



Solo photographic & interactive exhibition explores deafblindness – at Markham's Varley Art Gallery



Legally Deafblind

March 15, 2009 – May 3, 2009
Varley Art Gallery, Unionville, ON

Curated by Natalie Schönfeld Howard

Image: "Slow Dance, Jerome and Celine's Wedding", Natalie Schönfeld Howard, Poitiers, France, 2000

Markham, Ontario - The Varley Art Gallery of Markham explores deafblindness through the exhibition ***Legally Deafblind*** running from **March 15 to May 3, 2009**.

Curated by the artist, Natalie Schönfeld Howard, *Legally Deafblind* is a photo-based multimedia body of work about individuals who are deafblind; the importance of language and communication as a window to independence. It's an intimate journey of discovery about dependency on our senses.

Meeting two deafblind residents at the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf in Toronto was the initial inspiration to Ms Howard. "Their strengths, positive outlook and independence in spite of their disability touched me deeply and inspired me to search and explore their world," she says.

For the past 10 years, Ms Schönfeld Howard has photographed individuals who are deafblind at different stages of their lives with different degrees of deafblindness. The result is a body of work that is an exploration of the everyday realities of language and communication, specifically those moments of humanity that connect us all.

The exhibition includes 45 international photo documentary images of individuals who are deafblind at different stages of their lives, with different degrees of deafblindness. The photos capture the moments of humanity that connect us all: accomplishment, laughter, joy, isolation and struggle.

As part of the Varley Art Gallery exhibition, Ms Schönfeld Howard has constructed an immersive environment of multimedia installations that explore the inner landscapes and sensorial experience of a place when being deafblind. This three-part installation work includes a Braille/animation/sound vibration room, an installation of light, and a room of sensations.

The word 'VARLEY' written in a stylized, hand-drawn, black font.



“I have always been asked when showing the photographic aspect of the work – Are they completely deaf and completely blind? – My answer is No. In fact they are not, only a minority within the deafblind community is completely deaf and completely blind. It is through questions like these that I have come to understand the need for a more detailed body of work that targets the misunderstanding and misinformation that exist in the general community. This common, but incorrect, perception leads to many false assumptions about the everyday world of people who are legally deafblind, and in the way the community at large interacts with them,” says artist Natalie Schönfeld Howard.

The exhibition opening is Sunday, March 15, 2009 from 2 to 4 p.m. with The Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, in attendance.

The artist will be providing guided tours and supplementary programming for the public:

Sunday, March 28, 2009; 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.:	Tea & Tour with the artist [free with admission]
Sunday, March 28, 2009; 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.:	Beyond Sight & Sound Workshop with the artist [\$25, pre-registration required]
Sunday, April 26, 2009; 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.:	Tea & Tour with the artist [free with admission]
Sunday, April 26, 2009; 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.:	Film Screening, <i>The Miracle Worker</i> [free with admission]

The Varley Art Gallery acknowledges the support of the Varley-McKay Art Foundation, CNIB, Deafblind Ontario Services and Rotary Cheshire Homes. The artist acknowledges the support of the Ontario Arts Council for this project.

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The Varley Art Gallery of Markham explores Canadian art themes with a particular focus on portraiture. It also operates the McKay Arts Centre for community artists and studio classes in Fred Varley's studio. The Varley Gallery, located a 20-minute drive northeast of Toronto, is open Tuesday to Saturday, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Sunday from 12 noon to 4:00 pm. For related programming visit varleygallery.ca.

Markham, a municipality of more than 285,000 residents centrally located in the Greater Toronto area, is Canada's most diverse community and home to many of Canada's leading life science and technology businesses. It is renowned for a rich heritage, vibrant neighbourhoods, and leadership on the environment and urban design.

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A stylized, hand-drawn logo for 'VARLEY' in a bold, sans-serif font.