

# The Artistic Influence of American Deaf culture and heritage, explored through Visual Arts Education

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the combination of visual arts education with deaf studies. It explores teaching art lessons about deaf culture and heritage to students of all ages. There are three lesson plans included each with a Deaf artist as the inspiration for the project and the focus of the lesson. These lessons have been taught to students ranging from kindergarten up to college students. This exploration led to the discovery of my teaching philosophy which is included in the end to discuss what I will take away from this thesis into my future career.

## Keywords:

- Bachelor of Science Visual Arts Education, Ceramics
- Deaf studies
- Deaf culture and heritage
- American Sign Language
- Ceramics
- Collage
- Mixed Media

# Lesson 1- Betty G. Miller

**Name (Instructor) :** Hailey Meyer

**Central Focus:** Investigating Deaf Culture

**Lesson:** Neon Light Paintings

<p><b>Things you need to prepare for this lesson:</b></p> <p><b>Materials:</b> canvases/art boards, black paint, white paint, neon/bright colored paints, skinny paintbrushes, pencils, palletes, cups with water, paper towels, mod podge</p> <p><b>Mentor Artist(s):</b> Betty G. Miller</p> <p><b>Process Boards:</b> Steps to create a Neon Light Painting</p>			
<p><b>Rationale:</b></p> <p><b>Developmental:</b> aware of problems in larger world, learning in cooperative groups, longer project assignments</p> <p><b>Personal/Community/Cultural:</b> engage in a group discussion, creating abstract reasoning, researching and putting it together</p> <p><b>Artist connection:</b> Betty G. Miller creates artwork that represents not only the beauty of Deaf culture, but also the oppression of deaf people. She can beautifully balance the two themes into all her work which is what we will try to do while creating the neon light paintings.</p>			
<p>Language FUNCTION you'll target: Syntax and Discourse</p>			
<p>Language ACTIVITIES you'll use: Group discussion, exit ticket (artist statement), powerpoint</p>			
	<p><b>Lesson Learning Outcomes</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Learning</b></p>	<p><b>Assessment Instruments</b></p>
C	<p><b>VA:Cr2.3.HSIII</b> Demonstrate in works of art or design how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives.</p>	<p>Did the students create art that clearly represents Deaf culture in some way, whether through beauty, suppression, or otherwise?</p>	<p>What the students created in their art, Artist statements</p>
P	<p><b>VA:Pr6.1.HSIII</b> Curate a collection of objects, artifacts, or artwork to impact the</p>	<p>Are the students creating a piece of artwork that will allow the</p>	<p>What the students created in their art, Artist statements</p>

	viewer's understanding of social, cultural, and/or political experiences.	viewers to understand more about Deaf culture?	
<b>R</b> <b>e</b>	<b>VA:Re7.2.HSIII</b> Determine the commonalities within a group of artists or visual images attributed to a particular type of art, timeframe, or culture.	Can the students identify commonalities in what Betty G. Miller's artwork says about Deaf culture?	Discussion about mentor artist
<b>C</b> <b>n</b>	<b>VA:Cn10.1.HSIII</b> Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.	How did the students relate what they learned about Betty G. Miller to their own artwork?	What the students created in their art, Artist statements
<b>Entry Point/Motivation (15 Minutes)</b> 1. PowerPoint about Betty G. Miller including her artist statement, some background information on her, and pictures of her artwork. 2. Have a short discussion on what we see within Miller's artwork. 3. Present the project and overview of the steps, along with explaining the materials in front of everyone. 4. Hand out art boards to participating students.			
<b>Students at Work (1 Hour)</b> <b>Drawing-</b> Before the lesson, I will have prepared canvases or boards with black paint so they are dry and ready for the lesson. The students will start by reflecting on what they took from the introduction of Betty G. Miller and create a line drawing that plays with the beauty and the hardships withing the Deaf community. They will use pencil to draw this simple line drawing on the black canvas. <b>Painting-</b> The students will then begin painting by deciding which color or colors they would like to use. They will start by painting the lines that they drew with a white line. Once complete, they will mix their chosen color with white and paint on the outsides of the existing white line. They will then do this again one or two more times, adding less white to the color each time.			

