OCTOBER 6, 2018 — SEPTEMBER 1, 2019

PARENTING
an art without a manual

AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM
PARENTING
an art without a manual

"Life is tough enough without having someone kick you from the inside."
— COMEDIAN, RITA RUDNER ON PREGNANCY

WELCOME ALL, Each A Recipient of The Priceless Gift of Life!

Parents—we’ve all had them. Even if they were mere transient biological influences on our lives, predatory horrors, or the embodied essence of good and loving kindness, parents and parental surrogates act like most of humankind’s great powers—religion, sex, food, money, government—within themselves neither intrinsically good nor bad, but rather potent magnifiers of intention. Unlike adoption of an ASPCA pet, no license or proof of fitness is required to birth and assume the responsibility for a human child.

The Big Bang Theory actor and neuroscientist, Mayim Bialik, said of her own parenthood, “I came to parenting the way most of us do knowing nothing and trying to learn everything.” With that in mind, for one year, our American Visionary Art Museum (AVAM) will focus public attention on humanity's most basic performance art—the intuitive, complex, and transformative art of parenting. Our exhibition showcases works by 36 passionate artists, created out of every conceivable medium to express the artists’ own personal life experiences relating to parenting and/or being parented. Alongside the art, we have added globally sourced wisdoms, revelations from all the latest scientific research, and fun!

Most of us are children of some version of Marge and Homer Simpson—products of fellow flawed human beings who nonetheless managed to provide us some real glimpses of beautiful, unconditional love. Hafiz’s poem speaks of an ideal that may best be applied to parenting at its noblest: “Even after all this time the Sun never says to the Earth, ‘You owe Me.’ Look what happens with a love like that. It lights the whole sky.”

May your experience of our PARENTING exhibition leave you with a love generous like the Sun’s, a deeper understanding, and a greater forgiveness of self and all others.

Truly,
Rebecca Alban Hoffberger
and Anna Gulyavskaya, Co-Curators
Generous primary exhibition sponsorship for *Parenting: An Art Without A Manual* has been provided by Medomak Camp, America’s premier family camp. Nestled on the shores of a pristine lake, Medomak is a 300-acre classic Maine summer camp for the entire family. Medomak offers extraordinary counselor-led camp activities bespoke for all ages and delicious chef-prepared meals. A week at Medomak Camp makes lasting memories, strengthening family ties & a deep sense of community. In celebration of the 25th anniversary of Medomak Camp. www.medomakcamp.com

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EXHIBITION ARTISTS

- Bobby Adams
- Anonymous Artists
- Morton Bartlett
- Carol Beckwith & Angela Fisher
- Daniel Belardinelli
- Leon Borensztein
- Wendy Brackman
  & The Catskillched Crafters
- Tanja Brandt
- Ed Brownlee
- Allen David Christian
- Jim Condron
- Loring Cornish
- J.J. Cromer
- Scott Cromwell
- Kahlil Gibran
- Paul Graubard
- Alex Grey
- Betty Grodnitzky
- Francisco Loza
- Lower Eastside Girls Club
- Jordan MacLachlan
- Ray Materson
- John O’Brien
- P.NOSA
- Mary Proctor
- Carolynn Redwine-Geer
- Chris Roberts-Antieau
- Romaine M. Samworth
- Philippe Saxer
- Ann Sosbe
- Linda St. John
- Robert Sundholm
- Shawn Theron
- Mars Tokyo
- Frank Warren
- George Williams
- Chris Wilson
Holy Family, Alex Grey. Digital print on canvas. 2007 (original painting). Rights to reproduce original artwork came from Alex Grey.
Mom—start prenatal medical care immediately! You may need to get off prescribed medications known to injure your baby. Take vitamins recommended by your physician. Exercise regularly.

Dad—a big surprise revealed by recent research shows that dads’ exposure to environmental toxins and chemicals (especially Phthalate compounds found in plastics and some shaving creams), fatty diet, chronic obesity, and drug use can all have serious negative impacts on the quality of sperm DNA. Sperm matures in a 72-day internal process. Conscientious moms and dads should BOTH do all in their power to form healthy lifestyles prior to conceiving.

Sex—gentle is fine right up to when your water breaks. NO risky stuff! Some STDs can cause your baby serious damage. Get checked.

Drugs—Moms should say NO to alcohol during pregnancy, and avoid all recreational drugs. What you consume can pass directly to the developing baby and cause permanent damage. Follow this practice through the nursing phase.

Rock ‘N Roll—any REALLY loud, sustained noise can injure a baby’s ears that form fully by the 24th week of pregnancy. Lower the volume.

Mom—NO, to changing kitty litter when pregnant, and even limit gardening. Toxoplasmosis is a parasite born in cat urine that can pass to humans and cause severe injury to the human fetus.

Moms and Dads—YES, to singing, reading, and speaking to your baby even in utero. Latest brain research proves that toddlers “remember” stories and music first heard in the womb!

Mom—eat a healthy diet of lean meats, nuts, cooked eggs, well-washed fruits, hard pasteurized cheeses (no soft), sweet potatoes, leafy greens, and a variety of other vegetables. Keep caffeine to a minimum! Only one small coffee or green tea per day.

Mom—NO, to sushi, deli meats, hot dogs, raw meat, raw seafood, or fish high in mercury. Listeria and salmonella can hurt your developing baby.
10. Mom—NO, to hot tub soaking or very hot baths. Raising one's core temperature while pregnant can harm the baby. YES, to more sleep and all that bring you, sweet momma-to-be, peace and joy. Foot rubs recommended.

11. YES, to breastfeeding—really the best whole food with awesome health and harmony benefits for both momma and baby. If that's not working, try a lactation coach or seek out human milk sharing banks and networks. For even further help, get medical recommendations for quality formula alternatives.

12. Moms and Dads—YES, to reading and speaking directly to the baby, laughing and playing together, and engaging with your child. Born with brains filled with 100 billion neurons (the number of stars in the Milky Way), 0 to 5 are the ages when humans develop capacity for trust and other emotional and informational connections that last a lifetime. YES, to parent/child harmony, tenderness, and fun! NO, to raging anger—yuck!

13. NEVER SHAKE a baby. EVER! A newborn’s brain has the consistency of pudding or yogurt. Shaking can kill, permanently blind, or otherwise seriously injure your baby for the rest of his/her life. Don’t ever toss a baby up in the air higher than a foot (even when he/she laughs), and NOT before age two! Of babies injured, international statistics show that most fall victim in their first 6 to 8 weeks of life (the period when they cry the most), and those who hurt them are: Bio Dad 45%, Mother’s Boyfriend 25%, Baby’s Mother 15%, Child Caretakers 15%.

14. Cultivate real empathy for your child. Surrounded by giants speaking a foreign language, babies recognize voices and respond to ones who love them! A newborn is wholly helpless as to his/her own survival and needs, except for that very effective cry! Dependent upon and entrusted to you, your best care, gentle touch, tones, and eye contact must aim to engage, soothe, and comfort the child.

15. Find and befriend a fellow young parent to have a peer ally on this adventure of a lifetime. Get informed, trust your intuition, and know that feeling overwhelmed at times is really understandable.

16. Here’s the great part: If you were blessed with a wonderful childhood, you can put all that nourished you to good use with your child. If you had a really awful childhood, you can now be for your child that which you so wish you had experienced.

Many thanks to Margaret E. Williams, Executive Director of the Maryland Family Network, and to PNC Bank for making ZERO TO FIVE family support and education programs their primary national philanthropic priority.

