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## THE ISSUE OF (NON)INTEGRATION OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE IN RELATION TO ART AND EXHIBITIONS IN POLAND

**Abstract:** From the perspective of a deaf researcher and observer of social and cultural life, the word 'integration' means a more specific utopia on the ground of Polish social and cultural reality in relation to groups of people with disabilities.

Stereotypes resulting from the perception of people with disabilities strongly affect the perception of the deaf community and do not facilitate the organization of strictly cultural and artistic exhibitions in prestigious public places such as a museum.

The article describes two very important groundbreaking exhibitions of the deaf community, without references to the stereotype of disability that justifies the strategy of heterogeneity in the art world.

**Keywords:** accessibility, Deaf Land, Głusza, deaf culture, sign language, deaf art

### Introduction

From the perspective of a deaf researcher and observer of social and cultural life, the word *integration* means a more specific utopia on the ground of Polish social and cultural reality in relation to groups of people with disabilities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The article was written as part of the implementation doctorate (supervisor – Prof. UŁ Aneta Pawłowska, PhD; a 4-year grant from the grant program “The Implementation Doctorate of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition”, research project No. DWD/3/14b/2019).

“In terms of special education, social integration refers to the population of able-bodied and disabled people. It consists in the full participation of disabled people in all manifestations of individual and collective life.”<sup>2</sup> This rule should also apply to art, exhibition and participation in contemporary art reviews, at least in theory. In practice, the mainstream market in the field of art and exhibition, both in Poland and Europe, is reluctant to accept artists referred to as people with disabilities or disabled people.

As a rule, exhibitions of artists referred to as people with disabilities are treated as exhibitions of works falling under the category of amateur, non-professional or art-brut (i.e., primitivist) works.

“Polish studies on the image of disabled people in the media show that the mass media most often refer to two ways of presenting disabled people: as unhappy, dependent, requiring the help of others ("victims") or tragic heroes who perform extraordinary acts" despite "their disabilities ("supercripples"). This can be seen as a manifestation of a discourse of symbolic violence, which consists in omitting certain topics, simplifying the issues discussed and exaggerating the emphasis on fitness limitations, and of a paternalistic approach to the described people.”<sup>3</sup>

This type of a stereotypical image of people with disabilities significantly hampers their reception as full-fledged artists with equal opportunities in the mainstream of the art and exhibition market. This is often followed by the fact that, to a large extent, the aforementioned artists feel reluctant to deal with social issues or do not try to forcefully include (integrate) themselves into the area of modern art activities.

### **Disability as a criterion for competitions for authors**

This is particularly evidenced by the recently concluded competition for artists with disabilities who may experience barriers and have difficult access to art circulation, organized by Zachęta – the National Gallery of Art in Warsaw and the British Council.<sup>4</sup>

Works for the competition were sent by 82 artists. The goal of the competition formulated on the Zachęta website was as follows:

<sup>2</sup> B. Wołoskiuk, *Integracja osób z niepełnosprawnością - możliwości i bariery*, in: „Rozprawy Społeczne”, 1 (VII), 2013, pp. 69-73.

<sup>3</sup> M. Struck-Peregończyk, O. Kurek-Ochmańska O., *Wizerunek osób niepełnosprawnych w polskiej prasie opiniotwórczej na przykładzie tygodnika „Polityka” w latach 1997-2016* in: „Przeгляд Socjologii Jakościowej”, Volume XIV No. 3, 2018, pp. 48- 71.

<sup>4</sup> <https://zacheta.art.pl/pl/europe-beyond-access> (access: 25/06/2022).

“The social awareness of problems that artists with disabilities may face when they want to present their portfolio, apply for a scholarship or pursue their work, is not high. Difficulties may arise from prejudices and beliefs functioning in societies, communication barriers and limited availability of artistic programs.

The organization of the competition is an expression of our conviction that it is necessary to ensure equal opportunities in universal access to mainstream art in Poland. It also results from the efforts to introduce broad system changes in this area.”<sup>5</sup>

The competition was inspired by the Europe Beyond Access program, in which the British Council is a leading partner and implements this project together with six other artistic institutions in Europe.

As described on the website of the above-mentioned project, the key goals of the Europe Beyond Access program are to: support artistic innovation among artists with disabilities in Europe, revolutionize the programming of performing arts in Europe by showcasing works of world-class artists with disabilities, and create a network of experienced art directors interested in presenting and commissioning these artists. The program also aims to increase interest in the works of artists with disabilities and to create the best possible conditions for acquiring, developing, producing and presenting them.

