic and linguistic - using all the jargon - others are more laid back and relaxed, there are big differences within the group… My first exhibition was in 1995; in Cambridge … it was the first time I met other Deaf artists. Some of them I knew but I hadn't realized they were artists. We'd known one another but never spoke about art… at that exhibition the British Deaf News published a piece which talked about 'Omeima Mudawi' - a 'Deaf artist'. I had never labelled myself like that before. I understood why they had labelled me like this, it was because of Shape's funding, I had to be a 'Deaf artist' because of that. But personally I just see myself as an artist. But I accept the label of 'Deaf artist' for funding or whatever reasons.

Rubbena, coming from a non-Deaf background seemed to have difficulties understanding the negative associations for speech in the Deaf community dominated by a century of Oralism, and of the potential status given by the hearing world to those who can speak.

> The whole language thing is funny - how can they discriminate me because I
> have a voice - that's me, if I have a voice I'll use it - I had no language for the
> first 7 or 8 years of my life - not even sign or speech - I'm a bit like - don't
> discriminate against me just because I use my voice!

She continued:

> One thing I would really like to see is what everyone says when I ask, 'what
> does Deaf mean'? How do you define Deaf? That was my final problem with
> my research in the end - I can't define what Deaf is; I know we can't hear, but
> what does it actually mean to say this is Deaf art, how can we link this to
> DEAF?

Omeima echoed some of these points:

> Its like some say Deaf and some say deafness, they label themselves
> because of a method of communication and I think that's stupid, its just a
> simple word 'DEAF'

She emphasised that:

> A lot of art is not linked to the Deaf experience though. It's down to the
> personal experience of the Deaf artist. My art for example is linked to my
> personal experiences and what my everyday life is.

We can therefore observe how issues about Deaf cultural status are rendered
even more complex once they start to operate under the umbrella of Deaf art, and
the concomitant pressures to find swift and simple definitions satisfactory to all.
Those are in turn rendered more heated by the competition for access to funding
under the 'Deaf art' rubric, especially when in so many cases; Deaf art is
subsumed as a branch of Disability art, a problematic sitting in itself.

4.6 Summary

The informants' contribution pointed to the necessary stages through which Deaf
art discourse has to pass before it can stabilise in a way that enables all its

practitioners to feel able to move on to the next level. I would suggest that guidance might be found in Wittgenstein's anti-essentialist notion of Family Resemblances. In the simplest sense - I propose that no-one is ever truly going to reach an agreed definition of 'What is art?' or 'What is Deaf?'; and by implication, there exists no one agreed definition for 'What is Deaf art?'. In the same way there exists no one way to locate a fixed solution for the internal politics of a shifting and changing world, even if they wish to. These issues can be accepted and incorporated into a vision for the future; they are not necessarily problems that need direct answers, but differences amongst human beings that can be admitted and taken on board. Until this is realised, then, in my eyes, there will be a spanner in the Deaf art machine that will prevent it fulfilling the potential it has to grow and flourish in a wider art-world and gain the respect it deserves.

This chapter has described Deaf artists' views as to how the process of research should be carried out, and has pursued the leading issues raised by them. They have identified the first priorities towards the development of a Deaf arts discourse and the publication of texts which serve to both reflect and generate such discourses. Another way to conceive of both discourse and texts is to see them as Deaf spaces, within majority society. In the next chapter I will explore what can be learned from such an approach.

Chapter 5

The Purposes of Deaf Visual Arts

5.0 Some purposes of Deaf Art

It can be said that what Deaf visual art discourse and published texts of Deaf artworks have in common is that they create what may be termed a Deaf art 'space' within the Deaf community and simultaneously within majority society. For oppressed communities, the space can be seen as one to foster and develop one's collective thoughts, enable them to safely explore cultural priorities, such as identity and quality of life, as Chapter 4 has illustrated. In this chapter, then, I go on to explore the concept of the Deaf art space itself as presented to me by the informants, ending with a description and analysis of how the research project itself became an agent in the extension of that space.

I have identified ten spaces, falling into three subsections; three distinctly different ways of art functioning or playing a role. These spaces are not just those described by each artist, but can be analysed as occurring in wider situations, thus comprising a discourse. Initially we see this space emanating with a concern for the individual, a space for the 'self'. Secondly we note that there is potentially a community or group function within the existing discourse. Finally there is a space where the concern is aimed at others, outside of the community, whereby art is a means of projecting ideas to others. By the end of this exploration, it is hoped that the reader will have a greater understanding of the social space and the role that art serves in Deaf lives and communities.

5.1 Art as… A space for the self

Much of what came out of the interviews then, points towards the fact that 'art' is a space for the individual to address certain issues, be they emotional, political or cultural. Every informant realised and communicated the fact that the art space was indeed a beneficial space for contemplating, externalising, exploring and investigating such issues.

5.1.1 Art as… A space to explore cultural conflict

Admittedly, this project could be a broader study of identity and the social role of art in minority communities. 'Communities' being the operative word. We all belong to not just one community but to multiple communities, and maintain a variety of identities. The artists in question are not just 'Deaf', and it was clear that the 'art' space is not only that of a Deaf identity exploration, but also a space to ponder religious, sexual and racial identities. Maintaining a set of cultures and identities reveals a distinct set of challenges. These different aspects of people's histories, lives and beliefs are not unproblematic; there is often an element of conflict present where different cultures collide. This conflict inevitably needs exploring, and as was revealed by many of the artists art is a space where, in their opinion, this exploration can commence.

Omeima's story was my initial discovery of such cultural conflict being explored through the art space:

> I wouldn't say I had a particularly 'Deaf' identity, but that I have many identities, I am Muslim, I am a woman, I am Deaf. Those who have Deaf families, and lots of Deaf friends etc, they would be very different from me.

She went on to say:

> Its like I have 3 different worlds and its difficult for me to explain exactly what they are and how they function.

It is clearly not straightforward to Omeima how these different worlds sit; she elaborated:

> Well, my family is Muslim, and the West and the East are very different. My family says I am very Western, but my blood isn't, but that is how they see me. My mind is Western because I was bought up here, but there are mixtures of cultures still going on. My blood and my heart are tied to my African roots but my way of life isn't. When I was there in Africa I realized I

didn't really fit in with them really, I am Western so there is some kind of cultural conflict and overlap at the same time.

These three different worlds then come into Omeima's artwork; as she later revealed:

> They each influence me in different ways and I have brought them all together in my work, although my artwork is all my life experiences, there are different streams within this experience…So you can see that some of my work is linked to communication, and the languages I use. My three different worlds, I can't link them together, its impossible, so there is some kind of conflict going on there, they are all important and valuable bits of me, so I can't choose one way over another. They are all important cultures to me.

As Omeima concludes in this passage, it was only through her creativity and exploring these conflicting cultures that she discovered the existence of these cultural conflicts, and through the discovery of them, the move towards resolving and communicating them began:

> The conflict comes out in the expression… I realise I have a lot of cultures inside me which I never knew about. I didn't know they were there. …Its all there in the expressions and the art work… its there but you don't realise it [until you paint it] I prefer that - it's a natural way of seeing things – it's natural. *Art helps you see your insides…*[148]

She also felt that the process enabled her to render them visible to others:

> …It's all in my heart, my world, my life, if you just say a word, it could be anybody's, but this is mine - it comes from me. My roots, I was born there, its very valuable to me, what makes me me, its very strong and special - people can just look at a painting and be like ' o that's your world', its not as simple as that, but if they really look they can begin to understand what it is really like to be in me in my world my person. Me in my art is a very strong thing…

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[148] Italics mine

Rubbena also had an interesting take on this on cultural conflict,. She suggested, like Omeima, that art could be:

> … A space to address and explore cultural conflicts and multiple identities, after all, we all belong to a set of 'communities' not one community.

She explicitly suggested that 'art' may be a way to get through those conflicts, or at least to explore them:

> Lots of things were happening in me - and lots of those things were being thrown out onto my work - Deaf and hearing - being Asian - being a woman - the east and west culture, wanting to be myself, but my parents wanting me to be something else, Deaf people wanting me to sign - but I am oral[149]… Where do I go… That's why I love my art - why I love having my studio - when I first got my studio - that was like a dream come true.

It seems that the art-space and the literal space of a studio, liberated Rubbena to the point where she could begin to explore the conflicts for herself in the first instance. She went on to describe a similar conflict to Omeima:

> That's another important point though - my Asian family - that whole Asian culture - the fight between East and West.   How can I get through these barriers, these constant barriers…?

> …I mean I could be an Asian artist - an Asian woman. I could be a feminist. I don't know.... I have so many identities - I regularly fly back to Pakistan where my grand- father lives to absorb his culture. I grew up without that culture in an English world where my parents were working all the time. Think about a part of London where there is a big Asian community…And the atmosphere there, its very tense … its strange, you feel like an outsider, everyone knows who is who - that community is so close knit with their families and those 'inside' the community. Its like when a strange face

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[149] Rubbena's description of herself as 'oral' might be misleading. She grew up in a hearing family 'oral' but now signs fluently but not as a native language user, and this is partly where the ascription 'oral' both self attributed and used by native signers comes into use.

comes in – its like 'who are you, who are your parents, where are you from etc.

This feeling like an outsider demands further exploration. Although first generation immigrant children express cultural conflicts between two sets of factors, a Deaf child experiences estrangements from both, and if their deafness is not addressed by enabling easy and early membership to the BSL Deaf community, estrangement from a third, and thus almost total isolation.

Like Omeima, I feel that Rubbena was suggesting that the creative space helped her see these internal conflicts and more importantly through exploring them in a tangible medium (installation) this investigation of identities is on offer for all to see - to communicate this conflict and barrier-laden world to an audience:

> When I was little I was always looking out the window - I wasn't allowed out - well, its not so much that I wasn't allowed out but that deafness, I couldn't hear if something happened - Asian are ashamed of having disabled children, rather hide them. So all my life I have been looking out of the window - I envy people who have a life out there. So I had to *put it on show for people to see that*[150]… but they didn't like it. They were frightened. They found it claustrophobic… It was like the installation I made called "The Box". That dark and hard inside was like my hearing and the outside; soft and silky like the hearing world. Using outside and inside comes up in my work a lot.[151]

She then talked in more detail about the installation in question:

> I created a real life-sized maze, and there were different paths of my life. Hearing bits, Deaf bits, Asian woman bits, nothing to do with men, the stuck women, lots of photographs of chopped up wedding parties, woven back together, so I put things where I could hear things… music in bits and happy times and things… so really I am trying to let people go inside me… there

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[150] Italics mine

[151] There appears to be some significance in the invocation of inside and outside. Rachel explores this in her conker sculpture, and it appears that Niall is preoccupied with this in his windows series. I am not critiquing nor analysing works, but it is interesting to note these subtle consistencies in iconography and symbolism.

was a veil and I stitched it up and then nailed it so that you couldn't get
passed it - so that you were trapped. Some places had nice silk, so you
could go in. It was really powerful; it really had an impact on those who saw
it. It was called "Mute Culture". So they all knew what I was talking about.

Perhaps it is the 'put it on show' and 'let people go inside me' that is significant
here.   Not only is the 'art space' one where the self and individual can
contemplate identity issues, but also it becomes one, which puts something on
show for all to see. This putting on show, or externalising evidently serves its own
role.

5.1.2 Art as… A space to externalise issues

Once we acknowledge that 'art' is a space bigger than the literal piece of work, we
can see issues of expression, communication and intentionality coming into
play.[152] This larger art space then becomes a mechanism to externalise issues,
vent the anger and look at the emotion or expression to a point where one can
see it. It has in this process been recorded and externalised. Not only are you
getting something 'out' through art, putting it on show, you are also making it
tangible - something you can see and touch.

This 'externalising' was identified by Rachel, who pointed to the fact that through
her art work she was:

> Expressing personal experiences through sculptural ceramics… to a familiar
> and limited audience… other Deaf artists, Deaf and hearing friends.

These personal experiences could be either positive or negative, resistance or
affirmative. There is a distinct link here to Patti Durr and her work on Betty

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[152] This raises an issue I have touched on before; the fact that I am not going to go into
detail about these complex issues regarding intentionality and meaning. I am working
within a strict set of limitations and some areas just cannot be explored in depth. That is
not to say that they won't be explored at a later stage or in the dissemination part of the
process. What I might have included should I have focused on this intentionality issue is
Wollheim, R., and Shier , F. 'comments after Wollheim' in Art and Theory, 1900-2000.
Should the reader wish to look further into this I would suggest both of these sources.

Miller/Ann Silver as mentioned in 2.2.5. One might say this putting 'it' down, getting 'it' out, and putting 'it' on show, where the 'it' is something inside.[153]

As Rachel says:

> When I was at Camberwell…I think I felt a bit bitter then – you know I was bought up orally. So I wanted to show hearing people if not aware of deafness before of my experiences and Deaf issues. I kind of wanted to shock the hearing audience almost out of bitterness and frustration but I was aware that I really wanted to educate them about Deaf issues, bring them to understand and be more motivated to learn.

It may well be then, that for some Deaf artists not brought up in the signing community that it is useful to get out this anger, bitterness and frustration. Many of the informants talked extensively about this, not only were they resolving issues in their art works, but also in their writings about those works. Rubbena gave detailed descriptions of a similar process:

> …So today was the first time I read it [Masters dissertation on Deaf art] - for ages - because I was meeting you - and I look at it, and I see how angry I was, how frustrated, how there were a lot of things going on there…

She also applied this to her more recent works:

> …I think when I start painting, it's a matter of getting all the angry bits out - externalising them on the canvas, and then I have to smooth them over, cover them up. So I am communicating in a therapeutic way really - getting all those feelings out, and then smoothing them over. Make them happy, change the attitude, change the behaviour, change my way of thinking, become the person I want.

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[153] Word limits constrain me from exploring BSL signs in depth, however, I must make mention of this sign that came up again and again - the sign for 'express' 'get something out' (or 'poetry') from the upper chest outwards is combined with taking this something and putting down (onto the other hand) so that whatever it is that has come from inside, is now put down where you can see it (on the other hand) which can be turned to show to other people, the audience or just looked at from afar (objectively?) by the artist themselves.

This exploration by externalising then results in several stages: feeling, realising, externalising, understanding more clearly, communicating to others, and even changing and learning from the process. This might be interpreted as some kind of therapy. Hence the next 'space'.

5.1.3 Art as… A therapeutic space

The word 'therapy' is a tenuous one in my eyes, and is often bound up with mental health issues. It holds specific weight in the Deaf space and has become somewhat contentious to use in relation to Deaf arts, chiefly because of its intersection with disability arts discourses, where disabled artists have expressed anger about the emphasis on 'Art (therapy) for the Disabled' as Cathy mentioned in 4.3.2. However, the idea came from the informants not from me, so I am less hesitant to use it. A proportion of whom are in fact involved within the Art Therapy world by way of a course, degree or diploma. Thus I have to admit the informants' perception of Art Therapy is far more informed than mine, and I can only hope that this section does their thoughts justice.[154] If we apply the term in its broadest usages, therapy suggests some sort of metamorphosis occurring, as Ailsa observed in respect of the therapeutic processes of art apparent in some Deaf artists work:

> I would never say all, but some, you see that in Deaf Art Exhibitions, they
> change and develop its only some but it happens…

She elucidated with reference to other Deaf artists:

> Sometimes I have seen in their work - that their Deaf experience isn't there
> any more - that is not so obviously 'Deaf Aware', they can move on, and
> develop and not get stuck. So they go to Art College and deal with all the

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[154] It must be stated though, that there are a variety of forms of 'therapy' within creativity. I do not claim to be the authority on any of these aspects of the therapeutic nature of art. I will however suggest to the reader that, art therapy and social therapy through art are vast and complex and shrouded in controversy and ambiguity. The informants however, are far more knowledgeable than me on the subject and so it is not mine to question their application and terminology.

issues and get out, all the painful stuff and grief and whatever, then its done, its out and dealt with and they no longer have to address those issues.

Rachel also suggested that through this externalising process some kind of therapy could be taking place. When talking about her past and her early work she spoke at length about this therapeutic possibility:

Now I look back and I see, as a mother who has mellowed a bit, I can look back and see that there was some kind of therapy going on there - some kind of Art Therapy maybe - that I was using art to explore my childhood now I am painting totally differently now.

Ailsa gave a specific example of Deaf art fulfilling a therapeutic space. When talking about a recent group project, she suggested that there was:

The possibility of getting a view of Art Therapy there… a whole group in one place… but it was funny watching the interactions going on there - how people went into different groups, political divisions… a reflection of what happens in London…. We would all be sat down together eating but you could see divisions within that group…one of the people, it was his/her first time with all Deaf for one whole week, it was like welcoming him/her in, protecting him/her, making him/her feel ok there, it was like we had to encourage him/her and build up his/her confidence because s/he was a bit lost, kind of like therapy, because s/he had been brought up in a hearing family - not his/her fault.

So this therapeutic process is not just about the works themselves, but also the Deaf art space as a social, community and culturally derived space.

Some of the people there – it was their first time to be all Deaf for one whole week, they told [us] that they felt [the need to] explore their feeling because there [it was] *not possible to hide*[155], where they used to, with hearing family or daily life style.

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[155] Italics mine. This is an interesting concept with relation to Rubbena's earlier assertion regarding the inside and outside worlds.

So through the externalising process some sort of therapy might be taking place, where one of the effects is related to wider identity exploration.

5.1.4 Art as… A space to explore identity

If we see the previous three sections as development stages, a fourth stage then develops; art as a therapeutic space leads to different 'identity exploration' mechanisms. It is as though people and communities who have been oppressed, colonised or disempowered are put in the position where these existential questions become crucial.   Who am I? Where am I from? And what is my identity all about?[156]   I suggest that the art-space is an ideal dimension to explore these existential questions, and in turn communicate them.

To this end then, the art space becomes 'functional' on a number of different levels, as indicated below:

> There is loads of room for exploring there…. art can then be a good way for Deaf to explore and externalise things and come to accept them - and that is therapy in a way - many people would be defensive and reject that comment, 'that its not therapy' but lets be honest - really it is - that is therapy - but they can't admit it… so the artists who are criticizing art therapy are the ones who are using art as a way to externalise issues. And something changes, becomes aware…it is a very individual thing, some people change and grow and others don't develop they get stuck.

This exploration can then be part of a healthy personal development, even reintegration of the personality. Rachel spoke of this gradual making sense of everything around her. Interestingly, she described a piece of work and the meaning behind it, and the fact that Deaf and hearing people in different stages of this questioning process might have different interpretations of the art work - depending one might say on their progress on the 'contemplating existential questions' journey:

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[156] As suggested in section 2.1.5 with reference to Fanon's writings on colonialism. Where the weaker your community is, the more you are forced to ask those questions. Halbwachs (1992) also refers to a notion like this in his study on memory - where, again, the weaker the community the greater the need for community stories and memories based in the past.

'I think with Camberwell [Art School], I was a bit confused, my work was part of my personal development there - my studio was like my own, because all the others were hearing and talking. It was like my own little world…

She went on to describe one of her works in detail:[157]

…The conker - that was one of my most well thought out works… it's about two worlds, the outside spiky one is like the big world out there, the spikes are like the barriers and the difficulties, but on the inside, it's polished and rich and shiny and hard, its like my feeling of the Deaf community - When you look around, and finally get through all the barriers and find the community that is there, then you can relax in this core. But I am aware that the Deaf community itself is within a hearing world and in a way that hearing world is not open and the Deaf community inside is invisible. Lots of different meanings are there really. When Deaf people know the information about the conker, they are interested and fascinated - but hearing people (like my family) think its pretty but they don't really understand the meaning of the story.

It is interesting to note that this spiky/soft distinction is also used by Rubbena but exactly reversed. Rubbena went on to explore the contemplation of existential questions:

I was doing a bit of research - there it was more about myself, finding out where I fit into it all. All those things in my life - what do they mean - its not so much about Deaf Art, its more about who was I? who am I? I need to belong somewhere, there are too many things happening with me - not even my teachers understood me - so I wrote this piece of research, I think to try and explain it - to me and to them.

In trying to explain it to 'me' and to 'them' there seems to be an apparent pattern emerging. A two level, perhaps even two way explanation process is happening. Niall had an interesting take on this subject; he suggested that there is a 'Deaf way' of seeing things, and that one might be able to recognise it in a piece of

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[157] Which can be found in the pages of this study

work. I would speculate, that it could be this Deaf identity exploration, that he is referring to when he insisted:

> I have recognised Deaf art… I believe you can recognise Deaf art.

He continued:

> Its Deaf to want to see different views of something; to be able to get a clear idea of what something is…

In this light, perhaps there is a Deaf way of seeing that is embodied in the artworks. Interestingly and perhaps ironically, identity exploration is taking place, it is part of a wider social and artistic movement and could even be regarded as highly fashionable, or avant-garde. Niall observed:

> Identity is very 'happening' in the mainstream art world, female identity, gay identity, Irish identity, etc. This wasn't the case previously within the art world, but it is now a good time to get Deaf Identity out there and noticed.

Deaf and minority art then serves a number of functions based on the individuals' experience of the world and themselves. The data generated above reveals that these discourses are not arising simply on an individual level, but on a *group level.* It is as if the Deaf art community have similar feelings about certain topics, as if there is something that binds them all together.

5.2 Art as… a function for the community

One thing it has been impossible to miss is this collective nature of the data gathered. There are distinct similarities across most of the data generated. Amongst a 'group' of artists who constantly referred to the isolation and independent nature of the 'group' there has been a certain amount of consistency within the responses gained. Such a collective way of thinking or at least unified set of ideas and hopes made me ever more aware of the similarities amongst the group. Many of them said the same things, many of them felt similarly about certain topics. What is particularly important is that they all spoke/signed to me

about these things, unprovoked, despite the fact that they might not discuss it with each other.