“I don’t think it matters how many parents you’ve got, as long as those who are around make their presence a good one.”

— ELIZABETH WURTZEL
“Having children makes you no more a parent than having a piano makes you a pianist.”
—Michael Levine

PARENTING is truly a democratic art. The poorest and least formally educated parents among us might excel at the wise care and loving nurture of their children in ways that might elude some of our wealthiest and best formally educated.

Here, we speak of parenting not as mere biological fact, but as an active verb; one that takes on the day-in and day-out responsibility for the care and nurture of the child. Dr. Anthony Witham, President of The American Family Institute, wrote, “Children spell love...T-I-M-E.”

We sing praises to all the adoptive, foster, and surrogate parents, same-sex couples, grandmas and grandpas, loving extended family, mentors and teachers, and concerned neighbors who lovingly step in when biological parents cannot, or will not, to responsibly invest their time and love into the serious role of parenting a child in need.
In Praise of Grandparents

“My Grandmother is Big Data.”
— Seth Stephens-Davidowitz

A recent Pew Research Center study found that there are 2.7+ million grandparents raising their grandchildren, acting as the children’s primary or sole custodians in the U.S. alone. A fifth of these elder caretakers have incomes below the poverty line.

The impact of the current opioid crisis has generated new, even greater numbers of parent-addicts, incapable of reliably consistent care of their children. Other reasons parents fail to be able to care for their own children include catastrophic illnesses like cancer, mental illness, accidental injuries, and death. Brave and caring grandparents have stepped in time after time. Another fact that has greatly contributed to the increased number of grandparent-caretakers is the alarming explosion of the rate at which American women have been incarcerated—more than an eightfold increase since 1980. Over 60% of inmate women are mothers of children under the age of 18.

The USA, with less than 5% of the world’s population, has a shocking 25% of the world’s total prison population. This is a fact destructive to both our most cherished American ideals, as well as to the stability and wellbeing of America’s families.

“I may not be able to give my kids everything they want but I give them what they need. Love, time, and attention. You can’t buy those things.”

— NISHAN PANWAR
In Praise of Good Dads

In Baltimore, Joe Jones (Joseph T. Jones, Jr.) has become a national hero focused on healthy parenting and stronger family units. Jones, Founder & CEO of The Center for Urban Families, is a respected and creative leader working to find ways to inspire incarcerated fathers to become better, more responsible, and truly devoted dads. Jones’ films, featuring fathers competing in hilarious cloth-diaper baby-changing competitions, have gone viral.

“Women will only have true equality when men share with them the responsibility of bringing up the next generation.”
—Ruth Bader Ginsburg
How Well Does America Parent Her Own Children?

Below you’ll find compiled information from three comparative studies that rank the world’s richest countries by universal benchmarks of happiness and wellbeing, such as: low infant mortality, access to daycare and education, low rates of crime and violence, citizen perception of personal safety, access to free quality healthcare, gender equality, opportunity, and hope for the future.

RIDDLE:
WHAT SOCIETAL POLICIES ARE IN PLACE—WITHOUT EXCEPTION—IN ALL THE TOP-PERFORMING COUNTRIES RANKED BELOW?

ANSWER:
1. UNIVERSAL WELFARE THAT PROMOTES SOCIAL MOBILITY, AND PROVIDES FREE HEALTHCARE TO ALL ITS PEOPLE
2. AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE, AND NEW-PARENT PAID WORK LEAVE FOR BOTH MOMS AND DADS TO BOND WITH THE BABY
3. FREE HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION
4. COMMITMENT TO FREE TRADE, FREE MARKETS, AND PRIVATE OWNERSHIP, WHILE MAINTAINING STRONG LAWS RESTRICTING ENVIRONMENTAL HARM AND ETHICS VIOLATIONS TO PROTECT THEIR CONSUMERS WITH HIGH QUALITY PRODUCT INSURANCE, AND HIGH-QUALITY MANUFACTURING AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
5. PROMOTERS OF STRONG UNIONS THAT WORK IN CONCERT WITH THE BUSINESS OWNERS WITH THE AID OF FREE GOVERNMENT MEDIATION) TO ENSURE FAIR WAGES AND WORK PRACTICES, AND GUARANTEED PAID VACATION TIME

**STUDY #1**
US News and World Report, 2018
Top Ten Best Countries to Raise Children
(The USA did not even place on this list)

#1 Denmark  
#2 Sweden  
#3 Norway  
#4 Finland  
#5 Canada  
#6 Netherlands  
#7 Switzerland  
#8 New Zealand  
#9 Australia  
#10 Austria

**STUDY #2**
UNICEF’s Office of Research, Innocenti Report’s,  
Child Well-being In Rich Countries
(The USA ranked #26, near the bottom,  
below Greece at #25, but above Lithuania at #27)

#1 The Netherlands  
#2 Norway  
#3 Iceland  
#4 Finland  
#5 Sweden  
#6 Germany  
#7 Luxembourg  
#8 Switzerland  
#9 Ireland  
#10 Denmark  
#11 Slovenia  
#12 France

**STUDY #3**
UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network Report, 2018
World’s Happiest 150 Countries in The World
(The USA ranked 18th)

#1 Denmark  
#2 Sweden  
#3 Norway  
#4 Finland  
#5 Canada  
#6 Netherlands  
#7 Switzerland  
#8 New Zealand  
#9 Australia  
#10 Austria

“You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” —Deuteronomy, 10:19

“You the alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” —Leviticus, 19:34
Think: designer babies with inherited genetic diseases edited out, desirable parental and third-party genetic markers added in, and the possibility of birthing a clone—be it your own or that of your favorite movie star—all part of an accepted, everyday reality. Imagine great-grandparents living healthily to 180, and even far beyond that, and our future children benefiting from those centuries of experience, wisdom, and history lived first-hand by parents whose mental capacities have not at all diminished.
With the shared cost of public medical burden viewed as an ethical and societal responsibility, will your baby’s embryo in the future need to pass desirability standards before being approved to proceed to term and live birth? The babies of tomorrow may very well routinely expect to live multiple centuries, and among the company of many of their well elders.

With robots replacing much of the workforce in the future, will multigenerational families pool their resources to live with and communally parent their children and even their great-great-great-grandchildren? Will robots help us to parent, monitor wellbeing of, and act as teachers and companions to our children of the future? Will transhumanism supplant biological birth? Will we download our individuated consciousness into machines capable of preserving our memories and personalities forever? Will our families of the future be

telepathically linked—an upgrade that has already been successfully induced in animal tests? The breakthrough discoveries in bioengineering, and a more precise understanding of the mechanisms of consciousness and intelligence are all proceeding at an exponential rate.

Highest population projections put the expected number of our total human family at a record-setting 9 billion by 2050—that’s a giant leap up from the current 7+ billion in just a little more than 30 years. The fundamental ideals of good parenting and loving nurture are unlikely to change, hardwired as they are. We even see fundamental similarities to human parenting behavior among that of many animal species. One thing is certain, the outward form that future parenting and family will take is about to change, bringing about new future realities for parents and children beyond our wildest imagination. May they be for blessing and for greater, evolutionary peace and achievement.

"Here are God's children on both sides of the wall, and no man made barrier can destroy this fact."
— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., September 1964

Preaching Non-Violence and Unity to 3,000+ Gathered at an East German Church
UNICEF reports that 30 million children worldwide are current refugees, the highest recorded number since WWII. They are on the run with their families, or as orphans, due to conditions totally beyond their control—abject poverty, brutal regimes, gang threats, organized genocide, dire climate change with all its ensuing crop failure, disease, and lack of access to drinkable water.

