

[have]

[have doubts]

[harbour doubts]



[have]	
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Cover Image: Untitled, 829, 2011, David Hockney

[have]

[INSTRUCTION MANUAL I]

It is normal to have a crisis of confidence before committing to a career path. Nobody knows how best to spend a life. An important characteristic of an interpreter is resilience. You may find exams interrupted by an incipient pandemic, mental encumbrance or something else exceptionally unforeseen. At this time, you may find comfort in reaching out to the local COMMUNITY.

TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC

I am not the target demographic for a Friday night presentation on osteo- or rheumatoid arthritis.

I am confronted by complex spelling patterns, by muscle memory and inflammation.

I take notes on atmospheric pressure and painkillers, on the double movement of a magic cure.

A tilt of the head tells me the difference between being high and being high up.

It is nearly time for the squash and biscuits.

In a still moment I alphabetise my vocabulary.

[INSTRUCTION MANUAL II]

There are many British Sign Language books and dictionaries, of varying print quality, available to supplement in-person sign language learning. Themed vocabulary for Christmas or Halloween can have many real-life practical applications. One popular series is LET'S SIGN.

LET'S SIGN SCIENCE

For a visual poetry class, I am photocopying pages
from LET'S SIGN SCIENCE: BSL VOCABULARY
from an old series of print publications
that also includes LET'S SIGN FEELINGS & EMOTIONS.

I would like to find LET'S SIGN POP CULTURE
or LET'S SIGN IN THE MUSEUM but they don't exist
and I can't afford a graphics tablet or a year of fine-line art
classes to learn to draw the graphics packages myself.

I cut out cool collage combinations like untamed
magnetic attraction or caterpillar camouflage.
Something is missing but these are all the words I have.
I arrange the language and it falls flat on the page.

[INSTRUCTION MANUAL III]

A successful freelancer knows how to diversity their portfolio.
A performance interpreter might also want to qualify as a
speech-to-text transcriber, or write scripts for audio description.
Sometimes, acquiring this range of skills is called DISTRACTION.

WRITING AUDIO DESCRIPTION AT THE ULSTER MUSEUM

I want to talk you through the time and space of early California.
The brush strokes are confident in the white span of sea foam.
The colours are cold and I am sure the sea wall is seeping.

I am happy in the landscapes I've never seen in person.
It does not matter that this is a windowless room,
Venice Beach is well-lit and I wouldn't want to change my view.

The pigment of the watercolour is easily saturated in the paper.
I am trying to list the most important blues when
I am distracted by something new: a close, but different blue.

TOM DALEY DIVES FOR DAVID HOCKNEY

DAVID HOCKNEY PAINTS TOM DALEY

after Tariq Thompson

Tom Daley is not looking down.

He counts to three, he leaps, he shrieks
in synchronised vowel sounds.

He tries not to twist past the fluorescents
more than twice but pikes and extends
towards the rushing light of blue.

Alive, he floats to the surface
with an irregular heartbeat
and his breath left underwater.

David Hockney begins towelling off.
Cellulose paper absorbs the incorrect
composition of pool chemicals and paint.

DINNER PARTY

Mum thinks I'm asking for the langoustines
mais j'explique que je travaille en langue des signes.

[have doubts]

THREE SUMMER BIRTHDAYS

Everything changes.
Most of us lose
something or someone.

It is hard to reconcile
the people we were
with the people we are now.

[harbour doubts]

00:00 – 00:01 READY?



To ask a question I raise
my eyebrows.

Anticipation is my least favourite
emotion.

00:04

HELLO



This is the first sign everyone learns.



Over time we become more conversational.



Even in the beginning we are trying our best to be understood.

So many things have happened since I started writing this that I can't remember what you already know. Or what I want you to know.

The most important thing is that I have nearly always wanted to become a sign language interpreter. This longing has been at the periphery of everything I have done.

The second most important thing is that it is becoming clearer this isn't going to happen the way I wanted it to. Or maybe even at all.

03:15 – 03:20 BEHIND IN THE SEA PEOPLE ARE SWIMMING



In this language, sea and see
are not homophones.



This was filmed before the resurgence of sea swimming and written before I moved closer to the sea. It was a shock to see people trusting themselves in the water on the early cusp of spring.

On a single track road that runs too close to rock and water, I meet two cars coming the other way and have to reverse around the corner screaming then back onto the empty concrete block I saw the swimmers edge themselves into the water from.

I leave the car and sit on the ledge, my feet just shy of the lapping water, the rough rock pushing grass and gravel into the back of my thighs. The men swim around the island and at differing speed hold a conversation about the north-west anchorage. I have not been able to swim underwater for years. I do not trust my brain to remember to take a breath and hold it. I try not to watch and instead envy the day old croissants freshly buttered and set out on the fold up wooden table bleached by the salt water.

03:03 – 03:04 HAPPY



The bigger the movement,
the more likely I am to
express joy.

I often keep my joy contained.

It has been days since I've spoken
to anyone else. Luckily, the days
are short.

I bundle myself under the winter
wool blanket on my bed. I close
my eyes. I listen to the voice notes
my friends have left me on
speakerphone. Their voices fill
the stillness of the floorboards,
the silence of the doorbell.

Sometimes I lose myself in
the momentum of my own
hands. Joy turns into
applause and I'm speaking
another language again.