Therefore I believe it is possible to confirm that there is some kind of 'community' based 'space' for art within Deaf peoples worlds, where art has the potential to actually bring people together. Almost to the point of being able to organise and perceive it as a collective response. This relates to all that was set up in section 2.3 whereby, those who have been displace or deracinated, scattered and split by whatever ideology, can start to rebuild themselves and their community *through* art and the shared experience of it.

5.2.1 Art as… A space for community making

Identity exploration being apparent in all of the artists' viewpoints assists in creating a kind of consistent collective mechanism within the group. In the process, the artists appear to be bouncing ideas off each other, meeting like-minded people with some kinds of shared experience. Although there is only minimal interaction and group based discussion at present, there is clearly an overwhelming sense of the need for greater group based interactions. This dynamic is vital to a group who have become scattered to a certain extent.

In this light, the 'community making' aspect of the art space is vital in the building/rebuilding of a community that has been uprooted and discarded with a common feeling of loneliness and isolation. In light of what will follow, art can potentially be a way of uniting/reuniting these people with each other and their culture.

Rachel illustrated this:

> It was only after this [Camberwell Art School], that I got involved with the Deaf community and Shape - I met John Wilson and started learning about what was going on there. John is like a big door that opened for me, it was an important thing for me - and he provided me opportunities to exhibit my work at two exhibitions…

Given all that has been said it can be seen that the facilitator's role is of increased importance, whereby they not only support individuals but in the case of Deaf art, work to draw together not just the artistic community, but Deaf people as a whole:

> At that time my art was very personal, I didn't really want to sell it - I didn't really want to open myself up that much. But there, meeting other Deaf artists - I felt like there was more of a professional standard - the organisation, the local networking, the publishing etc. It was all of a very high level I was impressed - as an amateur myself - it was an important step.

This theme of discovering, meeting and communicating with other artists recurred frequently. More as a hope than an existing discourse. All the informants agreed about the importance of meeting like-minded people, yet, at this moment in time, it is partly dependent upon a certain set of facilitators and events.[158] Where such events have been set up in recent years, hence the early stage of community making. So that one can predict that provided funding of facilitators continues, a more cohesive and healthy Deaf arts community would emerge.

Niall, as the most experienced artist amongst the informants, described the lengths he has travelled to interact with the burgeoning international Deaf art-world:

> Last year I went to Deafway II in America and met artists from around the world, chatted with them and things… I also went to Sweden to Deaf Arts Now

It is significant that although all the worlds' sign languages are different, he finds few difficulties in developing a kind of lingua franca, which in 2.1 was described as International Sign:

> When Deaf artists come together its nice because we use the same method of communication.

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[158] Including Shape, Deaf Way in America, Deaf Arts Now in Sweden and the exhibitions that the informants have been involved in organised by John Wilson as well as the recent group projects organised by Cathy Woolley.

Where a shared set of experiences serves as a basis for linguistic comprehension. Omeima stressed the luxury of this shared set of experiences:

> I don't like doing things on my own; I enjoy doing things as a group and being part of a team, a team who share previous experiences.

Aside from the internal politics then, there is a distinct sense of being part of the same team, and the same community, a Deaf arts community.

> It's about getting to know one another, their ambitions, their knowledge and aims. Communication is very important, we can all, I think really and easily communicate together. Art itself is about communication. How to develop that communication - that is interesting. We are influencing each other and sharing. Communication through art. Communication with other people through art.

Niall felt that this exchange of ideas was beneficial to the wider community:

> It's very valuable to meet Deaf artists to give you a chance to talk and chat about ideas and each other's work etc. We can learn from one another. Where our art is coming from, our styles, our influences, and our experiences. Those things are better shared.

Ailsa too mentioned the importance of art bringing people together with reference to the recent group project:

> But here it was like - suddenly there were all these Deaf artists and all this Deaf art going on - and then *you weren't isolated any more*.

Again we see the sense of 'isolation', which seems to loom over the Deaf artist- a sense of isolation which importantly must be seen as a more general Deaf emotion. Thus it is this wider Deaf isolation that could either be overcome or moved towards resolution in the art space.

The Lake District project, 'Deaf Art Escape' [159] set up by Cathy and including a number of the artists involved in this project aimed to do exactly this. As Cathy pointed out the project was to bring people together, as well as facilitate other factors on several levels:

> I had often found that many Deaf artists felt a lack of time was the reason they were not creating new artwork and this was why I set up Deaf Art Escape - to provide the time and space to create. Another reason was that most activities and opportunities available to Deaf artists seemed to be led by hearing people and focused on disability access issues, skills training, for example "how to write a C.V. " Very few of these opportunities tapped into or developed artists' creative sides, their skills, abilities and enjoyment of art making.

So bringing people together and establishing creative partnerships was the primary motivation behind setting it up, yet the benefits of what came out of it, far seem to outweigh the initial 'creating time and space' objective. Rubbena did not attend, but she interpreted some of its underlying features:

> I wasn't part of it but I was amazed. It must have woken something up within them [the Deaf artists there]… is that because Deaf people were all together? Discussing, chatting or so they were feeling different - so then they were painting from a different feeling - from having discussed it. *They weren't isolated any more*. It was amazing.

She elucidated:

> that was more about getting Deaf art people together - people who have a similar experience… people trying to find out where they belong…That's how it all started I think - some of these were and some were not established artists, they were looking for an identity - somewhere to belong - a group - where to I fit in - who can I belong to - where do I stand in this bigger picture.

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[159] "In September 2002 eight leading Deaf London Artists escaped to the Lake District to create innovative new works inspired by a fresh environment."

Evidently then this bringing people together, giving them somewhere to belong, overcoming that isolation and reuniting them with their community that had somewhere down the line been broken and scattered has been, is and hopefully will be a useful tool in the bigger rebuilding of the Deaf community.

5.2.2 Art as… A space to create and work on group projects

There have recently been several similar collective ventures. Omeima's creation of the working and exhibiting group Resonant[160] is a good example of the potential benefits of such group work:

> Other women have come to me and asked about setting up exhibitions but when I said 'Why don't you do it?' they say they don't know how and have no confidence. So Cathy and I spoke and we agreed to do something about it…

She went on to detail their first group exhibition:

> They were all very nervous saying they weren't ready but I could understand where they were coming from, as it was similar to my experiences…They were nervous but that became excitement and it was packed it was great, the team worked and camaraderie. That was so important, being part of something not just being on your own.

She continued to elaborate on the wider hopes for Resonant:

> Resonant is aiming to empower Deaf women in becoming professional practicing artists in their own right. It's a great opportunity to share personal experiences and develop their artistic talent and co-ordinate teamwork for exhibitions. I see that Resonant is very important for Deaf women artists also as an opportunity to develop their own cultural value and identity through artwork and exhibitions… it is a great experience to share resources and

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[160] Resonant is a Deaf women's art collective, who support each other and exhibit as a group. Resonant's wider benefits are for children and adults. They aim to support artists who work from home in their own time, to encourage their artwork, and to integrate hearing people who can sign like interpreters etc. 'We're a very strong team really, and I hope we can grow and grow. We are open to any one regardless of ethnicity or hearing level.' (Personal correspondence)

ideas, different ideas come together and *become a really strong community.*[161]

Once again the theme of community making impels this next stage.

5.2.3 Art… as a space for discourse to resolve issues

The majority of informants talked extensively about this coming together and sharing of ideas. It would seem that my being in the field, at this precise time, and raising the Deaf art subject, might have had some kind of catalytic impact. It would seem that conversing with me might have reminded the artists of the success of past group projects and the possibilities of future ones.

Indeed, the idea of setting up a discussion group for the research project emanated from these conversations, by every artists without exception. The timing of this research project coincided with these other group projects, however the existing group projects were aimed at group work and facilitating space and time, with no attention to debate or critical discourse within the field.

Omeima was the first to put forward the discussion group idea:

> I think it is important to bring people together, to bring the right people together, shared experiences, same lives its an important thing - because everyone knows their way and their experiences, its very valuable for people to understand why its important to have artists in the world and what they are doing.

She continued, saying that:

> Different people and different things [needed to come into the discussion], talk about drawing themes out, your personal experiences. No one is really right or wrong, it's just a matter of personal experiences… Different viewpoints are good…I have always dreamt of that… it would be

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[161] Italics mine

interesting…a group would be nice, see how we feel as a group - see how that works.

Rachel agreed but thought that the dynamics might differ from one on one conversation:

> I do think that in a one to one setting people will be more truthful… in a group setting its easy to latch on to other peoples ideas, and just agree with what's going on. But a group of ideas would make for lots of inspiration, which is nice… It would be nice to really sit down and talk about art - me and Ailsa and Rubbena, when we get together we talk about other things. Or if you see Niall or someone at the theatre or something – you still don't get the chance to really sit down and talk about art. So that would be a good thing.

This suggests that there is a distinct factor happening amongst Deaf artists, that is possibly reliant on the fact that they are members of such a small community. When one belongs to such a small community, it appears that every member wears a 'number of hats' so-to-speak. Their role within that community is multi-faceted and multi-purpose, in the sense that these artists are not just known as artists. Thus it can be difficult to maintain a discourse when everyone is spread so thinly across these different purposes. This might be one of the contributing reasons to the lack of Deaf art discourse - simply that there are more urgent discourses at hand thus the time and attention has not been paid to the creative aspects of this community's life.[162]

Conversations with Ailsa and Rubbena reached a planning level, where we were discussing the practicalities of such a forum in detail; the venue, the funding, where when and who and so on. As Ailsa urged me:

> Bring them all together and throw in a question… and see what happens…
> that really should happen, you need that. Otherwise, nothing will happen.

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[162] This thought stemmed from a conversation with Dr Ladd where he pointed out the fact that the Deaf members of staff in the Centre for Deaf Studies, University of Bristol, rarely sit down and discuss issues solely based around academia, but a whole set of other community based discourses because they wear a set of different hats due to the scale of that community.

Everyone will hide in his or her own little worlds; we need to bring them together.

The use of 'we' here marks a crucial point in this research. It appears that my raising of the topic implicated me in the whole process. This is covered in detail in the conclusion. Ailsa provided more details of how she envisaged it:

I think it would be interesting to plan a series of discussions, say 5 at weekly intervals, and see the dynamics change, who comes who doesn't. Maybe on the first night everyone will come, and it would be interesting to see who doesn't come after that and to think about the reasons why they don't come back again… I think that you should have 5 sessions and ask 8 people along, actually, maybe 7 or 6 even, mix of men and women must have, different mixtures of people with different experiences… I am getting really excited about that… it could be a weekend thing, or evenings after work, just for one hour or something. But setting it up would be interesting for me.

Rubbena also proposed my involvement in such a group discussion:

It would be useful to set up a forum - I would even like to set it up with you - maybe even two sessions - one to warm them up and get a set of questions or issues and then another one where we can bring them all up and discuss them openly - say, what do you think you are an established artist - she thinks this and he thinks that… kind of thing. Plus being able to say this is the old stuff - where is the new stuff… and that is important the role of art in the future… that's what I want to know… this has never happened.

She elucidated on the finer points and suggested venues like:

'Whitechapel Art Gallery would be happy to set it up I think. Or I can try to get Serpentine gallery for you… And they have a perfect room and if it's a nice day they have the lovely garden and the atmosphere would be much more relaxed…

She described some of the qualities of the potential discourse and noted:

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> The forum idea might be a way of getting some of the issues and internal politics out in the open…

> …I want to see where the boiling points are… I think that people will come along feeling like they will be quiet and just observe, then they will start to see something going on… it will boil inside them and they will get involved. And then if you set it up twice then they can get involved again. I am shocked to see if people don't say their bit - what for? What's the point… it goes in circles for me - I don't know about them - but it goes in circles…

Rubbena suggested that this be a bigger part of the research, as explained, this was impossible. However by including me in the establishment of such group work, she pointed to the benefits to me personally:

> I don't know what the others think. Because we never talk about it… and that will help your research - update it to today. At the moment you have one to one, and you might get confused on where is the truth or whatever, you can't summarize that… And if you discuss it, and bring it all together in a forum then you can summarize each point – I think you should do it - I would be happy to work with you towards this…. it would be nice to have some faith in something!

This proposal for a cooperative role between informant and researcher seems to contain several dimensions.

5.2.4 Informant - Researcher Collaborative Projects and Catalytic Validity

One of these dimensions was my usefulness to the group as a student of art; another was my usefulness as a hearing person, perhaps as a 'neutral' figure, or in some way a representative of a reified 'hearing world'. Perhaps the overriding dimension was revealed in the catalytic possibilities of an outsider raising a latent topic for discussion. My instigation of the topic could be seen to have reminded the artists of the dormant passion they had for the subject.

As was discussed in 3.4.6 with reference to catalytic validity, two public presentations arose from my being in the field. The 'Artists Working Group' consisting of Rubbena, Ailsa, Rachel and Omeima presented a workshop entitled ' What is Deaf Art' at Vision Sign: Bristol Deaf Film Festival and gave a further presentation at the Deaf Arts Bournemouth University (DABU) conference. The Bristol workshop appeared to go well, to the satisfaction of the group, the festival organisers and the other participants. Rachel commented that:

> Its hard to figure all this out individually and there's nothing better than meeting in a group like one in Bristol's recent film festival and all our ideas suddenly pour out from nowhere or very deep in our conscience that we thought we never had! Ideas always thrive on inspirations/inputs form group settings… I'm gratefully glad for the opportunity at Bristol and let's hope we'll have more debate in Bournemouth. [163]

As regards the Bournemouth presentation, Ailsa commented on the fact that it was:

> An interesting day… new things for audience… seems that we are new faces… our presentation is fine. Its different dynamic from Bristol… seem it's new to audience. Things we all have learnt new in the end. Amy did some filming.[164]

Rubbena summarised the day saying that it was interesting; she was pleased to have a full house, that people were excited about their works and they wanted to know more. She made particular note of the fact that distinctions needed to be made between Art, Arts and Art therapy so that the audience did not become confused. She also pointed to future ideas, such as seeking funding for their work, setting up a Deaf Art Gallery and potential exhibitions of Deaf Art/Deaf Arts/Art Therapy for the d/Deaf. Her final point was that:

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[163] Personal correspondence, email dated Thu, 18 Dec 2003
[164] Personal correspondence, email dated Sun, 29 Feb, 2004

It is good to hear other artist's views as well as I feel we are getting clearer to understanding Deaf Art and Deaf Arts.[165]

At the time of writing, discussions in the group have moved onto a more critical level; the artists are thinking critically about their works, the group dynamics and the future of the discourse. The construction of such a group brings to light its own set of challenges, which should be regarded as healthy, whereby the dynamics need to be 'tried and tested' and compromises made, as Rachel summarised:

> We decided that the group was rather loose with individual motivations and desires…it kicked off as an informal think-tank…and we participated in Bristol and Bournemouth…we are very much individuals and we want to put the group on hold until another opportunity may come along in the future with a specific aim that we all can work together and toward, progressively. Strangely enough, Amy asked each of us why not Deaf Arts here has not been able to form a strong group… and from today's meeting, I learnt that I was able to reflect on the difficulties of teamwork and implementing unique ideas into a solid group identity but I still am not able to know exactly why we are having problems despite all our enthusiasm and passion of creating a De'VIA in UK. That'd be interesting to think about it! It may sound a shame that things are not working out, as we would have liked… but I hope to keep it open like an informal forum.[166]

Although as I have explained, this was not an intended consequence of the research, it seems to have been a vital outcome of the whole research process, and this level of reflection and critical thinking within the group is more than I could have anticipated at the start of the project. It is my hope that the informal forum continues, but that of course, is in the hands of the artists.

5.3 Art as… a space for community projection

Having passed through these two stages or spaces, a third dimension becomes apparent from the data. This aim of group based discussion or group-analysis is

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[165] Personal correspondence, email dated Sun, 29 Feb 2004
[166] Personal correspondence, email dated, Sun, 14 Mar 2004

a vital step in the move towards understanding themselves as a Deaf artistic community more clearly. Once this has been achieved, the next stage seems to be one of becoming ready to project that outwards, explain it to other Deaf and hearing people and to think about the audience.

5.3.1 Art as… A space to communicate

This section examines this process of community-making, spectator-creating and aiming ones work towards a specific, even future audience. It is here that we observe the informants consciously aiming to show something in their work, with a move towards change and changing attitudes. A similar process began with De'VIA at Deaf Way in 1989 - where artists had built up their discourse to the point where they were ready for manifest creation, constructing a public image to project outwards to others. I neither profess that this is what will happen in Britain, nor that it is what should happen, only that it is a possible route that Deaf artists in Britain might take based on the experience of their American counterparts. The level at which the British Deaf artists are ready to project themselves to the public at this moment in time is worthy of further exploration.

One of the most interesting points Niall made is indicative of this role of art:

> Art is a tool to express *ourselves*[167] emotionally; it is a tool for people to
> express our identity, experiences. You can use art to express what you want
> - all different things. Though some Deaf people can write about their Deaf
> experiences and through better education there is more of this.

Notice the 'ourselves' - this is no longer an individual thing, but a group construction. Niall went on to say:

> Art is a good tool, as in Russia, when Communism ended there was a great
> deal of art that came out expressing the oppression that people have lived
> through – political art. In the 80s there was an explosion of creativity because
> when you are not allowed to create - oppressed people need to express

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[167] Italics mine

themselves when they get the freedom to do so…So Deaf political art can have a powerful impact in the same way.

Others whole-heartedly agreed with this sentiment. As Rubbena highlighted:

It shows awareness to people so they become aware - what has happened in our world, because if we don't tell them or show them, people don't know and then we can't move on.

Rubbena is stating quite clearly that it is through other (non-Deaf) peoples increased understanding that 'we' can move on - that it is actually the lack of understanding on their part that is preventing progress. Exactly how majority societies lack of understanding about Deaf people was affecting the development of Deaf visual arts was not stated. This offers a useful direction for future research.[168]

She also referred to other examples of art functioning politically, and the power of art in communicating issues and the tenuous link between art and society - does art reflect change or contribute towards achieving that change?

It's an attitude thing. Like Hitler in Germany example - and the war - lots of painting at the time was tied up with revolutionist ideologies. A future tied up with industry, machines and technology - all that was happening through the art - the art was saying that before it actually happened.

This was an interesting discussion regarding the link between art and society, and another topic that Rubbena instigated, drawing interesting parallels between other cultures and ideologies and the function of art within different frameworks. It is interesting that both Niall and Rubbena pointed to political ideologies more than the often-mentioned ethnic and racial parallels that occur in most Deaf

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[168] As suggested by David Brien, on this note it might be useful to examine the distinction between Deaf made (which is admired and appreciated within the community) and Deaf art, which the artists would wish to see displayed in what have been, to date, exclusively hearing spaces: a change which might be seen as reflecting the changing role of the Deaf club and Deaf people's participation in hearing society as Deaf people.

discourses. It is not disempowered minority communities, black or aboriginal, but Communist Russia and Revolutionist Germany, which these two artists refer to.

In light of her last comment, Rubbena suggests that there is evidence in the history of art that suggests art might predict or contribute towards change. She points to the fact that art is bound up with the future, and suggests that Deaf art could serve this same 'predicting' and contributing towards change:

> So the paintings of the Deaf world - are saying something before its actually happened - that's the way it works - it's always worked that way…'[169]

Returning to the theme of this section, Ailsa too felt that art could be a tool in the expansion of Deaf awareness. She discusses this in relation to Deaf artists who:

> …if they are bought up to feel angry, like they have something to prove, demanding equal rights, the anger- gives them publicity- sells their work- but whether or not it is a quality piece of work is another question…   and maybe *through their picture they can educate people about their experience.* [170]

This then suggests that art potentially serves a specific didactic purpose in Deaf worlds. Through this showing and educating, the impact upon the public's understanding of Deaf communities and cultures cannot be underestimated, as Niall explains:

> It's important for Deaf art to be seen to show the richness and variation of the community and challenge preconceptions, to show the depth of the culture. That art might be a way of showing the diversity within the word 'Deaf'. That there are different ways and different things going on there. Deaf isn't just one thing - Deaf is deep. And then within all these different 'ways of being Deaf' there is a quality coming out. Which means that through art, Deaf culture can be recognised and respected for what it is. So that means that art

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[169] It might be interesting here to think back to 3.3 and the potential for Art to predict and mould a community by anticipating their way of seeing. It is as if the artworks are like signposts on the road - they warn you of, and predict the approaching bend - the importance being the fact that the artworks come before the bend and not tell you what happened once the bend is over.
[170] Italics mine

is useful for showing a culture. Their culture. It can then be likened to other culture; Irish, religious etc. So through art you can see bits of a culture and you can respect that. Paddy's book (Ladd, 2003) has started to do that academically and the culture he is talking about and the concept of Deafhood can be shown through art. For this to happen the art has to be of a high quality.

Although I have maintained my focus on Deaf visual arts, Cathy made an extended reference to a similar process of contemporary resurgence in several other Deaf art forms.

Art has the power to transform people's lives. It has the power to change and challenge. … if you look at film. Film. What's happening there - that is amazing what's happening there - its been a combination of different things but I think that what is going on in Deaf film is amazing - Deaf people love movies and access is easy - there are courses at universities about the technology and film making that are accessible and have been recently, so there are people making films now… and they are showing it to a hearing audience. They are challenging their views and the power is shifting. Its very powerful - there is a pop video - by Bim Ajadi, that was extremely powerful about 3 years ago - it was beautiful - it showed 'cool' Deaf people it was just his dream to make music videos… it celebrated the power of sign language and Deaf youth culture…

It would appear to be a very worthwhile research project to explore the similarities and differences between the participants in these Deaf art forms and Deaf visual arts, as Cathy indicated when discussing different 'types' of Deaf films, which mirror those we have learned about it.