Everywhere in the text there is the key word *disability* which, combined with the slightly pejorative image of a person with disability in society, causes even greater stigmatization of this type of activity and, at the same time, distances such artists from the mainstream of art.

In the case of the aforementioned competition, reducing the stigma is not helped by the fact that it was organized by one of the best and prestigious galleries of contemporary art in Poland, Zachęta in Warsaw.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <https://zacheta.art.pl/pl/kalendar/konkurs-europe-beyond-access> (access: 25/06/2022).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.britishcouncil.pl/projekty/sztuka/sztuka-i-niepelnowadnosc/europe-beyond-access> (access: 25/06/2022).

<sup>7</sup> A statement by one of the participants in the above-mentioned competition, Tomasz Grabowski:

I decided to take part in the *Beyond Access* competition because of its subtitle *Europe Beyond Access*, a competition for artists with disabilities. The aim of my participation was to draw attention to problems related to the Deaf society and the feeling of cultural distinctness, and to try to free others from medicalisation of the Deaf. From the perspective of the majority, the term *disability* is commonly understood as a social phenomenon that does not meet certain health criteria, while among Deaf people who communicate in sign language, such a term is perceived as inadequate to their experience. The majority of society, guided by stereotypes about disability and the best (in their opinion) interests of the Deaf, take actions that are inadequate to their needs. Barriers created in this way by the majority may result in Deaf people stopping activity in various areas of life, developing fear of making decisions,

The annual largest competition of the State Fund for Disabled People in Poland, under the name of "The Art of Disabled People" is subject to even greater stigma.<sup>8</sup> This competition is the largest review of the artistic achievements of therapeutic centres for people with disabilities in Poland, organized since 2003. In recent years, approximately 2,000 works have been submitted to the competition annually. They were assessed by well-known and respected visual artists, art historians and ethnographers.

The event is aimed at disabled participants of occupational therapy workshops and those who use the services of community self-assistance and social assistance institutions. Unfortunately, this competition is not treated as an artistic event worthy of any attention from professional art dealers and leading art galleries in Poland.

It is worth emphasizing the importance of using the term *art of people with disabilities* which, at the very outset, unconsciously stigmatizes the area of creativity of people with disabilities.

In addition, attention should be paid to the clerical nomenclature of scholarship programs and subsidy programs in Poland – the word *disability* appears in designated subsidy programs, and funds from these programs may be used only for purposes related to activities for the benefit of people with disability.

This, in turn, results in the fact that the word disabled must appear in each document created as part of the implemented project, and the participants of such projects must have disability certificates.

Outlined in a concise way, the above issues lead to the question of organising exhibitions of selected social groups classified as people with disabilities in such a way that they would be recognized as equivalent in the world of mainstream art and exhibitions.

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low self-esteem, withdrawal from relationships and activities, and even pressure to submit to the „authority” of the hearing.

In the context of members of the Deaf community, identifying with its culture and communicating in sign language, the word *disabled* should not be used in this type of competition, because it stigmatizes them, which not only affects their well-being, but also translates into a process leading to the rejection of an individual, their discrimination and exclusion from functioning in various spheres of life.

Organizing competitions for artists „with disabilities” as people who consider themselves disabled, based on the awareness of their disability, is a good way to activate them and provide them with equal opportunities in universal access to mainstream art. The organization of such a competition in the field of art, on the one hand, brings many benefits to artists who struggle with systemic obstacles, problems of everyday life and social barriers. On the other hand, it can be a starting point for reflection on whether the competition will unite the artistic community or maybe lead to divisions due to the nomenclature of social groups. *Beyond Access* is a unique space gathering artists with disabilities and a place where the artists can share their point of view with the outside world. (Statement of February 27, 2022 – own materials).

<sup>8</sup> <https://sztuka.pfron.org.pl/> (access: 25/06/2022).

### **An introduction to the issue of the identity of the deaf community**

This article is an attempt to show examples of exhibitions organized by one of the social groups classified as disabled, i.e., the deaf community. Due to its characteristics, it should be treated as a cultural and linguistic minority, not as a group of people with hearing disabilities.

At the very beginning of the analysis, the first question arises about the identity of deaf people and their belonging to the group of people with disabilities.

