

Transcript of the recorded conversation between Alison O'Daniel and Marta Hryniuk in the frame of WET (wetfilm.org) online presentation of *The Deaf Club*. The conversation was held in July 2025.

Marta Hryniuk:

Hello and welcome to this conversation hosted by WET. My name is Marta and I'm one of the members of WET, an organisation and physical space devoted to moving image practices, based in Rotterdam. Today I will be speaking with visual artist and filmmaker Alison O'Daniel. Welcome, Alison!

Alison O'Daniel:

Thank you for having me. I'm very happy to be here.

MH:

We are meeting in the context of our year-long public program with the title *How to make films that not only question, but remake the world?* This question has been guiding us through a period of year-long research conducted by members of WET, and a series of public events on historical and contemporary documentary and experimental film practices, bridging the supposed gulf between radical aesthetics and politics. In the first part of the year we revisited filmmakers who worked against dominant hierarchical conventions in the past, putting forward proposals for a more radical, collaborative and ethical filmmaking. We presented films by Maria Barea and Med Hondo, hosted talks and reading group sessions devoted to their work.

Now we are shifting to the contemporary moment, asking what constitutes a radical moving image work today. Where do we find spaces of political contestation and how are they represented in independent film and moving image practices? In this context, we invited Alison to present the work *The Deaf Club*, as part of our online program.

You can access the piece at wetfilm.org until the end of August. Alison O'Daniel is a d/Deaf visual artist and filmmaker working across sound, moving image, sculpture, installation and performance. She builds a visual, aural, and haptic vocabulary that reveals a politics of sound that exceeds the auditory. I first encountered Alison's work last year at a documentary film seminar called Doc's Kingdom in Odemira, and I was struck by, on one hand, its freshness and playfulness, and on the other by a profound investment in the politics of access, the experience of d/Deafness and the physicality of sound.

The Deaf Club takes us to a 1970s San Francisco, where the eponymous club hosted punk music nights alongside its day to day operations as a community space for d/Deaf people. And I wanted to start with a simple question: how did the piece come about? Could you say a little bit more about how you got to know about the Deaf Club, and why you decided to make a work about it?

AO:

I was in a very backwards process—I mean, literally a backwards process—of writing a feature script for my film *The Tuba Thieves*. And when I say backwards, I mean that I had commissioned three musicians artists to make me musical scores, and then I was listening to their scores and trying to write a script from the soundtrack. I was trying to move towards narrative from listening. When I was in that process, I just felt like the universe kind of opened up and I was this sponge for information and stories and anecdotes from people that I knew and was talking to about the project.

One day I was in upstate New York, and I was on my way to go visit the Maverick Concert Hall, which is where the avant-garde composer John Cage first premiered 4'33. On my drive there, my partner at the time, his uncle, was driving me there. He was a seminal figure in the Latino punk movement in Los Angeles (he started Troy Café) and he told me about the Deaf Club. He knew that I would have balloons for the audience whenever I would screen my first film. And I have balloons for the audience because it's this other form of accessibility, and it's something that people in deaf clubs would do. They would watch movies and hold balloons because the sound waves travel seamlessly and fluidly across the latex of a balloon. He knew that I did that, and he knew also that the Deaf Club had this history, as in the San Francisco Deaf Club.

There are many, many deaf clubs called the Deaf Club, but that one became sort of infamous because it started hosting punk shows. There are stories from punks about d/Deaf people having balloons there; he made that connection and told me about it. Then I started to do more research and decided that the film was going to be anchored by three concerts. The 4'33 performance, the Deaf Club—like the very last night at the Deaf Club—and then the Prince concert that happened in 1984. It was really fluid; I was learning the information about these concerts that had either some kind of anecdotal element that referred to either grasping for sound or trying to listen in a different way, or music being presented to a community that often isn't prioritised in music. That was how the Deaf Club became a narrative anchor in the film.

MH:

Could you say a little bit more, just for the context, about your feature film *The Tuba Thieves*, of which *The Deaf Club* is obviously a part? It would be interesting to know how you conceived of the chapter structure and I would be curious to know what it was like to make?