Billy Mager - his film put together two Deaf people and there was no Deaf context whatsoever. They were acting simply real life things - all the Deaf films are about hearing aids - worlds divided etc. people struggling, but if you put Deaf people in a normal context - yeah, they are using sign language there - so there is an element of Deaf culture - like banging the table or whatever - to get someone's attention - but there was no focus on the negative struggles.

It is possible that Deaf art serves as a 'double positive', in that showing oppression in a Deaf art from signals Deaf peoples' ability to transcend those experiences, a kind of 'look you have tried to suppress us and we have survived to 'write' about it.' Despite the hurt and the scars, through the art works the audiences can go beyond that and see this Deaf pride and culture being put on display. 'Not focus on the negative struggles' is the significant point and the subject of the final section within the presentation and interpretation of the data collected.

5.3.2 Art as… a celebrative space

All of the stages described thus far have extended the roles and relationships of the Deaf individuals and communities. There lies one further stage that I could identify from my research which dovetails well with the initial motivation of this project. It was my objective to look deeply into the affirmative aspects of Deaf culture in the midst of 'negative' studies regarding Deaf people. It is here that we see the art space as being that positive celebrative space: a space where the artist can prove themselves, a comfortable space with no barriers, where the negative myth surrounding deafness can be laid to rest within wider social constructions. This 'space' for art is the positive, celebrative space where art serves a serious function of communicating the pluses of Deaf culture to a wider audience and achieve the respect and recognition they deserve - for the delight of celebration itself. This was summed up by Rubbena:

> I have learnt a lot about attitude and having to fight for things - and it kind of made me angry - so my mission was to make myself better than the hearing students - so I was winning the best student every year and I was awarded the student of the year award in painting - and finally the person who gave me a place on the lower level of the training came up to me and said sorry you know - like we made a mistake - and on top of that I got accepted by Central St Martins, and my hearing peers didn't - so they were like how did you do that? … So that was really good, it made me wake up - made me realize that it was possible - this expression, and the first show I had there, I was selling my paintings and I got a really positive response - they were popular.

It was through art that Rubbena realized that it was possible to achieve and get the recognition she deserved. Admittedly she had to prove herself, but that was possible in the art space resulting in a positive response for her successful achievement. The rest of this section focuses on some wider positive spaces or issues that art seems to take on or alleviate in the informants lives. Rachel commented upon the fact that:

Often Deaf artists, become fascinated with art because of the barriers to other things, like art is a - visual area – a feeling of equalness with hearing peers using eyes and hands – it is a space where they can relax and share.

Cathy observed that:

I think the basic perception of Deaf people's lives is that they suffer, are traumatized and can't achieve in their lives. I think art plays a role in evaporating that 'myth'.

Nearly all the informants supported this assertion, as Rachel said:

I want them [the audience] to appreciate Deaf art and artists and the skill, to recognise and acknowledge us, to make an impact, positive or negative on the audience, giving them dialogue though my work; political issues, their personal interpretations or any connections to their experiences. I think I tried to bring that concept into my degree show, to teach hearing people about 1880 and Milan.

She went on to describe:

…[the] possibility of art being a space where artists can get the appreciation and recognition and acknowledgement that they deserve. A positive educational space.

Rubbena too felt strongly about this, that art gave her a space to prove herself:

So really through art I became a person, the proper person that my father never thought I would be - so then he saw that my exhibitions, selling my work etc. gave me confidence and made me a proper person.

In this respect she, and the other artists could prove their worth as the people they really are. It is not about denying the Deaf aspect of their work, but incorporating them and letting people see it for what it is. As Rachel agreed:

The art space, being somewhere where artists can show others a different way of seeing, can show the Deaf way or the Deaf experience… I therefore want to produce artwork and images for them to realise the unique effects on me and how we all 'see' silence differently.

5.3.3 Art as… a space to establish Deaf Awareness

Cathy discussed at length one final potential space for art. She spoke of the art space being an educative one for hearing people. Much discussion was had as to whether a work of art could be didactic in the literal sense - that it could teach hearing people about Deaf lives and make them understand more. It was agreed that there was a possibility for this to happen. Cathy however had a further take on the matter, one informed by her own experience. This is in relation to the wider space of art, the social role of art and the fact that art is not just about the works, but about the whole mainstream art world, the museums, the galleries, the critics, the theory and the publications. Cathy believed that paintings might not be the most powerful way to teach people about specific Deaf awareness issues, she went on:

That comes through working and collaborating with hearing people. That opens that up, that's where that space is… for example, my job now, thousands of people are employed by that organization - and every time I walk into a meeting I am changing peoples perception of not just me but of Deaf people in general. Hearing people have to ask me for advice. And you see the panic across their faces… It's a bizarre experience for them… their knowledge of Deaf people is probably a special one-off project when they get a bit of funding or whatever. They are helping, patronizing etc. then the tables turn… and I am a person on the same level- and I come into a meeting with

my interpreter - and move everyone around so that I can sit opposite etc. and that's like a powerful Deaf awareness thing.

She went on:

> That is where Deaf awareness is its most powerful - that work situation - its not about what hearing people can offer to Deaf people in the workplace, its about what Deaf people have to offer the hearing world - and once they are in a position to do that - then hearing people will realize that Deaf people have actually got a lot to offer. So then it's the same with art - its not about hearing artists asking or welcoming Deaf people in - its about what Deaf people have to offer the mainstream art world. And through that interaction and collaboration of Deaf and hearing Deaf awareness will come about.

This concept that Deaf people might actually contribute to the quality of non-Deaf peoples lives was a tenet held by Deaf philosophers prior to Oralism (de Ladebat, 1815; Mottez, 1993) but is only recently returning in a contemporary form. Cathy draws attention to this in the wider Deaf-hearing discourses:

> Social policy and discrimination laws and acts say that you have to include Deaf people… but slowly people are realizing that Deaf people do actually have skills and something to offer… its not just about hearing giving giving giving and Deaf taking taking taking… *it's the other way round - Deaf people have a lot to offer*[171] and have to stop fulfilling the taking and accepting role and take on the offering and giving role.

In confirming the validity of this Deaf community belief, this research itself may help to persuade non-Deaf people to appreciate those potential gifts.

5. 4 Chapter summary

This journey has narrated the question, Deaf art: What For? From the data generated we can see that there are many different functions and roles for art in Deaf peoples lives and Deaf worlds. People utilise 'art' for their own needs, for their communities' needs and for the needs of the wider society. Within this

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[171] Italics mine

statement we must understand 'art' as a wider social space. That is, it is not so much the artworks that have these profound affects on people's lives but the wider social space. It can be speculated then that this space will, in time, become more accessible to the Deaf artist. If we consider the fact that research is being done, the discourse is progressing, and above all the artists are coming together and discussing these issues. Additionally, courses are currently being set up training Deaf people to give gallery talks and tours of exhibitions in BSL, that the ARTSIGNS website (see glossary) is attempting to generate the language for Deaf people to talk about this wider art space. Here we see a certain set of vocabulary being generated 'made up/created' for English 'art' words as well as recording vocabulary used by some Deaf people engaged in the arts and in making this available to others it is hoped that access and education for Deaf people in the arts will improve. Deaf people are visibly re-gaining the power and self-esteem they had lost through being involved with projects such as this which will bring them on a equal footing with their hearing counterparts.

Perhaps the next step echoes the sentiment of Cathy's final comment, and that is for the artists to have the confidence to interact with the wider art space more fully. This can happen by way of exhibitions, courses, conferences, television programmes, publications and so on. For all of these ventures incorporate what Cathy suggested. A space where Deaf people can turn the tables and can reveal to the hearing people who run these worlds, that its not a matter of being obliged to let Deaf people into these worlds, but that Deaf people have got something serious to offer to this art space, in the way of their works and their thoughts.

We can learn lots from Deaf artists, their works[172] and their thoughts, yet what we potentially learn spans beyond Deaf art, it as about the wider Deaf space, its history and where it came from. Greater understanding of this results in the majority society learning about ourselves, why is it that we have constructed an 'us' and 'them'? Again this spans beyond Deaf worlds. We can learn about the deep-rooted psychological fear of difference (Lane, 1984). It is only in comprehending all the factors involved in such constructions that we will ever move towards eradicating this prejudice.

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[172] Which shall feature in the next chapter

We need to overcome the colonial legacy of considering 'us' as 'normal' and anything remotely 'different' as negatively deviant. For it is only through ignorance that this 'fear' still exists, and clearly from the data generated, the art space can be a space where this lack of knowledge can be overcome and in turn contribute to the eradication of ignorance based 'fear'.

Hearing people are not going to come looking for these answers though. It is in Deaf people's hands to understand themselves and their community more clearly. Only then will the Deaf space be in a position to project that to the majority society. It can be seen that the discourse is going in that direction, the ball is in motion so-to-speak and we are on a route to expelling the fear through greater awareness and respect resulting in empowerment. Art, it seems, has its role to play in this process.

Chapter 6

The Art

6.0 The Art

6.1 The Visual

Berger (1972) begins his collection of essays, 'Ways of Seeing' with a brief note to the reader explaining the contents of his collection.

> Four of the essays use words and images; three of them use only images. These purely pictorial essays… are intended to raise as many questions as the verbal essays. Sometimes in the pictorial essays no information at all is given about the images reproduced because it seemed to us that such information might distract from the points being made.[173]

It would be out of tune with the wider project to exclude artworks produced by Deaf artists, yet, as has already been suggested, it is not part of my agenda to analyse these works. Thus incorporation of these images needs a brief explanation.

Like Berger's work, this chapter intends to use only images. There will feature a collection of works by contemporary Deaf artists, no information at all is offered in this chapter on the grounds it would distract the reader[174]. The artworks themselves are extremely important to a study of this kind, thus they are incorporated in the main text and not as appendices. They are the very products we have been discussing. They are the tangible works produced by, amongst others, the artist informants involved in this project.

Cook and Crang (1995) suggest that the visual can be an important part of ethnographic research and that the visual can be considered valuable data in itself. This assertion is predominantly made in relation to photography and filmed data. These media unquestionably involve different processes to artworks as artefacts such as painting or sculptures. If the ethnographer is filming or

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[173] Berger, 1972: 6

[174] No details shall accompany the works, however, should the reader wish to inquire further as to the artist, the title or the date, they may find these details in the List of Illustrations that forms Appendix F (pages 256-269).

photographing the community in question then a certain communication event is taking place, involving the ethnographer's gaze, as well as more practical aspects such as planning, contriving, focusing, composing, editing and displaying. As suggested;

> Using visual methods as part of Ethnographic research creates both new avenues and new dangers around the issues of incorporation, representation and empowerment.[175]

This contriving and editing element seems to embody the 'new dangers' when it comes to issues of representation and empowerment, for distortion and misrepresentation are intrinsic to the medias photography and film. Furthermore, when we are looking at works done by a minority community, there are additional sets of dangers to bear in mind as Thornley (2002) forewarns us.

> Works produced by Deaf artists are often misunderstood or misinterpreted by those who view and critique their art.[176]

To avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations, these works shall not be critiqued.

However, the 'new avenues' regarding incorporation of visual sources could be a distinctly positive space, one that can represent and empower more fully. This represents a space that reveals aspects of Deaf art discourse to the reader neither involving the use of the English language[177] or the researcher as mediator. No analysis is needed and no interpretation is occurring.

Much concern within this project has been with the social role of art; the importance of being 'an artist' to the self, the community and the wider society. We have analysed and surveyed Deaf arts' history, its discourse, its creators, its benefits, its shortcomings and its future. Yet, it would not be surprising if the

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[175] Cook and Crang, 1995:72
[176] Thornley, 2002: 4
[177] This is particularly relevant if we think of English as most Deaf peoples second language.

reader had no concept of the works themselves, for few of them are published, and few of them have entered the institutions of the mainstream art world.

If we think of what follows in these terms, then we have a set of visual images; simple, colour, good quality reproductions of contemporary Deaf artworks from Britain and America. That is by persons self-identified as being Deaf in one way or another. The reader is invited to confront and experience them however they may wish.

> A depiction is never just an illustration… To understand a visualisation is thus to inquire into its provenance and into the social work that it does.[178]

Admittedly, I cannot entirely disappear from the construction of such a chapter. I am consciously selecting which works feature and which order they go in. The selection of images will admittedly be mine, however these decisions rely wholly upon which images have been photographed and published and are thus available to me. The organisation of such shall be entirely random - there is neither rhythm nor rhyme to the order imposed upon the selection. They are presented for the reader to perceive however they like - study them, enjoy them, judge them, question them, apply the cultural knowledge you have found within these pages to them, interpret them, see them as Deaf or as art regardless of Deaf input. These decisions are in the hands of the reader. These works have been put on show as if this were a small exhibition.[179] Although some level of curation has clearly occurred, the audience in my exhibition will get no handouts, no little box of text explaining what they should see and how they should think about it and there are certainly no headsets guiding you.

6.2 An exhibition of Deaf art follows

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[178] Fyfe and Law, 1988: 1

[179] At this point a discussion of Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' is possibly anticipated- or mention of Malraux's 'musee imaginaire' or Museum without Walls 1947. Although this topic would be appropriate and worthy of further consideration, there is not the space or time to elaborate within the confines I am working to, thus, the works themselves and this brief explanation of their function as unmediated representations of the 'culture' in question will suffice.

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"DEAF"