“Sociology accepts that identity refers to how people understand themselves and what matters to them. Two areas of knowledge about myself complement each other, namely: “How do I identify myself? How am I identified by others?” Thus, social identification takes place through self-determination (self-identification – reflection on oneself) or attribution to a given group by one’s surroundings. Identity can be considered as an attitude towards oneself and others and, as such, an individual identity.”<sup>9</sup> Social identity has a collective dimension, shows that people are similar to others in terms of experience, shared goals and shared values. Social identity influences the individual or individual identity.

The deaf community is treated by the Polish legislative system as a group of people with disabilities, who require support from the state in communicating with the rest of society. In the light of international law, deaf people are perceived as a group of disabled people, and not as a minority group that uses a different language and creates its own culture. Although people with disabilities are treated as the largest minority, the criterion is anti-discriminatory, which in the case of deaf people does not correspond to their sense of identity, needs and expectations.

This approach does not present a complete and authentic picture of this social group and does not reflect all the value it brings to society. The needs of deaf people are different from those of people with other disabilities. Therefore, deaf people want to be perceived differently, because they have created their own social identity and they demand its recognition in the face of the law. For these reasons, deaf people should be perceived by legislators in two ways: as people with disabilities and as members of a cultural and linguistic minority with the right to education in their own language. Bilingual education (Polish Sign Language as the leading one and Polish phonic language) is the best possible way to educate deaf people and enable them to function fully in society. The

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<sup>9</sup> D. Podgórska-Jachnik, *Głusi wśród słyszących – głusi wśród Głuchych. Problemy integracji społecznej osób z uszkodzonym słuchem w aspekcie tożsamościowym*, p. 18 in: „Tożsamość społeczno-kulturowa głuchych”, ed. Twardowska E., Polski Związek Głuchych Oddział Łódzki, Łódź, 2007, pp. 219-223.

status of the deaf and Polish sign language were discussed in the Polish Sejm on September 22, 2015, during the conference "The deaf as a linguistic and cultural minority". The conclusions of the conference are similar to those that the deaf community has been formulating for years – a lack of hearing is associated not only with discrimination, but also with deprivation of identity and forced imposition of standards of hearing people. That is why it is so important that deaf people should be educated in two ways – learn both Polish as a foreign language and Polish sign language. Only then will they be able to function properly. At the moment, unfortunately, they encounter a lack of understanding of their needs and, consequently, discrimination at almost every step.<sup>10</sup>

An important concept which highlights the uniqueness of the analysed community in comparison to other disability groups is Deaf culture.<sup>11</sup> The term "*Deaf culture*" sounds positive and expresses pride in being deaf, and the joy of being a member of a cultural and linguistic minority. One of the promoters of this concept is Barbara Kannapell, a deaf professor of sociology at Gallaudet University, founder of the organization "Deaf Pride". According to her, Deaf culture is a set of learned behaviours and observations that shape the values and norms of deaf people on the basis of similar or shared experiences.

The beginning of Deaf culture was the establishment of special boarding schools for deaf people. There, for the first time in history, the deaf community gathered in large groups. Bonds established in a school for the deaf are maintained and nurtured throughout life. It was only in the 1960s that the existence of deaf people began to be noticed. In 1965, the deaf Carl Cronenberg added an annex to the ASL Dictionary "Language Community".

The specificity of Deaf culture results partly from the very nature of deafness, from visual perception of the world, and partly from group life – first in a boarding school and then in a community outside it. Suffice it to mention the history of the deaf community on Martha Vineyard Island in New York,<sup>12</sup> elements of deaf urbanism in creating space around important deaf education centres (Gallaudet University in the United States of America),<sup>13</sup> dreams of many deaf activists to create deaf cities or islands (such as the dream of the Swedish activist Lars Åke Wikström to transform Gotland Island into a Deaf Island<sup>14</sup>).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.niepelnosprawni.pl/ledge/x/278048> (access: June 25, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> Based on [///C:/Users/Agnieszka/Downloads/07-Elzbieta\\_Mrenca.pdf](///C:/Users/Agnieszka/Downloads/07-Elzbieta_Mrenca.pdf) (access: 25/06/2022).

<sup>12</sup> More in: Nora Ellen Groce, *Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language: Hereditary Deafness on Martha's Vineyard*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.

<sup>13</sup> <https://ggwash.org/view/66281/deaf-urbanism-and-the-importance-of-building-accessible-cities> (accessed: June 25, 2022) or <https://ggwash.org/view/66282/why-we-all-need-deaf-urbanism> (access: 25/06/2022).