AO:

The Tuba Thieves is a film that weaves between narrative, reenactment, documentary and an essay film. The title of the film comes from the fact that in between 2011 and 2013, twelve high schools in Los Angeles had their tubas stolen. It became this kind of very minor caper story. People were really interested in it in LA; I was one of those people. But there was also this very jokey way of being interested in it, people thought it was both hilarious and just kind of fascinating. I understood that, and I think I felt both of those things as well, but my drive towards making a film that began with these stories was that I felt a sense of justice. I identify as d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing, but, you know, you can hear my voice. I speak, I don't have any d/Deaf accent. I've grown up with hearing aids. I've always been in this in-between space where people

can't really identify me. They don't necessarily believe me as I'm talking about my experiences with sound. But I feel hyper sensitive to all of these different experiences that people will have with sound.

People who go to the Deaf Club who suddenly open their doors very generously and excitedly to the late 1970s West Coast American punk scene, I think that collision of people, and that collision of two very outsider groups is really quite profoundly beautiful and fascinating. Though I recognise that maybe sometimes people hear that story and they are drawn to the novelty of it, which happens so much with d/Deafness. I felt that tuba theft stories was one of those kinds of stories where people were like, ha ha, this is so strange. And there's a novelty to the story. But I knew that there was some other component to it. I was really fascinated by just the socio-economic reality of which schools would be able to replace their tubas. I knew there was a more interesting story in there. Maybe a sentimentality or compassion in me wanted to go into that element of storytelling.

Then, the whole structure of the film is based on how I hear: always behind, always catching up. I'm always trying to make sense of things. So the structure of the story doesn't tell the audience where they are or why they're there. It confronts the audience with many anecdotal experiences that are all rooted in sound. I tried to place the audience into this experiential space where they're trying to understand and make sense of why they're there. And I tried to make the film in a way that engenders curiosity rather than only frustration. Maybe curiosity and frustration can get woven together in a generative way. All of these anecdotes: from the Deaf Club, to the Prince concert to 4'33, to the real life tuba thefts, to d/Deaf communities in Los Angeles right now, they're all woven together in a way that a story bubbles up through the way you experience it as you watch it, rather than falling into the tropes of narrative arcs and things like that. *The Deaf Club* felt like a way to yank us out of the contemporary time space and move back into the late 1970s moment, and really recreate it and put the audience there to live in that for a moment.

MH:

I find it really beautiful how you describe what your desire was for the audience to feel. Even though *The Deaf Club* is a fragment of the longer feature length film, I think it also has that sense, that feeling of simultaneity, of chaos, of fragmentation. For people who haven't seen the work yet, there are two screens alongside one another. We have, on one hand, a punk concert, a card game, conversations in American Sign Language happening all at once. On the other hand, we have the MC, the song lyrics, and the captions on the textual layer, which all create a feeling of a productive chaos and fragmentation. As a viewer, I always turn my attention somewhere and at the same time I miss out on something else. I feel that it is a very rich and beautiful experience. I was wondering how that relates, if at all what I'm saying speaks to you, and how does it relate to questions of access?

AO:

Access is really messy and it's very fraught. I'm always in situations where I'm sort of being asked to be an expert on it, when really the most productive conversations I have about

accommodations and access are with other disabled people. Especially when we have conflicting access points, if you have blind and d/Deaf people who have very different needs, like in a movie space, for example. But I'm talking about all sorts of things where you need access. You have to problem solve how you're going to deal with those conflicting accessibility points. So often I think there's a desire for it to be perfect, for us to succeed, and everybody having access.

In making this film, one of the things that became really important to me was to represent how... you used the word chaos, I guess? How potentially fascinating and amazing it is to just be in the middle of it. There's a few things that happen in *The Deaf Club* scene that take a moment to get used to. Some people think that it's archival footage and then contemporary footage. Some people at first think one screen is the deaf screen, and one is the punk screen. And it's not at all.

