

Access to art: your right to have full access to culture

Lauren John

The Equality Act of 2010 clearly details the important access rights deaf and hard of hearing people have to everyday services, which include arts and culture attractions. Service providers are "obligated" to look at their premises and the way they provide services and adjust them accordingly.

The RNID campaign to improve access to the arts has uncovered various problems with poorly trained staff, equipment such as induction loops that haven't been installed and audio tours of venues that are unavailable in written form. They also identified that in some cases, services and events were poorly publicised, something Magic Deaf is helping to combat in London.

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Magic Deaf, which stands for 'Museums and Galleries In The Capital' is primarily an online promotional tool, which was set up in 2002 by a worker at Tate Modern, with the involvement of a committee made up of representatives from deaf organisations and arts venues in the capital who run programmes for deaf and hard of hearing people.

The website now has 16 member art galleries and museums, ranging from the Science Museum to the Tate Modern and The Wallace Collection. The website provides details of all events run by its members, and also operates as a 'clash calendar' so venues can coordinate their schedules.

Marcus Dickey Horley, Tate Modern's Curator of Access Projects, commented, "Practically, providing services and events

for deaf and hard of hearing audiences depends greatly on being able to reach out, and actively inform potential audiences about what we are offering, and Magic Deaf has been helping, by providing information about British Sign Language, hard of hearing, and deaf events for ten years".

The Tate Modern's regular program of talks often attracts in excess of 80 people, and features the works of artists like Andy Warhol, Picasso and Juan Miro.

A programme of events that's regular and varied is something that is wholeheartedly welcomed by Magic Deaf administrator Amy Bodycombe, particularly she says, in today's current economic climate.

"Access to gallery and museum events is limited without interpreted talks; a rich programme of events at a range of venues improves education and knowledge of the arts, heritage and science. This is vital for deaf and hard of hearing people at this difficult time, with cuts taking place across public services."

Funding of arts and heritage has already been on the agenda this year, at meetings of Parliament's Culture, Media and Sports Committee. The future may be uncertain, but little has so far been reported about cuts to arts access in venues for deaf and hard of hearing, which could be beneficial to Magic Deaf going forward.

The committee has plans for the future of the site, as Amy Bodycombe explains, "Our plans are to keep the website going and gain a wider membership within the capital. If we gain more funding, we could expand the service to outside the capital."

However, Tate Modern's Marcus Dickey Horley urges other arts venues to remember,



Putting on a good event is good event is about making the audience comfortable

it's not just about promoting the events, but the finer details of the events themselves.

"Think about making the audience feel welcomed and comfortable, host the event with a welcome introduction, and think about providing the interpreters notes as a hand-out for the audience.

"Also don't forget about the social side of a trip to a museum or gallery talk, and suggest everyone meets up after the talk for a chat about the event". Put a good quality event together with effective promotion, and the end result should be MAGIC!

For more information visit www.magicdeaf.org.uk

Film festival celebrating disability is a success

Leonard Cheshire Disability recently promoted two films funded by Media Box and First Light at the Ability Media Centre in Southwark, London, as part of their held the charity's annual disability film festival

More than 100 people attended the screening of two films *Our Rights to Relationships* and *SportsDance*. The films were produced by students from the Ability Media Centre and their creative partners Signdance Collective, Europe's only international touring BSL dance, theatre and music company.

"The films have seen young disabled people come together to create truly inspiring work"

Our Rights to Relationships was inspired by a film called *Une Femme Mariee* by French director, Jean Luc-Godard and looks at the sexual and emotional needs of young people with disabilities and the barriers they face from parents, carers and others who say they are trying to protect them.

The film gives a compelling insight into the issues experienced by young disabled people and portrays their beauty and sexuality.

Sports Dance sees filmmakers use a fly on



are committed to overcoming the odds to make their movie succeed. It is a particular honour to screen these two productions at the Ability Media Film Festival here in Southwark.

"Both these pieces of work are an inspiring testament to how disabled people make the world a more inclusive and better place."

is two fantastic films we're hugely proud of. Both films have seen young disabled people come together to create truly inspiring work."

The Ability Media Centre is a fully accessible and inclusive media hub for disabled and disadvantaged young people in London. People can gain media qualifications and get