<sup>14</sup> <https://dovastidning.se/nyhet/ett-ar-efter-laws-bortgang/> (access: 25/06/2022).

Sign language is an especially important and valuable asset. The ability to tell a colourful and clear story in sign language is highly appreciated – as evidenced by rich sign folklore: stories, poetry, humour, or language games. For a long time, there was no way of writing sign languages, so most of this legacy was passed on in direct contact, as is the case in many non-European traditions.

The answer to the following question is significant, demonstrating the diversity of thinking of members of the deaf community about themselves and their social identity:

*Do deaf people want to be recognized as people with disabilities at all?*

*There are many opinions, as this environment is not a monolith. Two approaches are the most dominant. Some of the Deaf, especially the elderly, grew up in a world where they were only referred to as disabled. In that imagination, deafness was also associated with intellectual disability. These people are used to such a state, and they also consider their situation through the prism of benefits – because a disabled person's ID card entitles one, for example, to certain discounts. At the same time, such a document affects one's self-perception.*

*However, the position that deafness is not a disability is popular among young people. They say that this is formulated from the perspective of the majority group, which defines the disabled as people who do not meet certain health standards. In the eyes of these young people, it is the majority group that creates a construct that is harmful.<sup>15</sup>*

The strategy of being deaf is also a strategy of survival, of trying to maintain one's individual identity. According to Erik Ohna, there are "four phases of finding your own path, discovering your own identity. In one's childhood, deafness is taken for granted, then there comes alienation from hearing people (feeling abnormal) and affiliation in a deaf-like environment, followed by being deaf in your own way."<sup>16</sup> The final one, being deaf in your own way, may mean a borderline identity that is often characterized by choosing your own path that is not a way of living in just one world, that is, the world of the deaf. "Being deaf in one's own way means that being with the deaf is not enough, but also being with hearing people is not a way of life. Sometimes it means being between two worlds, adapting to this situation, going with the flow of the river of life."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> <https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kraj/kowalik-lis-glusi-to-niepelnosprawni-czy-moze-mniejszosc-kulturowa/> (access: 25/06/2022).

<sup>16</sup> J. Kobosko, *Co to znaczy być osobą głuchą? Studia nad tożsamością osobową młodzieży głuchej ze słyszących rodzin*, in: "Tożsamość społeczno-kulturowa głuchych" ed. Woźnicka E., Polski Związek Głuchych Oddział Łódzki, Łódź, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> <https://depot.ceon.pl/bitstream/handle/123456789/1903/Bunt%20jako%20czynnik%20r%C3%B3wnowagi.%20Jamming%20-%20zag%C5%82uszenie%20kultury..pdf?sequence=1> (access: June 25, 2022).

The features of group identity of the deaf community include: a relatively homogeneous nature of the community; being a minority in relation to the rest of the population in Poland; being a Polish citizen; having your own culture, tradition and language; striving to preserve the separate cultural features.

The spiritual and material achievements of the Deaf community are: the rejection of oralism, a specific social code, i.e. *savoir-vivre*, visual arts (fine arts, film, theatre, especially the deaf-art trend), social life (clubs, political and cultural organizations, sport organizations, events, Deaflympics Olympic Games, annual International Days/weeks of the Deaf); a history of fighting with discrimination and liberating themselves from dependence on the hearing majority. Particularly characteristic is the opposition to the medicalisation of deafness, combined with pious respect for the hands as the most important part of the body, thanks to which one can communicate in sign language.

### **The significance of the exhibition breakthrough in Paris, France**

The abovementioned issues do not make it easier to organize exhibitions depicting the deaf community in public cultural places (such as a museum or a very famous facility of great historical importance for a given country), and even hinder their implementation.

On a European scale, the first exhibition presenting the culture and history of the deaf community was *L'histoire silencieuse des sourds* organized in Paris in the Pantheon between June 19 and October 6, 2019, under the curatorial and scientific supervision of the deaf doctor of history Yann Cantin from the University of Paris 8 Vincennes -Saint-Denis. The exhibition was held thanks to the support of the Centre des Monuments Nationaux, the National Institute of Deaf Youth, the International Visual Theater and the Association of Friends of Abbot de L'Épée. The exhibition became a milestone due to the fact that the culture and history of the French deaf were presented in one of the most prestigious historical sites in France, i.e., in the Pantheon, a place of history and memory of the most famous French personalities.

