

Schwendener, Martha. «Joseph Grigley Vox Populi». *TimeOut* - June 5, 2003

The question is often posed to those who possess all five senses: Which would you rather lose, your sight, or your hearing? The two are typically cast as binaries, even in the art world. Take, for instance, the last Whitney Biennial, in which sound works were accessed via headphones in a pitch black room, as if seeing anything while listening might contaminate the experience.

The sight-sound dichotomy is more immediate for Joseph Grigley, who was born hearing but is now deaf. (His artist bio reads, “born in 1956, Longmeadow, MA; deafened in 1967.”) Since 1994, he has been making art composed of handwritten communications jotted on cocktail napkins, gallery announcements, and other sundry scraps of paper. On view here is *Blueberry surprise*, a compilation of selected writings from Grigley’s copious archive, printed on a 70”x52” sheet of paper. Featuring a maddening 45000 words, it’s a daunting work to take in, but it does include fascinating and often hilarious snippets of dialogue that conjure myriad places, situations and ideas.

Dominating the exhibition is an installation of five white, life size fiberglass dogs based on canines found in four paintings by Canaletto. The 18th century artist is best known for his postcard-like cityscapes, most famously of Venice, called *vedute* – a term that interestingly derives from the word *vedere* (Italian for “to see”). But in a gallery statement, Grigley characterizes Canaletto as a noisy painter; his dogs, with their cocked ears and crouching postures, reveal dramas hidden in the otherwise placid scenes.

While Grigley doesn’t always fully connect the dots between sight and sound, “*Vox Populi*” offers plenty to ponder: about the silence of pictures, the points at which seeing and hearing intersect, and the ways we communicate our experiences to each other.