The presence of a loving adult for these young refugees can help reduce some of this stress, but the supreme stressor—the loss of, or separation from, a safe and loving parent—can cause the child’s developing brain to release massive levels of cortisol as a natural response to the extreme stress they experience. Cortisol is a disruptor of vital circuit formation in a brain, and can inflict life-long damage.
Dr. Alicia Lieberman is one of the world’s foremost authorities on child trauma. She has urged a halt to the practice of separating children from their parents at the border, saying:

“The end should not justify the means in a society that is governed by the rule of law. The separation policy hurts children and hurts our own moral fabric as a nation because it perpetuates harm on innocent victims. Many decades of scientific study show that losing a loving and protective parent is the biggest single tragedy that can happen to a child. Children are biologically programmed to grow best in the care of a parent figure. When that bond is broken through long and unexpected separations with no set timeline for reunion, children respond at the deepest physiological and emotional levels. They become terrified, and their fear triggers a flood of stress hormones that disrupt neural circuits in the brain, create high levels of anxiety, make them more susceptible to physical and emotional illness, and damage their capacity to manage their emotions, trust people, and focus their attention on age-appropriate learning. Separating children from their parents at the border is the equivalent of inflicting cruel and unusual punishment on children. This is bad enough for a single child. When routine separation from the parent affects hundreds or thousands of children, it means adopting a policy that systematically hurts children’s physical wellbeing and emotional health not only in the moment but for the rest of their lives.”

Our Human Brain
Its Maturity is a “Long Time Coming”

When the mother’s egg becomes fertilized and a single cell folds to become two, it is not until three weeks into gestation does the formation of what eventually becomes a brain begins. Once born, having reached a full 9-month term, human brains double in size in the first year of life. By age three, a child’s brain has reached 80% of its eventual adult volume.

Here’s the amazing part: For the first three years post-birth, our unset gelatin-like delicate baby brains are busy making 1 million neural connections per second, trying to absorb and make sense of the world and people around us—impressions that will last our lifetime. And yet, our brains are still years away from being fully “cooked” or mature.

The part of our brain located behind our foreheads, the prefrontal cortex (PFC), does NOT fully mature—here’s the shocker—until we’re about twenty years old (for women) and in boys, not until they reach the age of twenty-five or twenty-six!
Why is this REALLY important? The prefrontal cortex portion of our brains contributes to our ability to focus, governs motivation and goal-directed behavior, and moderates social behavior—our executive function. It also helps compute consequence for our actions.

Therefore, because of this inherently long maturation cycle, it is rightful that “innocence” is long associated with childhood, but so is the need for a child’s protection and guidance by a fully mature, caring (not predatory) adult. Given this fact of delayed brain maturity, the accepted norm that the 18-year olds among us—or younger—can have legal access to guns, liquor, drive cars, make babies, and be required to enlist to fight wars, has huge implications on the collective design of our society, our overall youth wellbeing and nurture, and how juvenile offenders are viewed by the courts. It is sobering to know that the part of our brains that governs impulse control and wise, well thought-through action does not really fully mature until our third decade. That is not to say that there are not many caring, thoughtful, well-behaved young people among us, but the fact remains that their adult brain is not yet fully set.
My most memorable relationship was with my mother. She was the type of mother who would read to my brother and I before bed, come to our schools on her lunch break just to give us hugs, or just the type who would encourage us that we could be anything we wanted to be in life.
One day, Mom and I were attacked by a police officer....it was horrible. We survived, but that dramatic experience changed our lives forever. My mother fell into a deep depression, and eventually turned to alcohol and drugs to cope with the traumatic experience. After the police officer served only a year and a half, he was released and commenced to stalking
my family. Only 14 at the time, I realized that the mother I knew as a child was gone; most days she didn’t even get out of her bed.

A few months later, people came after me and I ended up taking a person’s life. At the age of 17, I was charged as an adult and sentenced to life in prison. While in prison, my mother spiraled downhill and lost everything to her name. I felt tremendous guilt not being there for my mother. My little brother did his best to help our mom, but in the end my mom decided that her life wasn’t worth living. In 2011, at age 54, my mom passed away.

In this painting, my brother and I attend Mom’s funeral. I remain in the back because I am afraid to see my mother deceased. It was the hardest I’ve ever cried, so white tears are all over the canvas. I even question why God allowed such a loving woman to suffer for so long. In the top of the painting angels and demons fight over who gets to take my mother’s soul.

The prison that I spent 16 years in lurks in the background, still devouring mostly young black men and leaving their moms home to fend for themselves.

Mom’s last words to me were, “Chris, please remember how much I loved you.”
Bobby Adams was born in Dallas, Texas and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. His father, a former boxer and strict—at times brutal—disciplinarian, operated a floor sanding business in Dundalk. His beloved and gentle mother taught school. Tragically, she committed suicide in 1976.

In 1964, Adams graduated from Sparrows Point High School where the only wisdom he learned came from an exercise in typing class that required him to repetitively type: “There once was a man, they called him mad. The more he gave, the more he had.”

During the draft of 1969, Adams was picked from the lottery to serve in the United States armed forces. However, upon his examination, Adams was designated 4-F (a candidate found to be unfit for military service) due to his impaired hearing; thus he avoided being sent to Vietnam.

A self-made pirate radio DJ, Adams began playing functions around Baltimore as “The Psychedelic Pig,” and spun records for a station he dubbed W.E.E.D.. In the early 1970s, John Waters filmed Pink Flamingos at the Baltimore County farm where Adams was living. Around that time, Adams befriended Waters and became the filmmaker's unofficial documentarian, taking photographs on film sets and chronicling the exploits of Waters’ band of inclusive renegades known as the “Dreamlanders.” “I just point and shoot,” notes Adams. “My approach is simple: I start with love, and the camera sees it.”

Inspired in part by Waters’ own art making and an Edward Kienholz exhibition he chanced upon, Adams began making art in 1996 after the devastating loss of his adored toy poodle, Odie. Since then, the artist has created more than 50 multimedia tribute pieces to Odie and installed them throughout his waterfront cottage. Adams continues to make art that ranges from his famous handmade holiday cards—each unique and personalized to his special friends—to life-size installations. The experiences of Bobby’s childhood continue to have the power to move him to tears.
Morton Bartlett, a self-taught sculptor and photographer, was born in Chicago, Illinois. Orphaned as a child, Bartlett was adopted and raised by an upper-crust couple in Boston, Massachusetts. He attended Phillips Exeter Academy and later enrolled at the prestigious Harvard College before quitting and settling in at a job as a commercial photographer in his early twenties.

Bartlett created the majority of his work between 1936 and 1963. For almost thirty years, unknown to family and friends, Bartlett studied history, costume design, and even anatomical manuals in order to create a series of realistic plaster-cast dolls resembling children. Each doll face and body was intricately painted and the dolls were carefully dressed in clothes that Bartlett sewed, knitted, and embroidered himself. Due to his exacting and meticulous manufacture of these figures, Bartlett could spend up to an entire year creating one single doll!

The artist’s ultimate creation is his collection of over two hundred black-and-white photographs that depict the dolls in a variety of everyday life-like posed scenes. Shot from multiple angles in a well-lit studio, Bartlett spared no effort or expense to create the photos. Some of the photographs feature the “children” reading books in bed, playing at the beach, and even practicing ballet. The dolls’ detachable arms and legs enabled the artist to easily change the positions of the figures from photo to photo, allowing him to create a series of different scenarios for the dolls to play out.

