

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

“One of the best parts of the job is watching people start understanding that he’s a full person—just a person who goes about it all differently.”

– Donal Mosher, one of Gannet’s caregivers

It’s not the kind of day job you expect an artist to have. Recent art school graduates I knew worked in cafés, painted houses, or were assistants to more established artists. So, when I first noticed Colter—who I knew from art school—walking around with a young disabled man named Gannet, I assumed they were brothers. Soon, another artist I knew, Donal Mosher, started showing up around the neighborhood with G (as they often call him), and I began to wonder what exactly was going on. Finally I met G, and discovered that G’s mother had hired both Colter and Donal as daytime caregivers.

I had no idea how to relate to G the first few times I met him. He didn’t make eye contact, he drooled and didn’t speak. I couldn’t figure out how much of a consciousness was in there: if he could even understand me when I talked to him. Should I talk to him? Was it OK to ask questions about him in his presence? I felt very awkward and I was in awe of the people who obviously knew how to relate to him. Then I saw him use his “communication book” for the first time and I was stunned. There was a person in there: a full person with ideas and desires and a strong will. I still didn’t quite know how to deal with him, but I was fascinated. My close friend Amanda also began working with G and he became a regular fixture in my circle of friends.

I watched as G became a sort of glue between the caregivers, how his demands and his way of being in the world began to color their art and alter their lives. G began showing up with them at music events and art openings. His request (via the communication book) for a “picnic in the park with friends” could scare up a half-dozen friends on an hour’s notice. I decided I wanted to do a short, experimental piece about G and his group of friends, and I started trailing them with my camera. Soon I met Amy, G’s mother, and she told me that plans were in the works for G to move out of her house and into his own apartment. I found my “short experimental piece” transforming into something larger and more narrative as G’s story evolved.

As time went on, I watched as G and his group of supporters tackle not only his move, but also an eye surgery and other obstacles. I found that I couldn’t decide which was more compelling—G’s story as he became the adult he is now, or the caregivers’ and Amy’s, as they learned from him and grew themselves.

Originally I had been drawn in by the question of G's subjectivity. What was it like to BE Gannet? But because Gannet couldn't speak, I found I ended up depending on the stories of the people close to him to describe his world. In the film, we end up seeing G through the dramatic effect that he has on others and through the life they build together. Rather than the story you might expect about one young man's move toward independence, THE KEY OF G becomes a story about interdependence, a movie about how G's world is made, and how he makes it with others.

Robert Arnold

Director, THE KEY OF G