



# **Disability Arts Symposium**

**Friday, January 25, 2008, 10am–6pm  
Gallery Gachet, Vancouver, BC**

Presented by Gallery Gachet, the Society for  
Disability Arts and Culture and Theatre Terrific,  
with support from 2010 Legacies Now.

Sessions: 10am-5pm  
Reception follows 5-9pm

Address: 88 East Cordova Street, Vancouver  
Located between Carrall & Columbia  
on wheelchair accessible bus route #4,  
and near routes #135 and #19.

Lunch, coffee/tea, and snacks provided  
Free admission • pre-register: [rsvp@gachet.org](mailto:rsvp@gachet.org)  
604-687-2468 • [www.gachet.org](http://www.gachet.org)

Our goal: Uniting artists with any type of disability working in any medium.

## Creating a disability arts network for BC

In 2006 artists and organizations came together in Vancouver to discuss the needs and struggles of artists with disabilities in BC. Now 18 months later, the BC Regional Integrated Arts Network (BRIAN) invites the community to get together for an inspired day-long event.

'Integrated arts practitioners' are invited to hear from pioneers and visionaries, create connections, debate ideas, and enjoy great food. While we work in different disciplines (theatre, media, visual arts. etc) many of the issues are the same. Come share and understand what unites and divides us, where we need equity and access, funding, overcoming labels, confronting marginalization, and realizing peer support.

Today's panel discussions and video presentations will address:

- 1) Does a "disability arts" label help or hinder artists? Hear views from Australia, the UK, and Canada.
- 2) Report back on the results of our 2007 disability arts sector consultations, and plans to launch BRIAN as a provincial resource for urban and rural artists;
- 3) Making the arts accessible for both audiences and on the stage!;
- 4) Advocating for inclusion of disability arts in Cultural Olympiad programming;
- 5) Video messages about rights and citizenship;
- 6) How would BRIAN operate as a network in BC?;
- 7) Establishing a Mentorship and Commissioning Fund for BC artists with disabilities;
- 8) Open Space - participants can self-organize into a hot topic.

### Panelists include:

**Bruce Gladwin**, Artistic Director of Back to Back Theatre, a pioneering Australian contemporary theatre company, with a full-time ensemble of five actors with intellectual disabilities. The organization has become one of Australia's leading creative voices, focusing on moral, philosophical and political questions about the value of individual lives.



Bruce Gladwin

**Wendy Hollo** is the Executive Director of Edmonton's Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts and an educator on self-advocates learning and using their rights. Wendy will be joined by some of the Centre's Lead Artists including **Uli Rossier** (right).

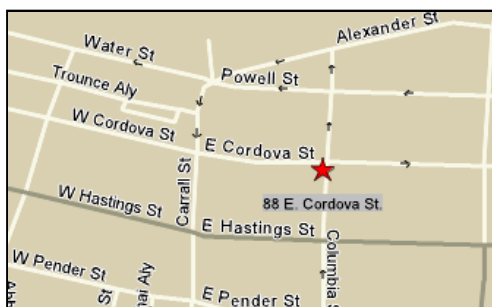


Uli Rossier (Nina Haggerty)

**Geoff McMurchy's** cultural leadership comes after a 30-year process of politicization as an artist with a significant spinal cord injury. He is now Artistic Director of the Society for Disability Arts and Culture, which strives to empower artists and performers with disabilities to correct cultural misrepresentations by creating their own narratives, and to bring disability-controlled narratives to wider audiences.



Geoff McMurchy



**All sessions at 88 East Cordova St.  
Located between Carrall & Columbia,  
on bus routes #4,7  
Pre-register: [rsvp@gachet.org](mailto:rsvp@gachet.org),  
604-687-2468, [www.gachet.org](http://www.gachet.org)  
Cost: Free**

Please let us know by Jan 18th if you have any special needs for participation.

# Symposium Schedule:

- 9:30** Registration/coffee & muffins
- 10:00** Welcome/Introductions from the BRIAN Advisory Committee: Geoff McMurchy (Society for Disability Arts & Culture), Irwin Oostindie (Gallery Gachet), and Cathy McDonald (Theatre Terrific).
- 10:30** Special Guest introduction by Susanna Uchatius (Theatre Terrific).
- 10:35** Bruce Gladwin, Artistic Director of Back to Back Theatre (Australia) presents on their award-winning theatre work, and their views on disability arts and culture "down under."
- 11:30** Discussion: Labels - defining, self-marginalizing, or liberating?
- 12:00** Through 2007, BRIAN engaged consultant Rick Marcuse for a disability arts community consultation. This was made possible with support from 2010 Legacies Now. Report back and discussion on the development of an integrated arts network for BC including: governance models; networking ideas; database; mentorship; creating a commissioning fund.
- 1:00** Lunch
- 1:30** Concurrent Sessions I:  
a) Making the Case for Accessible Arts Venues in BC.  
b) Video and discussion 'Through the Eyes of Artists,' human rights arts project from Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts (Edmonton).
- 2:30** Panel on Disability Arts Leadership - Geoff McMurchy (Society for Disability Arts & Culture), Diane Thorn Jacobs (Gallery Gachet), Wendy Hollo (Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts).
- 3:30** break
- 3:45** Concurrent Sessions II:  
a) Advocating for inclusion of disability arts in 2010 planning.  
b) Open space (discussion topic chosen by participants)
- 4:30** Symposium wrap-up and BRIAN "next steps."

