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Zine art and deaf identity in Indonesia: a practice-led phenomenological exploration of inclusive visual expression

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ABSTRACT

Deaf individuals primarily rely on visual modes of communication such as sign language, which also function as powerful expressions of cultural identity. Despite this, their representation within the arts remains limited, particularly in Indonesia, where access and inclusion are still developing. This study explores how visual art, specifically zine-making, can serve as an inclusive and culturally grounded creative space for the Deaf community, emphasizing the interaction between Deaf identity, sign language, and visual expression. Rooted in a constructivist epistemology, this research is grounded in the belief that knowledge is actively constructed through interaction, experience, and meaning-making. To support this philosophical stance, the study employs three interrelated methodologies: Practice-Led Research to guide the artistic process and creative exploration; Aesthetic Phenomenology to examine the lived and embodied experiences of visual creation and reception; and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to analyze the relational dynamics among human and non-human actors involved in the zine-making process. Through collaborative artistic engagement with Deaf individuals and reflective documentation of their interactions, the study reveals that zines function not only as artistic outcomes but also as inclusive communication tools that bridge the Deaf and hearing worlds. Visual elements inspired by BISINDO (Indonesian Sign Language) operate as symbolic markers of Deaf identity, while the integration of grapyak, a Javanese cultural value emphasizing hospitality, supports the formation of inclusive aesthetics rooted in local traditions. This research contributes to the field of disability arts by demonstrating how zine-making can serve as a site of cultural dialogue, visual empowerment, and artistic inclusion. It also provides a model for integrating local cultural values into inclusive visual practices.



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1. Introduction

The legal foundation for disability inclusion in Indonesia is grounded in two key frameworks: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Law No. 8 of 2016. The UNCRPD, adopted in 2006, emphasizes principles of non-discrimination, accessibility, inclusive education, and full participation in public life. Law No. 8 of 2016 echoes this commitment by guaranteeing the rights to life, work, education, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. However, despite the existence of these legal instruments, implementation in the arts and cultural sectors remains limited and inconsistent [1]–[3]. For the Deaf community in particular, structural barriers persist in accessing creative spaces, such as the lack of inclusive arts education, limited cultural representation, and insufficient curatorial support for sign language-based practices. Many arts institutions do not provide sign language

interpreters, visual descriptions, or accessible design considerations. As a result, Deaf communities often rely on grassroots initiatives to create their own expressive spaces through zine collectives, community exhibitions, and participatory workshops [4]–[7]. Sign language, particularly Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia (BISINDO), plays a vital role in bridging communication and affirming cultural identity within the Deaf community. BISINDO developed organically from Deaf communities and differs from SIBI (Sistem Isyarat Bahasa Indonesia), a government-imposed system that mirrors spoken Indonesian grammar. While SIBI is often used in formal institutions, many Deaf individuals prefer BISINDO as it better represents their natural and everyday mode of communication [8]–[11].

The regional variation of BISINDO, such as in Surakarta, reflects a rich cultural diversity that remains underrepresented in formal education and mainstream artistic production. However, this diversity offers a valuable resource for creating artworks that embody the pluralism of Deaf expression. The zine medium, in particular, allows for flexibility and community-driven aesthetics [12]–[14]. As an artist born and raised in Surakarta, the author is guided by the Javanese principle of *grapyak*, a cultural value emphasizing openness, warmth, and respectful communication [15]. *Grapyak* is not merely a social ethic, but a philosophical foundation for collaborative and participatory artistic practices. The author's personal experience learning the BISINDO alphabet during vocational school serves as a concrete act of *grapyak*, an effort to open communicative space with Deaf peers who identify as "Deaf" rather than with the medicalized term "hearing impaired. Collaborative activities with the Gerkatin community in Surakarta, particularly in visual arts projects, serve as the foundation for this research. The creation of zines functions as a form of practice-led research, where the creative process itself generates knowledge. Zines are chosen for their democratic nature, independence from institutional frameworks, and accessibility to Deaf communities both visually and narratively [16]. In this practice, zine making involves close collaboration between the author and Deaf participants, with *Grapyak* guiding processes of dialogue, participation, and mutual understanding.