<p><b>Sealing-</b> Once finished and completely dry, the student can add a layer of mod podge to the neon light section or the whole canvas depending on if they would like a shiny finish on their work.</p>
<p><b>Reflect /Closure (8 Minutes)</b></p> <p>We will finish off the lesson by first having each student fill out a small form about their artist statement. It is a paper where they can explain what materials they used, what inspired them, and what they created in their art. It is perfect for me to use in displaying the projects and it allows the students to reflect on the pieces that they created. Then, we will have a group discussion where we share our paintings, telling the class what we created and why. This allows for everyone to come together as a group and share about Deaf culture.</p>
<p><b>Clean up (7 Minutes)</b></p> <p>The students will wash the brushes, water cups, and paint palettes in the sink. They will move their finished work to a flat space to dry. They will place all pencils back into the cup they came in and will wipe down the table tops and floors if needed.</p>

## Lesson 2- Nancy Rourke

**Name (Instructor) :** Hailey Meyer

**Central Focus:** Investigating Deaf Culture

**Lesson:** Mixed Media Collages Inspired By the Meanings of Colors

**Things you need to prepare for this lesson:**

**Materials:** cardboard/posterboard, colored paper, paint, watercolor, markers, glue, paintbrushes, cups with water, scissors

**Mentor Artist(s):** Nancy Rourke

**Process Boards:** Color Meanings; Red= Empowerment, Blue= Audism, Yellow= Hope and Light deaf people need to see each other

**Rationale:**

**Developmental:** engage in group discussion, learning new vocabulary words, revising work or trying something new

**Personal/Community/Cultural:** showing personality, abstract meaning, aware of problems in a larger world

**Artist connection:** Nancy Rourke creates paintings with just three colors that share the themes of resistance, affirmation, and liberation. Each of the three colors has a meaning that is very specific when she uses it to create her work. The students will be using these same three primary colors in their work, making sure they are focusing on the meaning behind each color.

**Language FUNCTION you'll target:** Syntax and Discourse

**Language ACTIVITIES you'll use:** Show & Tell of final project, explain meanings behind the colors that you chose, discuss how color can be important to voice a point, discuss how the use of Nancy Rourke's colors makes you feel about deaf culture, exit ticket (artist statement)

	<b>Lesson Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Evidence of Learning</b>	<b>Assessment Instruments</b>
<b>C</b> <b>r</b>	<b>VA:Cr1.2.HSIII</b> Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices, following or breaking established conventions, to plan the making of multiple works of art and design based on a theme, idea, or concept.	Are the students creating art that relates to resistance and liberation in Deaf culture? Are they using the three colors? Are they focused on the meaning behind each color?	What the students created in their art, Artist statements
<b>P</b> <b>r</b>	<b>VA:Pr6.1.HSIII</b> Curate a collection of objects, artifacts, or artwork to impact the viewer's understanding of social, cultural, and/or political experiences.	Viewing of Nancy Rourke's artwork, Creating their own work to be displayed	PowerPoint, What the students created in their art