It's all fake, it's all constructed. None of it is archival footage. We filmed on VHS, on 16 millimeter and HD, so that's why it appears to have some archival footage. But it was all filmed in the same two days, and with all the same people and then edited in a way where it is throwing you into the middle of sign language, into the music, into the different parts of a very small space. Like the Deaf Club, where the bartender who's d/Deaf is interacting with hearing punks who've learned a little bit of sign language, maybe enough to order a beer. You know, and then a group of older d/Deaf women who are playing cards just in the middle of all of it and like, really loving the beat. And then the musicians who are performing with d/Deaf people in the audience, and so it is kind of a chaotic atmosphere, but it's really working and everybody who's there seems to really want to be there.

The split screen, for me, really is just meant to divide your eye and make you bounce back and forth and try to make these sorts of visual connections. And also to be completely immersed in that sort of impossibility of being able to own and contain all of it.

MH:

And you mentioned earlier that you work a lot with reenactment. Is this also the case? Could you also speak a little bit about the people you work with, who are the actors and performers you collaborate with?

AO:

I would say I very, very loosely, and expansively think about reenactment. I really love history and I love historical anecdotes. I love very personal history. So, for example, in *The Tuba Thieves* there's a lot of dialogue throughout the film picked up and dropped into the film from Facebook chats. The entire conversation in the Prince scene for example, is all from a Facebook chat discussion of all these people who happened to be at that concert.

The Deaf Club scene is really careful, detailed research. I looked at one film that exists in that space, about the space, and then as many films that I could find and photographs that I could find that were actually taken at the Deaf Club. And then there was one book that was really written from the hearing perspective, like from the punk perspective that I read very early on.

When I read it, I just was really irked by it. I felt like the d/Deaf perspective was so missing and that the punk perspective was very much, you know, it was really *other*. It was very much like a hearing perspective that I hear a lot, that was kind of like, oh, whoa, d/Deaf people! Like the kind of shock of being around d/Deaf people that hearing people often have. That was really represented in the book. I couldn't find any representations of the d/Deaf perspective.

And then I knew that there was this Wikipedia entry I found about Bruce Connor; a lot of his photos of punk history are from the Deaf Club. And so, you know, I knew that he was this figure who was there. So he was an anchor that I could hold on to as a visual artist and as a video artist and as a filmmaker, and then bring him in as kind of a real character based on this Wikipedia article and then little bits and pieces of anecdotal history.

And then I had punks around me, or people who are serious punk enthusiasts that were just hardcore about me getting the moment correct. They were like, this is a very particular California moment and punk history before it becomes macho and aggressive. It's still arty, like, you have got to represent this right. They were so insistent. And so I loved, you know, trying to live up to that. In fact, actually, now I'm really dear friends with Daphne Hanrahan, who they speak about in the scene. Daphne was the person who went in and really started the Deaf Club with the punks coming in and performing. I'm very good friends with Daphne now, and when I finished the film, it played at [New York art space] Art in General, and there was a New York Times article about it, and she got in touch with me. I had tried to reach out to her, and I just couldn't find her contact information. I couldn't get in touch with her. She reached out to me and was like, I don't know how you did that. Like it's so accurate. And that was a moment of complete validation, you know?

Sorry, that's a very long answer to say that I'm very loosely thinking about reenactment. I think the reason I give myself that liberty is, it is like a d/Deaf activist kind of position that I'm taking because I hear - I mishear so constantly. That's such a frustrating experience I'm living on a day to day basis. But as an artist, I also find it really interesting. And so I've tried to really think through that as an almost documentary position, like my truth of experience. How can I represent a sort of storytelling that brings everybody into that way of encountering the world?

I care very much about the truth telling of that moment. But I also give myself a lot of freedom in representing a moment. And so, reenactment: I think I'm a little loose about that word, though I do actually feel like the Deaf Club is very well represented in this scene in particular.

MH:

And who are the people that you work with? Performers, actors, but also your crew and other collaborators. Could you say a little bit more? How do you find them?