Understanding the agents involved in this process reveals the relational dynamics of the work. The roles of the artist, the Deaf collaborators, and the zine medium each contribute uniquely to the creation of meaning. Examining their interaction uncovers the complex social networks through which artistic value and meaning emerge [17]. This research also draws on the aesthetic of *sanggit*, a Javanese philosophical concept of meaningful negotiation between tradition and modernity [18]. In this context, *sanggit* is not only a stylistic reference but a method of reinterpreting traditional values such as *grapyak* into new visual forms that speak to contemporary issues, particularly disability inclusion. *Grapyak*, symbolizing openness, respect, and warm interpersonal exchange, is manifested in both the visual and collaborative dimensions of the zine project. Visually, *Grapyak* is expressed through friendly, approachable monster characters, bright color palettes, and playful compositions that invite participation and emotional engagement. These design choices aim to evoke a welcoming atmosphere aligned with *Grapyak* as a relational ethic. Socially, *Grapyak* is realized through the collaborative process with Deaf participants, where dialogue, feedback, and mutual respect shape co-created content. The zine is thus made not about the Deaf community, but with them.

The principle of *sanggit* is reflected in the hybridity of the artistic work: it revives traditional concepts like *grapyak*, reinterprets BISINDO signs into imaginative visual symbols, and abstracts cultural identity into expressive forms that resist literal representation. This layered approach creates a work that functions both as a means of communication and as a cultural artifact, resonating with both Deaf and hearing audiences. Simultaneously, this study engages with disability aesthetics, which centers the lived experiences of disabled individuals and challenges normative assumptions about beauty, communication, and artistic value [19]. In the context of the Deaf community, this aesthetic is grounded in visual language and embodied expression. The zine uses BISINDO not merely as a code but as a visual system for generating meaning, each letter designed into a character reflecting the creativity and depth of sign language culture. Hand gestures are exaggerated, symbolically infused, and embedded within quirky, childlike figures that reflect the artist's memory of learning to visually communicate with Deaf friends. This approach rejects standardization and instead affirms the visual-spatial intelligence of Deaf culture. To frame the interaction between art, inclusion, and culture, this

study adopts a constructivist and contextual approach to disability. Theoretically, it is informed by critical disability studies, which position disability not as a medical limitation but as a socially constructed identity shaped by context and interaction. It also draws on Deaf Gain theory, which reframes deafness not as a loss but as a cultural and communicative asset, especially relevant in visual and performance art [20]. Practice-led research supports this perspective by allowing knowledge to emerge through making, dialogue, and reflection. Meanwhile, the integration of *sanggit* and *grapyak* as cultural frameworks ensures that this process is grounded in local philosophical values rather than imposed from external inclusion models. Ultimately, this research proposes that inclusive art is not only about who is represented, but how they are represented, who is involved, and what cultural values shape the creative process. By combining traditional aesthetics, community engagement, and disability-centered visual strategies, this work offers a model for culturally grounded, inclusive, and socially engaged artistic practice.

2. Method

This research is rooted in a constructivist epistemology, which holds that knowledge is actively constructed through interaction, experience, and meaning-making. Within this philosophical stance, the study integrates three interrelated methodologies: Practice-Led Research, Aesthetic Phenomenology, and Actor-Network Theory (ANT). Each plays a distinct yet complementary role in the process of knowledge production, artistic reflection, and social analysis.