'93 C.C.BAIRD ©

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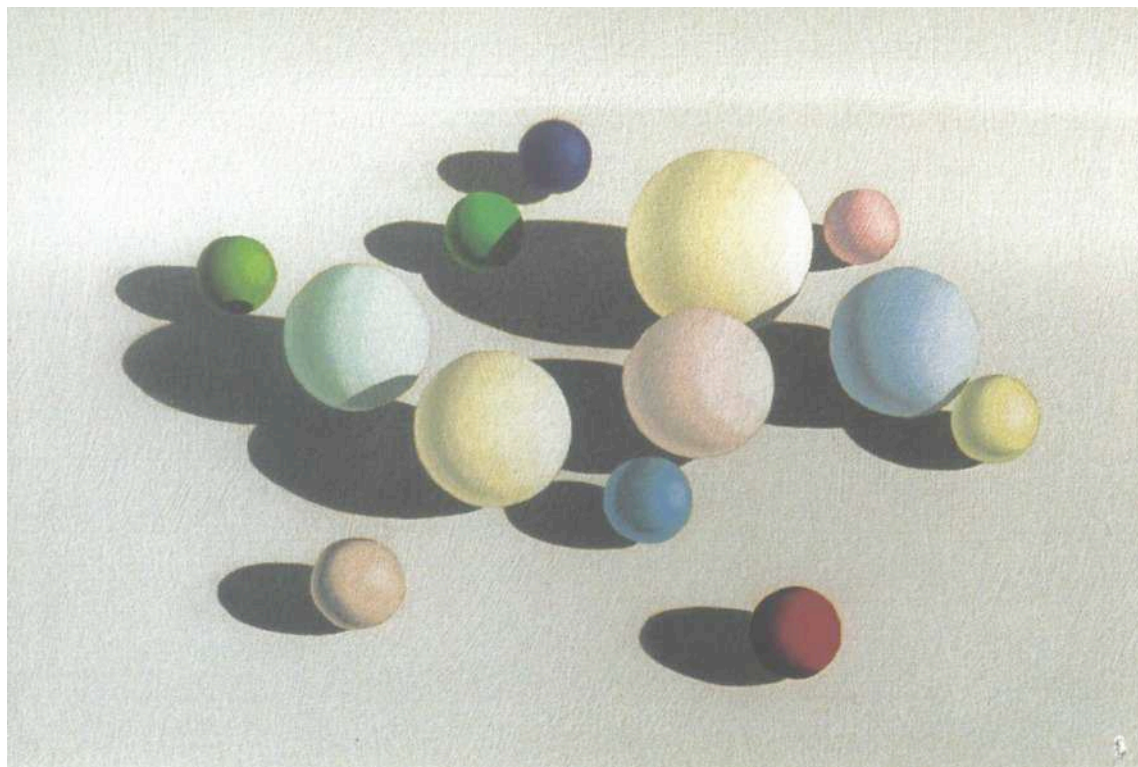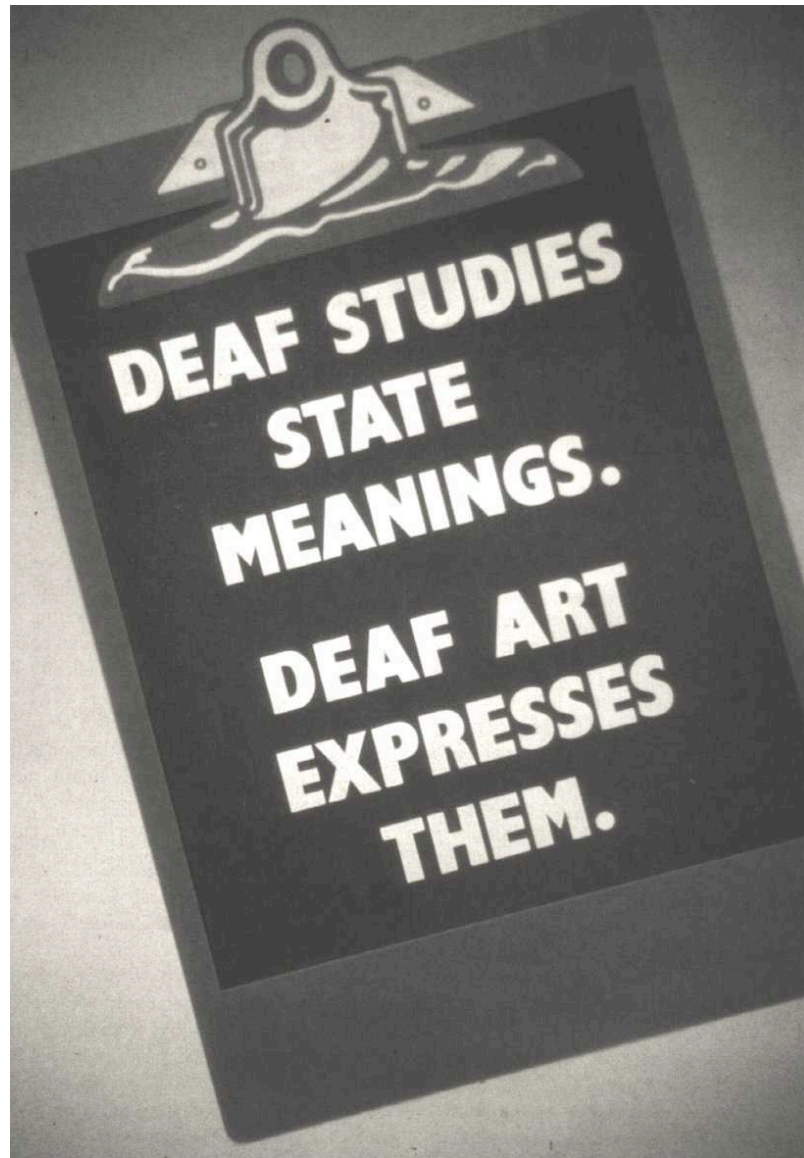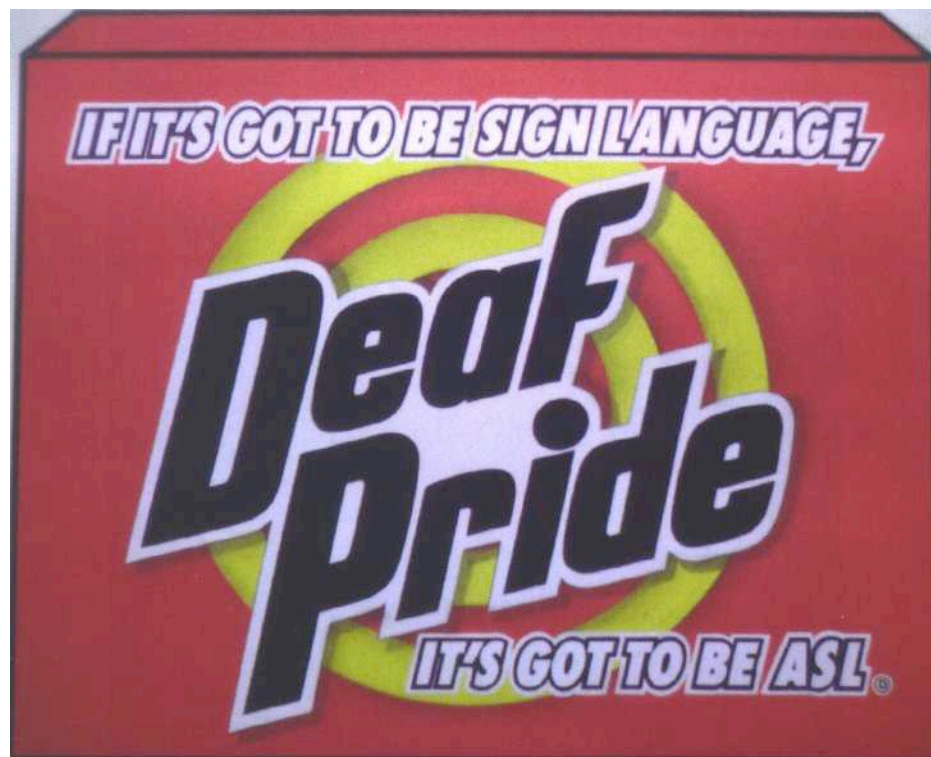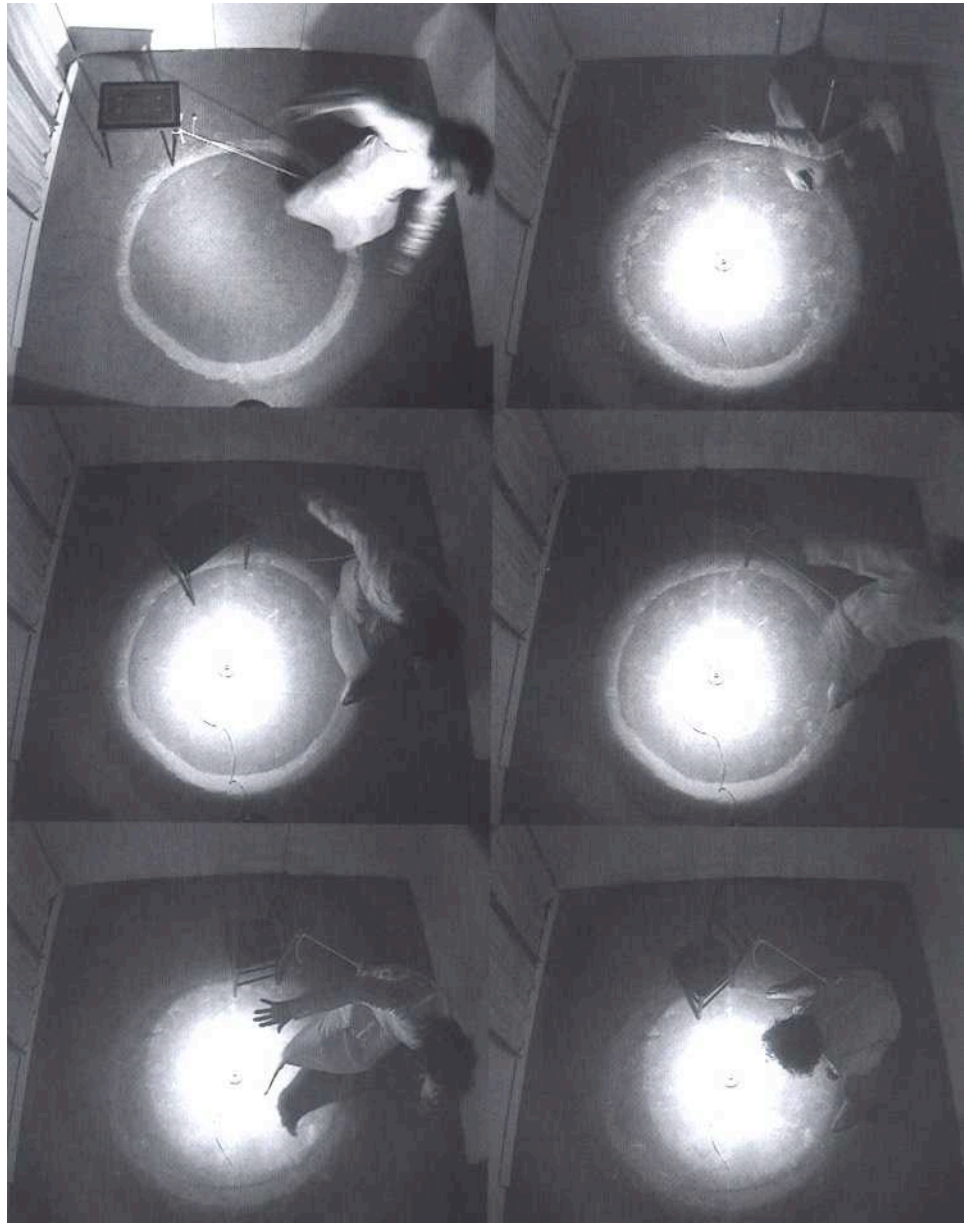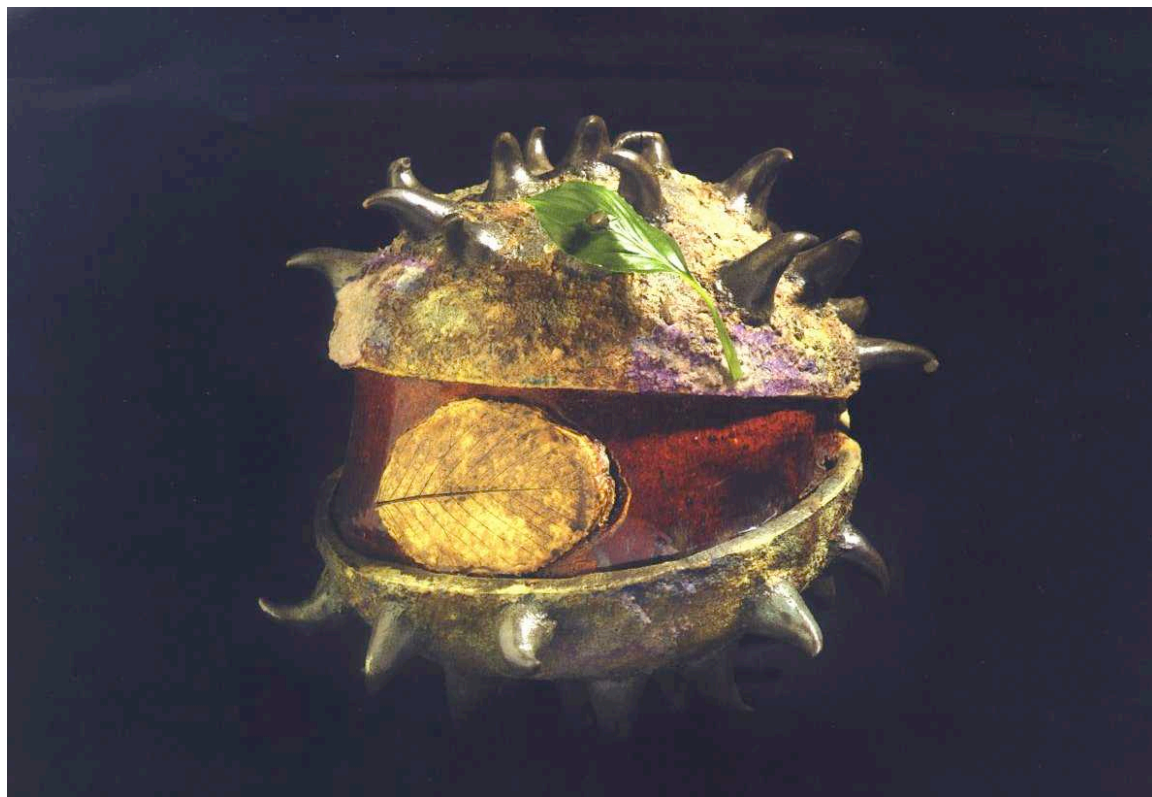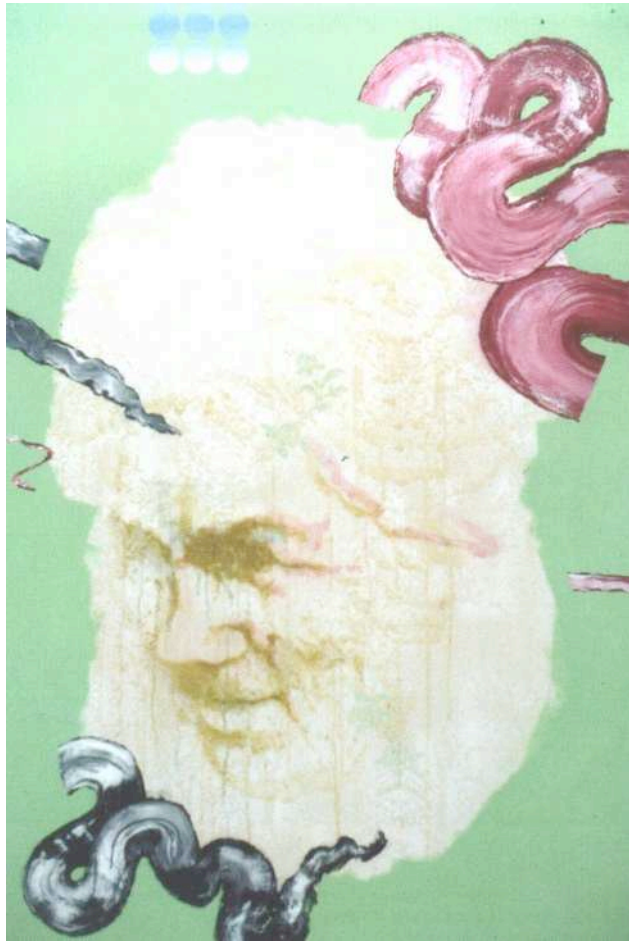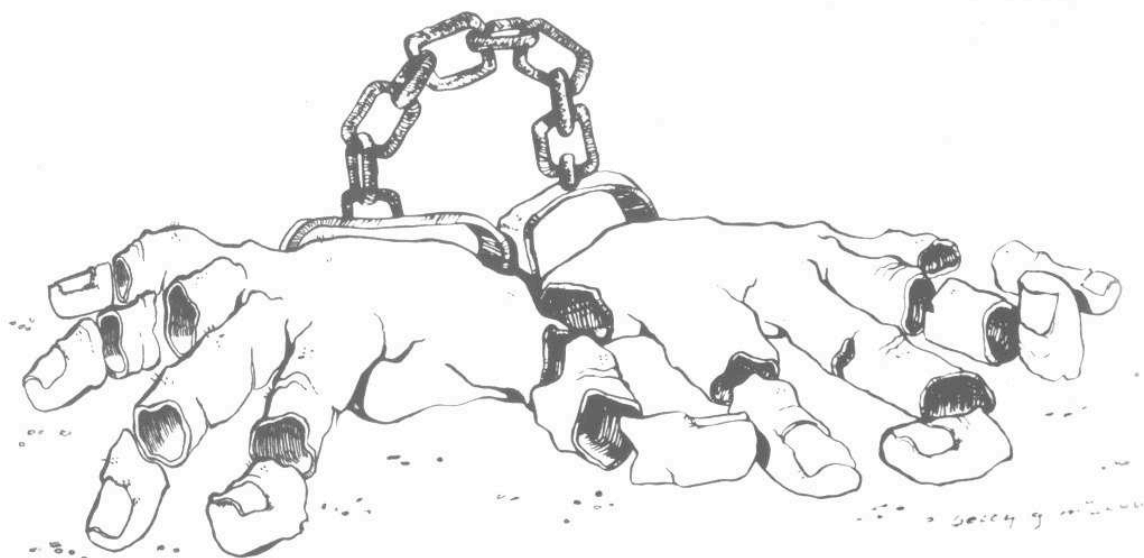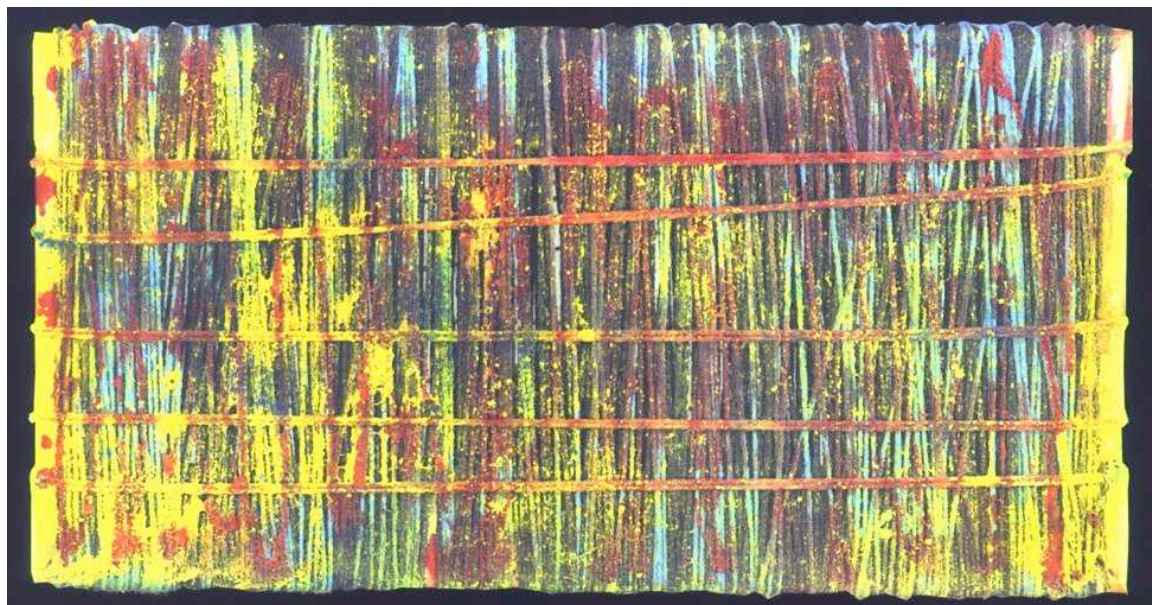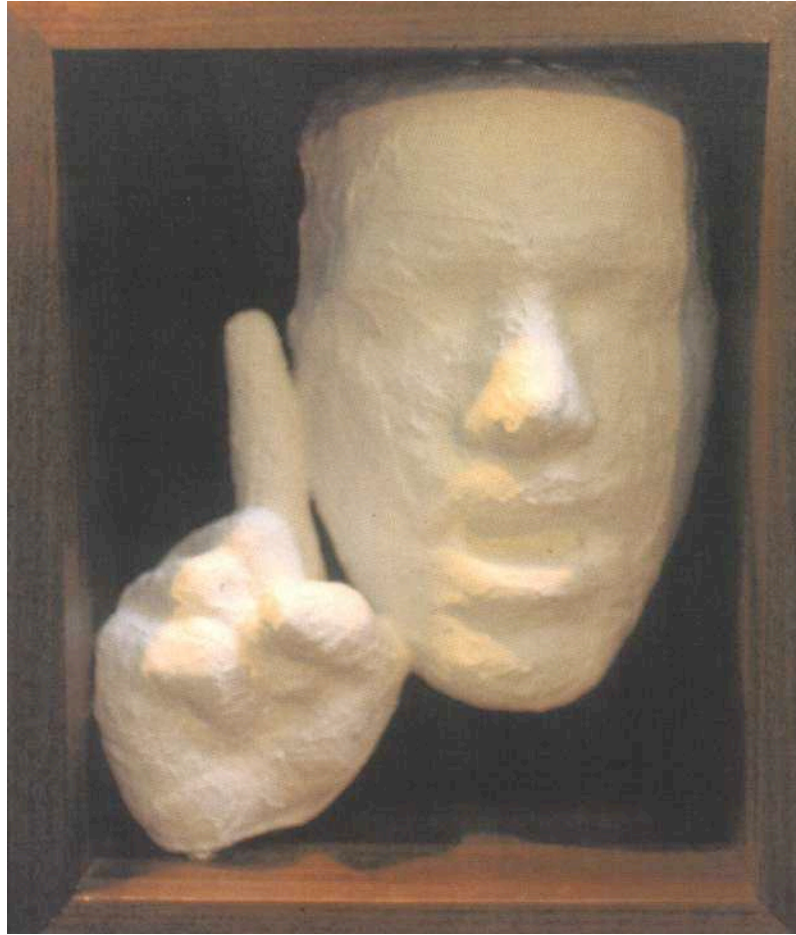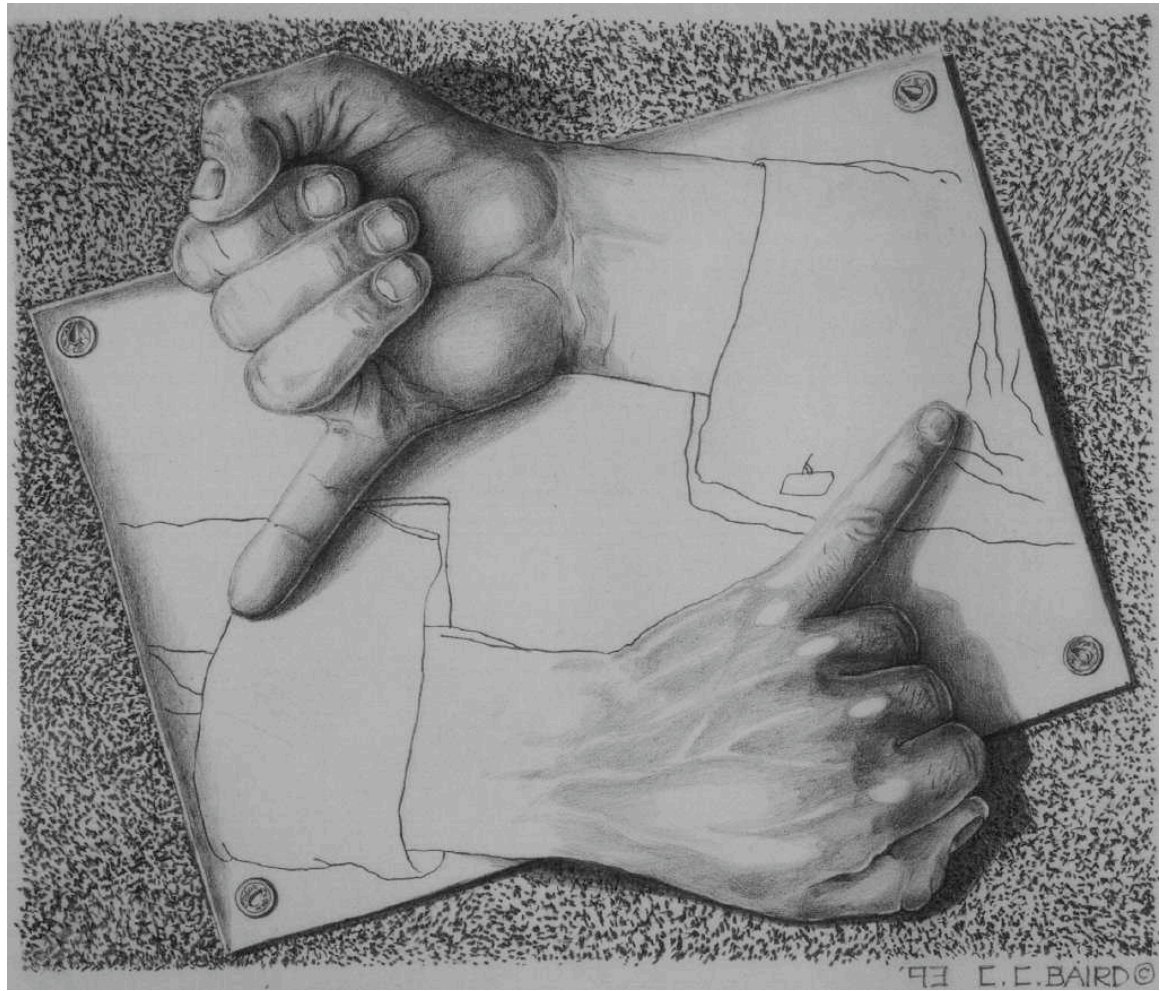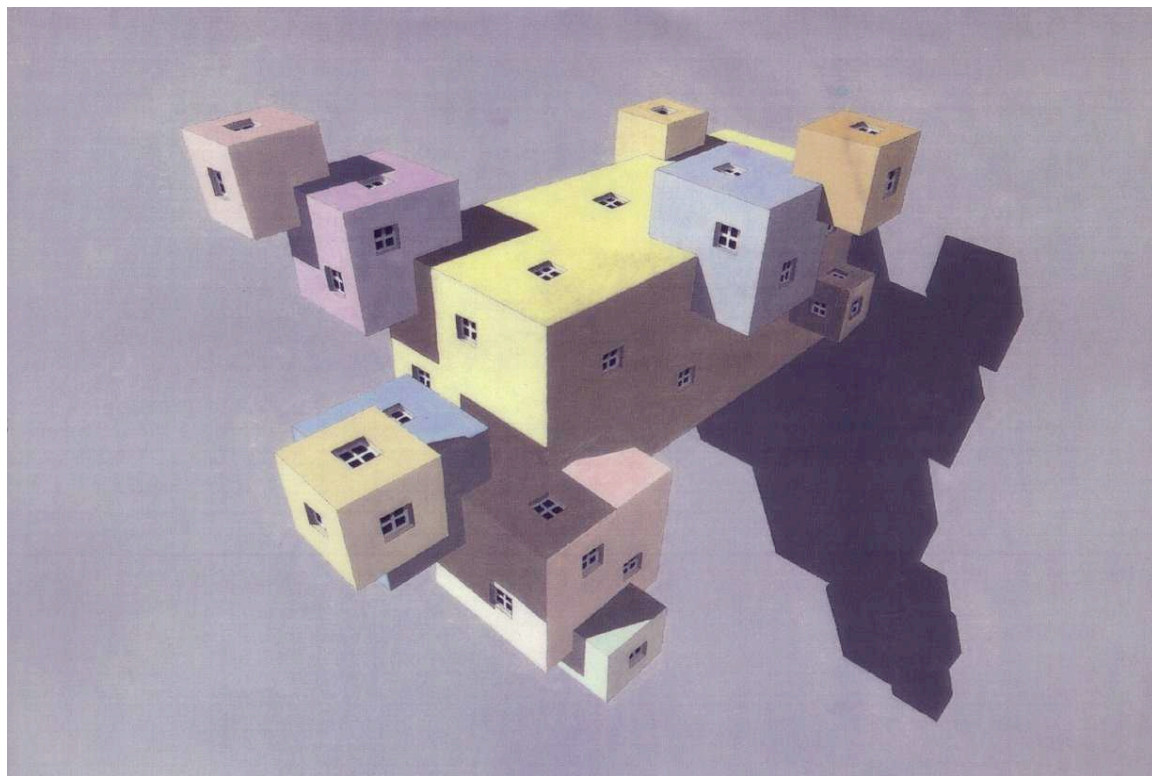
Chapter 7

Discussion, Conclusions and Implications

7.0 Endings

Drawing this thesis to a close requires one final discussion based upon the preceding three chapters. This is followed by a brief conclusion and an analysis of the issues and implications that emerged during its course; both methodological and subject specific.