AO:

Yeah, there's a casting process. When I was trying to find someone to play Bruce Connor, I wrote to a bunch of film people in New York because I knew I was going to be filming in New York. I wrote to the New York Film Anthology, and I asked them, "I'm trying to find somebody

who could play Bruce Connor, who looks like him when he was 40 years old and also can shoot 16 millimetre [film]. Can you guys help at all?" Like, I know that's got to be the most narrow [niche]. And three people wrote me back and they were like, Joel Schlemowitz, you need to talk to this guy. And he really does look like Bruce Connor when he was 40. He's a 16 millimetre filmmaker, and based in New York. I got in touch with Jean Connor, Bruce Connor's wife, and I sent her a picture of Joel, and I was, like, basically asking for her blessing. And she was like, oh, he doesn't look anything like Bruce, but he looks just like Robert, which is their son. And I was like, great, that's good enough.

So I'm always looking for a likeness, but I really love when people have some kind of quality that aligns on some level. Or, I'll sometimes cast people who really care about [the subject]. So the guy who plays the MC, he's a punk in New York, he is a musician, he's an artist. He knows, you know, that world and that moment. So he was really helpful. And then, it was extremely important to me that there were tons of d/Deaf people. We had sixty-five d/Deaf people who were part of it. And the crew always has a mix of d/Deaf and hearing people. It sometimes varies, like sometimes it's more hearing people, sometimes it's more d/Deaf people.

And then for that scene in particular, it was really about authenticity. So the bands. One of the bands was basically themselves. They're called Future Punks and they really loved the Units, so they wanted to channel the Units, but they performed their own songs, and then the other band was completely constructed for that [scene]. And they were... how did we get in touch with them? I'm so close to all of them now, and now I can't even remember. I don't know, they were just like, also really interested in punk and cared a lot also about the distinctions of different moments in punk history. So it was important to me to surround myself with a lot of people who cared deeply about the authenticity and getting 1979 right.

And, you know, we filmed in New York, which is funny because we didn't even film in San Francisco. And that goes kind of throughout the whole film, some people are completely actors and playing totally fictional roles, but a lot of people have some sort of resonance to the real: either they are playing a version of themselves, or they have some relationship to the original sort of character, or I develop a character around them. And then crew, I would say I just really like sensitive thinkers. So I try to have people who are, you know, kind and not film bros. No film bros are allowed, ever. No matter what gender they are, no film bros! No Hollywood film bros are allowed.

MH:

Great. I really feel like the people who we see on screen, they do feel like real people, whether they are playing a version of themselves or performing, there is a documentary feeling, even if it's fiction, which is really nice. I think that's a really nice balance. But I wanted to ask you about the Deaf Club being somewhat an intergenerational space. We see, obviously, people of different generations. There are older d/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing people playing cards. There are people chatting. There are obviously mostly younger people, who are enjoying the punk show. And that's not something that we see so often. So I was wondering if you think that there

is some sort of new opportunity for commonality, sharing space in a way that otherwise wouldn't happen if it was a different community, let's say?

AO:

Yes. I mean, that is an absolutely—in relation to my last answer—that's a very accurate portrayal of a deaf club. It would be intergenerational. It would be interracial. Because for d/Deaf communities, especially pre-internet, to gather in a space together is such a relief. There were just so few opportunities to connect. And so, you know, once the internet came about, that changed everything for the d/Deaf community. And before that, their isolation was such an issue. So deaf clubs were one of the solutions to that isolation. Anyone and everyone would go to a deaf club who was d/Deaf. So that's actually just a really appropriate, accurate representation of a d/Deaf gathering in the late 1970s.

That one in particular at the Deaf Club in San Francisco was in a very rough area of town. There was a real kind of collision of so many sort of down and out communities and the d/Deaf community probably being, you know, one part of that. If anything, maybe my version of the deaf club is probably a little too clean [laughs]. But yeah, I think the age thing is an appropriate representation of reality at that time.

MH:

How did they change? How are they today? The deaf clubs, with the internet?