- **Practice-Led Research: Structure and Artistic Process:** At the core of this research is Practice-Led Research (PLR), which positions artistic creation not merely as output but as a central process through which new knowledge emerges. In PLR projects, the creative component and exegesis are seen to be research outputs of equal value and as two aspects of a single, unified whole [21]. The creation of the zine *Grapyak Monster* was used as a methodological tool to explore visual communication and inclusion within Deaf culture. The stages of the creative process included: Planning: Ideation was grounded in previous interactions with Deaf friends, reflecting on the potential of sign language as a visual form. Artistic Creation: Each letter of the BISINDO alphabet was transformed into a monster-shaped digital character, designed using Procreate on an iPad. Consideration was given to readability, cultural reference, and imaginative engagement. Documentation: The process was documented through sketches, screenshots, artist notes, and reflective journals. Reflection: The researcher engaged in critical reflection after each stage, considering emotional responses, aesthetic choices, and feedback from Deaf collaborators. As both researchers and artists, they aim to make sense of the world and share what they have created with a broader community [22]. Through this practice, artistic production served as both method and data [23].
- **Aesthetic Phenomenology: Embodied Experience:** Aesthetic phenomenology supports PLR by unpacking the subjective and embodied experiences during the creation and reception of the zine. The viewpoint of the reflective practitioner informed the conduct of practice and that of research throughout [24]. How the experience of working with sign language influenced visual decisions (*e.g.*, the viewer's engagement with the haptic, the proximal and the distal values, which, in visual terms)[25]. The emotional and perceptual impact of engaging with Deaf collaborators, exhibitions, and audiences - The multisensory nature of the zine medium, how tactile materials, visual forms, and reader interpretation together create aesthetic meaning. This phenomenological reflection was recorded in a research journal and later analyzed to connect artistic choices to cultural and sensory experience [26].
- **Actor-Network Theory (ANT): Mapping Social and Material Relations:** To complement the internal perspective of phenomenology, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) was used to examine the external networks and actors involved in the creation of the zine. ANT can demonstrate how assemblages in educational practices can be simultaneously made and unmade, with unconventional forms and spaces taking shape and developing strength [27]. ANT conceptualizes the project as a web of interconnected agents, human and non-

human, that co-construct the artwork. This includes: Human actors: the artist, Deaf collaborators, mentors, audiences – Non-human actants: BISINDO as a language system, Procreate as a software tool, the iPad and stylus as creative instruments, grapyak as a cultural value. A table was developed to map the roles and functions of these actors. The interactions between them were analyzed to understand how meaning, representation, and inclusion are mediated in the art-making process [28]. By acknowledging the agency of these non-human elements, educators and theorists can better understand the complexities of modern educational environments as material relations [29].

Though the three approaches come from different traditions—artistic research, phenomenology, and sociology—they are unified here through a constructivist lens, which values experience, interaction, and meaning as socially and culturally constructed. In this framework, PLR provides the creative process, Phenomenology reveals inner experience and meaning, and ANT contextualizes the artwork within broader networks of relations. By integrating these approaches, the research not only produces an artwork but also generates layered insights into inclusive visual communication, Deaf identity, and the aesthetics of disability.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Grapyak to the Deaf Friend: Space for Art Creation

Deaf disability is a communication barrier through hearing media that prevents Deaf friends not having access to information like hearing people. Deaf disability also has its own culture in communicating as a substitute for non-communication between Deaf individuals with Deaf people, or with non-Deaf people. The language of Deaf disability is often shaped by the oral-manual controversy, where the oral method is preferred over signing, and this dynamic contributes to the formation of Deaf culture [30]. Deaf culture can be understood through the concept of Deafhood [31], which differs from the 'static' medical condition of 'deafness'. Deafhood represents the ongoing challenge Deaf individuals face in asserting their identity within both the hearing and Deaf communities [32], [33]. Much like other cultures, Deaf culture is marked by its social intricacies, distinct beliefs, norms, and values, as well as shared activities, collective oppression, diversity, history, traditions, and technologies, all of which are passed down to future generations [34]–[36]. Deaf culture is a set of values, practices, and beliefs shaped by the Deaf community, of which communication through sign language is a major component. This culture includes not only ways of communicating but also distinctive identities, art, and social relationships. Sign Language as Identity, Sign language like Bisindo (Indonesian Sign Language), is central to Deaf culture. BISINDO itself originated from the initial/native sign language of the Deaf, where the use of BISINDO adjusts to the understanding of Deaf language from various Deaf backgrounds without incorporating the affix structure of the Indonesian language [37]. It is not just a means of communication, but also a symbol of identity and pride.