The audience learned about the history of the deaf in France, great figures of deaf activists, the history of the first association of deaf people in Paris, founded by Ferdinand Berthier in 1836, forced sterilization and prohibition of sign language with compulsory oral education, and the awakening of the deaf community in the 1960s and 1970s, at a time associated with the recognition of international sign languages.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.parispantheon.fr/var/cmnm\\_inter/storage/original/application/906c84dee7dad-87cd5ee3ab4d6792449.pdf](http://www.parispantheon.fr/var/cmnm_inter/storage/original/application/906c84dee7dad-87cd5ee3ab4d6792449.pdf) (access: 25/06/2022).

The exhibition also became a challenge – not only in terms of content, but also logistics in the area of making it accessible to everyone. It was described in four languages: French, French Sign Language (LSF), English and International Sign (IS), including English and French subtitles. Next to each historical section, a tablet was placed on the exhibition wall with the option of including a video with a translation into French or international sign language. In this way, the exhibition became accessible to everyone, both deaf and hearing people.

The exhibition itself, in its substantive nature, was primarily a historical one, presenting chronologically the most important facts from the history of the deaf community in France. The exhibition was accompanied by historical objects such as manuscripts, archival historical documents and copies of French sign language plates. The artifacts illustrating and showing the most important figures in the French deaf community were paintings and sculptures. Historical objects (a sculptural bust of Fernand Berthier,<sup>19</sup> Napoleon's Codex with mentions of the deaf) were obtained on loan for the exhibition from the National Institute of Deaf Youth in Paris (L'Institut National de Jeunes Sourds de Paris), which was founded in 1760 as the first free public school for the deaf in France. Four personalities selected from the history of the deaf community were depicted in a very interesting way, because the exhibition showed four films with English and French subtitles, made in French sign language with the participation of deaf actors in disguise and in costumes from the era in which the people lived.

In the centre of the exhibition space there was a circle of panels surrounding the central column, which displayed four videos depicting the aforementioned deaf personalities: Madeleine Le Mansois,<sup>20</sup> Ferdinand Berthier, Henri Gaillard<sup>21</sup> and Emmanuelle Laborit.<sup>22</sup>

The exhibition was located in a relatively small space in the Pantheon, in one of its side aisles. It was divided into four historical sections: *Discovering the*

<sup>19</sup> Ferdinand Berthier (1803-1886) was a deaf educator, organizer and animator of the life of the French deaf community in 19<sup>th</sup>-century France, and one of the first advocates of deaf identity and culture. (Based on S. Allier-Guepin, *Ferdinand Berthier Premier militant Sourd du XIX e siècle*, Editions Monica Companys, 2019, France).

<sup>20</sup> Madeleine Le Mansois (1750-1826) – a deaf suffragist from a family of Angevin aristocracy, who obtained the right to marry for deaf people in the French parliament, which was then entered into the Napoleonic Code (one of the objects at the exhibition). <https://noetomalalie.hypotheses.org/717> (access: 25/06/2022).

<sup>21</sup> Henri Gaillard (1866-1939), journalist and editor-in-chief of the *Gazette des Sourds-Muets*, opting for deaf people to participate in World War I and not to be treated as second-class citizens <https://noetomalalie.hypotheses.org/853> (access: June 25, 2022).

<sup>22</sup> Emmanuelle Laborit (1971), a French deaf actress, starring in many films about the world of the deaf.

*roots, Towards recognition, Towards rejection, Awakening of the Deaf.*<sup>23</sup> Presumably, the budget and the small space did not allow for the creation of an event that would go beyond the framework of a typically historical exhibition. Perhaps it is related to the fact that the curator of the exhibition was Yann Cantin, a historian and researcher of the French deaf community. Cantin himself claims that: "The idea of progress is regression for the Deaf, a denial of their most elementary rights, in the period in which the most amazing scientific progress was made: the 20<sup>th</sup> century." It is not deafness that defines them, but being instinctively attached to their language. For him and for the community to which he belongs, sign language is "what allowed them to enter the French society on an equal footing and to contribute to the great advancement of humanity."<sup>24</sup>

### **The importance of *Glusza/Deaf-land* in the perception of the art of the deaf by public institutions in Poland**

The organization of the exhibition in the Pantheon in Paris and solutions in the area of accessibility used there became a model in the process of preparation and implementation of another exhibition called *Glusza/Deaf Land* at the Silesian Museum in Katowice, illustrating the history of the deaf community.<sup>25</sup>

