

# Sonnenstrahl Shares Some Criteria

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*Coffee Shop Notes*

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On Friday, 10 October, during Homecoming Week at Gallaudet University, there was a noon lecture at Ole Jim, the alumni house. The featured speaker was Deborah Sonnenstrahl, and the topic was the book she authored, *DEAF ARTISTS OF AMERICA*. Before she covered various highlights from the book, she shared with us a short sub-lecture, "Behind the Book Cover: The Joys of Writing."

In this short sub-lecture, using PowerPoint, Sonnenstrahl explained what criteria she used in making selections for the book. There were eight main concerns to deal with, three of them being the focal choice (American or international deaf artists?), whether or not to make this book a textbook or a coffee table book, and picking between chronological or alphabetical arrangement.

One very important criterion for selection of artists in the book dealt with whether or not the artwork of said artist was available in the public sphere. This made a lot of sense, regardless of how much we would like to see certain artists included. The works had to be available to audiences through museums or galleries or other public spaces, in order for the artist to be featured. This kept in nicely with the decision to make the book a solid text suitable for study as well as for other purposes.

As for determining the focal choice, American or international, Sonnenstrahl contended that as an American, she had lived this country's history and was capable of writing about American deaf artists. It is a relief to know that our premier Deaf art historian would not be so arrogant as to try and elucidate the finer points of foreign history as it affects Deaf art outside of America. Because of Sonnenstrahl's integrity, the book will stand as a cornerstone in the study and appreciation of our artistic heritage, as well as serving as a springboard for further creative dialogue, on both American and international levels.

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