Bartlett’s collection was created for deeply personal reasons and out of great loneliness, and never went on public display during his lifetime. Although he had permitted a craft magazine to review his dolls once, the extent of Bartlett’s doll work and photographs were only discovered upon his death. Even in his will, Bartlett neglected to mention the collection of dolls in his possession. Kindly, upon his death, Bartlett donated his entire estate, valued at $300,000, to be “divided between orphan charities.” The deeper reasons behind his extraordinary creations remain widely unknown. One clue into the mind of the artist is an update he submitted to the alumni section of Harvard’s 25th anniversary report. It read: “My hobby is sculpting plaster. Its purpose is that of all proper hobbies—to let out urges that do not find expression in other channels.”
Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher are an unstoppable team of photographers renowned around the world for their pioneering documentation of over 150 African cultures. After forty-plus years of work in the field on the African continent, they have been granted unrivaled and intimate access to African tribal rites, rituals, and ceremonies of thousands year-old cultures—many never before documented and some in imminent danger of disappearing without a trace. Beckwith and Fisher work with the goal of preserving cultural traditions that have become vulnerable to the expansion of industry, onset of war, and other modern threats. Their devotion is to the ideal that understanding other cultures brings us closer towards global harmony—a driving force behind all they do. African Ceremonies, a double-volume book that is referred to as Beckwith and Fisher’s “defining body of work,” features not only photographs but worldly knowledge about the methods used to raise children in African cultures. The book attests that the “responsibility of raising a child is often shared between mother and grandmother or among a man’s several wives.” It is common to have many “uncles” and “aunties,” and to use these terms of endearment for a wide range of people who are present in a child’s life—not only a parent’s sibling. Communal parenting support is a widely used practice in Africa. The emphasis is on providing love and support to all the children of the tribe.

Beckwith and Fisher beautifully put it, “We feel privileged to photograph these cultures that possess a wealth of knowledge that should be celebrated, shared, and honored. It is our life’s passion to document and create a powerful visual record of these vanishing ways of life for future generations.”
Daniel Belardinelli (1961–)

Daniel Belardinelli is a New York City native who used to make his living as an attorney. Concurrently and with great passion, Belardinelli pursues artistic interests in which he has taken psychological refuge for most of his life. As a child, Belardinelli found great relief from the difficulties he had expressing himself verbally by channeling his angst into drawing. Encouraged by family, drawing kept young Belardinelli busy and quiet during the many after-school hours he spent between the two restaurants his father's family owned in Manhattan. These establishments were the kind of places that were frequented by entertainers such as Groucho Marx and Tony Bennett, but also darker characters such as the Mafia—particularly the Bonanno family. Daniel's father was also in the Mafia. Among his toughest childhood memories are those of his parents' constant smoking and drinking, and his dad taking him with him to gay bars when he was only 12 years old.

In his thirties, Belardinelli was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Describing himself as a “high-maintenance, obsessive-compulsive adrenaline junkie,” he cites ADHD as the reason for his poor performance in school, and the compulsive drug use that marred his youth and early adulthood. Belardinelli was also diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder, which helped the artist understand his incessant drive to create daily journal entries over a 27-year span. Despite the learning disabilities, drug habits, and resultant behavioral problems that contributed to his expulsion from several secondary schools and four different colleges, Belardinelli earned a law degree from City University of New York School of Law.

Belardinelli uses a variety of mediums to create his work including nail polish—a dominant medium of his art since 1985. The artist often creates autobiographical work depicting his early family life and scenes from childhood memories. Belardinelli lost his uncle, William Cashman, on September 11, 2001. Cashman was on United Airlines Flight 93. Belardinelli had planned on joining his uncle to go hiking out west, but changed his plans last minute. Because of their involvement, Belardinelli’s family was given access to the recorded tapes from the downed plane, but had to sign releases that forbade them from speaking of what they heard. Belardinelli later stated in an interview, “I wasn’t allowed to speak it, but I drew it.” These words echo back to the secrecy within his own childhood, when he would pass time in his father's family restaurant observing and recording the faces and conversations of those surrounding him. Belardinelli wishes to remind children: “You are not your parents, and you are not limited by who your parents are, or how they act.”
Leon Borensztein
(1947–)

Leon Borensztein was born two years after the end of World War II, and raised in Poland during a difficult political time that ultimately led to changes in the economy and government. Common to other Eastern Bloc countries at that time, Poland purged political communist officials in lieu of new leadership. For a young Jewish man, growing up in post-Holocaust Poland presented quite a few difficulties. After getting bullied and harassed throughout the ‘60s, Borensztein decided to move to Israel in the early ‘70s to pursue higher education at the University of Haifa. A few years after receiving his degree in Creative Art and Geography, Borensztein immigrated to the US to start a teaching position in San Francisco, California.

Throughout his career, Borensztein says he always “felt the need to give voice to the unheard and unseen.” That desire turned into a personal passion in 1984 when Borensztein’s daughter, Sharon, was born with severe disabilities. Borensztein has lovingly photographed his only child for over thirty years, patiently present during the good times and the bad. Sharon, Borensztein’s autobiographical book named after his daughter, features a selection of photographs and personal writings from the artist’s journals. All entries give an intimate peek into the everyday lives of Sharon and her father, and bear witness to Sharon’s beauty. Borensztein describes the book as a “story of love and loss, success and heartbreak, and of overcoming.” The book diligently documents every aspect of challenged life and unexpectedly complicated parenthood, and presents even the toughest situations with a force of grace and total honesty.

Tenderly, Borensztein stated in an interview, “When I put Sharon to sleep, I sing a Polish lullaby.”
Wendy Brackman was born in Brooklyn, New York. Both of her parents were musicians and Brackman began studying music at the young age of 9. She sang jingles, did voice-over work, and—as her voice matured—trained in opera. Increasingly fascinated by visual art, Brackman eventually established a small art studio where she set up a barber’s chair in the corner, gave haircuts to earn a living, and honed her skills with scissors.

In 1982, a stack of paper plates glimpsed at a backyard barbeque changed Brackman’s life. “I was suddenly inspired to cut those paper plates to assemble fanciful artworks to amuse and delight my friends,” she says. “Ever since then, the possibilities have seemed infinite.” Industrious and blessed with abundant energy, Brackman made a career as “Wacky Wendy,” a professional party-entertainer known for making elaborate paper plate hats and masks at a wide array of venues, including The White House.

Brackman’s vibrant giant paper plate mandala was a highlight of AVAM’s “All Things Round” exhibition, and her Botanical Bonanza sculpture—which took more than a year to create—was featured in AVAM’s “YUMMM! The History, Fantasy and Future of Food.” This year, AVAM is proud to exhibit Brackman’s Dog House and Angry Mother Puppet. Both of these powerful wood-carved sculptures are among Brackman’s earliest works and depict periods of great tension in her life—tension that has since been happily resolved.

After many years of raising their son in Brooklyn, Brackman moved with her husband, Lou, to the rural Catskills, where they garden, pick berries, and make jams. Last winter, Brackman spearheaded the creation of a social sewing collective named “Catskill Crafters.” The group utilized the participants’ collection of men’s ties, dad stories, and talents to form the massive and stunning works exhibited in this show.
Ed Brownlee was born near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and raised by a Mom who worked two jobs. He has a sister and a brother. He remembers making villages from river mud as a kid, and later copied paintings from books in study halls. Brownlee’s most vivid childhood memory was of “mean nuns raising havoc.” Brownlee characterizes his youth as misspent, “I had a choice of juvenile home or army. Chose army.”