The *Glusza/Deaf Land* exhibition is a pioneering activity of the Silesian Museum in Katowice on a European scale, being a broad development and a significant modification of the concept of the French exhibition. In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Dagmara Stanosz, curator and coordinator of the *Glusza/Deaf Land* project, writes:

*Glusza/Deaf Land* is a scientific, educational and exhibition project, which allowed us not only to meet deaf artists from around the world, but also to carry out many educational and popularizing projects over the years. Knowing that we will not change the defective system, we wanted to initiate activities that would direct people's attention to the linguistic and cultural minority of the Deaf in a local and global dimension, open them to sign language as intangible cultural heritage, and help them understand and start changing common space for the better. Working on the linguistic borderland, we have never talked about disability, emphasizing the need to equally discriminate both phonic and spatial languages.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Prepared on the basis of the author's own materials, photo documentation from the exhibition and an exhibition flyer.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.yanous.com/tribus/sourds/sourds190802.html> and <https://noetomalalie.hypotheses.org/754> (access: 25/06/2022).

<sup>25</sup> More on <https://muzeumslaskie.pl/pl/glusza-2/> (access: 25/06/2022).

<sup>26</sup> Introduction to the catalogue of the *Glusza/Deaf Land* exhibition, ed. D. Stanosz, Wydawnictwo Muzeum Śląskiego, Katowice, 2022, p. 6.

The essential key is a lack of the word disability in all substantive and technical aspects of this exhibition, and thus a lack of greater stigmatization and excessive stereotyping.

As part of curatorial preparations for the exhibition, the most important thing was the selection of objects that have a permanent and strong relationship with the culture of the Deaf in the form of videos, historical memorabilia and paintings (created by deaf and hard of hearing people) found in museum resources in Poland and private collections. The vernissage took place on June 23, 2022, and the exhibition itself will be on display until June 2023. It is an attempt to bring the audience closer to a wide spectrum of deaf people from the point of view of these people (the curatorial team includes two deaf curators - including the author of this article and Michał Justycki, an educator from the Silesian Museum). It is also a logistical challenge due to the fact that the descriptions, objects, and the arrangement of the exhibition must take into account as many as four languages: Polish, Polish sign language, English and international sign language. Moreover, accessibility for people with eyesight problems was ensured in the form of audio description and typhlographic objects.

The exhibition not only aims to bring the world and history of deaf people closer to the hearing, but also to contribute to the discussion of the community itself about its own history and art. Hence, it demands the necessity to display information in four languages.

It goes far beyond the framework of a typical historical exhibition, because its concept is based on the intention to show more than the history of the deaf community and its language. The main motto and inspiration is the title of Paul Gauguin's painting *Where do we come from? / Who are we? / Where are we going?* The artistic work of deaf and hard of hearing people in Poland, both former (Franciszek Prek,<sup>27</sup> Feliks Pęczarski,<sup>28</sup> Kazimierz Wiszniewski<sup>29</sup>) and contemporary artists (Marek Krzysztof Lasecki,<sup>30</sup> Justyna Kieruzalska,<sup>31</sup> Mirosław Śledź<sup>32</sup>). Artistic objects are not limited only to paintings and drawings. There are installations by Daniel Kotowski,<sup>33</sup> graphic art by Przemysław Sławik,<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Franciszek Prek (1801-1863) - a recognized diarist („Czasy i ludzie”), painter and traveler.

<sup>28</sup> Feliks Pęczarski (1804-1862) - a recognized painter.

<sup>29</sup> Kazimierz Wiszniewski (1894-1960) - a painter and graphic artist, student of Władysław Skoczylas.

<sup>30</sup> Marek Krzysztof Lasecki (1967) - a painter, graphic artist, teacher of art history and graphic art.

<sup>31</sup> Justyna Kieruzalska (1984) - a graphic designer, illustrator and creator of comics.

<sup>32</sup> Mirosław Śledź (1961) - a self-taught painter belonging to the art-brut trend and creator of the theory of quadrisism.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel Kotowski (1993) - a visual artist and performer.

<sup>34</sup> Przemysław Sławik (1978) - a graphic artist, teacher of art history and graphic art.

animations by Tomasz Grabowski,<sup>35</sup> comics by Małgorzata Szok Ciechacka,<sup>36</sup> animation *Blue 52* by Klaudia Wysiadecka<sup>37</sup> and works of the film section of the Polish Association of the Deaf, West Pomeranian Branch in Szczecin, and the Deaf Culture Center in Wrocław.