7.1 Discussion

The function of art in Deaf lives and communities, as proposed by the artist informants, has been explored in Chapters 4 and 5. Furthermore, artworks created by Deaf artists have been presented in an exhibition-like manner in Chapter 6. The collective power of these three chapters has revealed to the reader the identification of Deaf visual art discourses, the purposes of Deaf visual arts and the quality and diversity apparent in the works themselves. Based on these findings, we can utilise O'Neill's (1993) assertion in relation to the place of art in the recovery of Irish identity, with respect to visual forms within Deaf spaces.

> Visual forms of representation were… major vehicles of the social and
> cultural articulation that led to… critical moments of self-definition

Consequentially, there is one final dimension to this wider Deaf art discourse that demands serious attention before any conclusions can be drawn. It is vital that we step out of the project itself, and see it for what it is. This is a critical ethnographic exploration of the discourses of Deaf visual artists; it appears that it is crucial at this stage to consider the 'use' of such an exploration. This study has demonstrated a commitment to empowerment of those who have informed it. It is therefore vital to understand exactly how such work can be of benefit by exploring implications beyond the need to record and archive.

This discussion proposes that this study potentially has a place beyond the Deaf art world it seeks to represent.

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[180] O'Neill, 1993; 56

It is my contention that the Deaf art space could be seen as a mirror, indeed a microcosm of the wider Deaf space, with Deaf art and its discourses indicative of, and beneficial to a wider comprehension of the Deaf peoples and communities.

Art cannot remain isolated; it does not come from a void. Art is constantly bound up with forming and performing culture (Cheetham et al, 1998). We, the audience, are subjects in a world of objects, and as Preziosi (1996) suggests, the dramaturgy of the self may be reflected in a subject's relationship to the surrounding objects. On these grounds, art embodies our culture whilst we simultaneously come to know our culture by our relationship with objects. This dialogical dynamic can be seen as, 'you are your stuff, you are what you make' and vice versa 'your stuff and what you make is, in a sense, you.' [181]

On these grounds, art is clearly a privileged subject matter when assessing communities. Art is a valuable cultural indicator should we wish to gain greater understanding about a people and their ways of seeing and being. By implication then, art is a tool available to us when we are assessing the past and its historically determined social realities. It has been suggested that it is not only the literal art works that serve this role, but the wider rhetoric surrounding art discourses. The narratives attached to artworks and the institutions surrounding them are reflective of certain social realities (Preziosi, 1996). Works of art are telling. What we do with them and the rhetoric surrounding them is perhaps more insightful.

As Bann (1998) suggests, the identity of a century can be expressed in the rhetoric of an exhibition. It is his belief that the mechanisms adopted throughout history as regards visual display of art objects are indicative of the time from which they come.   Alluding to the Nietzschian 'Spirit of an Age' or 'Zeitgeist', he suggests that by surveying the past via cultural and institutional indicators we can gain a deeper understanding of the societies and times from which they came.

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[181] As discussed by Preziosi, in a one-off lecture at the University of Bristol History of Art Department (2002).

With reference to the project at hand, the identity or state of a community can be expressed, not only through the art works but also through the wider discourse and rhetoric surrounding the art space. Art produced at different epochs in Deaf history is reflective of differing Deaf historical situations. In a time before deafness acquired the negative connotations inspired by the medical model, there was no need to point out implicitly or otherwise Deaf issues in a work of art. However, when the Oralist ideology took hold, the creation of works by Deaf people deteriorated alongside their community and culture (Mirzoeff, 1996). Similarly, during the recent Deaf Resurgence, there has been an explosion of creativity (Ladd, 2003). When Deaf people have fought political campaigns, art has served its purpose. When Deaf people celebrate their culture; art too serves its role as suggested in 2.2.

We can take this one step further. What is taking shape in the Deaf space is revealed in the Deaf art world and vice versa. Furthermore, what is taking shape in the Deaf art world is a *concentrated version of events and dynamics that are part of the whole Deaf space*. The importance of this assertion lies in the fact that the wider Deaf space is vast and complex due to its tangled history, as described in Chapter 2. It is proposed that the Deaf art space is a valuable and effective mechanism for untangling the wider Deaf space. In Deaf art we perceive diversity, politics, the impact of Oralism, the imposition of existential questions, the need for identity recovery, the move towards self definition, disability issues, problems rooted in linguistic barriers, a dependence on hearing people and facilitators, lack of self esteem and the search for definitions.

There is an ambiguous and uneasy sentiment towards issues such as integration and mainstreaming. These sentiments, together with accompanying internal politics, are apparent in both the Deaf art space and the Deaf space. The question I propose then is, what else can be seen clearly and tangibly with the subculture of the Deaf art world, which might make sense of complex factors present in the wider Deaf space? This is left for future research to consider.

Works of art are:

> Construed as the most distinctive and telling of human products, the most paradigmatic and exemplary of our activities, more fully revelatory and evidentiary in all their details than any other objects… in the world.[182]

The discourse and rhetoric surrounding art objects can reveal much about the Spirit of the Age (Bann, 1998). Approaching the art-worlds and the artworks of minority communities is not only an important part of their liberation and self-definition, but importantly the majority cultural understanding of them and by implication of the individual majorities and our own thoughts, beliefs and actions.

> To think our way back beyond art has always been to think our way back beyond human.[183]

We must observe and analyse the art space and its discourses in a way appropriate to the communities from which they come, for the revelations and wider implications the art space retains will go unnoticed if we fail to acknowledge that the wider art space is a deeply felt, historically determined, culturally implicit reflection of a people.

7.2 Conclusion

This study began with a search for a discourse. The initial search suggested that there was little existing discourse. An exploration of Deaf communities and their histories in Chapter 2 revealed reasons for this. The predominance of the medical model, together with the effects of oppression and Oralism have directly contributed towards the diminished creative and artistic output of Deaf communities.

Extant discourses reflect Deaf peoples and the Deaf world today; a world in a state of change. Lost histories are recovered; broken communities are rebuilt through the processes of collecting a culture (Humphries, 2002). These activities are all facets within a wider decolonisation process and the existing discourses reflect the stage that they are at in this process. It was established in 2.3 that art

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[182] Preziosi, 1996: 289
[183] Preziosi, 1996: 290

plays an important role in social life. Case studies were presented, illustrating the way in which the art space served its unique function within the reconstruction and empowerment of deracinated peoples. This leads us to examine whether such a model of art within oppressed societies could be applied to the art of the Deaf space.

An overall picture emerged (see Chapter 5), suggesting that art serves a series of functions for the Deaf informants, by way of its role not only in individual lives, but also in the lives of the community and potentially the majority society. A selection of art works by Deaf people was put on offer in Chapter 6, serving as an accessible space for contemplation of the objects in question, with minimal mediation on the part of the researcher.

To summarise, art can be seen to fit into a set of 'spaces' whereby it plays its useful role, whilst the discourses surrounding the Deaf art world are in tune with the present stage of liberation. Art serves a purpose here both reflecting and predicting social change. Furthermore there is a purpose to exploring this Deaf art space. There are implications to be explored in light of this project regarding methodology, dissemination and further research as well as deeper thought regarding the potential impact of this kind of research on the Deaf art world.

7.3 Implications

Certain issues and implications emerged throughout the course of the study. In the pages that follow, these shall be explored with reference to the methodology employed, the dissemination possibilities and a call for further research.

7.3.1 Methodological Implications

Worthy of note is the extent to which the methodological issues which arose became intertwined with the project as a whole. Much of what is described in Chapter 4 was not anticipated at the beginning of the research, nor was included in the original design. It is, however, a vital component of the study and therefore cannot be excluded.

What follows are brief explanations of the various facets of research that have raised issues, some of which must be seen as a call for further research, while others must be regarded as healthy dilemmas when carrying out research in a small community in a state of flux.

Critical ethnography

It is clear from the amount and quality of data collected that critical ethnography is useful when researching the Deaf community (West, 2001). The employment of such a methodology was based upon the need to move away from the ethnocentric bias often incorporated in cross-cultural research projects and on these grounds has been achieved. The dialogical nature of the data collection and the aim at co-operative praxis did however result in some unanticipated issues. The stringent levels of validation required to keep this research as Deaf led as possible resulted in a more time-consuming process than I had planned for. The amount of time involved in transcribing tapes, making adjustments, selecting quotes, finalising selections and returning them to informants at each stage, cannot be underestimated. The constant checking process and ongoing validation meant relying heavily on the informants who all have busy lives and their own commitments and priorities. These factors must be considered and accounted for in further critical ethnographic products where validation is equated with quality.

The Researcher

From the outset, both the extent to which the researcher affects the field and how the researcher role within that field might be perceived and understood were of

constant concern. The deep levels of self-analysis and introspection this project has demanded should be addressed. In order for such introspection to remain positive rather than detrimental to the study, it is necessary to accept that some issues are irresolvable. This acceptance could be regarded as a leap of faith, for the benefit of the research and its goals.

All interpretations made within this project are based on specific experience and theoretical grounding. The reader might interpret meanings differently due to their own backgrounds and experiences, which may or may not impact upon the value of my inferences. Raising these issues throughout has contributed to the worth of this study. I have aimed to be honest and transparent throughout; the reader may evaluate the success of this endeavour for themselves.

The Supervisor

Much mention has been made of the significance of working with a Deaf supervisor who holds such status within the Deaf field. It is difficult to document this topic referentially for there appears to be no existing discourse on the matter within Deaf Studies, and little within other Minority Studies. On these grounds the Deaf Supervisor-Hearing Researcher dynamic requires further examination and reflection on the part of both supervisee and supervisor. This deeper level of reflection has been initiated, and much of what was experienced and contemplated over the course of this project has informed recent debate concerning validity, ownership and responsibility in Deaf Studies research (see Appendix E).

Until Deaf people are analytical and publicly critical about research done by non-community members, there will be no standards and benchmarks of exemplary work for hearing researchers to work towards achieving. This is clearly worthy of deeper consideration.

Catalytic Validity

As was documented in 3.4.6 and further detailed in 5.2.4, the catalytic possibilities of this project were not necessarily anticipated and were only fully appreciated

when realised. The project's aim was always to reach beyond the boundaries of the academic sphere, and to a certain extent we can see that this has been achieved. The artists have embarked on a deeper, more critical examination of Deaf art discourses and have had their field validated through the research process and its product, both actual and potential. Significantly I am implicated in this discourse, thus moving towards researcher informant collaboration, which potentially serves as a basis for the next phase of the project, that is, dissemination.

Dissemination

At best, catalytic validity must be viewed as a fluid ongoing process. This project marks the start of this process but by no means fulfils the liberatory objectives of the project. It is through meaningful dissemination that empowerment can be acheived. As was pointed out by Omeima in Chapter 4, the most important thing is to make the research visual due to the important link Deaf people have with the visual. This points to the disparity between the final academic product and an accessible community product; the academic thesis alone will not suffice. Dissemination then is dependent upon a number of factors, most importantly, collaboration. For it is only in collaboration that this will become fully empowering. Extending the project without the Deaf people involved (supervisor, gatekeepers and informants) would only serve to lose the spirit of the entire endeavour, and be seen, at worst, as betrayal.

High on the informants' agenda, was the notion of effective dissemination as a means to raise the profile of art within Deaf lives. Their allusion to positive role models leads us to consider the most effective means to create such models and to reveal them to future generations of Deaf people. Publications, curricula for schools, touring exhibitions, catalogues, videos, websites, cultural festivals and further public discussion forums have all been suggested for this purpose. The notion of making a piece of academic research accessible to the community in question is worthy of deeper consideration. These more tangible outcomes would serve to liberate further than would an unpublished text in English, which might not necessarily be the most accessible format. Such a venture would also require

funding and support and is, on these grounds, a project for the future, beyond the confines of this thesis.

Research with minority communities and weight

Making the research useful is a serious issue within the Deaf community. It was suggested in Chapter 2, that the Deaf world is 'finding a voice' (Humphries, 2002) and that they are bound up with collecting their culture to project outwards to the majority society. A study such as this potentially provides a forum and encourages the exploration of 'voice'.

The process is twofold and requires the location of both the informant and the researcher voice/sign. Alongside members of minority communities who have yet to articulate their hearing allies need also to establish ways of being heard/seen. In the absence of any benchmarks pertaining to this precarious practice, any message offered runs the risk of appearing final, comprehensive and absolute. The accompanying burden stands in direct opposition to inherent feelings of vulnerability.

Had this piece of work evolved within a more established subject area, the responsibilities might not have been so heavy and the contribution to the field less significant. As it stands, this is one of the only, if not *the* only piece of research of its kind assessing Deaf arts by way of critical ethnographic data collection. As a consequence, there is greater pressure not to misrepresent or damage, and to do justice to all involved parties

A mutually acceptable text

Based on these assertions, a mutually acceptable text is clearly the aim. Whilst respondent validation has approached this, informants have not had access to a final version prior to submission. Should a collaborative framework develop as regards dissemination, I would be very keen for all gatekeepers and informants to read the finished product should they so wish. This way, there could be a chapter or afterword, a commentary or a response from the community in question. This would serve to further validate the research. Furthermore it would create that

essential critical feedback if we are ever to improve the situation regarding majority society members researching with/on/for minority community members. To summarise it is vital that we (Deaf people and their hearing allies) assess the processes that have led us here, and proceed in a fashion that will be most productive and empowering.

7.3.2 Other issues and implications

Self and Other

Initially, our exploration of the Self and Other led us to realise that we need to re-address the issue of 'difference' (Skliar, 2003) when talking about cultures that are distinct from our own. We need to retrace our steps in order to create less ethnocentric outlooks, to cease equating equality with sameness and to consider diversity as a model for future cultural encounters. The ethnocentric outlook which purveys can, in this sense, be equated with 'fear'. This fear stems from ignorance which in turn results in oppression that is more concerned with the self than the other:

> People are quite afraid of human diversity and look to their social institutions to limit or eradicate it… the history of relations between the society of hearing-speaking people and the community of deaf-signing people is an excellent case study in the motives and means at work when fear of diversity leads majorities to oppress minorities.[184]

Further research based upon this outlook is essential if we are ever going to truly comprehend the notion of otherness.

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[184] Lane, 1989:xiiv

Deaf

The present state of the Deaf field can be summarised as Deaf people being caught in a moment of self-definition, rediscovery and liberation, of crawling out of the mechanics of the elaborate 'pinball machine' (Bechter, 2002). This liberation requires making sense of an apparently 'nonsensical' oppression where, importantly, both sides of the battle can begin to reassess their values and their motives. With the support of academic research, greater understanding on everyone's part, and coalition of Deaf and hearing, it is hoped that any fear might turn into a mutual respect - that hearing people might begin to see Deaf people and their culture in all its richness and diversity. In turn, Deaf people might begin to see the acceptance of power that they, to a certain extent, have perpetuated under the model of dysconscious audism as discussed in 2.1 (Gertz, 2002).

This needs to take place on two levels. Hearing people need to reassess the 'game' they have created, and Deaf people might need to begin to consider post-Resurgence people as a new and different breed, generations away from their colonial predecessors. However it must also be accepted that we cannot change the past; the shadow of history remains ever present.

If we are to see Deaf people as being in the throes of self-liberation, we must admit to the fact that some hearing discourses
 are simultaneously creating a further set of oppressive ideologies as suggested in 2.1.5.

Deaf Art

Deaf expressions then play their role in this liberation. Art as well as poetry and theatre have been described in 2.1. and 2.2 as sites in which rebuilding can be located. However, the Deaf art discourse remains in an embryonic state, in a biographical phase where people are still inquiring as to what it is. This reductive questioning is hindering the expansion and progression of Deaf art discourse. Ultimately this expansion has to come from the Deaf people and artists themselves. Research such as this can offer tools, but Deaf people need to

choose how best to use them. Questions emerging here concern whether or not the process can be accelerated and whether there is a space for a hearing researcher such as myself to be a catalyst in this speeding up process.

The contribution of Deaf artists to Deaf Studies and Deaf discourses needs to be recognised. The artists involved in this project are both aware and critical of the metaphorical 'spanner in the works'. The natural progression is to examine the cause of that 'spanner'. As an outsider to the community might suggest several causes: that the internal politics are damaging the community and their collective power; the obsession with labelling issues creates unnecessary splits and internal battles; and the futile search for definitions is hindering the possibility of progress. These are ideas put forward by this ethnographer, and are not claimed to be the final word, but hope to inspire further debate.

All these issues are simultaneously part of Deaf art discourses, and should not be considered as 'wrong'. They are however, factors hindering the further development of these discourses. The artists perhaps need to realise that all this is healthy and natural; that it is part of the Deaf art discourse process. Once they see this perhaps they can proceed more easily.

These issues are deeply rooted in the Deaf peoples' consciousness (Ladd, 2003). Resentment, bitterness and anger are all a natural part of any decolonisation process. What does need to be addressed though, is who or what are these emotions directed at. If we think about this rationally, that anger and bitterness has Oralism to blame; Oralism, and those who espoused the Oralist ideology. We have to be careful to blame Oralism here, *not* Deaf people and *not* hearing people, for not all hearing people espouse the Oralist legacy. Many of the negative issues surrounding the internal dynamics of the Deaf space we have explored can be explained thus.

The debate over 'who is deaf' and 'who is Deaf', might also be seen as an obsession on the part of human beings to taxonomise, categorise and label. Luczak (2003) published a set of thoughts on the topic of Deaf art and artists. His

view is useful in that he has pondered these questions for some time, and as an artist himself he has clearly reached some answers of his own.

> As a deaf artist, you must have asked: What is art? What qualifies deaf art as such? Or Deaf art, with a capitalized D?… Some people may say that … sign language must be part of the artwork. Others may say that depicting the impact of hearing loss is essential. And a few might venture to say that the hatred of speech therapy is a prerequisite for deaf art. The list of possible criteria for deaf art or any kind of art, for that matter is endless. Which is the way it should be.

> My answer to the question of deaf art is this: Don't even answer it. I repeat, *refuse* to answer it. Don't even try.[185]

Anti essentialism

The application of Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances is helpful when contemplating 'What is art?' (see 2.3). It is also useful when contemplating, 'What is Deaf?' and furthermore when attempting to essentialise 'What is Deaf art?' Importantly the incorporation of an anti-essentialist outlook does not take away any strength or power within a concept or group, for:

> The strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres.[186]

The strength of Deaf peoples can in fact be based upon the diversity within the group, whereby there might be a space for a collective goal within which a united front can be revealed, yet accommodating and encompassing the diversity and difference within it. One of many possibilities, the reader is invited to reflect and interpret from within their own frameworks upon the project and to understand it as such.

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[185] Luczak, 2002:39
[186] Wittgenstein, 1972: 32

7.4 Summary

This study has explored a set of Deaf artists' worldviews within a contextualised framework. The group of artists involved was small, predominantly female and all based in London. Critical ethnographic methods have generated an enormous amount of data, much which has been set aside due to the limitations put upon an academic study. A future space for this surplus data might come to the fore at the dissemination stage, however we have noted that dissemination is, to a certain extent, contingent upon the artists and the Deaf people from which this came. The move towards empowerment has been initiated, but by no means completed. There is an obvious call for further support and interest in the Deaf arts field. The artists clearly have something to say. This impacts on our understanding of the wider Deaf space and by implication other minority communities.

What can be claimed in light of this study is that art has a purpose in the liberatory agenda and plays a significant role in the (re)building of broken communities. The discourse in this field is still in its early stages, thus the function of art in the Deaf space is yet to be fully realised.

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Appendix A

I have included this text from the first work on UK Deaf Culture and its political frameworking precisely because it uses d/Deaf art as a metaphor to reveal positive statements regarding Deafhood and to actively illustrate metaphorical events which serve to stand as a reading of Deaf history. I was particularly moved and excited by the author telling me that 'this was done instinctively not consciously' (Ladd, 2004, personal communication).

Inside the Museums, Deafness Goes on Trial

"Reader, place yourself at the door of a building above which the sign '*Deafness*' is displayed. Entering the room, you will see all around a display of the various totems placed there by its curators - ear trumpets from the 17th century, hearing aids from the 20th century, models of the ear, and diagrams of its tiniest parts. Drawings of Deaf children being operated on by 18th century dignitaries who called themselves doctors, photographs of 19th century children, their mouths forced open with silver tools in order to bring forth sounds, and of children in the 20th century weighed under by headphones half the size of their heads. On the walls are paintings in gilded frames of doctors and benefactors in impressive robes modelling the honours laid on them by a grateful society. And in a corner marked 'The Future' are more models, of scintillating operations carried out close to the brain itself, and of the human genome project, illustrating the genetic mutations of deafness due for honour-bestowing removal in the not-so-distant decades.

At the very back of the hall there is a wall, behind which is a room whose existence is under dispute. Deaf people and their friends have asserted that there *is* in fact a room behind the wall, whilst those with vested interests (and considerable control over the lives of the Deaf community) decry this as wishful thinking and demand irrefutable proof. (Perhaps, one might say, like those who make similar demands on the subject of global warming before feeling the need to take any action at all). My task has been to locate a door in that wall, and to draw attention to its existence by affixing a notice to it…

… Whilst examining the room, I could not help but notice some of the paintings therein, which all seemed to be turned to face the wall. On righting them, I noticed that each embodied themes which had not previously been recognised. These themes seemed to run in complete contrast to the way that the professional world had defined issues relating to Deaf people. The paintings spoke of communities all across the world who were experiencing joy in their collective existence, a defiant pride in their sign languages, and deep pleasure at the sight of new generations of small children taking the first steps to reproduce their thoughts and feelings on their hands. They spoke of people whose lives were not motivated by a sadness in not being able to hear birds singing, or who were not primarily motivated to come together by any sense of loneliness or exclusion, although, being human, such emotions could still be recognised. They spoke of oppression of these communities by those supposedly charged with responsibility for their welfare. But they also portrayed a clear sense of the ingenuity, determination and humour by which they struggled to resist that oppression. Their tales, as represented by their language illustrated in the paintings, were so inspiring that it became clear that beneath them lay an even deeper set of themes.

