

Differently talented artists you may not have heard of



In 2019, a unique book came out in the Croatian language. Its author is Jan Bolić, a young man from Rijeka, who managed to write it using only one finger. Mr. Bolić suffers from a rare disease in which he is losing the ability to use his muscles. Because literature is important to him, he decided to write a crime novel set in the US, and has done it although he could only move a couple of fingers. He says stories are the way in which he forgets about his misfortune, and can live in another world, for a short while. This is not his first book: He has also written two books of poetry.



Michael Naranjo is a Native American sculptor born in 1944. He belongs to the Tewa Tribe, and his father was a ceramic artist. Unfortunately, during the Vietnam War, he was hit by a grenade, which made him blind and unable to fully use his right hand. He began to sculpt while he was recovering from his injuries, making art pieces in clay, wax and papier-mache. Later, he also used bronze and stone. After a while, he turned his passion into a job, and is now a professional artist. His favourite topics are Native American warriors, children, soldiers, and animals such as bears and birds. He is so famous that his art can be seen in the Vatican and the White House.



Linda Riveros had a difficult childhood: she was born without arms and had to drop out of school because of bullying. Then her brother was killed, and her sister disappeared. There was one thing, however, which helped her through all these tragedies – it was painting. Ms. Rivero's sister taught her to use a paintbrush with her toes, and their mother got her a scholarship with the Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists of the World, located in Switzerland. After a year of studying, she had an exhibition, and is now a professional painter.



Agathe Backer Grøndahl was a famous Norwegian pianist in late 19th and early 20th century. She was one of the few women composers in history. People used to think that women could not create new music, although many learned how to play the piano, to entertain their families and guests. A very interesting fact is that she spent the last twenty years of her life almost completely deaf. Nevertheless, she continued to play and teach music until her death in 1907. She composed about 400 different pieces, and held concerts of her own compositions, as well as those of other famous artists, such as Edvard Grieg.

Tasks:

Find online, or at your local library, the art pieces from artists mentioned. Write a review.

Try out one or more of the artistic methods mentioned in the text (e.g. writing with one finger). How does it feel? How much more time do you need? What characteristics do (or did) the people mentioned had to have?

Discover: Can you find art made by disabled people in your city?

Research:

Find out about another disabled artist, sports person, influencer, or entertainer.

What difficulties did they have to overcome?

Who or what helped them most?

How do they make this world a better place?