Possessing a dark sense of humor from as early on as he could remember, Brownlee’s personal passions include birds, national parks, and hiking. An army reservist, he feels fortunate to work with clay pretty much his whole life. A parent to a 24-year old son, Billie Bob, his words of personal wisdom are, “Your parents aren’t perfect,” and “Give your kids space to learn. I had a lot of alone time.”

Self-employed as a ceramic artist, Ed’s Facebook page is Edsware Ceramics.
Allen David Christian  
(1957– )

Allen Christian, a.k.a. “Mr. Lucky” or “The House of Balls Guy,” was born on September 16, 1957 in Minneapolis. He was the sixth of nine children. His father, Vernon Robert Christian, worked for the U.S. Postal Service and held additional part-time jobs, while his mother, Dorothy Agnes Christian, worked for “Ma Bell” (American Telephone & Telegraph). Christian’s artistic ‘aha’ moment occurred during his first year attending a Catholic school when he built a crucifixion scene. In fifth grade, Christian’s art teacher arranged Saturday drawing classes for him at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, but the young artist quit just after several sessions.

As a teen, Christian tinkered for many long and happy hours in his father’s basement workshop making things. During four years of military service based mostly in Europe, Christian was inspired by cultures that possessed “a vast history, where art was valued as a social treasure.” Upon returning to the U.S., he attended art school for one semester and again quit, put off by its focus on concept.

Christian ultimately chose a practical livelihood as an electrician, but for more than two decades he has enchanted visitors at his Minneapolis-based “House of Balls”—an old gas station and artist studio jam-packed with singular works of art fashioned out of everyday objects ranging from bowling balls to badminton birdies. Of his recycled art, Christian says he “discovered the essence of humanity through found objects, through inanimate objects that are cast-offs. I try and give these inanimate objects a new lease on life, to imbue them with emotion.” Happily together for over 20 years—and married for four—Christian and his wife are the proud parents of four beloved daughters and one amazing son. When asked what piece of advice he would give to young ones everywhere, Christian replied, “I would advise children to try and get their parents to play again, to tap into the world of wonder they lived in as children.”
Jim Condron is one of six children born to an investment banker father and a promotional goods entrepreneur mother. Raised in Oyster Bay, New York, Condron remembers making art as a very young boy—creating watercolor paintings of “mice playing sports,” building miniature golf courses, and making baseball diamonds complete with dugouts, in his front yard.

After graduating from college, Condron worked as an investment banker in New York but quit to take a job as a janitor in a church. In the years that followed, Condron tried a series of jobs; he was employed by a general contractor, taught art privately, and worked as a barista. When Condron’s beloved mother, Karen, passed after a very difficult eight-year battle with ALS, he was devastated. Coming to Baltimore, Condron found a true surrogate parent in a Maryland meditation teacher. She is depicted in the lower right hand corner of Condron’s painting, *Family Portrait*, along with her own two sons. Condron lovingly wrote, “I would likely not be making art today if not for meeting her.”

*Family Portrait* was painted to capture the peace and beauty of his spiritual teacher’s family, and originally included the family’s stepfather, a prominent and well respected member of the Christian clergy. Created for a benefit exhibition, the painting sold before it was even finished. When Condron’s patron could not finish paying for the work, he returned the painting to the artist, and another buyer purchased it. Years later, the man depicted in the painting was discovered to have abused one of his stepsons. The news became public and resulted in his firing, incarceration, and the destruction of his marriage. The painting’s second owner, upset at the family’s tragic circumstance, removed the painting from their home and put it into storage, not wishing to be reminded of its history. After discovering that his painting had been sitting in storage and badly damaged, Condron offered to purchase the painting back. Not until 2017 did Condron begin reworking *Family Portrait*, entirely painting over the offending parent figure. Condron explains, “These changes felt like purging an element of evil from the work, and freed something from within me.”

Currently employed at MICA, Towson University, Stevenson University, and Wilson College, Condron lives and works locally in Maryland. He is happily committed to a loving relationship with his partner of 14 years. His advice to parents is: “Model true care and love for your children. If you don’t know how to do this, find someone who can.”
A native of the Druid Hill Park neighborhood in Baltimore City, Loring Cornish’s row home serves as both a gallery to his artwork and a floor-to-ceiling, indoor and outdoor work of art. Cornish began transforming spaces and creating installations at an early age after altering an old building his father gave him during his college years. Also known as Van Freeman, Cornish worked a string of jobs, including DJ for a gospel radio station, actor, and TV game show contestant on The Price is Right, before devoting himself fully to making art.

Cornish’s artwork was first noticed after moving to Los Angeles in 1997, where he transformed his rental apartment into an environment of faith-inspired mosaics and wall pieces made from discarded materials. Literally putting every cent into his artwork, Cornish created his pieces using copper pennies, mirrors, broken tiles, metals, and shards of glass. After being evicted by his landlord, he returned to Baltimore with only three sculptures in hand. Later, Cornish learned that his former L.A. rental home had gained artistic popularity through a feature newspaper article.

Cornish continues to constantly transform his current Baltimore home on Parkwood Avenue with new incarnations of his work, warmly welcoming people of all ages and backgrounds. Every inch of Cornish’s floors is embedded with colorful mirror and glass proclaiming words of welcome, peace, forgiveness, and mercy. Everywhere, there is a positive word expressing a character trait he aspires to. A true believer in God, Cornish gains his inspiration from perceiving a hidden spirit—a spark—in the everyday. Cornish has chosen to lead a life unencumbered by a regular paycheck, relying wholly on the grace and bounty of God for all his needs, “That’s my thing on Faith.” Inspirationally, the artist maintains his own art gallery and studio, How Great Thou Art, in Baltimore’s heavily touristed Fells Point commercial district.

“I’ve messed up some things throughout the years, but God has always provided a Plan B, or Plan C. Becoming an artist was not part of my life’s plan. I became an artist after everything else was washed away, and this incredible artistic journey began.”

“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”
—Mahatma Gandhi
J.J. Cromer was born on November 21, 1967 in Princeton, West Virginia to science teacher parents. His mother's love of birds inspired her to name him “John J.” after famed bird illustrator John James Audubon. Cromer was raised in rural Tazewell County, Virginia. He remembers, “We always had animals: dogs, cats, turtles, fish, ducks, chickens, and a rooster named Duke.” The living room was filled with scientific apparatuses—microscopes, telescopes, and the family rock collection. Collecting and identifying bugs and plants were frequent family activities along with extensive family camping trips in summer. Cromer enjoyed drawing as a child until a dismissive seventh grade art teacher shut down his interest.

Turning to books, Cromer loved reading science fiction and fantasy, and began writing his own at an early age. Cromer received a degree in history and then earned two additional degrees in English and Library Science. He then worked as a librarian at a college library, where he met his wife Mary. Only after marrying did Cromer begin to draw again. What was at first a renewed hobby quickly gave way to obsession. His drawings developed into detailed paintings, all inspired and expressive of his concern with current issues such as war, racism, science and technology, freedom of expression, class inequities, and environmentalism. Likewise impassioned by the destruction of the environment, Mary works as a lawyer for the nonprofit firm Appalachian Citizens’ Law Center in Whitesburg, Kentucky.

Cromer states: “I am very interested in the other human beings I share this planet with. I'm motivated by a humanistic hope that my voice can contribute to our cultural conversation. However small and inconsequential my voice is, it’s still my voice. This need to ‘speak’ drives my artwork. In other words, what it means to be a good human being in community with other beings. This is very important to me.”