R e	<p><b>VA:Re7.1.HSIII</b> Analyze how responses to art develop over time based on knowledge of and experience with art and life.</p>	<p>What are the students initial thought on Nancy Rourke’s work? What do they think after hearing her artist statement? What do they think after attempting to create their own?</p>	<p>Discussion during the PowerPoint, Discussion at the end of the lesson</p>
C n	<p><b>VA:Cn11.1.HSIII</b> Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society.</p>	<p>How does Nancy Rourke’s art encourage the Deaf community? What is it’s impact?</p>	<p>Discussion during the PowerPoint, Discussion at the end of the lesson</p>
<p><b>Entry Point/Motivation (15 Minutes)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PowerPoint about Nancy Rourke including her artist statement, some background information on her, and pictures of her artwork.</li> <li>2. Have a short discussion on what we see within Rourke’s artwork.</li> <li>3. Present the project and overview of the steps, along with explaining the materials on each station.</li> <li>4. Hand out art boards to participating students.</li> </ol>			
<p><b>Students at Work (1 Hour)</b></p> <p><b>Paint Station-</b> This station will include paints of different colors for the students to include in their work. There will be cups of water with paintbrushes along with the bottles of paint. I will provide paper plates or some sort of paint palette to disperse the paint onto.</p> <p><b>Paper Station-</b> This station will have different colored construction paper, scissors, white glue, and glue sticks so that the students can cut and paste shapes onto their mixed media collages.</p> <p><b>Marker Station-</b> This station includes a variety of colored markers. The students will utilize this station to do any drawing that they want present on their mixed media collage.</p> <p><b>Watercolor Station-</b> This station includes a variety of watercolors along with paintbrushes, cups with water, and paper towels. It can be utilized to add watercolor in the form of a light wash of color or a bold statement on their mixed media collages.</p>			

### Reflect /Closure (8 Minutes)

**Process-** Start by asking the students about how they felt about this process of focusing on colors and their meanings. What encouraged their projects and what set them back?

**Nancy Rourke-** How did Nancy Rourke's story and her work inspire the student's work?

**Deaf Culture-** What parts of Deaf culture did you focus on in your work and why?

**Audism-** How did you represent Audism, or the fight against it, in your mixed media collage?

**Artist Statement-** Have the students fill out an artist's statement for use in displaying work and for them to personally reflect on the answers to all of these questions.

### Clean up (7 Minutes)

The students will help by washing the paintbrushes and water cups in the sink. They will move their projects to a flat area to dry. They will clean up any scraps of paper and throw out ones that cannot be used. They will place the leftover paper into a neat stack and the markers will be placed neatly in a bin. The floor will be clear of any leftover scraps of paper or paint and the tables will be wiped down by the students.

## Lesson 3- Chuck Baird

**Name (Instructor) :** Hailey Meyer

**Central Focus:** Investigating Deaf Culture

**Lesson:** Clay Hand Sculptures

### Things you need to prepare for this lesson:

**Materials:** clay, clay tools, water, sponges, bowls, paint, watercolor, paintbrushes, colored paper, scissors, and glue

**Mentor Artist(s):** Chuck Baird

**Process Boards:** How to cut and shape clay, how to use clay tools

**Rationale:**

**Developmental:** use of language as a tool, explore creativity, learn well in cooperative groups

**Personal/Community/Cultural:** more genres of learning (art), interest in study of psychology, focus on problems in a bigger world

**Artist connection:** Chuck Baird has represented a variety of aspects of Deaf culture within his art but in this lesson, we will focus on his ASL paintings. ASL is a huge part of Deaf culture as well as being a beautiful form of communication. This project will represent ASL and it's beauty through representation of animals and their habitats.

**Language FUNCTION you'll target:** Syntax and Discourse

**Language ACTIVITIES you'll use:** Discussion during PowerPoint, Discussions while working, exit ticket (artist statement), Discussion about art at end

	<b>Lesson Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Evidence of Learning</b>	<b>Assessment Instruments</b>
<b>C</b> <b>r</b>	<b>VA:Cr2.1.HSIII</b> Experiment, plan, and make multiple works of art and design that explore a personally meaningful theme, idea, or concept.	Are the students using all of the stations to create ASL handshapes and landscape paintings for the background?	Use of stations, What the students create in their art
<b>P</b> <b>r</b>	<b>VA:Pr6.1.HSIII</b> Curate a collection of objects, artifacts, or artwork to impact the viewer's understanding of social, cultural, and/or political experiences.	Viewing of Chuck Baird's artwork, Creating their own work to be displayed	PowerPoint, What the students created in their art
<b>R</b> <b>e</b>	<b>VA:Re8.1.HSIII</b> Analyze differing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works in order to select and defend a plausible critical analysis.	What do the students learn from viewing Chuck Baird's art? How does it make them feel about ASL and Deaf culture?	PowerPoint, Discussion during PowerPoint, Discussion at the end of the project
<b>C</b> <b>n</b>	<b>VA:Cn10.1.HSIII</b> Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-	How did the students relate what they learned about Chuck Baird to	What the students created in their art, Artist statements

