

Nancy Rourke, De'VIA Artist
Artist in Residency at Ohio School for the Deaf
November 16-20, 2015
Summary of the Special Art Project

The special project was approved by the ODE (Ohio Department of Education), Superintendent Doug Lowery and Principal Greg Mendenhall. It was funded by VOCA (Victims of Crime Act) and Deaf Positive Attitude Health (D-PAH.)

My duties were to teach the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing students on Deaf View/Image Art (De'VIA) based on their Deaf experience. This project was to focus on their experiences through trauma, emotional disturbance, bullying, violence, and so forth.

During art week, I taught them the basic understanding of De'VIA history, the 2013 De'VIA mural at OSD, and about the De'VIA artists across the nation. The workshop focused on three themes, Affirmation, Resistance and Liberation. Different motifs taught and were used are: chain, arrows, hands, eyes, ears, mouths, blue tapes, masks, mirrors, tables, bolts, stitches, half faces, prison doors, feathers and wings. The students came up with their own expression and showed various traumas that they experienced in their life.

My responsibilities were to make sure that their drawings were big enough on the canvas to paint and to encourage them to express their feelings freely and paint what they felt was significant to them. The emphasis explained to the students for this artwork there is no right or wrong in making art. It was extremely important that the students felt they were in a "safe place" to be able to brainstorm for ideas and really connect with their art.

When I observed the students all week, the self-esteem in the beginning was very low and then by Day 5, there was a sense of accomplishment, pride and healing in the students. When the students expressed themselves in their drawings, many of them became emotional because they finally had a chance to share their story by drawing their feelings of oppression and resistance from their family, friends, teachers, and their community.

At the end of the week, more than fifteen students from kindergarten to high school volunteered to explain and share their thoughts and feelings through the paintings to the audience during the art exhibition. These students are brilliant and very brave to do this.

This is what De'VIA is about; it is based on Deaf experience. Eighty-seven percent are resistance work. The total number of paintings in five days comes to 238 paintings, including the 2'x4' murals. The murals will be a permanent fixture at OSD to show the school and community the students work during that important week. All of the paintings that I saw are important and telling a message.

In this documentation, I will show you samples, interpretation and meanings behind the painting. There are many to describe the meaning of their paintings. There is so much to study.

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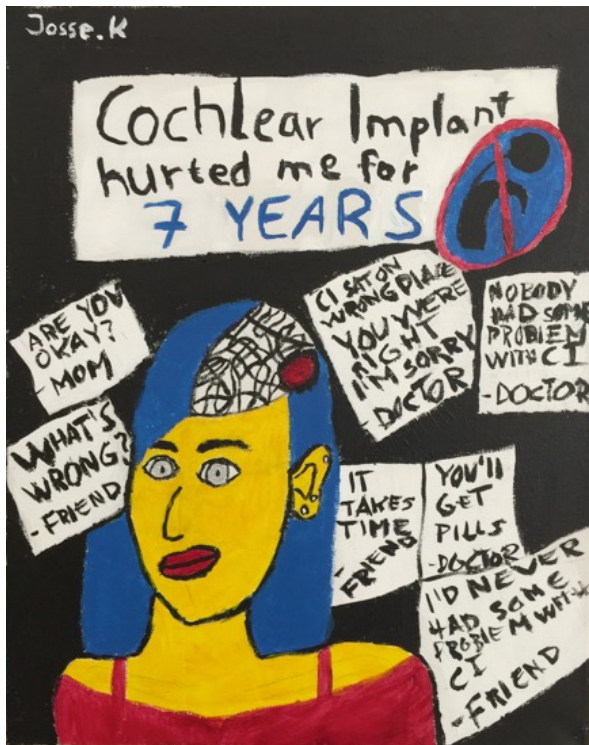
- Resistance theme means TRUTH TO BE TOLD.
- Affirmation means Deaf Culture, Deaf Identity and Pride.
- Liberation means both resistance and affirmation.

The students were inspired by my art style, using Rourkeism (primary colors).

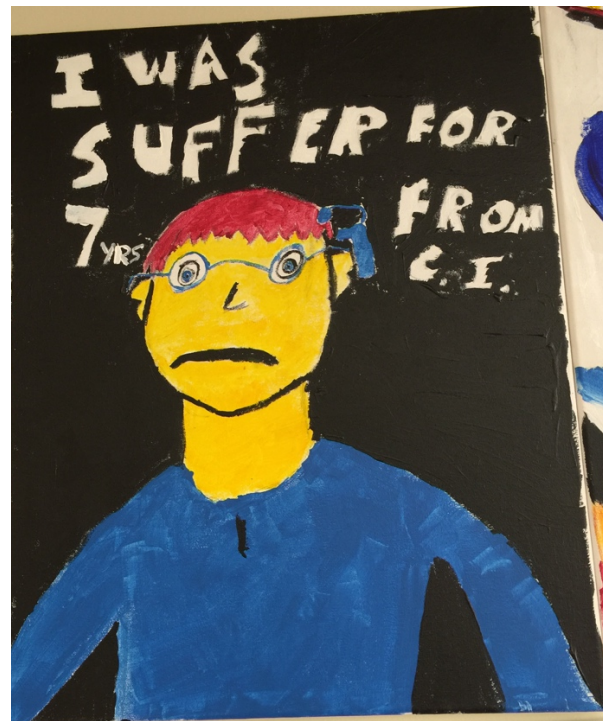
- Red means EMPOWERMENT.
- Yellow means HOPE and light so Deaf people can see.
- Blue means AUDISM and OPPRESSION.

