

Kultur und Geschichte Gehörloser e.V. (KuGG)

**Abstracts for the 2nd conference
in Heidelberg, 2004 June 4th - 6th**

“Ways to understand Deaf culture”

Encomium by Gertrud Mally, Munich – cartographer at the National Institute Survey of Bayern, former editor of the Deaf magazine “Selbstbewusst werden”.

Thoughts about the exhibition: The lifework of Fise alias Albert Fischer

We, the Deafs of Germany, have lost a wonderful member of our Community; the deaf artist Albert Fise died at the end of last year, just as he had reached the peak of his great and impressive work. Full of love and creativity, Albert Fischer produced a countless amount of paintings. His work of art tells about the suppressed and hidden identity of the Deaf people.

On the wave of emancipation, the Deaf culture also found its way into the field of art. In his oil paintings and watercolours, Albert Fise stands up for the sign language to be respected as an independent language and consequently stands up for the Deaf identity.

The exhibition will present Albert Fischer’s lifework to all visitors, deaf artists and lovers of art, and will demonstrate that Deaf culture can be expressed through art. This should be an unique example not only for us, but also for the next generation.

Simon Kollien, Hamburg - German psychologist and lecturer at the University of Hamburg

Approaches of research and definition of the concept “Deaf culture”

With reference to the reflections of Hessmann/ Weinmeister at the conference of GGKG in 2003 in Magdeburg (Germany), Simon Kollien talks about the actual definition of the term of “Deaf culture”.

Until now, the existing definition of “Deaf culture” could not eliminate the confusion among the community of interests; the topic is too complex. In his seminars, Simon Kollien deals with topics belonging to the Deaf culture, such as the sign language poetry or “typical” ways of behaviour of the Deafs.

The latter will be presented in an overview during the lecture and will then be linked to the concept of Deaf culture. Approaches and perspectives from other fields of general culture studies will be included and the possibility of making any transfer will be discussed.

Catherine Tangelou, Athens - teacher in a secondary school for the deaf in Athens, painting and theatre artist, she is living in Hamburg for the moment

Deaf culture in Greece and own experiences about theater and art

In her presentation, Catherine Tangelou talks about the numerous aspects of the Greek Deaf culture, considering both, social-cultural and historical approaches.

Further, Catherine Tangelou refers to her own experience in the field of education, working with art and especially with the Sign Language Theater. Moreover, Catherine Tangelou reflects on the importance of the theater in Deaf culture which helps the Deaf members of a language community to strengthen their identity.

The Deaf theater supports to the reflection on Greek sign language being the cultural foundation of the Greek Deaf community. So the connection between language and culture can be shown clearly.

Helmut Vogel, Hamburg - educational scientist, works as a self-employed lecturer

Germany's Deaf culture and its past

During the past decades the term of the Deaf culture has been developed and has nowadays been accepted. First, the Deaf became aware of their own language, and then of their own culture and history. The attraction of the term "Deaf culture" bases on its explicit and dynamic sense, additionally it can be distinguished from the older term "Deaf world", but also from other interpretations, such as "Deaf, your way".

After this, a few historical events of great importance for Germany's Deaf people are shown in an overview: First Deaf club in 1848, struggle against the suppression of sign language in 1870, foundation of the national associations Regede in 1927 and DGB (German Deaf Association) in 1950, the movement of Deaf sports and the efforts for the acceptance of sign language.

A similarity between the self awareness of the Deaf in the past and in the present can be understood on the background of the deaf history.

Dr. Chrissostomos Papaspyrou, Athens – sign language researcher, chemist, doctor's degree in sign language linguistics, scientific collaborator at the Institute of German Sign Language at the University of Hamburg

The meaning of "Language", "Culture" and "Civilisation" in the context of the reflection about Deaf culture

To understand the development of all human communities, the knowledge about language, culture and civilisation is of primary importance. In his presentation, Chrissostomos Papaspyrou outlines these concepts and their connections. He puts them together into a scheme to demonstrate how they are mutually influenced and controlled by one another.

Finally, general definitions of language, culture and civilisation can help to determine the concept of "Deaf culture"; contradictory opinions can be brought together to reach an agreement about the concept of "Deaf culture".

Dr. Paddy Ladd, Bristol – Lecturer and MSc Coordinator at the Centre for Deaf Studies in the University of Bristol/Great Britain

“Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood” Synopsis to the book

This book presents a ‘Traveller's Guide’ to Deaf Culture, starting from the premise that Deaf cultures have an important contribution to make to other academic disciplines, and to human lives in general. Within and outside Deaf communities, there is a need for an account of the new concept of Deaf culture, which enables readers to assess its place alongside work with other minority cultures and multilingual discourses.

The book assesses the concepts of culture, on their own terms and in their many guises and applies these to Deaf communities. The author illustrates the pitfalls which have been created for those communities by an unthinking adherence to the medical concept of ‘deafness’ and contrasts this with his new concept of ‘Deafhood’, a process by which every Deaf child, family and adult implicitly explains their existence in the world to themselves and each other.

The ethos of the book is one of a journey made by both author and reader, between whom a dialogue is encouraged. This leads to the possibility of a very special and exciting period of cross-fertilisation between all aspects of multilingual and multicultural development.

Satu Worsek, Hamburg – Deaf educator, scientific collaborator at the Institute of German Sign Language at the University of Hamburg

Deaf culture in Finland

In the 90s of the past decade, deaf people were discussing whether they were deafs or sign language users. The term “sign language users” is new and stands for persons who use sign language every day and who consider sign language as their mother tongue – or first language.

The concept of the “signing human being” illuminates another point of view compared to the concept of the “deaf human being”. The first one emphasizes the linguistic and cultural minority. Even if deaf people identify themselves as signing persons they recognize how important the term “deaf” is for their identity. The expression “deaf”, as well as “deaf and dumb”, “hearing-impaired” belong to the medical terminology and evoke negative associations among the hearing people. The deafs do not consider themselves as handicapped. Their language, the sign language, is the most important part of Deaf culture, Deaf culture could not exist without it.

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Fringe events

Socializing and Quiz at the Deaf club with Herbert Christ (Berlin), product designer, collaborator at the Deaf Association Berlin

A quiz about Deaf culture and Deaf history with questions from the fields of history, politics, education, language, culture, art, media and technique. The attractive prizes are sponsored by the DeafShop.

Sight seeing tour through the old town and the castle with Dieter Betz, chairman of the Deaf Association "Alt-Heidelberg"

Visit of the City Art Museum Mannheim with Martina Bergmann (Hamburg), collaborator of the Art Museum Hamburg.