It is the latter that I have labelled '*Deafhood*'. Deafhood is not, however, a 'static' medical condition like 'deafness'. Instead, it represents a process - the struggle by each Deaf child, Deaf family and Deaf adult to explain to themselves and each other their own existence in the world. In sharing their lives with each other as a community, and enacting those explanations rather than writing books about them, Deaf people are engaged in a daily praxis, a continuing internal and external dialogue. This dialogue not only acknowledges that existence, as a Deaf person is actually a process of *becoming* and maintaining 'Deaf', but also reflects different interpretations of Deafhood, of what being a Deaf person in a Deaf community might mean.

Furthermore, in the recent years I have termed the *Deaf Resurgence,* people have also found the psycho-cultural space to begin to ask - what could a Deaf person, and a Deaf community *become*? What could we have been had not sign language and Deaf teachers been removed from Deaf education after the Milan 'Congress' of 1880, a date as pregnant with meaning for us as 1492 is for Native Americans. What could we have been had we not been forced to endure more than a century of English illiteracy, self-shame and stigma? Who and what *were* we in the centuries before such prohibitions descended, when Deaf professionals and Deaf pride was reputedly much stronger? And what can we bring forward from those times which might inform the fledgling steps we must take in this 21st century?

The drive to answer these questions, the process of becoming - these I have called *Deafhood*. Deafhood affirms that how we have been these past 120 years is not all that we truly are. It affirms the existence of a Deaf sense of *being*, both within the individual and throughout the collective, which, like a river surging against a dam, cannot rest until it can find a way through that will take it down to a sea of Life, where all human souls are enabled both to find their fullest self expression and to interpenetrate each other.

Without a knowledge or understanding of the existence of this collective sense of Deaf Weltanschauung, and all the implications this has for those who make decisions about Deaf communities, it is our contention that, for all the pieces of paper, medals, or white coats one might possess, those 'qualifications' are not only worthless, but actively dangerous…

…Before I left that room, with a deepened appreciation that the tales so passionately conveyed by the figures in the paintings could not be adequately translated into mere English prose, I had determined that the notice on the door should be amended to '*Deaf Culture and Deafhood*'.

However, I then noticed that the paintings had been arranged in a particular pattern. The hand movements in them pointed towards the far wall, where a metal shutter hung. On looking more closely, I discovered that behind the shutter lay a door directly leading to the world outside. The message became clear - the way to truly enter this room was not via the one I had just come from - instead, the task was to re-open the door in that wall, so that all who were interested could now enter directly, without having to have their perceptions mediated by the 'miracles' on display in the room of *deafness.*

At this moment, it occurred to me with no little amusement, that room itself was perhaps more properly regarded as a kind of annexe to the one I found myself in - an exhibition of curios belonging to another tribe of beings who had sought to remake Deaf people in their own image - or perhaps more appropriately, in their own limited image of themselves. As for more detailed description of the paintings and the other contents- ah, such interpretations would have to wait their turn in another volume. I could but hope that those who finally gained entrance could begin the process of removing the sign I intended to affix on the other side of the door, and to replace it with another - on the inside this time - which finally described the curios and their tribe of practitioners in a more appropriate form - one which read *'Colonialist Relics'.*

This thought caused me to look back at the paintings, and I noticed that many of the Deaf people of old had included those who could hear amongst their company. Some were able to sign with them, some stood on the conversation fringe admiringly, and some were going about their lives simply respecting that relationship. The paintings seemed to encompass virtually the entire history of humankind, across the whole planet. Some revealed the high prestige of sign language and Deaf people at the Ottoman court. Others illustrated the cooperation between hearing and Deaf people during the French Revolution. One set showed Queen Victoria signing with a Deaf servant. Others illustrated societies from Mexico to Martha's Vineyard to the Bedouin nomads to Bali, where all its members, both Deaf and hearing, could communicate in Sign.

These images, it was clear, reminded us that hearing people had indeed once passed through that door - indeed numbers of those portrayed in the paintings seemed to look expectantly towards it, some with an expression of puzzlement that the flow of visitors had for so long dwindled in number.

Suddenly I realised why for so many years, expressions like 'the public', or 'society' had irritated me so much when used in respect of Deaf people. They were anonymous terms somehow, meaning everything and therefore nothing at all. The figures portrayed in the paintings were not 'professionals'. They were living and breathing 'lay people' - lay as in the sense of 'non-expert', whose reality needed to be distinguished from the 'experts' in the annexe. Numbers of such 'lay people' existed in the past… And it became clear once more, the multitudes of the Future wait beyond that door - if one chooses to recognise them. For we are all at times lay people - except for that privileged few whose self-proclaimed 'experthood' blinds them to that reality. Moreover, at many different times and in many different ways across the globe, this triangulation has enabled the downfall of many bigger buildings than this one. In less fashionable times this used to be known as 'solidarity'. Now, instead of the movie adage, 'If you build it, they will come', it seemed to be more a case of 'If you believe it, and demonstrate it, they will return'.

And at that moment, the portraits of Desloges, Berthier and Deseine, of Massieu, Clerc, Burns and Kirk, of Foster, Suwanarat and Mercurio, of Miles, Philip and Woodhouse, of Barwiolek, Mc-Kinney and de Fay seemed to move their hands in turn - 'If lay people are able to behold us here, we too will return'.

 I realised then my duty was not only to the Deaf and lay peoples of the 21st century, but to those pioneers of the past, whose works illustrated the exciting larger dimensions that Deafhood offered to the future. Surely, I though, the achievements of these people

deserved not only to be recognised and respected, but also admitted to the range of discourses taking place within and across the other oppressed groups, as located in the works of Du Bois, and Said, Biko and Black Elk, Benedict and Geertz, Fanon and Marcuse, Foucault and Freire, Williams, Thompson and Hall?

As I left the Deaf room and walked back past the exhibits, it was clear that one could not harbour any illusions that those who maintained the annexe would give up their power quietly. Closing the door behind me, and walking down the long luxurious driveway towards the gates, passing rows of statues erected to revere those who had colonised other peoples and other languages, it was impossible not to notice that most of those subject peoples had attained a degree of freedom which would have caused those figures to turn in their graves. With a renewed hope that people in our society would, if properly directed, be able once again to listen to the signs and tales told by the hands in the paintings, I let myself out, in such a state of reverie that it was only later that I realised I had forgotten to ask the man at the ticket booth in the white coat for my money back...'

Appendix B

Amy Forbes-Robertson
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Dear…

Presently I am researching issues surrounding 'Deaf Art'. This is taking place at the University of Bristol and I am working with Paddy Ladd. We both feel very strongly that there seems to be a massive lack of research/information regarding Deaf Art and Artists. We also feel that few people have asked or are willing to ask Deaf Artists what they think, nor have they given them the space to talk about their work. We would like to gather this information, record it and bring it together as a valuable resource for others.

We are hoping to do exactly this, starting by asking you to be involved. If you are interested in partaking in some informal chats, interviews and group discussions, we would be really pleased to work with you towards expanding this field. The possibilities for the final product are endless; from curricula for schools, to publications, to exhibitions/workshops together with an increased dialogue between Deaf artists - nationwide, even worldwide.
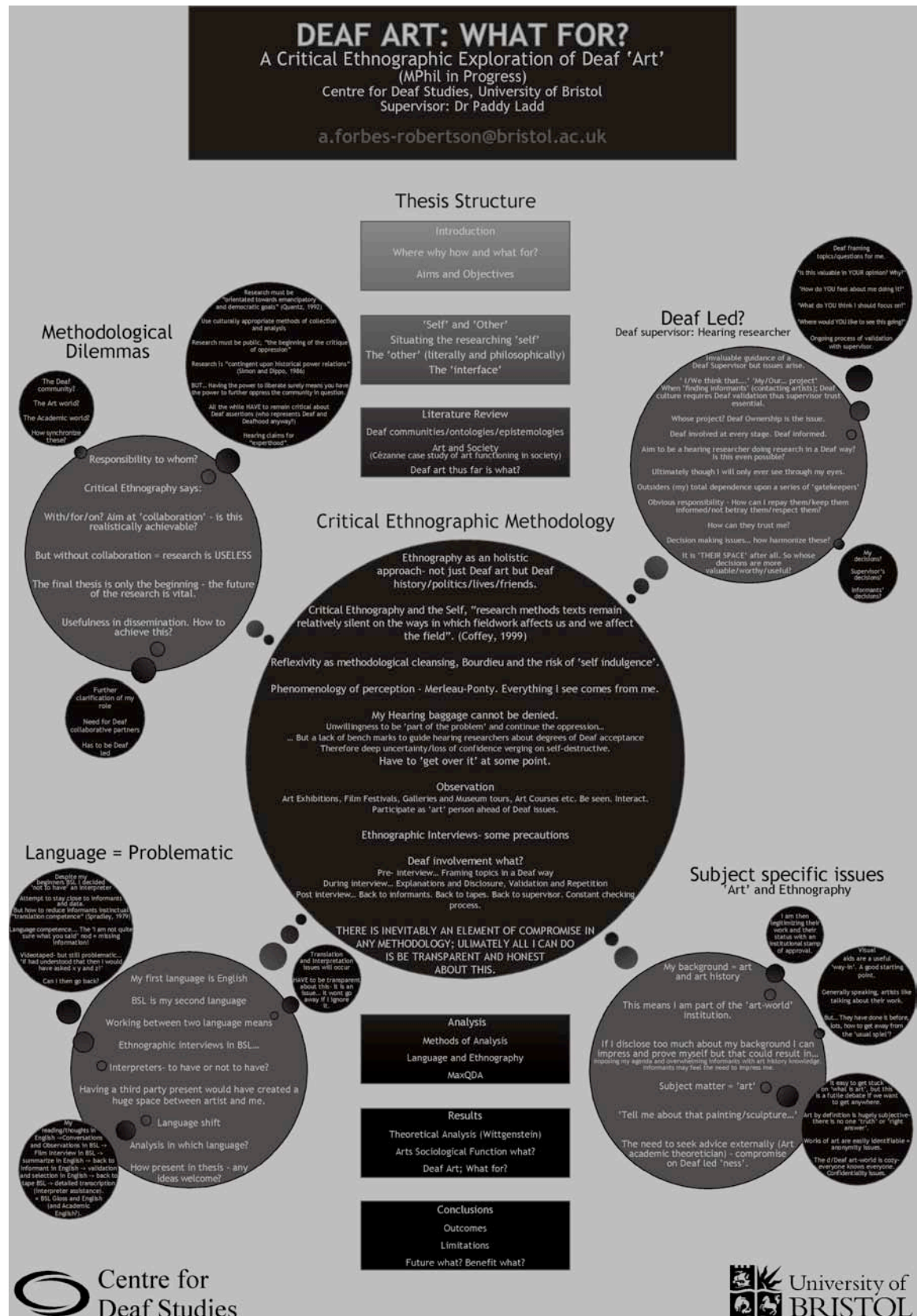
We feel that you and your work have a valuable contribution to make to this project, and hope that you will get in touch with us at the above address.

Look forward to hearing from you.
Best Wishes

Amy

DEAF ART: WHAT FOR?

A Critical Ethnographic Exploration of Deaf 'Art'
(MPhil in Progress)
Centre for Deaf Studies, University of Bristol
Supervisor: Dr Paddy Ladd

a.forbes-robertson@bristol.ac.uk

Thesis Structure

Introduction
Where why how and what for?
Aims and Objectives

'Self' and 'Other'
Situating the researching 'self'
The 'other' (literally and philosophically)
The 'interface'

Literature Review
Deaf communities/ontologies/epistemologies
Art and Society
(Cézanne case study of art functioning in society)
Deaf art thus far is what?

Methodological Dilemmas

Research must be "orientated towards emancipatory and democratic goals" (Quentz, 1992)

Use culturally appropriate methods of collection and analysis

Research must be public, "the beginning of the critique of oppression"

Research is "contingent upon historical power relations" (Simon and Dippo, 1986)

BUT... Having the power to liberate surely means you have the power to further oppress the community in question.

All the while HAVE to remain critical about Deaf assertions (who represents Deaf and Deafhood anyway?)

Hearing claims for "experthood"

The Deaf community?
The Art world?
The Academic world?
How synchronize these?

Responsibility to whom?

Critical Ethnography says:

With/for/on? Aim at 'collaboration' - is this realistically achievable?

But without collaboration = research is USELESS

The final thesis is only the beginning - the future of the research is vital.

Usefulness in dissemination. How to achieve this?

Further clarification of my role

Need for Deaf collaborative partners

Has to be Deaf led

Deaf Led?
Deaf supervisor: Hearing researcher

Deaf framing topics/questions for me.

'Is this valuable in YOUR opinion? Why?'

'How do YOU feel about me doing it?'

'What do YOU think I should focus on?'

'Where would YOU like to see this going?'

Ongoing process of validation with supervisor.

Invaluable guidance of a Deaf Supervisor but issues arise.

'I/We think that....' 'My/Our... project' When 'finding informants' (contacting artists); Deaf culture requires Deaf validation thus supervisor trust essential.

Whose project? Deaf Ownership is the issue.

Deaf involved at every stage. Deaf informed.

Aim to be a hearing researcher doing research in a Deaf way? Is this even possible?

Ultimately though I will only ever see through my eyes.

Outsiders (my) total dependence upon a series of 'gatekeepers'

Obvious responsibility - How can I repay them/keep them informed/not betray them/respect them?

How can they trust me?

Decision making issues... how harmonize these?

It is 'THEIR SPACE' after all. So whose decisions are more valuable/worthy/useful?

My decisions?
Supervisor's decisions?
Informants' decisions?

Critical Ethnographic Methodology

Ethnography as an holistic approach- not just Deaf art but Deaf history/politics/lives/friends.

Critical Ethnography and the Self, "research methods texts remain relatively silent on the ways in which fieldwork affects us and we affect the field". (Coffey, 1999)

Reflexivity as methodological cleansing, Bourdieu and the risk of 'self indulgence'.

Phenomenology of perception - Merleau-Ponty. Everything I see comes from me.

My Hearing baggage cannot be denied.
Unwillingness to be 'part of the problem' and continue the oppression...
... But a lack of bench marks to guide hearing researchers about degrees of Deaf acceptance
Therefore deep uncertainty/loss of confidence verging on self-destructive.
Have to 'get over it' at some point.

Observation
Art Exhibitions, Film Festivals, Galleries and Museum tours, Art Courses etc. Be seen. Interact.
Participate as 'art' person ahead of Deaf issues.

Ethnographic Interviews- some precautions

Deaf involvement what?
Pre- interview... Framing topics in a Deaf way
During interview... Explanations and Disclosure, Validation and Repetition
Post interview... Back to informants. Back to tapes. Back to supervisor. Constant checking process.

THERE IS INEVITABLY AN ELEMENT OF COMPROMISE IN ANY METHODOLOGY; ULIMATELY ALL I CAN DO IS BE TRANSPARENT AND HONEST ABOUT THIS.

Language = Problematic

Despite my beginners BSL I decided not to have an interpreter

Attempt to stay close to informants and data.
But how to reduce informants instinctual "translation competence" (Spradley, 1979)

Language competence... The 'I am not quite sure what you said' nod = missing information!

Videotaped- but still problematic... 'If I had understood that then I would have asked x y and z?!'

Can I then go back?

My first language is English

BSL is my second language

Working between two language means

Ethnographic interviews in BSL...

Interpreters- to have or not to have?

Having a third party present would have created a huge space between artist and me.

Language shift

Analysis in which language?

How present in thesis - any ideas welcome?

My reading/thoughts in English →Conversations and Observations in BSL → Film Interview in BSL → summarize in English → back to informant in English → validation and selection in English → back to tape BSL → detailed transcription (interpreter assistance). → BSL Gloss and English (and Academic English?).

Translation and interpretation issues will occur

HAVE to be transparent about this- It is an issue... It wont go away if I ignore it.

Subject specific issues
'Art' and Ethnography

I am then legitimizing their work and their status with an institutional stamp of approval.

My background = art and art history

This means I am part of the 'art-world' institution.

If I disclose too much about my background I can impress and prove myself but that could result in... imposing my agenda and overwhelming informants with art history knowledge. Informants may feel the need to impress me.

Subject matter = 'art'

'Tell me about that painting/sculpture...'

The need to seek advice externally (Art academic theoretician) - compromise on Deaf led 'ness'.

Visual aids are a useful 'way-in'. A good starting point.

Generally speaking, artists like talking about their work.

But... They have done it before, lots, how to get away from the 'usual spiel'?

It easy to get stuck on 'what is art', but this is a futile debate if we want to get anywhere.

Art by definition is hugely subjective- there is no one 'truth' or 'right answer'.

Works of art are easily identifiable = anonymity issues.

The d/Deaf art-world is cozy- everyone knows everyone. Confidentiality issues.

Analysis
Methods of Analysis
Language and Ethnography
MaxQDA

Results
Theoretical Analysis (Wittgenstein)
Arts Sociological Function what?
Deaf Art; What for?

Conclusions
Outcomes
Limitations
Future what? Benefit what?

Centre for Deaf Studies

University of BRISTOL

Appendix D

Dear Amy

…I've thought of any more contributions to your project and I think there's no more to add. You see, it's hard to figure all this out individually and there's nothing better than meeting in a group like one in Bristol's recent film festival and all our ideas suddenly pour out from nowhere or very deep in our conscience that we thought we never had! Ideas always thrive on inspirations/inputs from group settings...I apologise if I'm not much of any more help this time but I'm gratefully glad for the opportunity at Bristol and let's hope we'll have more debate in Bournemouth.

I understand that it'd be obviously too late to add on from Bournemouth but I wonder if it'd be archived for a possible 2nd edition or follow-up some time later (i think in your wish, many years time for a good break!) or something like a postscript that maybe published in some nice literature e.g Deaf Worlds, the International Journal of Deaf Studies?

I'm sure that your project on British Deaf Art will make a justifiable, accurate and well-informed portrayal of this subject. You have given all involved contributors plenty of opportunities to clarify, confirm and amend our statements. You deserve all the best credit and attention for all your hard work and commitment on it despite your personal dilemmas/concerns being from a hearing perspective. I truly applaud you!

Happy Holidays and have a really restful break. Put up your feet and sit by a fire and have a tipple!'

Appendix E

Our experiences of Deaf led research trying to develop positive Deaf-informed research projects with a Deaf advisor

Dr. Paddy Ladd
Amy Forbes-Robertson
Donna West
Janie Cristine Goncalves

Introduction

Little or nothing has been written about the experience of Deaf Studies hearing students working with Deaf advisors this far and the same is true for experiences between other majority culture groups working with minority or oppressed group leaders (e.g. black, native) – our aim is to share with you our Deaf hearing research collaboration experience and this workshop will help us analyse some key elements or reflections concerning issues of Deaf hearing research *collaboration* in the pair Deaf advisor/research hearing student/assistant. We will explore issues regarding Deaf and hearing collaboration, *communication, ethics and legitimacy, power and research validity*.

Our general research work has been based on the principles of Post Colonialism applied within Deaf Studies as the main theoretical background guiding our work and the reflections presented here will also reflect that. **Post colonialism** is a critical theory which investigates the discoursive condition of colonial relations and their aftermath withdrawing from cultural studies theoretical contributions. Deaf and hearing relations within research field have been of a colonial type since they started. We find it interesting to analyse the beginning of change of this scenario using this theoretical framework.

We have use Critical Ethnography as the main basis for our methodological action in the research work we describe here.

One of our aims with our research work is trying to find ways to make Deaf Studies research more Deaf-led/less hearing-led – since we believe this is the best way forward for hearing contribution within the field. We are all too aware of the historical context of research on Deaf people by hearing people.

Our struggle with that attempt in the development of our research projects[187] this far has made us reflect about principles and methodological issues concerning

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[187] The experiences reported here refer to the development of four pieces of research…Donna West MSc Degree dissertation (2002), Donna is currently working as a research assistant with Dr. Ladd on a research project entitled. Amy Forbes is currently

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Deaf-led research, a paradigm where Deaf people themselves are advisors, collaborators and participants (Lane, 1993), in order to draw the balance of power, control and ownership of the research away from the academic domain, and towards the socio-cultural reality that informs the study (Freire, 1998).

A critical socio historical and epistemological glimpse on this Deaf hearing encounter

The fact this research is Deaf-led needs to be assessed on the basis of the impact it has on the research product itself and not only on the advisor-student Deaf-hearing closed pair/group relations. We also believe the effects or outcomes of the Deaf hearing collaboration work that can reflect on wider Deaf and hearing communities are key issues to be taken into consideration.

The Deaf -hearing history within academia has been a record marked by hearing domination and very few attempts to demonstrate an actual equal collaboration and partnership between Deaf and hearing researchers have been made, reflective exceptions can be found in works such as Alys and Ackerman (2001).

The new encounter model described here, in which hearing people have a subaltern role in the research pair, *Deaf advisor - hearing student/ research assistant* hopefully might reflect the first signs of new collaboration, emancipatory and culturally productive work between Deaf and hearing people and their communities.

The Deaf struggle to produce Deaf academics and have the right to work in leading roles respected has been remarkable and worldwide congregation of Deaf academics have already taken place[188]. The academic system is ready for hearing advisors make their own choices and lead most research, so Deaf led research developed by a hearing researcher can be seen as a post colonial space/relation within a colonial state still.

Critical Ethnography guidance aiming for Deaf led, Deaf informed research

Some specific Critical Ethnography principles have been applied to our work with the purpose of developing Deaf led research, despite our level of autonomy as researchers can vary according to the type of project being developed[189] :

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concluding her MPhil Degree. Janie Goncalves is developing a Project on Deaf education in the south of Brazil aiming for her doctoral degree in the year 2005.