AO:

Yeah. I mean, d/Deaf communities are just incredibly connected. You know, like d/Deaf communities have always been the first to use texting or FaceTime, or video chat. So they just have a connectivity that's... I mean, my social media is just full of d/Deaf people and it's very discursive. Anytime there's an issue that happens, I rarely see my hearing friends talking about things, like making videos, talking about issues, but I always see my d/Deaf friends doing that. Everybody, you know, posts their opinions about things. And so I think what's changed is the immediacy. You have the immediate ability to connect with people. And you're not beholden to interpreters, you don't have to... you can create your own spaces that are accessible digitally, before you would have had to have an event or a deaf club.

MH:

I wanted to come back, briefly, to talking a little bit more about the sound and different ways of perceiving the sound, not just with ears, which is often the experience—the simplified experience—of hearing people, but with the whole body. And given the different points of access that people have to your work, I was wondering if you could speak a little bit more about the audience, how you think about your audiences?

AO:

The first thing that's the most important to me with my audience is that it's mixed. I never really want the film to only be seen by a hearing audience. I really love when hearing audiences and d/Deaf audiences are mixed together and have to be aware of one another in a space or in a

theatre. That's always been so, from the very, very beginning. As I started writing grant applications, I would always say, you know, you don't really reach for critical comprehension of this film unless you're aware that you're not the only audience, that there's like a diversity of audience. That is really important to me.

There are many ways that I went about trying to make that feel present in the film. Some of it is literally just the edits. I'm always thinking about what happens because my eyes are my ears. So often in the cinematography of this film, I'm trying to put things kind of in the way. I really want to create this feeling like you want to push something out of the way and look around it to see.

I was trying to visually create these strategies, whether it's split screen or literally layers or physical obstructions that just give you a little bit of that feeling of something's in the way. And that's how I hear every day. It's like something is a little bit... it's going to take me a moment longer to understand or to get around that, sort of obstruction, corner or whatever. So I was always trying to think of either cinematic ways to do that through cinematography, or ways to do that through the edit, or ways to do that narratively, so that you don't really know where you are, why you're there. And so there's an investigation that's required of the audience.

But I also tried to do a lot of flashy, beautiful, eye candy, fun things so that people didn't get up and walk out. I was really strategic about using every single filmmaking skill I have in my toolbox to keep people in seats so that they wouldn't just dismiss the experience, because I know it's really different than what a lot of people [see]. I know it's different than what we expect out of sitting and watching a film.

And then in sound design, I was often talking with the sound designers: you know, can we move this into the stomach? I want people to feel like they're going to throw up [laughs]. I want to put so much bass on this that it actually rearranges your cells or something, or makes you a little physically uncomfortable, or gives you access to the soundtrack through your bones or your intestines or something. I was thinking about a lot of different ways of how to get the information into every single crevice and corner of the film so that you're encountering it. One of the things I say about *The Tuba Thieves*—not the deaf club specifically—is it's kind of an unspoilable film. I can tell you every single thing that happens in it, but you have to watch it. It's a film that's...it's not a brain cognitive experience, it's a physical body experience. You sit through it, and the way that it happens to your body, I think, is really how we comprehend the film. Or at least that's what I wanted. And it seems like the way that people talk about it, that worked.

MH:

I really agree. I really felt that way.

Alongside your filmmaking practice, you also work with a lot of other mediums. You work with performance, with text, with installation. How does this piece sit in your larger body of work? And you mentioned that you are working on a new film, are you able to say anything about it yet?

AO:

I would say that my work is about sound, and it happens in filmmaking and in installation mostly, sometimes in performance, but usually the performance is a way for me to work out casting [laughs].

I do a lot of things where I specifically will bring people together that I know I want to end up being in the film. So it's this very long writing process for me in a way. Sculptures and installations usually are a way to deal with the physical spaces of galleries and museums, which are often really acoustically terrible, which I find kind of exciting and a wonderful sort of d/Deaf challenge. In a way everybody who looks at video, at least in a museum or a gallery, is basically sort of Hard-of-Hearing because the sound is so bad. And so, I love that! I know that's really frustrating for most video artists, but for me it becomes a fun thing to work with.

I guess maybe because I do installation and video and sculpture, I'm thinking very spatially. A lot of times the language of film, the spatial element of film makes a lot of sense to me in a physical gallery space. And then the sort of sculptural language makes a lot of sense to me in film and structure and how we experience it.