J.J., Mary, and their son Julian live on a small, historic farm in southwest Virginia, in the mountains of central Appalachia. Musician Dock Boggs was a friend of Mary’s grandfather. He would often play his banjo on the steps of the front porch of Cromer’s farmhouse. Cromer and his family keep chickens, geese, and bees, and they walk in the woods as often as possible. Identifying edible mushrooms is a current interest.
Jubran Khalil Jubran was born on January 6, 1883, in Bisharri in modern day Lebanon. Gibran’s father owned land and a walnut grove, but made money in the unpopular art of tax collection. In 1891, Gibran’s father was convicted of corrupt practices by the villagers and his property was confiscated. Later in life, Gibran romanticized his father as an idealistic man who refused to compromise with corrupt authorities. The villagers would better remember him as a violent drinker and gambler.

By 1895, Gibran’s mother left his father and brought her family to the U.S. She worked as a peddler, saving enough to open up a shop. His new school gave Khalil the American spelling of his last name we use today. At first, English did not come easily for young Gibran so his teacher referred him to drawing. There, he quickly fell in with avant-garde artists who called themselves “The Visionists.” One of the leaders was pioneering art photographer Fred Holland Day. Day read English literature to Gibran to improve his language facility, and encouraged Gibran’s calling as a creative artist.

Gibran’s mother was concerned about the influence of her son’s new Bohemian friends, and sent him back to Lebanon to study there. He visited Bisharri on vacations, but his relationship with his father became strained. In 1902, Gibran learned that his sister Sultana had succumbed to tuberculosis. He hurried home to arrive only two weeks after her death. His brother, Butrus, was also diagnosed with tuberculosis and left for Cuba to be in a warmer climate. Soon after, Gibran’s mother developed cancer. Both Butrus and Gibran’s mother passed a year later, leaving him responsible for his youngest sister, Marianna, and the debt-ridden family shop. He ran it long enough to pay off debts.

Gibran widely considered himself a painter, and appeared in several exhibitions in his youth. When Day’s studio burned in the winter of 1904, destroying Gibran’s entire portfolio, Gibran began writing a weekly column to earn money. Simple and direct, Gibran’s poems and prose spoke to the hearts and souls of his readers. Themes of alienation, disruption, and lost rural beauty resonated with his readers, and Gibran quickly found admirers and even imitators of his new style amongst Arabic writers.

Gibran is still regarded as a literary hero and political rebel in the Arab world, where his romantic style was at the heart of a renaissance in modern Arabic literature. Gibran’s works became hugely popular in his time, making him the best-selling American poet of the twentieth century. His most notable English-written book, The Prophet, was at first widely dismissed as sentimentalist by American critics and historians of art and literature. But the public widely took his work to heart, especially his haunting wisdom on the spiritual nature of parenting.
Paul Graubard was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey and grew up in Passaic, New Jersey—a mill town “15 miles from N.Y.C. and 100 years behind the times.” Childhood memories, fables, Romanian songs, and travel all inspire Paul’s work. Paul explains, “There is a Chassidic belief that one can thank The Lord for the gift of life and its bounties by singing, dancing and engaging in joyful creation. This philosophy is a guiding force behind my paintings. My work comes out of a need to celebrate life.”

Paul began drawing as a child during World War II, depicting U.S. tanks, warships, and airplanes beating the Nazis. Drawing battle scenes was the most interesting part of school to him, and he dropped out in the tenth grade to hitchhike across the U.S. After taking a high school equivalency exam, Graubard attended college and eventually settled down in New York City to raise a family. He worked as a third grade teacher, a professor of special education, and for 20 years as a psychologist—always finding work that gave him the autonomy he craved. His beloved eldest daughter’s untimely death from cancer was a devastating blow for Graubard, setting off a period of grief so profound it could not be expressed by mere words. Some 50 years after the end of WWII, Graubard started to draw again, “On a whim, and maybe out of desperation.” Two years later, Paul quit his job and has been working “full time and a half” as a painter ever since. “I do believe that stumbling on art saved my well being, if not my life,” he says. The loss of his beloved daughter still brings him to tears.
Alex Grey grew up in a Methodist household until the age of nine, when his parents became disenchanted with religion due to apparent hypocrisy and racism in their church during the Civil Rights Movement. When Grey was 21, his first LSD trip and introduction to his wife Allyson occurred in a single night, transforming his agnostic existentialism into radical transcendentalism. Investigations into the nature of consciousness through shamanic performances in the ‘70s and ‘80s led Grey to Tibetan Buddhism and study of the physical body.

Grey continued his psychedelic voyages with Allyson while employed at a medical school morgue preparing cadavers. These sacramental sojourns led to a unique series of artworks entitled *The Sacred Mirrors*, and other paintings that “x-ray” multiple dimensions of reality, interweaving physical and biological anatomy with psychic and spiritual energies. The artist applies this multidimensional perspective to crucial moments of human experiences such as praying, kissing, copulating, pregnancy, birth, and death—providing a glimpse into the luminous vibratory and archetypal domains of awareness described by healers, clairvoyants, and saints.

By referencing multiple wisdom traditions in his artwork, Grey's paintings indicate an inclusive vision, a universal sacredness. In 2004, the Greys founded the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors in New York City, a cultural center and refuge for contemplation that celebrates a new alliance between divinity and creativity. The Chapel moved to its permanent home in Wappingers Falls, New York in February 2009. With a cult following ranging from rock stars to scientists, Grey's works have become icons of the contemporary spiritual movement by virtue of their power to inspire, inform, and illuminate the inexplicable. The Greys are thankful and proud parents of their daughter, Zena.
Betty Grodnitzky

Betty Grodnitzky agrees with the old saying: "Age is a number, and mine's unlisted."
Her mother was vibrant, funny and hailed from an observant Orthodox Jewish family. Her gentle and devoted father owned his own upholstery business.

Grodnitzky attended Western High School in Baltimore, Maryland. She was awarded the Peabody Medal for Scholastic Achievement and the title of Maryland Champion for competitive speed and accuracy in typing and shorthand. After graduating, Grodnitzky got a job at the Social Security Administration. There, a co-worker set her up on a blind date with the man who would become her husband, a handsome serviceman with "extra-long eyelashes." Upon escorting Grodnitzky home after their first date, her husband-to-be asked, "Well, are you gonna marry me or not?" The couple dated for five months before getting engaged and were married within the year. They became parents to both a daughter and a son.

Grodnitzky’s daughter, Kandye, was the spitting image of her beautiful mother. Unfortunately, by age fifteen Kandye fell into a deep depression. This battle with mental illness continued for twenty years, culminating in Kandye’s suicide despite her parents’ frantic efforts to appeal to scores of doctors to get their daughter help. Kandye's illness was only somewhat soothed by her acute compassion for stray animals and her determination to rescue them. Even at the threat of eviction, Kandye would make the choice to house the homeless animals she’d find. Grodnitzky admits that her daughter even asked her help to “hide a Doberman Pinscher.”