Sign language allows Deaf people with disabilities to express themselves in a way that is fully understood and valued by their community. The use of sign language with BISINDO is more optimal when used by the Deaf community [38]. The researcher has a lot of experience with deaf friends from vocational school until now. From the beginning of learning alphabetic sign language, which is quite helpful for communication, at least no longer relying on tools to write, but practicing signs for words that are difficult to express with alphabetic signs. Since then, besides being friends, we have gone through many activities related to fine arts, such as painting together, discussions, and exhibitions. Seeing how culture and communication work with deaf friends, in this creation, using visuals is the main element that can be worked on. Sign language itself is a very visual form of communication, so the use of visuals allows artists to convey meaning, emotion, and strong messages through media that can be accessed by various audiences, including the Deaf community. In visual works, there are also two things that can be offered, namely aesthetic and educational works. This creation space makes it possible to create a work of art that collaborates thoroughly on how communication is possible between visual forms and the Deaf themselves. Of course, this also gives an idea of how the Grapyak form, which has the essence of togetherness, can be embodied in the form of artworks.

3.2. Grapyak Monster with Zine media

Zines gained renewed popularity in the late 1960s and 1970s, playing an essential role in spreading anti-establishment and feminist ideas, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom [39], [40]. As Punk and DIY scenes grew, and the advent of copy shops made distribution easier, zines like *Sniffin' Glue* and *Profane Existence* emerged from the counterculture movement into the mainstream [41], [42]. Throughout its various historical phases, zines have offered a space for intellectual expression outside of the mainstream. They created a platform for communities whose experiences, values, or identities were not represented elsewhere. The zine, as a form of self-publication and independence, is a relevant medium of creative expression in this context. Zines are often used to explore niche topics, offer alternative views, and promote grassroots activism [43]. In the context of Deaf culture, zines can serve as a powerful tool for the Deaf community to share their experiences, voice their issues, and connect in ways that are not represented in mainstream media. By providing a space where Deaf people can express their unique perspectives, zines create a sense of identity and solidarity, much like the role they played in other counterculture movements. In this research, the zine that combines the Bisindo sign language alphabet and the essence of Grapyak serves as a visual and narrative communication tool that connects the Deaf and non-deaf communities. Through the zine, inclusive messages and friendly aesthetics can be conveyed in a more personalized and interactive way. In the process of creating the zine, the first thing that was made was the visual form that each represents the Bisindo alphabet. The digital paintings were created by considering the readability aspect of each alphabet from A-Z. Each character of this digital painting must include the hand gesture of the Alphabet Sign with the development of a monster shape that has personally become the author's visual expression that has been processed so far.

The combination of monster shapes and the Bisindo sign language alphabet is, of course, key to this process. Defining which monster shape represents each alphabet is an important contemplation in the formation process. The author in this context explores the memory of childhood experiences when starting to recognize the alphabet, namely connecting the alphabet with animal shapes to spark the imagination of memorizing letters. The memory of childhood provides inspiration to utilize the alphabet into a word to be visualized. For example, when making the shape of the letter A, it will be a lure to make a visual of a dog. The pattern will be used to create a visual of each letter. In this process, the theme of the shapes is very random and not specific to animals, representing the richness of language and the mystery to be solved by the viewer. After all the Bisindo alphabet has been visualized, because before the idea of making a zine was sparked, the artist made an interactive work that had been written in the urban vortex 4 seminar proceedings at IKJ first with the title "Exploration of Bisindo Alphabet Sign Language in Interactive Digital Works", namely by making digital paintings of the Bisindo alphabet into fonts that are convention on the laptop keyboard. This zine is a continuation or development of that work. Utilizing the fonts that have been convention on the laptop, the author makes a sentence that the appreciator will have to solve when they want to understand what the written sentence reads, of course, by learning the type of alphabet that has been used in the work. The sentence is part of the Zine's content, Fig. 1. The zine book consisted of a cover, introduction, the entire sign language alphabet, sentences, the artist's CV, and acknowledgments. Everything has become one unit with the zine title "Grapyak Monster". The arrangement used the Procreate application on the iPad. After everything was organized, the zine was printed into a very vibrant physical form, namely a thick cardboard cover and HVS paper content. The Grapyak Monster zine consists of several integrated components, including a cover, introduction, a complete BISINDO sign language alphabet, contextual example sentences, the artist's biography, and an acknowledgments section. All of these elements are unified under the thematic title Grapyak Monster, reflecting both the content and the cultural ethos of the work. The entire layout and illustration process was conducted using the Procreate application on an iPad. The decision to use digital illustration software was not purely technical—it was rooted in a desire for visual clarity, flexibility, and expressive freedom, allowing the artist to stylize each BISINDO sign into engaging monster characters that could resonate with Deaf and hearing readers alike. The digital medium also facilitated repeated revisions and feedback incorporation, aligning with the collaborative spirit of inclusive design.

