

# Introspective Wonders

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*Coffee Shop Notes*

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Introspection is a contemplative process, one where the person looks within. Art frequently invokes introspection. The less information given, the freer reactions are capable of being.

Compare the strong colors and detailed canvas of a Chuck Baird to the muted colors and reduced forms, or even lines, of a Guy Wonder. Baird is known for his surreal imagery of handshapes and signs which blend with the signs these handshapes depict, while Wonder has created a body of work that depict the same with grid backgrounds, made primarily from wire, which tends more toward the conceptual: <http://www.guywonder.com>.

Wonder's work compels examination of the visual nature of sign language. How Wonder reduces handshapes to a bare minimum of contour, using wire, is unique. His work inspires questions, such as how important the manual alphabet is to ASL, and how much we can glean from how little information we are given. How much of sign language is strictly visual, and how much of it is also tactile, something to be felt in the hands, and in the wires of a Wonder assemblage?

The choice of media used in a Wonder opens up possibilities for how deaf experiences and sign language might be represented—his use of utilitarian materials seem to strip away the cloaks we wrap around our emotions, like the old wood of a wall stripped of its wallpaper and paint, the scent of mildew wafting from the cracks, with the scrawled names of past inhabitants near the floor. In contrast, a Baird canvas is highly representational of defined potential—think of a house recently painted and papered, the lawn just laid down, and the furniture fresh and springy.

The grid Wonder uses in those works with two dimensional space is another element which supports his art nicely. Does the grid signify anything? Is it an abstraction of mainstream society? The Dreaded System, in whose cracks so many of us have fallen through? Its openness, not being a solid surface, invites our observations to mingle with its form and create meaning.

Wonder also creates textured collages and assemblages, such as A FOR ALICE COGSWELL and COCHLEAR IMPLANT, which engage the eye and the mind with humor and ease.

A Wonder piece holds no immediate invitation or promise—it lacks solidness, yet it vibrates with the hint of being, existence only to be found when our minds fill in the blanks. And our minds fill in those blanks through introspection, our understanding not to be exposed wholly in front of us, spoon fed with precision, but embraced, silently, as we listen with our eyes to the rises and falls of the lines and textures that weave in and out of a Wonder.