Paddy Masefield OBE
Playwright, director, disability activist

Paddy Masefield was one of the leading figures of the Disability Arts Movement. A key spokesperson for disabled people, Masefield was dedicated to removing barriers to the arts.

Masefield was vice-chair of the ME (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) Association, and appointed the first honorary life member of the Directors Guild of Great Britain. In 1996 Masefield was appointed an OBE for services to the arts.

The 'Paddy Masefield Award' was set up in 2003, in collaboration with 'Equata' and 'Art + Power', to acknowledge the talents of learning disabled artists in the South West. NDACA holds several artworks that were granted this award.

From 1994 to 1998 Masefield was chair of the Arts Council of England's initiative to increase the employment of disabled people in the arts. This resulted in the creation of an apprenticeship programme placing disabled people in roles within mainstream arts organisations such as the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and English National Opera, in an effort to counteract disabling working cultures within those organisations.

In 2006 he wrote 'Strength: Broadsides from Disability on the Arts'. The book features past speeches, photos and references to the work of other disability artists, whom Masefield was keen to promote.

Disability Arts Movement highlights

'Strength: Broadsides from Disability on the Arts' was published in 2006.

Quote from Deborah Williams, about Masefield’s book

‘Strength is a book about Disability Arts in the truest sense. It covers one person’s experience from the inside, of life as a disabled person, whilst noting down all the little things that get missed, the stories and observations that turn into dinner-party stories and will eventually become part of the history and archive.’

Further reading

The book 'Strength: Broadsides from Disability on the Arts' by Paddy Masefield OBE can be bought from: www.ucl-ioe-press.com

‘Paddy: A Life’ is a series of poems written by Allan Sutherland based on interviews with Paddy Masefield, and can be found on the Disability Arts Online archived website: www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk
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