There are these really amazing opportunities to work in very different formats where audiences come in and they interrupt a scene in a museum or a gallery space, like you never walk into something at the beginning and you're always seeing a portion of it, and then you see the rest of it, and then it goes back; you see things out of order. I find that really interesting and amazing, just the way that the language of looping video in a gallery, we are forced to ignore it or pretend it doesn't happen, but actually what it's doing is making you encounter a non-linear narrative, which I think is really fun to play with.

And because I was a visual artist first, in making *The Tuba Thieves* I really didn't understand how filmmakers raise so much money. So I basically wrote a script for *The Tuba Thieves*, and then I would take segments out as I would get money, and film them as standalone kind of short films that I knew were going to also be a part of the feature film. *The Deaf Club* was one of those. I made ten short films from 2013 to 2018 that then ended up... nine of them ended up in the film. Sort of rearranged. *The Deaf Club* is actually the one that's the closest to its original edit; I think it has a little section taken out. It's a little bit shorter, but the two channel thing was how it was shown in museums.

The next film I am making is about the weaponisation of sound, and sonic warfare. And across the entire spectrum of that. As a d/Deaf person, I really think on a daily basis, I'm kind of dealing with—not to be overly dramatic, but like sometimes it can feel like it—not warfare, but definitely the weaponisation of sound is happening all the time in my world. And it's really disheartening and frustrating, and it just never, ever ends, it's unbearable. And so I guess maybe I find a lot of things that are really frustrating in life, as somebody who deals with a disability. I try to take those things and pull them into filmmaking. So that I can maybe own it and rearrange it and try

and find some justice in it. So the film is going to be divided into three parts, I think, that focus on sort of different views of the weaponisation of sound. I think that's all I'll say at this point.

MH:

Sure, yeah, thank you. I wanted to ask you briefly about another piece, which is called *How to Caption*, which is a text piece. It is available on your website, so people can go and have a look. And it's been also published in some places. It's somewhat a practical guide on how to caption sound in a film. There is a nice sentence in the piece: "Consider your captions an interpretation of mood and sound design." And it obviously has a practical application and asks the reader, if they are not d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing, to pay more attention to issues of access. But it's also very much a meditation on sonic aesthetics, on miscommunication and its poetry. And it is also a conceptual artwork, in a way, which is concerned with the infrastructure around access. In some ways it feels representative of your work, or at least it feels like this dichotomy runs through your work. Can you say a little bit more about this line between a conceptual gesture, which at the same time has a somewhat practical impact in the world, which I suppose you could call activism?

AO:

Yeah, I'm really moved by your description of it as art, and I can see that, but when I made that page, I made it kind of out of frustration, because it took me so long to make *The Tuba Thieves*. It took me 12 years, I guess... like 11 years. And because I had started showing segments of the film, in museums and galleries, you know, people were becoming aware of it. I wasn't doing that filmmaking thing, where you just work on it very quietly and privately. And so what started to also happen was that there started to be more language around accessibility in filmmaking, and disabled filmmakers.

I was having these very irritating experiences where some filmmakers who were more established than I was, who had films they had done, were making films that were related to sound. They were reaching out to me asking, like, how do you caption? And it was an interesting thing because I was like, "well, I don't know, like I'm not a caption expert." I just know what I want and need, and I know that historically in my life, I've mostly been angry about captioning. Most of the time it really feels incomplete and it feels kind of lazy and it's rarely interesting. Sometimes it's even inaccessible while being supposedly accessible, like a music symbol. I always talk about a music symbol as the ultimate inaccessible accommodation. I realised that I was going to keep getting these questions, and I was going to keep having this conflicted feeling of like, actually I'm trying to create something, it is something I'm designing in a way.

And so what I found was that these filmmakers were asking me to be a technical expert when I was like, no, you're asking me to give you something that's actually my art. I had to deal with the conflict in me as a self-centered artist who wants credit for the thing that they're designing and making, and a d/Deaf person who wants all films to be accessible. And so that was a really interesting ego moment for me, where I was like, you know, I really do want everybody to put good captions on their films. I don't want to hold this close to my chest. At the same time, I want

to acknowledge the work that I'm doing to try and solve something that feels like a problem to me. So I just very quickly one day did that page, I just added it to my website and it was both an act of generosity and a way to sort of speak up and say be aware that when you caption your films, you're doing something more than just providing accessibility, like you are becoming like a very loaded interpreter in a way, of sound.