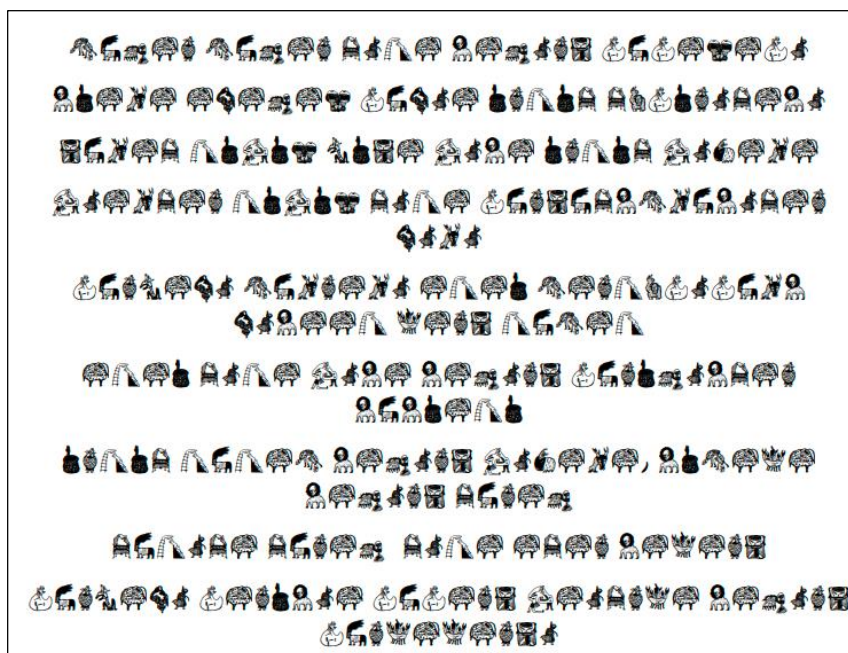


Fig. 1. Said the zine

Once finalized, the zine was printed in a tactile, reader-friendly format, using a thick cardboard cover and HVS (standard copy) paper for the internal pages. These material choices were intentionally made to enhance physical accessibility and engagement, especially for Deaf readers who rely heavily on visual clarity and tactile experience. The use of bold, high-contrast visuals and generous spacing supports the legibility of the sign alphabet and allows for easier visual tracking—important for readers processing spatial language. The cardboard cover provides durability and a sensory appeal that echoes the playfulness of the zine’s content, while also making it suitable for repeated handling in community or educational settings. Moreover, the layout and design are deeply informed by the Javanese cultural value of *grapyak*, which emphasizes warmth, openness, and relational harmony. The page arrangement is intentionally open and inviting, with clear narrative flow and accessible iconography, reflecting *grapyak* not only as a theme but as a design principle. The visual choices—including rounded shapes, vibrant but soft color palettes, and character expressions—evoke friendliness and inclusiveness, encouraging both Deaf and hearing audiences to engage without intimidation or hierarchy, Fig. 2. In this way, the medium, material, and cultural values converge to create a multisensory, inclusive reading experience that centers Deaf visual culture while inviting cross-cultural understanding.