Respectfully,
Nancy Rourke
December 3, 2015

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This girl used the blue and black for the cochlear implant and red for the scar on her head and red for "NO" symbol. She used the yellow to represent herself as a Culturally Deaf and has HOPE and wears red outfit for power. Her hair in blue because she was one of many who went through painful experiences.



This guy has been experiencing pain for seven years with a cochlear implant.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMRkm8cxGVE&sns=fb>

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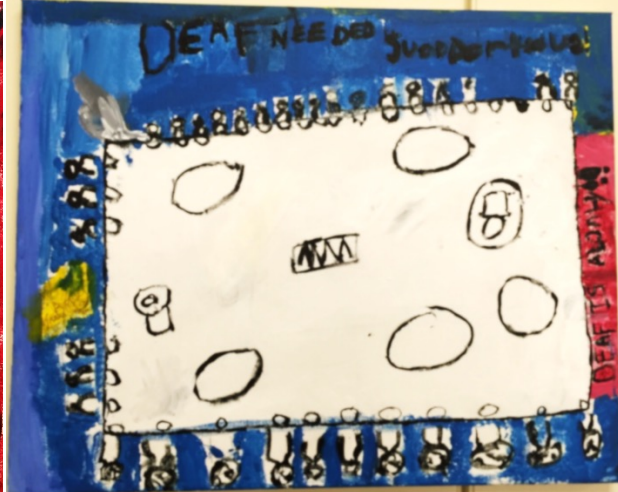
The girl in yellow outfit, is her own self portrait. The person above, is the puppeteer, covers the girl's eyes, forcing her to learn to talk and listen. The girl worked hard to act like a "hearing person" and the puppeteer says to her, "you wanna have BF? Must be hearing" (Meaning do you want to have a boyfriend then he must be hearing.) There are black bird feathers falling down from the top. The feather is a motif, that represents "parroting."

This is the first day she did the painting.

Two days later, she did the same painting on a mural (that will be a permanent collection at OSD.) This time she shows a woman with black bird wings, who happens to be her mother. The black bird wings is a motif that represents, speech therapy, puppeteer. She shows more truths.

This is really sad as her mother controls her life. The girl looks unhappy.

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These paintings are called "Dinner Table Syndrome." Table is a motif, meaning people gather together, unite, collaborate. The students felt left out and/or they were having a hard time following everyone's conversation. This means that they are not looking forward to going home for the holidays.

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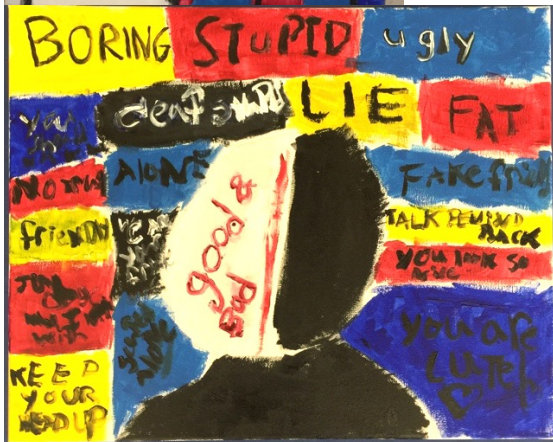
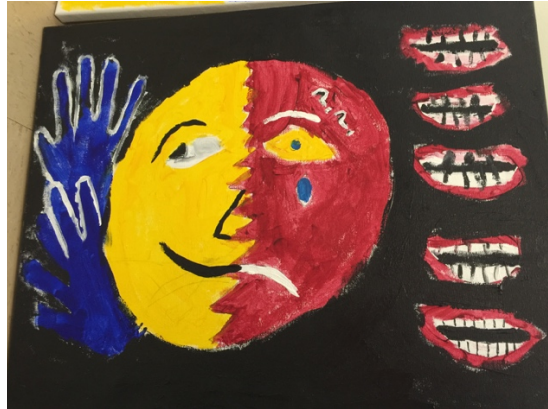
An elementary student painted this painting. It shows HANDEYE, which is a motif that means Deaf. This person uses sign language and relies on eyes for visual. The two hands represent two Deaf students stay together, as they are protecting themselves from something happening bad. The black background represents darkness, audism, oppression and trauma. Their eyes are big and wide.

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This painting is about her experience of being left-out and oppressed by her own family at home. The blue tape is a motif, which means oppression and mask of benevolence. Their mouths are open, meaning they talk and do not sign. She feels very isolated that her TV becomes her best friend. Her hand holds the TV as if she was hugging her own friend.

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"Who Am I?" "Which Identity Am I, Deaf or Hearing?" These paintings show faces in half. That is a motif, meaning not knowing which identity. They seem to be confused, on who they are, because of cochlear implant and being forced to learn how to speak and listen when they really want to use sign language.

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This painting shows abuse. There are stitches and scars. That is a motif, meaning she was physically abused and/or was experimenting traumas and has a "Frankenstein bolts" on the neck. This is a motif, meaning FIXED. She shows herself in blue that refers to oppression.

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This painting shows a girl using a mirror. A mirror is a motif, meaning two-way mirror. She sees herself as a proud Deaf person, while others see her as a different person. This is abuse.

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A 4-PLUS student did this painting. She identifies herself as a happy flower girl, always showing she is happy and friendly, but the other half shows where she really is not happy at all. There is a mask, which is a motif, meaning two faces.

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This is one important painting as it shows a bit of everything here. There is bullying, self-portrait identity, audism, oppression, and a struggle of staying strong. There are five motifs in the painting. Chain is one of the motifs, meaning tied down to not able to free himself to be the who he wants to be, a Culturally Deaf person.