[188] Deaf academics have been meeting in the latest years. The first meetings have happened in America (2002, 2003) and have put together Deaf academics from different parts of the world.

[189] MSc, MPhil research, Ph.D. research or an independent research project not aiming for a Degree (like the one being developed by Dr. Ladd and Donna West and referred before)

Reflexivity: This principle refers, among other things, to the attention that must be paid to the status, experience, and background of the researchers through a constant process of scrutiny and self-analysis (Hertz, 1997, Boucher, 2000);

Transparency: This means any relevant decision within the project made by the researchers will first be put to the Deaf informants or consulting/validation groups involved for discussion and approval;

Data Analysis Triangulation and Validation: Emerging themes and concepts from the data are referred back to the informants in order for them to approve that analysis. Data gathered at every stage of the project will be brought to focus groups in order to explore, explain, contextualise, dispute and elaborate on the data until the final interpretation is chosen;

Knowledge Creation and Ownership: The concept of Deaf-led Deaf research is based on the understanding that the Deaf informants, together with the researchers, are the creators of the intellectual property, and that in this respect, they ultimately have ownership of the research process itself;

Research Dissemination: The Deaf informants and advising groups are also expected to be involved in the decisions as to the most effective dissemination strategies and the key concepts for dissemination.

Some key issues on research as a collaborative construction between the cultures involved

We have been receiving regular tutorial support and advising for the development of our research projects from Dr. Ladd, an acknowledged key leading Deaf researcher whose academic and Deaf experience have been responsible for groundbreaking work in Deaf Studies (Ladd, 2000, 2003). The guidance and feedback received not only have helped us validate our findings from a cultural insider's perspective, but also have furthered our aim that our research be more Deaf-led and Deaf-informed at all levels. This, in our opinion however, seems to raise issues concerning ownership of research, since our supervisor is from within the culture being studied and we are not. A careful balance needs to be struck between a collaborative exchange of ideas and a supervisory validation of the researcher's work and hypotheses seems to be necessary.

It is common sense in our group that ultimately every piece of research depends on the people who are doing it – they each bring their own experiences, understandings, knowledge, personal feelings and find a way to work with those. It just feels like, within Deaf Studies, hearing and Deaf people working together can only benefit from sharing some of the issues involved in Deaf hearing collaboration work, being transparent with each other as they work together. This can help them explore and better understand not only the methodological, linguistic, political and cultural implications, but the personal impacts that Deaf-hearing relations brings on each of them and the reflects of the process on their communities.

Reflecting on our experience

We have selected the aspects and remarks that follow below while making an attempt to analyse our research journals and notes on our ourselves as hearing researchers, our Deaf advising experience and the principles of Deaf led informed research we strive to build. We have also had one group meeting and several other students' discussions before reaching these points.

1.Deaf advisor - Hearing research student/assistant collaboration

> We as students acknowledge the precious opportunity of having the guidance of a Deaf Supervisor and see it as an invaluable guidance into the culture of the other
>
> We are all aware we would not be able to   produce the kind of work we aim for without the help of a Deaf advisor and of the Deaf validation groups we are working with.
>
> A Deaf supervisor and hearing students working together is a new ground,   since the hearing supervisor and Deaf student or research assistant was the only model in the past.
>
> That situation can also build up extra outsiders' expectation on one's work because it is being developed under Deaf supervision and has been set the ambitious goal of being authentically a Deaf informed project.
>
>
> It is important to consider the multi-faceted role of the Deaf advisor; in some circumstances, there may be some more varied hat-switching than a common advisor would need to do :*advisor, supervisor, teacher, tutor, cultural member of the minority group studied, informant, gatekeeper and friend.* This functional eclectism demonstrates a movement towards a much more holistic, but as yet, unexplored/blurred model of research collaboration.
>
> The Deaf role mobility shown above,   could also be a sign of a phenomenon Deaf and hearing education researchers in South America have chosen to call   *Deaf Pedagogy*, meaning a particular way to teach that seems to be coming to evidence in settings where Deaf people are working in teaching positions and have autonomy in their work(Perlin, 2003; Skliar, 2003, Goncalves and Ramos-Gascon, 2003).

 As hearing students, we feel honoured to be in this fortunate position to work with a Deaf person, the unique academic and human value of the person we have been working with needs to be noted as a distinction. This fact is known to many

and we are using our experience and this space here also to validate these perceptions regarding the uniqueness of this professional.

2. Communication Issues

> Several languages and cultures working together - a Babel Tower communication syndrome;

> You do an experience a cross linguistic and cultural experience yourself through your own relationship to your advisor and informants;

> The most common languages used are British Sign Language and English, two of us are English and share the national identity of our advisor. However,   the linguistic and cultural maze can be even greater if you do not share the majority culture/language of your advisor, e.g. one of us is Brazilian. The game can add at least two other languages on stage, Portuguese and Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS).

> We believe cultural issues play as important a role as the linguistic ones so the hearing and Deaf cultures involved are also affecting the communication issues in the development of our work;

> Data interpretation issues arise too. Deaf informants' representations of situations are presented to the hearing researcher, who interprets this and presents to the Deaf advisor who who will assess and might reconstruct the interpretation with the student. The researcher will do a similar process with the informants themselves, either suggesting an interpretation or eliciting their own reading of it. So the chain is complex and a reconstruction is never inevitable (Geertz, 1973 second or third order interpretations).

> The same exercise above using data from the project about Brazil presents many more challenges to both student and advisor, since the distance, linguistic and cultural differences between the two and the community being studied adds difficulties.

3. Power, collaboration and research validity issues

How much do we (over?) rely on Deaf input in the research work in relation to the expected input from the responsible researcher (hearing) ?

How to achieve a balance? Is a balance what we are aiming for?

Is balance the same thing as collaboration?

However, we also need to ask ourselves to what extent can outsider researchers (hearing) benefit from the collaboration of cultural individuals (Deaf) who belong to the group being studied ?

We use the expression 'seeing through Deaf eyes' – since our advisor usually sees different things, notices things that maybe get overlooked, can see bigger picture whenever we present him an issue for discussion. However,

Are not we as people and students ultimately always seeing/reading/writing the situations through our eyes in the end?

Decision making issues… how can we harmonize these?
My decisions?
Supervisors' decisions?
Informants' decisions?
It is 'THEIR SPACE' after all. So whose decisions are more valuable/worthy/useful?

4. Ethics, power and Legitimacy

Despite we have guidance and close advising, our identity is not wiped away from the research. We need to be aware of our own identity as hearing to consider and predict , among other things, for the limitations of penetration in the field and cultural group we are researching about. In a way, this impossibility is an evidence of what we have   set out to prove – there are different cultures – Deaf and hearing-   and the boundaries have to be respected. Education and research are ultimate fields in which this cultural ethics should prevail. The outcomes of our work in the field   can testify that in a certain way. However, the sense of 'otherness' can also be felt by researchers working within their own cultural group…since identities are not fixed entities and the patterns of identification are intricate social and psychological processes (Skliar, 2002).

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The discourse ' I/We think that….' 'My/Our… project' reveals the underground debate on ownership issues in these Deaf/hearing collaborative work. We believe this kind of authorship/ownership has to be authentically shared between Deaf and hearing when they work together in Deaf Studies to generate a new epistemological qualitative view on the positivist concept of author and ownership to a work and acknowledge the need of Deaf-led research and Deaf input in the area at all levels. Changes in the ways formalities of the academic world and in current perceptions on the minority culture would be necessary to redress this issue;

There seems to be different ways of working between Deaf and hearing people. So it is important to establish each other's 'way' and be honest and critical about dialogues and interactions.

This might all seem like any other Supervisor/supervisee relationship dynamics BUT- is this whole thing any different with a Deaf supervisory one?
Is there an element of treading on eggshells?
Is there an element of not wanting to stomp in with hearing ways
Aren't we meant to be experiencing a   Deaf Way?

How are the power relations advisor-student   student-advisor being redressed? Do they take a different shape if we analyse them from a Deaf/hearing relationship point of view and mainly from a Deaf led work perspective?

Hearing researcher's burden of responsibilities – in terms of trying to keep research Deaf-led/informed, and of having Deaf (well-known, well-respected, member of the community we are researching with) supervisor, not letting him down, not letting informants down, not letting community down.

But who represents Deaf and Deafhood anyway?
Is a Deaf supervisors validation and approval enough?
Can supervisor validate all of this- just because he is Deaf?
Could this be an easy cop out validation?
Surely a Deaf academic only represents a certain proportion of the Deaf world- does this matter?

Ethic responsibilities - How can I hearing value the community/informants for their collaboration /keep them informed/not betray them/respect their values and input?

How do these dynamics work if and when hearing researcher community/Deaf informants relationship go wrong
Who should a Deaf supervisor side with and is it a matter of taking sides anyway?
After all the hearing researcher might disappear
How far can the Deaf advisor work as a mediator without risking his allegiance to Deaf community?

There are several risks being a hearing researcher such as the oversimplification when talking about someone else's rich and deep culture, meaning, however hard we try to understand we are not a product of it, it is not our community, identity, life, history, an experience we share. So we are never fully going to comprehend the complexities and emotional elements.

We also need to explore the feeling of anxiety/paranoia/fear/nervousness (of being an outsider researcher…) in the light of the history of Deaf-hearing relations so the process can be enriched and gain from that reflection

There is a massive lack of benchmarks for hearing researchers in Deaf Studies as it is being proposed now
Who do we look to?
Who has done successful work on other groups?
Who has achieved what we all aim to achieve?
What kind of hearing people do Deaf people want to have collaboration with?

Final words at the moment

Close Deaf guidance and feedback on tentative interpretations and inferences and with the whole research process in Deaf Studies does not only help hearing researchers in terms of extending the principles of validation, but also furthers the aim that Deaf Studies research be more Deaf-led or Deaf-informed.

This, as explained before, however raises issues concerning ownership of research, when the supervisor/manager is from within the culture being studied

and the researcher is not (Donna West, 2002). A careful balance needs to be struck between collaborative exchange of ideas, generation of new data and supervisory validation of the researcher's work and hypotheses. While hearing students and academics continue to dominate research projects within the Deaf community (Lane, 1993, Young and Ackerman, 2001), a more collaborative model is one which must be critically examined.

There are power, ethic, methodological linguistic/communication and cultural issues being addressed in the students' accounts that have been briefly presented here. They give us a summary of where our main concerns probably are as hearing, but these would need to be explored further and deeply to help us reach any further conclusion on them. Hopefully our own attempt and exercise in identifying them can be a sign of a postcolonial attempt to revisit Deaf/hearing work relationships.

There are and there will never be recipes to Deaf and hearing relations be it in education or research or any other field of Deaf Studies. A personal/ group/ theoretical/ methodological construction seems to be there in every experience, some aspects may happen again with other pairs, groups…some will always be unique to the people involved and historical time lived through. The data presented here needs to be analysed further and progressively with new students as the advisor's experience is also enriched.

Code System

DEAF ADVISER - HEARING STUDENT/ ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE
The advising

Hearing person Deaf advisor identification

- Methodological
- Theoretical
- Political
- Personal

Post colonial relations
Rich cultural experience
Cultural informant

Outsider's expectations on work

The Advisor

High demand to deal with more than just a common advisor role
High demand to deal with more than just a common advisor role : hat switching syndrome
Minority community research insider outsider status

Individual cultural self & the culturally representative self
Mediator
Gatekeeper Role

The work together

Culture - Different work dynamics with a Deaf advisor / Def led informed research work?
  ▪ New methodologies for Data Collection/Analysis/Sharing / Deaf advisor-hearing student discussions – Sign Language and image video focused methodologies and strategies

Hearing X Deaf Students differences…worth thinking?

ETHICS & LEGITIMACY

From hearing burden to Paranoia syndrome

  ▪ the legacy of being a hearing researcher within Deaf Studies
  ▪ how the new hearing generations seem to be
  ▪ handling this (or do not)

Deaf people struggle to become advisors under the hearing academic system pressures

Is a Deaf advisor enough to legitimate a work within Deaf studies?

Work ownership reflections

DEAF HEARING COLLABORATION

Impact on people involved/work /research/Deaf and hearing communities
Each work is one construction by people involved
Deaf hearing Deaf Dependence – Has it turned the other way around? Is there a better word than dependence to explain it?
Effects of having Deaf people on a leading position chance to have more successful collaboration now?
Being a hearing student or a research assistant - differences
The value of transparency

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Deaf led and informed research – striving to make informants participants
Deaf Hearing collaboration close scrutiny under research reflexivity

COMMUNICATION

Cultural issues – culture is as important as 'language' in communication and runs through and outside it
Language issues – two or more languages together on stage
Interpretation & Translation dilemmas sign language and oral languages particularities and other issues
Interpreting and translating between languages and cultures

POWER & VALIDITY

Deaf led informed research as postcolonial space/relation within a state still under colonial rules
Validation
- Is a Deaf advisor everything?
- Hearing seeing through Deaf eyes, is it really possible?
- Work Ownership issues

Appendix F

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Appendix G

Informants details as offered by them

Ailsa McGilp

Born: 1968, Aberdeen, Scotland
Educated: Aberdeen School for the Deaf.

1990- 1993: Central St Martins School of Art, - BA (Hons) Degree Textiles
Designs.

2000 – 2003: Goldsmiths University of London – Postgraduate Diploma Art
Psychotherapy (Art Therapy)

1994: Artsigns,– Art Guider for BSL user at Tate Modern, London

Exhibitions:

1993: Degree show, Central St Martins School of Art, London.
2000: Deaf Eye. Shape, London.
2002: Deaf Lake, London
2003: Goldsmiths University, London.
2003;The Tolls Gate Café, London.

I developed my artistic skills through practise and experimentation with the
techniques of colour, expressionism and abstraction. My last artwork is symbolic
by nature. The works are of my reactions to places visited in West Coast of
Scotland during family holidays, and in a visit to the Lake District in 2002. Green
and Plum echo the landscapes that are etched in my memory. Most of the places
I choose to pain hold strong memories, often childhood ones, reflecting conflicting
feelings of joy and sadness and an awareness of freedom and space.

Cathy Woolley

"Cathy Woolley was born in North West London. She studied Fine Art and Art for Society at Marchester Metropolitan and Wolverhampton University, and has an additional Youth Arts Development qualifications from Goldsmiths University.

Cathy set up 'Deaf Escape', two art retreat weeks for Deaf artists in the Lake Distirct and Dorset in 2002 and 2003. She has also curated three Deaf Art exhibitions, and given several talks on deaf arts and access to the arts across the UK in her spare time. She works full time as the Community Relations Officer for Historic Royal Palaces, a charity that manages and conserves five unoccupied Royal Palaces in London. Cathy develops and co-ordinates arts and education programmes, events and exhibitions in parnership with a wide range of socially excluded groups at venues such as the Tower of London."

Niall McCormack

MY STATEMENT AS AN ARTIST

The austere stark style of my paintings is informed by surrealist and minimalist movements. My work is a response to my take on architectural structures and their surroundings and shows an exploration of diverse architectural forms: monastic, Romanesque, classical and minimalist modern and the institutionalised setting.

I am particularly interested in how people are influenced and affected by these forms in both urban and rural environments. As a young man, I was deeply affected by the monastic environment in which I found myself placed. This made a rich mystical impact on my life intermingled with the feelings of silence and austerity, which is and was at that time integral to my young deaf identity and my particular way of seeing things.

Since childhood I have experienced many disharmonious things and the joy and pain that a diverse life brings. These experiences inform my ongoing engagement and fascination with the institutional setting and this imagery continues to work on an unconscious and subconscious level for me.

In conclusion, I feel my artistic responses to these things in my life and work are positive, esthetic and evocative.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Niall McCormack

SOLO EXHIBITION

1998   Diorama Art Gallery, London.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2002   Washburn Art Building, Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C.

              "Altered Perspective" The Millennium Arts Center,Washington,D.C.

2001   Generate Exhibition, Hull, North England

              Deaf Eyes Exhibition, Media Centre, Inslington, London.

2000   TraninArt 2000 Exhibition, Trani, Italy

1999   Diorama Artists Group show, Diorama Art Gallery, London.

              Christmas Show, Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Dublin.

1998   Group Show - 'New Still Life' Jo Rain Gallery, Dublin.

              Deaf Arts Now! exhibition, Stockholm, Sweden.

1997   Multimedia project - CD ROM production by five deaf artists

              at the Photographers' Gallery, London.

1995   Deaf Expression Exhibition, St.John's College, Cambridge.

1993   Deaf Artists Exhibition, Wallingford, Oxfordshire.

1991   European Deaf Culture Festival, Dublin.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1982/3   Dun Laoghaire School of Art and Design, Dublin

              One Year Certificate in Visual Education

1983/7   National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

              studied Fine Art - Painting.

              NCAD Diploma in Painting 1986

              BA (Hons) in Fine Art (2.1) 1987

1996/8   Diploma in Arts Management, Birkbeck College,

University of London.

Course modules: .   Communication and Media,

Arts Policy and Planning (Tate Gallery).

Arts in Community Settings (Whitechapel Art

Gallery)

Work placement (Royal Academy of Arts)

CURRENT OCCUPATION

Full time painting in London. I occasionally run art workshops, work as a
Gallery Guide at Tate Modern on a freelance basis and a Peer Guide for SHAPE
London, arts organisation, London.

CONTACT DETAILS

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Textphone   +44 20 8672 0362 .

Fax   +44 20 8672 4348

Email   nmcck@aol.com

Web: www.niallmc.co.uk

Omeima Mudawi

Textile artist and designer. She gained a BA in Textile Design, Surrey Intittule of Art and Design 1995-98. Whilst she was at university she wanted to become a freelance artist but initially worked as an Ethnic Worker and Acting Development Officer at Friends for Young Deaf People (FYD), and a Mental Health Care and Support Worker in a Residential Care Home. She also did a Postgraduate Diploma in Art Psychotherapy Foundation at Goldsmiths University.

Her first exhibition was 1995's 'Deaf Expression' at St Johns College in Cambridge. Her second exhibition was in 1998 at Stockholm, Sweden for Deaf Arts Now. She went to Washington DC to meet Betty Miller who was her first role model of "Mother of Artist". Betty was an inspiration for Omeima to develop her artwork. She entered her work in many exhibitions and led workshops in art. Her first solo exhibition was held in Sudan, at the Hilton Hotel, Khartoum in 2003. It was her first exhibition in hearing society, being officially opened by the Sudanese Minister of Culture.

Omeima has done a number of other exhibitions, training courses and speeches as part of her professional development, including Deaf Visions at the Maritime Museum in Greenwich; Deaf Eyes Exhibition, London; the Lauderdale House Society, where she provided a multi-cultural arts workshop for Deaf children; the Whitechapel Gallery, where she led a workshop on CGCS exams for Art and Design to 16+ Students; the Art House, Halifax where she presented an art workshop for people with disabilities and non-disabled artists.

Omeima has also taught textile workshops at Hammersmith College in London. At the Photographers Gallery she worked on a multimedia special project for CD ROM "deaf site" with deaf artists. She also taught textile workshops at Hammersmith College for 12 weeks in 1996. She was also the editor of Handwave magazine for Deaf people from 2001/02. In September 2002 she participated in a residential deaf art week held in the Lake District, this resulting in the popular Lake of Art Exhibition held at the Candid Arts Gallery, London, in November 2002.

As well as giving a seminar at the Halifax Art House (1996) Gallaudet University (1999) she has also done one for the Deaf Arts Bournemouth University Symposium in early 2004, and has also featured on Channel 4's Sign On about the "Deaf Expression exhibition" (1995) and See Hear on BBC2 in 2003 on Resonant.

Omeima has also attended the Deaf Arts Now Festival, Stockholm, Sweden in 1998, giving a lecture on Deaf artists and actors. At the most recent Deaf Arts Now 2 Festival in 2001, Stockholm, Sweden she held an exhibition and gave a lecture about her unique style of artwork. This was followed by her exhibition at the Khartoum Hilton, Sudan. Further exhibitions are planned for Dubai. She is currently a freelance artist and designer, and will have an exhibition, Deaf Arts Now, in Stockholm, Sweden in May 2004.

Rachel Coppage

Born on Isle of Wight to hearing family, with a younger Deaf brother.

Brought up orally, wore hearing aids and no knowledge of sign language.

Became a boarder from age 7 to 18 in special & aural-led residential schools.

Upon leaving school with 2 A levels, went to Chicago as an exchange student and stayed with a Deaf host family - parents and 5 children all Deaf and sign language users. ASL was therefore my 1st SL. Felt a sense of belonging at last and in one year, I turned myself over like a new leaf!

Returned to UK, was rebellious. No longer wearing hearing aids and switching off my voice. Was demanding of more access, better services, etc. Went from one extreme to another. Might be through a confusing period with identity issues.

Foundation course in Art & design, Winchester.

BA Degree in Joint Honours Fine Art & Ceramics, Camberwell.

Winchester - I produced a lot of work with my attachments to my American experience and SL. Recurring theme - freedom and liberation from oralism.

Camberwell - my work became focused on my frustrations and difficulties being the only Deaf student on my course and my isolation. STrong feelings emerged in my sculptural ceramics.

Since graduation, i didn't do more art work until I started a postgraduate diploma in Art Pscyhotherapy at Goldsmiths and I'm in the 2nd year. A completely different perspective and my work reflects on much broader issues, less personally.

Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq

RUBBENA AURANGZEB-TARIQ

ARTIST RESUME

62 The Firs   STUDIO

Alexandra Road   Redlees Studios

Hounslow   Redlees Park

MIDDX TW3 4HR   Worton Road

Home Phone 020 8577 2412 (Voice/Text/Fax)   Isleworth

Mobile 07753963081   (SMS)

MOBILE FAX 07753963219

EMAIL rubbena@hotmail.com

QUALIFICATIONS

1995	London Institute, Central Saint Martins College, London
	BA (Hons) Fine Art Painting.
1994	Birkbeck College, Centre for Extra-Mural Studies
	University of London
	Arts Management and Training – Diploma & Certificate
1996	Surrey Institute of Art & Design. Farnham, Surrey
	MA Fine Art
1998	Farnborough Tech. College, Farnborough, Hampshire
	BSL (British Sign Language) Stage One
1999	Goldsmiths. University of London
	Foundation in Art Psychotherapy
	London
2000	British Sign Language - Stage Two,
2003	Goldsmiths. University of London
	PG Dip. Art Psychotherapy

TRAINING

| Oct'96-Jun'97 | DE@FSITE - a multimedia project at the Photography Gallery, London. Including a show of the work in the gallery. |

VOLUNTARY WORK

July 2000	ONE DAY WORKSHOP
	Serpentine Gallery, London
	Talk and workshop for Asian Deaf Women and Girls focusing on 'Shirin Neshat' Muslim women artist.
February 1997	ONE DAY WORKSHOP
	Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
	Worked with three other artists with deaf children, from Oak Lodge School, London
April 1996	ONE DAY WORKSHOP
	Serpentine Gallery, London
	Organized and ran a workshop at the gallery, based on Jean- Michel Basquiat's work, with deaf and hearing children, from Bishop David Brown School, Woking.

EMPLOYMENT
ARTIST IN RESIDENT

Summer 1992	Artability, arts for people with disabilities. Tunbridgc Wells
	An apprentice artist working with mental handicapped adults
16 June 1996	Workshop - Healhlands School's 21st Celebration, St. Albans
	Organized Mask making workshop for 3-16 years old deaf children, Employed by Shape London
8 Nov. 1996	Workshop - Frank Barns School; Swiss Cottage. London
	Organized "Hand Sign Painting' workshop with deaf children of 5-9 years old.

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10 Oct 1998	Workshop for Deaf and Hearing children, FYD &. Shape -Archway
	Organized painting workshop to allow children to express themselves in their own arts.
8/9 Nov 2003	Weekend Academy – "Continuing Professional Development" - Bryam Shaw School of Art & Design, London
Aug 2003 Bristol	Presentation/Workshop – "What is Deaf Arts?"-

Forthcoming Shows

15-22 Feb 2004	Solo Show - Art, Culture Et Tourisme Internationaux des Sourds Paris
14-22 May 2004	Deaf Arts Now, Sweden
November 2004	Solo Show – Aylesbury Art Centre, Aylesbury
November 2004	Solo Show - National College of Art, Pakistan

EXHIBITIONS

20 – 26 July 2003	Solo Show - World Deaf Congress, Montreal, Canada
19 Jun – 2 Jul 2003	Whitehead Gallery, Goldsmith College, Uni. Of London Yatra – a journey
5 Mar- 29 Mar 2003	Cranleigh Arts Centre, Cranleigh, Surrey
6 Feb- 1 Mar 2003	Farnham Maltings, Farnham, Surrey
8 Jan – 2 Feb 2003	The Robert Phillips Gallery, Riverhouse, Walton on ` Thames, Surrey
November 2003	Solo Presentation on BBC 1 Sear Hear
July – Sept 2002	Millennium Arts Centre, Washington D.C, USA Washburn Art Centre, Gallaudet University, Washington D.C, USA Published in Deaf Arts UK & USA wide
June 2002	Open Summer Show, Redlees Art Gallery, London
November 2001	Redlees Art Gallery, London
May – June 2001	QMMAC, Islington, London

	sponsored by Shape London & London Arts Boards
	Shown on BBC See Hear July 2001
	Pub. Deaf Arts Uk Summer 2001 & Autumn 2001
Sept - Oct 2000	Lauderdale House. Highgate Hill, London
	sponsored by Jackson Lane & Pub. Local Courier
June - July 2000	Goldsmiths College. New Cross, London
October 97	Photographer Gallery. London WC2
	De@fsite
October '97	Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London.
June - July '97	James Hockeny's Gallery, Farnham, Surrey.
	Degree Show (MA)
June'96 - Jan'97	RNID, Featherstone St. London.
Summer 1995	Degree Show BA (Hons) Central St. Martins, London
October 1995	Deaf Expressions, St John College, Uni. of Cambridge, Cambridge, supported by Shape London
28th October 1995	Sign On television, Newcastle
	Hear No Evil Exhibition tour:
	supported by North West Disability arts forum
September 95	Albert Dock Trading Company, Liverpool
July- Aug. 95	School of Architecture, Liverpool
June 95	Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Salford
April 1994	Sutton House. Hackney
	sponsored by Shape Hackney
October 1994	Lloyd Park Theatre, Walthamstow
	sponsored by Waltham Forest Disability Unit
October 1993	Gottlieb Gallery
	Shown on BBC See Hear.
June 1993	Julius Gottlieb Gallery, Carmel College, Wallingford
	sponsored by Shape London
October 1992	King's Centre, Aldershot, Surrey
	sponsored by Breakthrough, Farnborough

March 1992   Basingstoke Centre, Basingstoke, Hampshire
                           sponsored by British Gas & Basingstoke College

MY WORK

My recent paintings explore how we collect our feelings and thoughts within ourselves and how we learn to contain them within our own space and personal boundaries. The paintings created autonomously expresses ideas of how one reflect with colours, texture and space on canvas and installations. The work on canvas and installation expresses in minimal expressions using mark making, drawing, and textured surface in the use of mixed media leaving the images unconscious and mysterious.

This process has given me insight of my identity, as I often wondered where do I see myself in society. I am an Asian Deaf female artist in a Western society surrounded with strong influence of Eastern culture. My recent paintings explore how we collect our feelings and thoughts within ourselves and how we learn to contain them within our own space and personal boundaries.

ADDITIONAL INFO

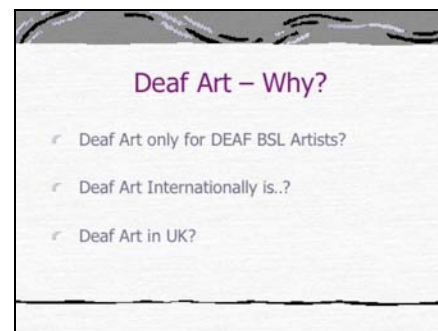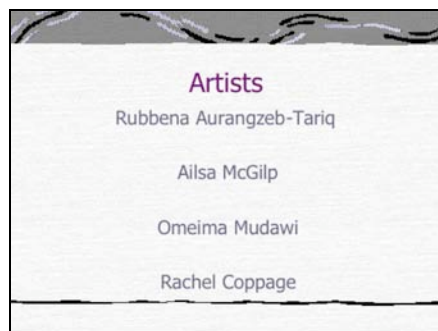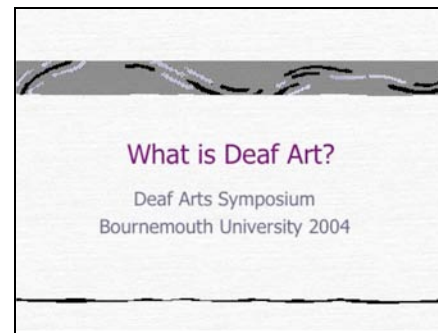Private Collections and Publications on request

Active Research in Deaf Arts

Member of British Association of Art Therapy (BAAT)

Equality Steering Sub-Group member of BAAT (ESG)

Art, Race & Culture Sub-Group of BAAT (ARC)

Deaf Art

What is Deaf Art?

Deaf Arts Symposium
Bournemouth University 2004

Artists

Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq

Ailsa McGilp

Omeima Mudawi

Rachel Coppage

Deaf Art – Why?

- Deaf Art only for DEAF BSL Artists?
- Deaf Art Internationally is..?
- Deaf Art in UK?

1996 - Deaf Eye

- Rubbena produced a research paper for her masters (MA) degree called "Deaf Eye".
- The research discussed the artworks by D/deaf and Hearing artists.
- Deaf Art was difficult to conclude because there was no definition of what D/deaf means in UK.

Deaf Artists?

Hearing & Deafened Artist's Artwork are part of Deaf Art?

FRANCISCO GOYA
1746 - 1828

- In 1792 he went completely deaf. He was 46 years old.
- His painting; the colours darkened, the brushwork became looser and more expressive.
- He didn't care much for royalty who tried to please and pose for him. He exposed their weaknesses on canvas, showing their true characters.

The Witches' Sabbath

Edvard Munch
1863 - 1944

1893
The Scream
(or The Cry)
- A Hearing Artist
- Norwegian painter and printmaker represent intense psychological and emotional themes.
- The expression of this painting could be"deafened" "too much to cope with"

VINCENT VAN GOGH
1853 - 1890

1889
Self-Portrait with
Bandaged Ear and Pipe

A Hearing Artist

The Expression of cutting his ear, could he had or wanted to be deaf?!

Deaf Arts........

Deaf Art/s….

- Arts includes all art form (sculpture, Printmaking, Textile, Painting, Film, etc)
- Art"s" be part of the Deaf Art?

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Deaf Art

USA

Evolution of ASL
Betty Miller 2000

Hearing Aids Are Not Like Glasses
Judith Treesberg &
Betty G. Miller 2003

HEARING AIDS ARE NOT LIKE GLASSES

1989   De' VIA movement

☞ The De' VIA movement represent a revolutionary event which revises our vision of things before and after.

☞ "Deaf President Now" at Deafway 1989, become an official recognition for De' VIA group.

De' VIA

American movement means
Deaf View Image Art

(chosen for its natural flow in American Sign Language)

BUT is for all D/deaf and hearing artists....

De' VIA Definition

☞ Deaf artist who uses Deaf experience and expression in their artwork.

☞ De' VIA artist group includes Hearing artists who represent "Deaf View Image Art."

☞ deaf artist who uses any art form in their work held the same artistic standard as other artists are not part of this movement.

Deaf Art

EUROPE

Deaf Art in Europe?

- There is no clear definition what is Deaf Art in Europe...

- Russia have a Deaf Artist Group the artworks are the same artistic standard as other artists

Deaf Arts Now

- 1989 Deaf Arts Now was formally adopted by D&VIA terminology

- 1991 European Cultural Festival of the Deaf in Dublin, Ireland, which was the Cultural Capital of Europe at that time.

- 1998 Invited European and American Deaf Artists

- 2001 Deaf Arts Now became established for European Deaf Artists

- 2004 Deaf Arts Now in May

Deaf Arts Now

- Deaf Arts Now aim to share experiences and network with D/deaf Artists.

- Provide a forum for D/deaf artists to integrate and communicate in sign language.

- Deaf Arts Now is continuing to develop its definition

Deaf Artist

UK

"Deaf Artist Exhibitions" UK

- 1993 Deaf Artists Exhibition, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

- 1995 "Deaf Expression" Exhibition, St.John's College, Cambridge.

- 2001 "Deaf Eyes" Exhibition, Media Centre, Islington, London.

- 2002 "Lake of Art" Candid Art Galley, London

Deaf Artists in UK

- Shape London achieved funding for some of the exhibitions

- Media Promotion for D/deaf artists (See Hear and Sign On) recognising the professional Deaf Artists in UK

Deaf Art in England

- Deaf artist lack of continuation to develop a recognition for Deaf Art.
- Deaf artists lack full access to communication
- D/deaf artists lack opportunities to express their artwork in society
- Fear of being stereotyped and labelled
- Deaf Art lacks funding to continue its work.

Artist Profiles

Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq

Artist & Art Psychotherapist

Education

1995 - BA (HONS) FINE ART
CENTRAL STAINT MARTINS SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN, LONDON

1997 - MA FINE ART
SURREY INSTUTITE OF ART AND DESIGN, SURREY

2003 - Postgraduate Diploma in Art Psychotherapy
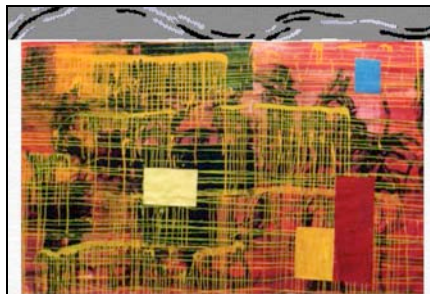GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN, LONDON

Profile

Rubbena has been exhibiting in UK since 1992.

Has also been exhibiting internationally since 2002.

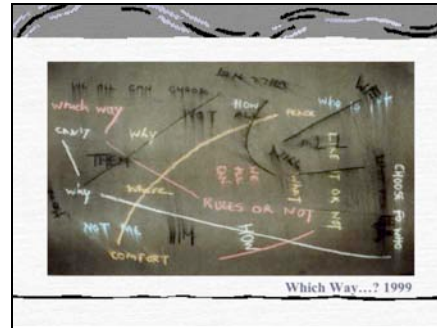Had major exhibitions in London, Washington, Montreal and Paris.

Next Exhibition: 'Deaf Arts Now' in Sweden in May 2004.

Station Wait 1993

Artistic Expression

My work explores the collected feelings and thoughts within myself of my identity as an Asian Deaf Women artist.

Which Way...? 1999

Cultural Identity

These bold works represent a delicate expression of my personal cultural boundaries and its restrictions.

Created autonomously and spontaneously, these paintings expresses ideas of how one responds to cultural differences and its influences in the medium of vivid paintings and installations.

Eid 2001
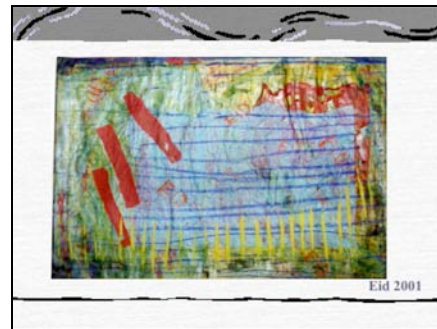
The Artwork

Minimalist expression using marks making, drawing, and textured surfaces in the mixed medium leaves the images unconscious and mysterious.
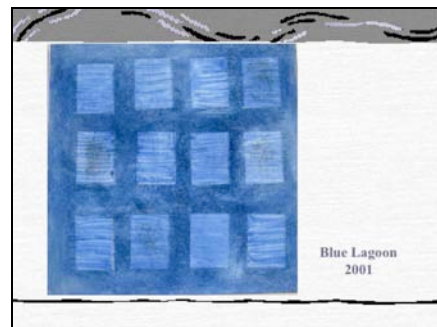

Blue Lagoon 2001

Image Making Process

The image making process has given me insight of my identity

Lines represent my deafness, controlled and structured like the audiogram

Dreams 2002

Me

I often wondered where do I see myself in society, an Asian Deaf Women artist in a Western society surrounded with strong echoes of Eastern culture..............

Sunshine Behind Bars
1993

Ailsa McGilp

Art Psychotherapist

Background

- Born Deaf Family in Scotland

- Practise as an Art therapist in London and Scotland

- Work in Mental Health Services, Schools, Public and Private sectors

Education

1993 - Central St Martins School of Art– BA
(Hons) degree Textiles Design

2003 - Goldsmiths University of London–
Postgraduate Diploma Art Psychotherapy

Exhibitions

2003 – The Tolls Gate Café, London
2003 – Goldsmith University, London
2002 – Candid Arts Gallery Lake of Art,
London
2000 – Deaf Eyes, London
1993 – Degree Show, Central St Martins
School of Art, London

**Artist Background
Romantic Art**

Scotland Tartans which it
greatly influence my
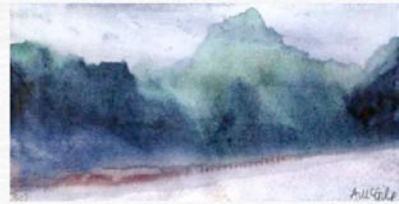artwork and inspiration.

I developed my colours
skills through practise
and experiments from
Artist from 20 century
in Europe.

Lake of Art

The works are my reactions to places
visited in Lake District

Green and Plum echo the landscapes that
etched in my memory, often childhood
ones.

Art Therapy

Art Therapy

- Confidential and therapeutic process, an agreement between client and therapist
- Expression through the artwork and the use of the space in the room
- Clients who have difficulty to express using any language
- Client develop insight and work through their problems
- Client identify a way to deal with difference and difficult of experiences

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Art Therapy with Deaf Children

No Home

- Case: Deaf Girl moved from North Africa
- Girl family moved many times in UK
- The Artwork: represented a safe place to contain her feelings - in a box

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Language

- Case: Deaf girl have no communication with her mother
- Therapy: Controlled her feelings in a bottle. The jar has contained her feelings, a safe space to be.
- Client: She has the same feeling in her bedroom

Identity

- Case: In the past his mother refused let him use sign language
- Therapy: That's me!
- Big eye & lash
- No hand

Scissors

Case: In the art therapy session he is angry, wanted me to help him to draw scissors

Therapy: He agreed to do the drawing independently

Rachel Coppage

Trainee Art Psychotherapist

The ASL Cloud 1990

ASL was my first sign language.

Cannot describe what it felt like learning - new language at age 18 - a wonderful experience.

Was interested in origins of language in different levels - thought - reading - speaking -signing.

It doesn't link up but shows the importance of linguistic opportunities and preferences.

The Wall of Difference - 1990

This mirrors my bringing up in oral schools and attending audiologist appts hence the soundproof dots on the left, and my new identify in switching hearing aids off to sign language and getting involved in deaf culture.

The birds symbolise freedom and liberation.

The tree shows my continuing growth - learning and developing my own being - having a choice at the "fork" - going that or this way.

Gulliver Navel to Chicago - 1991

This is my self portrait, upon return from (one year away) USA age 19 I struggled to adapt to living here again, trying to meet my family expectations and to develop my own identity within the deaf community.

How powerful taking on ASL must have been made an incredible impact on me but simultaneously I was brought upon me at an extreme opposite to my oral upbringing both extreme. Tongue pulled out to prevent me to speak again throat bleeding switch my voice off.

The Corker - 1993

The outer shell with spikes represents the big world in mainstream society with prejudices and discrimination to disabled people.

The inner corker is the deaf community - invisible but rich and closely knit, sharing common needs of language and identity.

It is almost like an eye in the protective eye of the deaf community and bonding in conflict with the dominating eye of the hearing society.
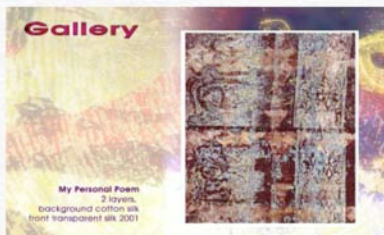
The leaf is about myself facing every day barriers outside.

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Omeima Mudawi

Textile Designer/Artist

Education

- *Certificate in Media Sign - Deaf TV Presenter/Deaf In-Vision Interpreter*
- *Foundation Access in Anthropology in Art and Media*
- *Foundation in Art Psychotherapy*
- *BA (Hons) Textile Design*
- *Arts Management*

Gallery

My Personal Poem
2 layers,
background cotton silk
front transparent silk 2001

My Personal Poem 2001

Solo Exhibitions

- *Hilton Khartoum, Sudan 2003*
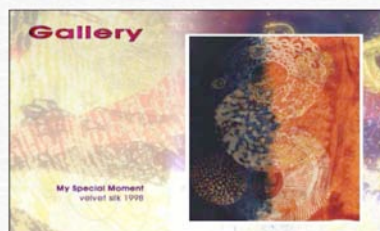- *London 2004 (announcing soon)*
- *Dubai 2005*

Group Exhibitions

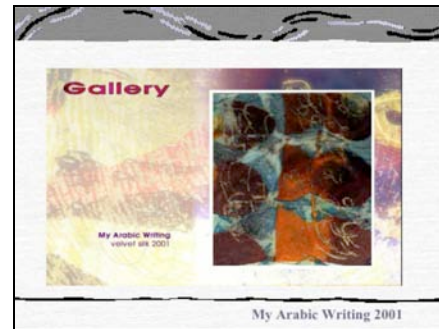|		
2003	Resonant for Deaf Women - Chats Palace, London
2002	Lake of Art, Candid Art Galley, London
2001	Deaf Arts Now, Sweden
2001	Deaf Eyes,London
1998	Deaf Arts Now! Sweden
	Mall Gallery, Degree show
1997	Multimedia project - CD ROM production Photographers' Gallery, London.
1995	Deaf Expression, St.John's College, Cambridge.

Next Exhibitions:

2004/5	Resonant
2004	Deaf Arts Now, Sweden

Gallery

My Special Moment
velvet silk 1998

My Special Moment 1998

My Home 1998

My work

Most of my work is on velvet, silk, textured tissue, satin silk and paper.

The use of experimentation with colour is very important to me as it reflects my personal experience and many symbols from my life.

Many of the colours I use are a visual experience that relate to the various themes linked to my life experience.

My Arabic Writing 2001

RESONANT
DEAF ARTS

- Deaf Women Artist Group in October 2002 created the group Resonant Jan 2003.

- Resonant was chosen to reflect the artists aim to use their influence and encourage other deaf artists to start developing their own support network.

- Resonant aims to give one exhibition this year and also to encourage each member to set up their own exhibitions.

Resonant Group May 2003

RESONANT
DEAF ARTS
AIM

To empower deaf women artists to become practicing professionals in their own right

RESONANT
DEAF ARTS

OBJECTIVE

- Share personal experiences, knowledge and ideas
- An opportunity to develop their own cultural value and identity through artwork
- Inspire co-operation, support and appreciation
- Provide training for continuing professional development using role models and specialized tutors
- To arrange a residential escape in the United Kingdom

Chats Palace Exhibition in London May 2003

RESONANT
DEAF ARTS

www.resonantarts.org.uk
www.resonantdeafwomenarts.org.uk

Deaf Art

What is Deaf Art?

Only for DEAF BSL Artists?

Deaf Art in Britain is…?