**5:00**



'A Man with a Stare,'  
Yvette Prefontaine

Closing Reception for 'Broken Barricades: Ways of Seeing'  
Reception is open to the public and runs until 9pm.  
complimentary hors d'oeuvres and cash bar.

Broken Barricades is the visual highlight of a month-long exploration of the lives and work of artists with disabilities. Direct from the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts in Edmonton, Alberta, the Centre's Lead Artists will be present to speak about art production at the margins of the Canadian arts scene. Opened in 2003, Nina Haggerty provides a place where people with intellectual disabilities explore creativity and creative expression. The Centre supports artists with developmental disabilities working in a variety of disciplines, including: drawing, painting, printmaking, collage, ceramics, and 3D design. Over 100 artists pay a small membership fee in exchange for full access to art materials, studios, and exhibition opportunities in a public gallery.

The Centre is one of many thriving arts hubs located across Canada supporting artists informed by disability issues. Gallery Gachet is pleased to host this exhibition which reflects the breadth of work being produced by disability artists.

## The last remaining avant-garde movement

### Melvyn Bragg on the role of disability arts in the UK's cultural life

Guardian Newspaper, December 11, 2007

I chaired a debate on the future of disability and deaf arts last week. I was struck by the range of people who turned up for the debate. Many of them were wheelchair users, many having made efforts and travelled distances.

What I saw was a constituency approaching a critical mass which has always been essential to push any minority forward to compete in the mainstream. I was also surprised (for this I may have to be forgiven) at the intensity of feeling, both about the arts and at the sense of exclusion.

The day marked UN International Day of Disabled Persons. The London Disability Arts Forum (LDAF), in association with Tate Modern and the Office for Disability Issues, jointly hosted the debate.

The culture minister, Margaret Hodge, applauded LDAF for raising awareness of just how important the role of disability arts can be in the cultural life of the nation. The public service agreement target is to increase involvement by disabled and deaf people in the arts by 2%.

There were six panellists; it would be invidious to pick out any one because each one made a different point with passion and clarity: Sandy Nairne, director of the National Portrait Gallery; Paddy Masefield, doyen of disability and deaf arts; Yinka Shonibare, former Turner Prize nominee; Nabil Shaban, acclaimed artist and performer; Ju Gosling, artist in residence at the National Disability Arts Collection and Archive; and Jenny Sealey, artistic director of Graeae Theatre company.

It became not so much a debate as an intense discussion; the motion - that disability and deaf arts ought to be dead and buried, ie that we are all in the mainstream now - clearly found little favour.

I'll pick out a few points:

I was struck by Shonibare's comment that disability arts can be seen as the last remaining avant-garde movement. He compared it to the early days of feminism and the black arts. I thought this could prove a powerful dynamic as an argument given the increasing weight and talent of "disability art" now being produced.

Nairne was in the unfortunate position of being not only head of a leading gallery but taken as the representative of

the dreaded arts establishment. He took it gallantly on the chin not make any excuses even though in mitigation he could have pointed out that his work as chairman of the Fourth Plinth Commission had chosen Marc Quinn's statue of Alison Lapper to appear in Trafalgar Square. (At the moment Shonibare is being considered for the plinth, alongside Tracey Emin and Antony Gormley.)

Gosling wanted a separate place for disability arts to maintain their visibility. She said: "Should we bury a movement which points out that we can only really be happy when we accept the reality of the human condition as being vulnerable and imperfect."

Shaban put on a firecracker display of railing against everything that stood in the way of artists like himself

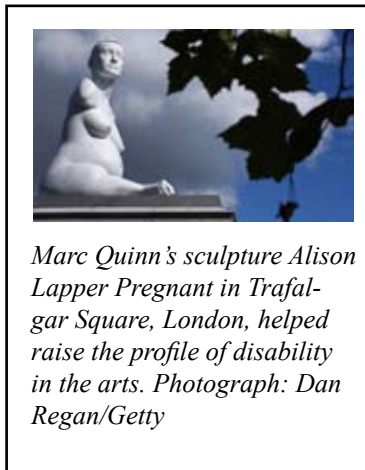
whose spectacular talents have made him a beacon and model. Sealey was loquacious and telling in her apologia of deaf theatre and Masefield is surely an iconic figure in this struggle. No one speaks with greater force and sense.

The vote to maintain disability and deaf arts was carried by a 99% vote. The vote on the need to obtain more funding for disability arts was carried unanimously.

At one stage I noticed that at the back of the auditorium a dozen or so people had drifted in clearly from another event. They stood and watched and listened.

They stayed for a while - they looked very surprised at what they had stumbled on in the Tate Modern - I think they may have been seeing the emergence of a new world.

Melvyn Bragg is a writer and broadcaster, and president of mental health charity Mind.



*Marc Quinn's sculpture Alison Lapper Pregnant in Trafalgar Square, London, helped raise the profile of disability in the arts. Photograph: Dan Regan/Getty*

Also this winter...

## UNRULY SALON

Presented by Green College at UBC  
January to March 2008

Join The Unruly Salon to further the discourse on diversity, humanity and civil society; contribute to a reshaping of the disability narrative; challenge ideas of 'global citizenship'; and work to realize the full inclusion of all people. Producer Leslie G. Roman, Artistic Director Geoff McMurphy.

[www.unrulysalon.com](http://www.unrulysalon.com)