The central point of the narrative of the fourth part of the exhibition about the work of deaf people is the work of Nancy Rourke (1957) – an American artist, representative of the deaf art trend which developed very strongly in the United States. Three of the artist's paintings (*Deaf Mona Lisa*, *Second Wave of Milan and Doris Fedrid* and *Rose Steinberg Feld*), purchased by the Silesian Museum in Katowice, became the main point of reference for the other art objects in the fourth part of the exhibition (especially *Deaf Mona Lisa*). Assumptions of the deaf-art trend<sup>38</sup> are one of the most important determinants of the cultural creativity of deaf people, through the use of symbols related to the culture of the deaf in opposition to the majority, i.e. the world of hearing. The works of artists do not only present topics from the everyday life of deaf people, which

<sup>35</sup> Tomasz Grabowski (1988) – a graphic designer and multimedia artist.

<sup>36</sup> Małgorzata Szok Ciechacka (1978) – a graphic artist, illustrator and creator of comics.

<sup>37</sup> Klaudia Wysiadecka (1997) – a graphic designer, illustrator and creator of the *Blue 52* animation featured at the exhibition.

<sup>38</sup> Deaf-art manifesto content: De'VIA represents Deaf artists and perceptions based on their experiences of being Deaf. De'VIA uses formal artistic means to express the cultural or physical experience of being Deaf. These types of experiences may include the metaphors of the Deaf, the perspective of the Deaf person and the attitude of the Deaf person in relation to the environment (this is both the natural world and the Culture of the Deaf) and the spiritual and everyday life.

De'VIA can be identified through the use of formal measures such as contrasting intense colors, contrasting textures as a possible trend in the work of Deaf Artists. It may also often include a point of view focused on the physical characteristics of the mouth, eyes, ears, and hands. Currently, Deaf artists tend to present these body elements on a natural scale, but autonomously with respect to space. There is a difference between De'VIA artists and De'VIA artists. Deaf artists are the ones who deal with art in all its forms and adhere to the same standards as other artists. De'VIA was created at a time when artists wanted to express their experience of being deaf through visual arts. De'VIA can be created by hearing or deaf artists if their intention is to create a work, which grows out of their experience of being deaf (a positive example would be the hearing child of deaf parents, or CODA). Of course, it is possible the lack of creative work by deaf artists in the area of De'VIA.

Although applied and decorative arts may use the idea of De'VIA (high contrast, theme, exaggeration of the means and symbols used), the manifesto was written especially to take into account the traditional areas of visual arts (painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, printing) as well as alternative media described as fine arts, such as fabric, ceramics, neon, collage.

It was established in May 1989 at the DeafWay Congress.

The signatories of the manifesto were: painter Dr. Betty Miller, sculptor Dr. Paul Johnston, art historian Dr. Deborah M. Sonnenstrahl, painter Chuck Baird, sculptor Guy Wonder, painter Alex Wilhite, fabric artist SandiInches Vasnick, fabric artist Nancy Creighton and video artist Lai-Yok Ho . (own translation) <https://deviacurr.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/devia-manifesto-full-size-72-dpi.jpg> (access: 25/06/2022).

is a determinant of classifying a given artist's art as deaf-art, because there are also works showing the artists' personalities and referring to their deafness in a non-obvious way, or not at all.

The exhibition itself has been divided into four parts to present various aspects and nuances of the deaf community, its culture and sign language.

The first part (*Language*) goes far beyond the historical narrative of sign languages, as it is a broader story about means of communication, including multimedia stands and multimedia installations that allow the recipient to touch the emotions of being deaf, learn about the elements of sign language and the history of languages in the world.

The second part (*Deaf History*) tries to present the most important events in the history of the deaf community in Poland, including the history of and information on deaf education in the world.

The third part of the exhibition tries to answer the question: *Deaf or who?*

The answer is not unequivocal. It is the sum of the most important issues related to the perception of the community itself, its culture, code of behaviour, way of perceiving the world, problems of bilingual education. In fact, the answer to this question is left to the recipient, so that they can get to know the specifics of the deaf community which is not homogeneous and very often moves between two worlds: the world of the deaf and the world of the hearing. A deaf person often feels like a stranger in the hearing world, not being fully integrated. Magdalena Dunaj writes about it:

*The axiological aspect of relating to the deaf as strangers is related to comparing their hearing and speaking skills to the skills of an average hearing person. On the basis of such a comparison, which is necessarily against the deaf person, value judgments are then made. Hearing and related speaking are the most valued. The more a deaf person does not hear and the worse he or she speaks, the less he or she is of value to the hearing community.<sup>39</sup>*

