

SILENT VOICES, hearing through the eyes

Deaf people and sign language.

The event **SILENT VOICES** is designed to bring visitors closer to the deaf universe, to its culture, to its language and to the way it relates.

The photo exhibition **SIGNS (children in sign language)** offers a series of black and white childrens portraits done by Elena Siniscalchi: a path that witnesses the expression of Italian Sign Language (LIS) through the young protagonist's eyes and hands. In the last decades many countries have officially recognized sign languages to be a precise code which follows grammar and syntax rules and relates to the eyes instead of the ears.

Communication through signs goes back to our remote past: The success of verbal language, which frees hands to do other tasks, is the final step in the evolution of interpersonal communication.

We can suppose that there have been two parallel evolutionary lines: one for the vocal language type and the other for the sign mould (infact some anthropologists indicate the coexistence of both a spoken and a signed language in some primitive tribes). The main things which we learn from deafs and from their language is the adaptability of the nerve system and its functions: of its extraordinary latent potential.

Visitors have here the opportunity to consult the *Elementary bilingual italian sign language dictionary*, which is the result of an ambitious project of linguistic and philologic italian sign language experts. They were able to unify the written, the signed and the multimedia language together, four different codes in one . Two linked computers with custom software make it possible to digit a word which is than immediatly translated into Italian Sign Language.

The exhibit is linked with a selection of movies and videos, signed both by hearing and non hearing authors, dealing with deaf themes.

The event means to show the opportunities and the rich world of different communication: listening with hands to a beating heart, catching a concept or a speech through the eyes and through a glance.

SIGNS (Children in Sign Language)

The photography exhibition of Elena Siniscalchi's portraits, is a voyage into deaf culture and language, which offers the opportunity to approach a still unknown world . Although important philosophers and scientists as Plato and Leonardo caught the potential of non-hearing people, thus far we know very little about them and even less about their language (for ex. Italian Sign Language L.I.S., American Sign Language A.S.L. and many others) provided with grammar and syntax rules.

This language is really difficult to recognise for someone who has never had the opportunity to observe two signing people closely, no one utilizes it in a proper and more evident way than children do.

These pictures of both deaf and hearing signing school-children invite visitors to listen to their voice, to their silent language.

Elena Siniscalchi

Elena Siniscalchi is a portrait Photographer. She was born in Kiel, Germany in 1969 and grew up in Italy. Very soon she developed a strong interest for photography: a life witness able to record and catch the short instants which slip away from our memory.

Portrait is the central thread of her work, focused on gesture, facial expressions and non verbal communication.

Children are the protagonists of many other of her projects like *Gesture melody*, centered on a childrens violine orchestra and its little artist's musical gestures and glances.

Elena Siniscalchi has also been working for theatre (Teatro Franco Parenti and Andr e Ruth Shammah) both on stage and in her privat studio.