So think about all the power that sound has and how to describe it. Also, one other thing that I want to say that I think about a lot, and I find it very hard to believe... people maybe understand this. Sometimes I think that captions, when I read them, they feel a little diminutive. It feels to me sometimes they're attempting to raise a d/Deaf person's experience up to a hearing person's experience. There can be a feeling of a kind of hierarchical, conceptual comprehension thing. And I really don't like that. And there's just so much richness in d/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing movement through the world, interfacing with sound. And so I really think of my approach to captions as a way to encapsulate what that contribution is and can be, in a very quick way.

I think it's much deeper than just captioning, but I think that I was able to take that space of language and capture it in a film, and use it as a way to start to communicate something that I think is much deeper than just like, a d/Deaf person and sound in a film. I think there's a lot of richness in between those two things, and that they don't have to be separate. And so I was just hoping in very, very minimal terms, on one page on my website to start to communicate a little bit of that. It's been really, really meaningful to me how much people have responded to it. I think honestly, the mindset when I wrote it was really just like "uuuugh!" But now I actually do really want to write a book called *How to Caption* that is more developed, more than one page on a website.

MH:

That's great. For me, somehow on one hand, I realise that there are so many ways to caption that there will never be a recipe to do it in one way.

AO:

Yeah, but I will say that I also have felt a little bit irked sometimes when people call it creative captioning, because I think that in some ways—although I don't think this is people's intention—it can kind of dismiss the captioning as like an *other* captioning, which means that the sort of standard way of captioning (there is no standard) is the right way. And I find it really limiting. So I always want to say that captioning has a job, but it can do the job in a lot of different ways, I think.

MH:

Maybe just to, slowly wrap it up. But I was just curious to know a little bit about your experience and how you feel like this space has changed, particularly in film festival contexts and museums and art gallery contexts. Do you feel that there is any change towards more accessibility?

AO:

Yes, for sure. I mean, I am under no illusion that *The Tuba Thieves* got made because there was a growing awareness. My timing with *The Tuba Thieves* was just very fortunate and lucky, because I think things were really changing. I mean, I also think that I am part of that change. I have been demanding that and I am really fortunate to be in a community—a global community—of really empowered, disabled artists and filmmakers that are amazing and doing amazing work. And we are all in the legacy of so many disabled activists who came before us.

So I do feel like things are changing. And yet, the invisibility of disability is... oh man, it is relentless. Yeah. It's a hard one. I wax and wane all the time between optimism and irritation [laughs]. I am really inspired by so many of us and the way that we're putting ourselves out there and demanding things and what so many people are making. And it's really hard all the time. And I feel like we have to always be, like, weirdly polite about it. And I don't like that [laughs].

MH:

Thank you. Maybe that's a good moment to wrap it up.

AO:

Okay. It's kind of a sour note to end on. Sorry, but...

MH:

I mean, it's maybe the reality. But I don't know, I feel like, and this is speaking from the perspective of a hearing person, but I do feel that there is a change. And, yeah, I do see it and I am also more and more exposed.

AO:

It's just hard as a US citizen, it's hard not to be extremely pessimistic right now. Because it's every day hearing about a new thing that's being torn down or destroyed. It's a very strange time to live in this country. But I imagine that things are just going to keep moving up in so many other places as well. Here... I don't know, we might stagnate. I don't know what's happening here. It's really a mess. It's important to acknowledge that.

MH:

Yeah. Yeah, it is. Well, thank you so much for chatting to me about your work. I've learned a lot. And I'm a big fan of *The Deaf Club* and *The Tuba Thieves*, and I'm keeping my fingers crossed and waiting for your next film.

AO:

Thank you. Yeah, my hope is to do it in five years, not 10 or 11 [laughs].