It is worth mentioning here the phenomenon of audism, which is widespread among deaf people, regardless of whether it is conscious or unconscious. The majority, i.e., the hearing world, is stronger. "The phenomenon of audism is the result of recognizing the culture of the hearing as higher, better than the culture of the Deaf, which is perceived as subordinate, less valuable in relation to the former. Behaviours that discriminate against deaf people lead to the consolidation of negative stereotypes about them. Among others, there is the perception of hearing impairment as such that prevents effective participation in social life

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<sup>39</sup> M. Dunaj, *GLEUCHY-ŚWIAT. Głuchota w perspektywie antropologii zaangażowanej*, doctoral dissertation, Uniwersytet Łódzki, 2015, p. 16.

on many levels, including the labour market. Moreover, audism can lead to the development of a paternalistic attitude towards deaf people. Deaf people are then perceived as constantly needing help and support in managing their lives.<sup>40</sup>

### Summary

The abovementioned problems with the perception of deaf people occurred while working on the exhibition, as it was not easy to organize it due to many stereotypes functioning in the museum environment. An attempt to organize an exhibition about the world of the deaf is sometimes perceived as inconsistent with the seriousness and prestige of the cultural museum – a very important institution in the mainstream of the art and exhibition market. This applies not only to exhibitions dealing with the subject of the deaf community, but also individual exhibitions of deaf people, active artists who often have a lot to say in the field of social art.

“Currently, there is a strong need for the deaf community to emphasize its distinctiveness, which, perhaps, is a prerequisite for its future integration with the hearing – integration of equal partners on equal terms. The development of the socio-cultural identity of the Deaf is needed, so that people with hearing impairments can feel valuable (full-value) and causative, as well as have a reference group that guarantees them the possibility of identification and safety, and is a good starting point for shaping an individual identity without the neurotic feeling of fear.”<sup>41</sup>

The rebellion of the deaf community and the lack of their deeper social integration stems in particular from their reading of emotions flowing from the world of the hearing, in reference to the omnipresent oppression of the hearing culture and adaptation to the majority. As a result, an individual (artist, deaf person) can either give up and "disappear" or rebel against the existing norms and stereotypes which are usually not subject to social verification as a convenient strategy that does not require changes in the axiological dogma. And this is not conducive to the strategy of building the integrity of the art domain – it is the opposite. The idea of discontinuity and dispersion allows one to build a sense of separateness and defend one's own identity of being different in the mind of the majority, i.e., the hearing world. The strategy of heterogeneity is therefore justified and makes sense in today's diverse world.

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<sup>40</sup> S. Pieniążek, M. Dankiewicz, *Analiza tożsamości kulturowej Głuchych*, in: “KWARTALNIK NAUKOWY” 2 (34) 2018, p. 435.

<sup>41</sup> D. Podgórska-Jachnik, *Głusi wśród słyszających – głusi wśród Głuchych. Problemy integracji społecznej osób z uszkodzonym słuchem w aspekcie tożsamościowym*, p. 18 in: „Tożsamość społeczno-kulturowa głuchych”, ed. Twardowska E., Polski Związek Głuchych Oddział Łódzki, Łódź, 2007, pp. 219-223.

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## **PROBLEMATYKA (NIE)INTEGRACJI OSÓB GŁUCHYCH I SŁABOSŁYSZĄCYCH W ODNIESIENIU DO SZTUKI I WYSTAWIENICTWA W POLSCE (streszczenie)**

Słowo *integracja* z perspektywy głuchej badaczki i obserwarki życia społecznego i kulturalnego oznacza bardziej swoistą utopię na gruncie polskiej rzeczywistości zarówno społecznej jak i kulturalnej w odniesieniu do grup osób z niepełnosprawnościami.

Stereotypy wynikające z postrzegania osób z niepełnosprawnościami rzutują mocno na sposób postrzegania społeczności głuchych i nie ułatwiają organizacji wystaw strictly kulturalno-artystycznych w prestiżowych miejscach publicznych takich jak muzeum.

Artykuł opisuje dwie bardzo ważne przełomowe wystawy pokazujące społeczność głuchych w historycznej i kulturalnej odświeżeniu bez odniesień do stereotypu niepełnosprawności, które uzasadniają strategię heterogeniczności w świecie sztuki.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dostępność, Głusza, kultura Głuchych, język migowy, sztuka głuchych

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