Fig. 2. Zine in digital form

3.3. Aesthetic Experience as Aesthetic Phenomenology

Aesthetic phenomenology, as a philosophical approach, emphasizes the subjective, embodied experiences individuals have when engaging with artworks. In the context of the Grapyak Monster zine, this approach is crucial for understanding how aesthetic meaning arises from the interactions between the artist, the Deaf community, and the artwork itself. This process involves more than personal interpretation; it is a collaborative, affective space where meaning is co-constructed through dialogue, experimentation, and reflection. The artist, as the initiating agent, not only directed the visual and conceptual development of the zine but also functioned as a facilitator of inclusive dialogue between cultural values, technology, and the lived experiences of Deaf individuals. Using practice-led research, the artist experimented with visualizing the BISINDO alphabet through monster characters that conveyed both linguistic information and emotional warmth. These experiments were continually refined through reflection and feedback, particularly from interactions with Deaf friends and collaborators. This collaboration was not superficial; it involved sharing drafts of the zine, observing sign language in everyday use, and inviting critiques on clarity, relevance, and cultural sensitivity. The Deaf community played an active and generative role in this process. Through informal interviews, collaborative drawing sessions, and direct feedback loops, Deaf participants shared their experiences with sign language, their preferences for visual representation, and their reactions to early drafts of the zine.

Their insights shaped not only the accuracy of the BISINDO depictions but also informed the emotional tone, color palette, and overall layout, ensuring the work resonated with Deaf visual sensibilities. For instance, suggestions from Deaf collaborators led to greater emphasis on facial expressions and the spatial orientation of hand shapes, key features in natural sign language communication. The zine itself functions as both a cultural artifact and an accessible communication tool. As an independent, self-published format, the zine is distributed directly to Deaf individuals and communities through exhibitions, community workshops, and school-based sharing activities (Fig. 3). Its printed form, with clear, high-contrast illustrations and structured page flow, is designed to support visual legibility and user-friendly navigation. Because it does not rely on text-heavy explanations, the zine can be engaged with intuitively, making it especially effective for readers whose primary language is visual rather than verbal. Its compact, tactile format also makes it portable and easy to share across different settings, including Deaf schools, community centers, and art spaces. Ultimately, the Grapyak Monster zine not only reflects the values of inclusion and Grapyak but also embodies them through its method of creation and dissemination. The collaborative approach allowed the artist and Deaf community to co-produce a work that bridges cultural and communicative divides, while offering an inclusive aesthetic experience grounded in lived realities and mutual respect.



Fig. 3. Discussion about zine with deaf friends during the exhibition

3.4. Sanggit Aesthetics: Grapyak meets Contemporary Media

The essence of grapyak, reflecting the warmth and openness of Javanese cultural values, is integrated into the artwork through a visual strategy that is modest yet communicative—particularly through the use of black-and-white color schemes. Although it avoids literal warm color palettes, the composition utilizes organic forms, open spatial

arrangements, and a friendly visual rhythm that evokes an inviting and inclusive atmosphere. This strategy not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the work but also strengthens its participatory and socially engaged message. This creative approach aligns with the concept of *sanggit* aesthetics, as defined by Dharsono [44], which frames artistic expression as a dialogue between tradition and modernity. Within this framework, three aesthetic tendencies can be identified. First, symbolic revitalization (*mutrani* or *nunggak semi*) is evident in the adaptation of traditional values and forms into a contemporary medium like zine-making, where black-and-white visuals are purposefully employed to center attention on meaning and narrative. Second, symbolic reinterpretation arises when cultural elements are not represented literally but are expressed through subjective and imaginative visual formulations, including contextually designed sign language symbols. Third, symbolic abstraction refers to the effort to convey Deaf experiences and *grapyak* values through suggestive, poetic visual language emphasizing emotional and philosophical depth rather than direct representation. In the *Grapyak Monster* zine project, *sanggit* aesthetics are embedded both in the process and the outcome of the artwork. The project revives the value of *grapyak* through its inclusive design approach, reinterprets sign language through the development of imaginative characters rooted in the artist's personal memory, and achieves symbolic abstraction by transforming cultural and communicative values into expressive visual forms. BISINDO sign language serves as the visual foundation of the work, with each alphabet letter reimagined as a unique visual element. These forms act as communicative bridges between Deaf and hearing communities, embodying the principles of *sanggit* while inviting deeper appreciation for the visual complexity and cultural richness of sign language. In this way, the artwork does not merely reflect aesthetic beauty but becomes a medium for dialogue, identity, and social inclusion grounded in reflective authorship inspired by lived Deaf experiences.

