David Rosenbaum
SIGNews staff writer

Gallaudet was not ready for Ann Silver when she enrolled in the 1960-70’s but she brought a new perspective. At that time, “Deaf Art” or “Deaf Studies” was not well known. “The Gallaudet community provided me with a rich foundation in ASL/Deaf culture, New York City, and a solid base in the visual arts.” Silver had a love for art but Gallaudet did not have proper art facilities. “Truthfully, the Gallaudet art department was substandard, and I would’ve had majored in Deaf Studies if it had been offered back then,” she admits.

Author Deborah M. Sonenstrahl, in her book “Deaf Artists in America: Colonial to Contemp orary,” said that in an attempt to give legitimacy to Deaf Art both as a genre and as an academic discipline, Silver advocated for a cause known as the ‘Deaf Art Movement’.

What Happened at Gallaudet?
At Gallaudet, several art majors, student activists, supporters and I banded together to fight for the inclusion of Deaf Art in our classroo m and studio work. Silver recalls, “A Deaf ethic served as a primary characteristic of our small collective, and it was an appreciation of the value of ASL/Deaf culture and aesthetic that drove us to seek acceptance of Deaf Art in the overall art system. The art department, however, suppressed our desire to express art the ‘Deaf Way.’ In fact, our requirements included 8mm film I made.”

Making Her Mark on Society – and the Deaf World
“I have evolved from a sign language book illustrator of the 1970’s to a master of Pop Art today,” Silver says. “My work is always about ASL/Deaf culture, representing the visual art wing of the Deaf Studies spectrum. As a Deaf woman and first-generation American, I experience the same roadblocks of racism and homophobia. As a result of my civil rights background, my artwork deals with issues of discrimination based on hearing status as an art maker viewers think.”

“Though I make poster art for the gallery world, my priority is to create ASL/Deaf-cultural themes in public art as part of separate from architecture and environmental design to create art that becomes a value-added benefit to any building project in a Deaf setting (i.e. Deaf schools, Deaf community service centers, Deaf residential centers).” Though ASL/Deaf-based artwork in public spaces is rar It, it would be great to include the work and ideas of Deaf artists into the design and construction of buildings. “This future of public art by Deaf artists lies in the forward-thinking ability of master planners and architects to accept the language, life, culture, and history of Deaf people. Clearly, the inclusion of Deaf Art in the world of art and academia, as well as public art, is my lifelong passion.”

Upholding
She was born into a hearing family in Seattle, WA in 1949 and attended public schools. Profoundly Deaf, I was blessed with art as a vital tool to communicate with the hearing folk via crayons long before I acquired English and ASL. My K-12 public education was 90% guesswork and 10% art because support services (professional notetaking and interpreters) were nonexistent. I turned to art as a means to escape from the cacophony of speech, lipreading and auditory training. In 1962, at the age of 13, my exposure to Morris Broderson’s watercolor painting was my first taste of what came to be known later as Deaf Art. His fingerspelled artwork inspired me to pursue a goal years later, such as to legitimize Deaf Art.”

“...Whenever I assigned a project, my images, symbols, codes and signs with the language, culture, identity and heritage of the Deaf World. Many of my culturally-specific logos applicable. Deaf Art develops along the lines parallel to language, culture, history, politics, education and society – and contains a diversity of not just experiences but also themes and issues that affect the Deaf World.”

Greatest Impact
As a result, Silver graduated with a bachelor’s degree in commercial art from Gallaudet in 1972, she says she has never had an issue with her ASL or high school education, surgery and the extremely small edition number that makes my work highly sought after, they may become like collectibles.”

“Though I am best known for limited-edition prints,” Silver says, “I am most comfortable with Mail Art which I have been collecting for over 30 years with the collaboration of the U.S. Postal Service. Also known as Correspondence Art and Yelopos going as far back as the early 1900s, my color-penciled/inked envel opes depict either realistic or surreal combinations of signs and language, Deaf and or fingerspelling elements.”

When asked about her current projects, she said “While juggling freelance projects, I am working on two books: my hand collection and an autobiography that also includes a descriptive catalog of mylifetime art/design work. Does anyone know how to clone Ann Silver?”

Ann Silver is the only founding member of the historic Deaf Art movement group (1960s-1970s) to work extensively in graphics. A designer/artist by trade and Deaf Studies researcher by habit, her work combines Pop Art, product advertising, roadsigns, ASL/Deaf culture, and her own experiences with audism. Silver has been a driving force for over three decades for recognition and inclusion of Deaf Art in the world of art, architecture, public art and academia.

Special Needs Registry, cont. from page 5
the fire. By the time the boy smelled smoke, and investigated, the fire was blocking his exit on the first floor. When the fire department arrived, the boy was already breathing smoke. Following his rescue, he was treated for smoke inhalation at a local hospital. “Although we met one day, and in an hour of brainstorming, a worthwhile program, and asked Powell to continue it, we never met, and in an hour of brainstorming, we came up with the format.”

Filling Out the Form
“Recognizing the value of such information not only for individuals experiencing emergency, but for the community in case of a disaster,” explains Powell. “The Fire Department, in conjunction with the Powell Foundation and the California Division of the Registry. Using a form which is available at Vallejo Fire stations, the main Police station and online, per sonal needs training is a way to provide support and resources to emergency personnel. Emergency responders can then take appropriate steps to anticipate and adequately respond to the caller’s special needs.”

The one-page Special Needs Database form includes a check list for special needs which include: supplemental oxygen dependent, wheelchair dependent, non-ambula tory, confined to bed, developmentally disabled, chronic communicable disease, large stature, hard of hearing or deaf, sight-impaired or blind, dementia or Alzheimer’s, hospital patient/visitors.

Upon receiving each completed form, the Callers/Registry, cont. on page 22
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