making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.	their own artwork?	
<p><b>Entry Point/Motivation (15 Minutes)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PowerPoint about Chuck Baird including his artist statement, some background information on him, and pictures of his artwork.</li> <li>2. Have a short discussion on what we see within Baird's artwork.</li> <li>3. Present the project and overview of the steps, along with explaining the materials in front of everyone.</li> <li>4. Hand out art boards and clay slabs to participating students.</li> </ol>		
<p><b>Students at Work (1 Hour)</b></p> <p><b>Clay Hand Shapes-</b> The students will chose an animal to focus their work on. They will then learn the sign for that animal and create the hand shape with the clay. There will be different clay tools and sponges on the table to create it. They can leave the hand smooth or add some different designs with carving into the clay.</p> <p><b>Landscape Background-</b> The students will then create a background landscape for their animal to live in using the stations listed below.</p> <p><b>Painting Station-</b> There will be different colors of paint, many sizes of paintbrushes, and cups of water for the students to use paint if they wish on their landscape.</p> <p><b>Collage Station-</b> There will be scissors, glue, and a variety of different colored papers for the students to use if they would like to collage any part of their landscape.</p> <p><b>Watercolor Station-</b> There will be watercolor palettes, a variety of different sized paintbrushes, and cups of water on the table for the students to use to create their landscape.</p>		
<p><b>Reflect /Closure (8 Minutes)</b></p> <p>We will finish off the lesson by first having each student fill out a small form about their artist statement. It is a paper where they can explain what materials they used, what inspired them, and what they created in their art. It is perfect for me to use in displaying the projects and it allows the students to reflect on the pieces that they created. Then, we will have a group discussion where we share our paintings, telling the class what we created and why. This allows for everyone to come together as a group and share about Deaf culture.</p>		
<p><b>Clean up (7 Minutes)</b></p> <p>The students will begin by setting their projects aside onto one table for their landscape boards and on a wooden board for their clay hands. The clay hands will be sprayed lightly with water and covered in plastic. The clay tools will be cleaned with the water cups and sponges on the table before being put away into the bin that they came in. The paintbrushes will be washed and placed back in the cup they came in. Any glue or paint bottles will be closed and put in a box. All scrap</p>		

papers will be put back into a pile or thrown out if unusable. Once all the materials have been cleaned, we will wipe the tables and floors to get rid of any additional mess.

## Final- My Teaching Philosophy

Hailey Meyer

12/13/2022

Honors Thesis

Deaf Culture & Art Education

### My Teaching Philosophy

When deciding what to study for my honors thesis, I struggled to find a topic that truly excites me. I wanted to chose a topic that was more than just a grade to get me one step closer to graduation, I wanted it to have meaning for me personally and my career moving forward. As I sat in my art education classes and my Deaf studies classes, I found that I love both topics so much but had no clue how to combine them in my future. That's when I decided to explore that exact topic for my honors thesis. As I brainstormed projects, created lesson plans, and taught them to small classes of all age ranges I found myself referring back to my ideals regarding teaching often. I wanted my lessons to be useable in

my future classroom, lining up with what I find to be important in the art classroom. This thesis encouraged me to dive deeper into what my philosophy on teaching truly is and this information is some that I will take away with me into graduation and my future classroom.