The second great loss for Grodnitzky was the passing of her beloved husband who died after suffering a heart attack. Following these tragedies, Grodnitzky faced foreclosure on her marital home and moved back into her parents’ modest house where she remains today. There, she has set up a wildlife haven in a suburban backyard no bigger than 30’ by 40’. Grodnitzky’s 'haven' attracts an astounding variety of birds, animals, and a beloved momma deer who has faithfully brought fawns to meet Grodnitzky, year after year, since 2014. The artist lovingly named the deer, Bambele’ an affectionate Yiddish adaptation of the name Bambi. In her great loneliness, Grodnitzky found a Heaven-sent companionship with Bambele’. Witnessing up close the tenderness with which Bambele’ acts to protect and nurture her offspring has affirmed Grodnitzky’s belief that the Presence of Divine Love is embedded in all that has been gifted life. Many have told her that she is saving these animals, but she believes it to be the other way around. Grodnitzky has self-published two books that document the up-close adventures of her beloved backyard menagerie. Both books are dedicated to her late, beloved daughter, Kandye. Like her mother, she “talked with the animals.”
Francisco Loza was born one of seven children to a homemaker mother and a banker father in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. Loza treasures his childhood memories of being the family comedian among his large extended family who would gather for lively reunions. Piñatas, tamales, pozole birria, dulces tradicionales, haciendas, and visits to see the abuelas (grandmothers) are all sweet memories of Loza’s childhood days. Before committing to the life of a full-time and self-taught artist, Loza worked for three years in his favorite uncle’s candy factory. Together, Loza and his uncle traveled all over Mexico selling candy.

Loza began working in his current medium of arte en estambre, pressed yarn technique, in the mid-1980s after he first visited the indigenous Mexican Huichol villages located in the mountains of Central Mexico. Loza recalls the Huichol explaining to him that the pieces of beaded and yarn art are espejos del alma—mirrors of the soul. This insight motivated Loza to create his own yarn work and to later share it as a vehicle to show respect and affection for the gifts and knowledge of different people and their cultures in communities around the world. Loza is especially thankful for a 15-plus year collaboration with a Huichol shaman and artist, Macario Matias. Together, the men share their dreams and create spirited art expressions out of concern for Earth’s environment and the state of our current humanity. Both Matias and Loza’s works were featured in the American Visionary Art Museum’s exhibit “All Things Round: Galaxies, Eyeballs & Karma.”

Loza believes deeply that parents should encourage travel as an important part of personal and creative growth—“the best way to learn more about ourselves and life.” Loza wishes parents would “give the best opportunities to children to do what they want, and become who they want to be.” Loza moved to Baltimore when he was awarded a 4-year residency at the Creative Alliance.
The Lower Eastside Girls Club was founded in New York City by a group of 30 mothers, workers, artists, educators, scientists, athletes, and business women who were appalled that neighborhood after school programs excluded girls. Feeling that the community only supported positive youth programs for at-risk young men, these women used their own time and money to create a similar outlet for girls in the community. In October 1996, they began operating after school, weekend, and summer programs on a shoestring budget. Using their own volunteer talent and AVAM’s “Seven Educational Goals,” the group served to provide girls with activities and support to help them lead more fulfilling lives.

The Lower Eastside Girls Club has grown from that group of women meeting in kitchens and church basements into a full-fledged organization providing multiple and holistic services to more than 500 girls age 8 to 25 and their families.

The organization is currently building a new multipurpose center so that they can continue their work with the girls and create a permanent presence in the community.
Ray Materson  
(1954–)

Born March 15, 1954 in Milford, Connecticut, Raymond Materson grew up in the Midwest. Ray’s father had been sprayed with Agent Orange while serving in Vietnam, and demonstrated enormous rage. Once, when Ray’s father saw his son’s disdain he said, “You know I was once a young man full of dreams. My best day was spent alone in New York.” The calmest person in Ray’s life was his grandmother, who taught young Ray how to sew and embroider.

Ray earned a G.E.D., and later attended Thomas Jefferson University as a drama and philosophy major. By that time, Materson had developed a serious drug problem. To support his habit, he committed a string of robberies with a shoplifted toy gun from K-Mart. Materson was eventually arrested and sentenced to 15 years in a state penitentiary in Connecticut. To keep sane during his time in prison, Materson sewed. He unraveled socks to obtain thread, and secured a sewing needle from a prison guard. In exchange for cigarettes, he began enlivening the prison issue caps of his fellow inmates with their favorite sports team logos. This effort quickly evolved into far more personal artistic expression when Materson began to create embroideries depicting memories of his life. Consisting of 1,200-1,500 stitches per square inch, and measuring in under 3 inch squares, each image takes Materson up to 50 hours to complete. Some embroideries depict scenes from his life in prison, others are childhood reminiscences, as well as his daydreams of an idyllic world of fantasy, travel, and freedom.

Since his release from prison in 1995, Ray has worked as a teacher, counselor, caseworker, program director, design consultant, and public speaker. With the help of his former wife Melanie, he published his autobiography, Sins and Needles: A Story of Spiritual Mending. In 2003, he became the first artist to ever receive the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Innovators Combating Substance Abuse Award.
Born Laura June MacLachlan, the artist favored the name “Jordan” ever since she read *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Unlike the rest, Jordan was “unaffected by how the world thought that she, a woman, should think/be/behave.” In admiration, MacLachlan asked that friends and family please call her “Jordan” from then on.

A curious child, MacLachlan believed she was an “orphaned cub of a mountain lion” captured by a scientist and transformed into a human. She loved to play outdoors, ran on all fours, and even insisted on eating her meals from bowls on the floor. When it was time to enroll at school, MacLachlan remembers weeping when she realized that she could no longer “be an animal.”

At the age of 12, MacLachlan’s mother was overtaken by mental illness, leaving her three children to be raised by their father. Her mother’s departure marked the beginning of a very dark time for MacLachlan—she was sexually abused by her gymnastics teacher for two years following her mother’s leaving. Then, when only 16, she was drugged and kidnapped while traveling on a family trip. Held for 48 hours against her will, MacLachlan was miraculously released by her kidnapper. Not wanting to hurt her father with news of what had happened, she kept her horrifying experience a secret for almost 50 years! She became a recluse, scared to leave the safety of her home. Unquestioningly, her loving father embraced these changes and purchased a kiln for his daughter to use during the long days she spent at home.

After graduating high school, MacLachlan attended several universities but was unable to stick it out for more than a few months at a time. She stopped trying when she became ill with palsy. Realizing she was not cut out for the university lifestyle, Jordan drew inspiration from all that she’d created at the kiln in her father’s basement, concluding, “well, maybe I’m an artist…”

Once settled down and married, the most precious gift to MacLachlan was the birth of her daughter. During her battle with bipolar disorder, MacLachlan was misdiagnosed and prescribed medication that led her to lose her marriage and home. Wishing nothing more than a safe environment in which to raise her daughter, MacLachlan persevered and is now a prolific artist, loving partner, and mom. To all the children out there, MacLachlan writes, “Trust the special heart of yourself that knows who and what you truly are, let this be your guide and protector, because YOU ARE SO BEAUTIFUL, SO IMPORTANT.”
Paul Douglas Niemic was born in Virginia on February 4, 1971. He was the youngest of three children. Niemic was the shortened name that had been assigned to his parents by Ellis Island authorities when they emigrated from the Ukraine. After being teased in school for how his last name rhymed with “anemic,” the artist further shortened his name to his signature, P.Nosa.