3.5. Actors in the Ontology of Disability Art Formation

Latour's theory. According to Latour, everything is connected and mediated through networks. Latour defines "network" as a non-social entity; not society, but the formation of interactions through various tools or media that give rise to small loci. This is where Latour has the idea of decentering, which shifts the focus of attention from actors (humans) to networks. The shift to the realm of networks will lead to non-human existences, or what he calls "actants"[28]. Today, the development of technology and its various instruments has made humans so dependent that they are unable to live without them. Therefore, actants, or non-human things that are material, unconscious, and -perhaps- purposeless, must be positioned and analyzed equally as we position and analyze human actors. So it can be said briefly that the actors in the discussion of this paper can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. List of Actors and Their Roles in Creating Inclusion-Based Digital Artworks

Actor	Human	Non-human	Actor role (action)
Artist	v	-	Creator of the work and facilitator
Deaf	v	-	As Inspiration
Grapyak	-	V	Philosophy Inspiration
Bisindo	-	V	Form Inspiration
Ipad	-	V	Tools for making digital paintings
Stylus pen	-	V	Scratching tool
Procreate (Software)	-	V	App for digital painting
Scientific Journal	-	V	References to topics and methods
Zine	-	V	Connector between artists, deaf people, and appreciators

Table 1 shows the actors involved in the creation of artworks about deaf disabilities. Humans, objects, technology, and non-human entities are positioned equally, with each having an important function or action in the realization of a work. This proves that these actors are very much needed, and if there is no role between each actor, then the artwork that is present will feel lacking or may not even be finished.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that artistic practice, particularly through the medium of zine-making, can serve as an inclusive and contextually grounded form of expression for the Deaf

community. By integrating BISINDO sign language, the Javanese cultural value of *grapyak*, and principles of visual storytelling, the zine emerges not only as an artwork but also as a communicative tool that bridges Deaf and hearing experiences. Grounded in a constructivist epistemology, this research emphasizes that knowledge and meaning are actively constructed through interaction, lived experience, and collaborative creative processes. Within this framework, the concept of socially interactive creative experience is understood as the collective capacity of artists, Deaf collaborators, visual tools, language systems, and cultural values to co-create meaning through relational and participatory artistic engagement. The creative space thus becomes a site of shared authorship and inclusive representation. Rather than functioning as a passive product, the zine becomes an active medium for critical reflection, identity affirmation, and participatory learning. These socially engaged creative interactions highlight that artistic meaning emerges through dynamic relationships shaped by specific cultural and social contexts. This research contributes to the field of disability arts by offering a replicable practice-led model that foregrounds the communicative power of visual language and the role of local cultural values in shaping inclusive aesthetic practices. It also offers practical insights for educators, designers, and cultural institutions on how zines can function as accessible, low-cost platforms for arts education and public engagement. Looking ahead, this approach offers the potential to be applied in other disability contexts, to deepen Deaf audience engagement, and to expand this visual model across educational, curatorial, and intercultural communication settings. Ultimately, the study affirms that inclusive art practices—when grounded in direct community involvement and cultural sensitivity—can foster more equitable, reflective, and meaningful spaces for creative dialogue and representation.

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