This semester I created three art lesson plans for my thesis that were inspired by Deaf culture and ASL. I was able to teach all three lesson plans to a variety of different age groups throughout the semester which helped me realize what works and what does not when creating a lesson plan about a topic I am passionate about. My first lesson is inspired by Betty G. Miller and focuses on her neon light art. I taught this lesson to a few students from off campus ages ranging from seven to eleven. The students truly grasped the concepts and were so excited to execute the lesson. Not all of them followed the exact prompt but it was okay because they all still made fantastic art while understanding the topic presented to them. I found myself not caring if the painting followed the exact prompt because the students were excited about art, engaged during the introduction, and were able to tell me about what they learned and why it was important at the end.

My second lesson is inspired by Nancy Rourke and her use of color in art. She uses only three colors, each with a very specific meaning; red for empowerment, blue for audism, and yellow for hope and the light deaf people need to see each other. I taught this lesson to a small group of student in the honors program at SUNY New Paltz and we created mixed media art with focus on the colors we were using. I taught the lesson and then we split up to create the art and as we began discussions about what each person was making, it triggered another conversation and another, leading the three of us to get to know a lot about each other. I realized that when we were focused on a task, giving it our prime focus, all three of us were able to open up a lot about our life outside of art or school. I got to know so much about the students that came to this lesson which I found to be really

special. Art has always been an outlet for me and that is something that I want to emphasize in my classroom far more than the quality of the projects they create. As I was sitting there with the other two students who came, I recognized that this is what I want for my future classroom- a safe space to open up to each other with no judgement. This lesson and the students that came were a major factor in my realization of what my teaching philosophy is.

My final lesson proved to be my favorite and the one that I believe has the most potential for my future classroom. It involves creating ASL landscapes inspired by Chuck Baird, using ceramics and mixed media for the background. I am passionate about ceramics and the balance of chemistry and patience involved in creating the final piece. I knew I wanted to create a lesson using this medium and I think the execution was more than I had hoped for. I was able to teach this lesson to two small groups; three SUNY New Paltz students, and four Kindergarten students during my Saturday Arts Lab class. I taught this lesson first to the Kindergarten students by teaching them animal signs and having them cutout their hand shapes with clay, positioning them into the sign of their choosing. Then in a separate class, I revisited the lesson and had the students remind me of the animal and their signs in order to create a landscape for that animal. With the college students I was able to complete the lesson in one sitting. From teaching this lesson to two widely different age ranges, I learned the versatility of this lesson and that it encouraged the theme of American Sign Language exactly how I had wanted it to. I loved seeing the vast difference in the direction the Kindergarten students took the project in comparison to the college students. That was my favorite part and it emphasized the point that I have no interest in focusing on the quality of art created in my classroom. After teaching this final lesson I felt set in how I feel about my future as a teacher and what I plan to encourage in my classroom.

My teaching philosophy is simple in a way; I want my classroom to be a break in my student's day. I had an amazing experience last semester as a substitute teacher grades K-12, any and every class in the district. That experience taught me how grueling and difficult a normal school day is for each student. I even found myself struggling to stay focused and excited to teach all of the lessons for each day. With that being said, I could not imagine the amount of stress each student is feeling every single day at school. As a specials teacher, I want to encourage important topics and skills while keeping to the core standard of allowing my students a break. I plan to execute this through the energy in my classroom and my methods of grading. I will present projects that I hope to be fun and engaging for my students, teaching them new skills that they may not learn elsewhere. After I have introduced my lesson and we move onto work time, I plan to allow the students to explore in any way they feel excited about. I will have some boundaries within this, but I want my classroom to feel like a free space to explore yourself and connect with others. I want to encourage my students to work together and talk to each other. This is something that they can not normally do in their core classroom so I would like to provide my students with that opportunity. My goal as an art teacher is not to guide my students to create the highest quality art pieces, but rather to guide them to connect, explore, and find meaning in everything they do.

I find myself feeling thankful for this opportunity to explore an important aspect of my future through this thesis. Each project began as a way to incorporate Deaf studies into art lessons but grew to have a far deeper meaning. I am now confident in my goals as an art teacher and could not be more excited to begin that new journey.