Nosa has been drawing since early childhood, filling over 60 notebooks with sketches. He is also a world traveler, backpacker, mountain climber, collector of stories, guitar player, and philosophy lover. After a near-death experience in a bike accident in 1995, a drummer friend gave him a set of drumsticks to occupy him over his long bedridden recovery. The concentrated occupation with rhythm proved key to awakening a profound sense of underlying rhythm inherent in most everything. Now using a solar and bike-powered sewing machine, Nosa embroiders “word pictures.” Passerby participants supply five-word descriptions of images or mini-stories that Nosa then sews. The resulting sewn pictures playfully narrate the provided tale in a language that transcends words. Nosa tours local fairs, street festivals, and museums all over the world with this participatory art. “It is my firm belief,” writes Nosa, “that all of life’s questions can be answered with a sewing machine.”
Mary Proctor's store, Noah's Ark Antiques, in Tallahassee, Florida, is a wood cottage where you can still buy used phonograph records and faded photos. Her yard is a labyrinth of clutter, surrounded by a chain link fence. She lives with her husband and four children in a mobile home behind the store. Mary Proctor began painting on doors in 1995, after her aunt and two other family members were horrifically killed, trapped inside their burning house trailer. Firefighters failed in all attempts to pry open the swollen metal doors. Proctor says that’s when God spoke to her, telling her to “paint onto the doors.” Renaming herself, “Prophet Mary Proctor,” the artist embellishes doors with spiritual teachings and observances of righteous behavior garnered from everyday life, especially from that of her wise Grandma. Proctor’s doors often vary in size from small kitchen cabinets to large double-door garages. To create her imagery, Proctor typically uses paint and a collage of buttons, cloth, and found objects. Proctor likes to think of herself as a missionary rather than an artist. Of her work she said, “I’m just a messenger and [my collectors] are the deliverers.”
Carolynn Redwine-Geer picked up her first needle and thread, at ten years of age. Even back in those days she dreamt of becoming an artist. Her mother taught her to sew, and Redwine-Geer began to create clothes for her dolls using fabric scraps leftover from homemade dresses. She was never able to attend art school because her father fancied it a place for “hippies” and “drug-inspired artists.” Luckily, when Redwine-Geer turned 18, she was hired as an Apprentice Fashion Illustrator, and her artistic career took off. Her first venture, Carolina Moon Designs, was a high end women’s and children’s clothing line. The name originated from her nickname as a young girl, Carolina Moon.

By the early ’90s, Redwine-Geer’s artistic career was in full swing. Besides creating clothing designs, she would paint and draw in her downtime. Redwine-Geer exhibited paintings in several galleries, and some of her work was acquired by the University of Maryland University College for their permanent collection. She also began illustrating greeting cards and children’s books. One of her favorite projects was a Peter Pan pop-up book that was sold across the globe!

The artist grew with the realization that her “greatest love [is] designing and crafting things that are cherished by people of all ages.” Looking back, her entire life’s work revolved around creating illustrations and designs for children and families to enjoy together. In The Mother’s Heart is the Child’s School Room, Redwine-Geer includes imagery of the women in her family. The woman and child in the rocker represent the artist and her daughter, and the woman in the lower right corner represents the artist’s mother.

In 2010, Redwine-Geer opened an online store selling custom wedding accessories for brides, and bow ties and suspenders for grooms. She says, “Working with couples, helping them with their plans and dreams, has been wonderful beyond my expectations.” Even more recently, in 2015, Redwine-Geer decided to open Carolina Moon Muppets to fulfill her lifelong dream of designing and crafting dolls for children and collectors alike.
Chris Roberts-Antieau (1950–)

Chris Roberts-Antieau was born to a fashion model mother, Rosemary Lee, and Finch Lee Roberts, a home-builder. She attended public schools in Brighton, Michigan and won 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place the first time she entered her high school’s art competition. The next year, Roberts-Antieau was awarded only a 2nd place prize because, as the teacher explained to her parents, “We just can’t continue giving all the prizes to Chris.” Her high school counselors did not recommend college, which, in hindsight, may have been a great blessing. “I like being self-taught because I don’t ever want to have ideas of what not to do,” she says. Roberts-Antieau later took an art class at a local college where the teacher told her, “You’ll never be an artist.”

After seven years together with boyfriend Darrell, Roberts-Antieau became pregnant with her only child, Noah Antieau. Upon becoming a mother, she stated: “I just knew I had to prepare a path for my son and me.” Her first attempt to produce a work of art to sell was a 3D soft, stuffed sculpture that took her 18 hours to complete. At first, Roberts-Antieau was thrilled when it sold at a Michigan fair for $20, then the reality of the hourly pay for her new enterprise set in.

By 1987, Roberts-Antieau had worked long hours to create a wearable art sample clothing line to pitch at craft fairs. The line consisted of just three vests and two jackets. Thankfully, the American Craft Council (ACC) juried her into their giant Baltimore ACC Fair. With only those five samples in hand, she had wholesale buyers lining up at her booth. A star was born!

Roberts-Antieau continues to enchant audiences with more and more diverse works. Her one-woman gallery is today one of New Orleans’ most successful. She holds the distinction of being the most repeatedly exhibited artist included in group thematic exhibitions at the American Visionary Art Museum.
Romaine Samworth was a much beloved artist who worked in papier-mâché, plaster, and paint. Born with perfectly normal sight, at age eight Romaine received a smallpox inoculation. Her eyes became contaminated when she accidentally rubbed them—a swift and tragic cause of total blindness to many children of her generation.

Born Romaine (“just like the lettuce”) Marsh on January 5, 1921 on a small farm near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Romaine had a very happy family life surrounded by loving parents, a pet mutt (“mostly Shepherd”), a cat, a lamb, and milk cows. “I had a girlfriend who teased my sister and me, calling us ‘the swamp sisters,’” she recalls. “When I was 14, my beloved oldest sister, Mildred, died. It was the biggest tragedy of my life. My baby sister, Ida, is still alive.”

The State of Pennsylvania had a school for the blind in Carlisle where Samworth learned braille. “Jane Johnson, my braille teacher from the Baltimore School for the Blind, was like a second mother to me,” says Romaine, “I would stay with her in Baltimore for a couple of weeks at a time.” Romaine became a talented pianist and played for her church for 17 years. At 34 she married Charlie, a man seven years her junior and totally blind. Both Romaine and Charlie earned extra money assembling birth control diaphragms in their basement. Their married life was exceedingly happy. They sang together in their church choir (Romaine sang alto), taught Bible classes, laughed a lot, were avid Phillies fans, enjoyed Romaine’s excellent cooking and especially loved their rare trips to Ventnor Beach in New Jersey. “I couldn’t believe the sound of the ocean!” notes Romaine. She and Charlie did not have children, but they did have a parakeet named Pixie that called Romaine, “Momma.” Pixie lived 15 years. The couple applied for a guide dog, but they were denied because their rural home did not have the required sidewalks.

It was Samworth’s Avon lady who introduced her to ceramics. “The first thing I sculpted was a hand, but everything was one color;” she remembers. Out of her one remaining eye, Romaine could perceive some bright colors and soon bought her own kiln to further experiment with clay. She took a basic sculpting course with Laura Goodman and later with Eiko Fan. Both teachers were amazed at Samworth’s natural gifts. Eiko remained Romaine’s faithful friend and champion to her end; she is Romaine’s documentarian and biggest admirer. On Romaine’s 90th birthday, her beloved Charlie died. They had been married for 55 very happy years. Romaine lived independently, despite breaking her hip, until just before her death. As she was wheeled into surgery in 2015, her only question was, “Will I be well by my American Visionary Art Museum opening in Baltimore?” Samworth’s art is proudly part of AVAM’s permanent art collection.
Philippe Saxer was born in the town of Bumpliz, Switzerland. Saxer began drawing as a young child with an intense focus that left no question that he would make art his life’s work. He loved cartoons, but the art form was not taken seriously in Switzerland and there were no mentors for Saxer to learn from. Instead, after rejecting an offer to apprentice with a graphic designer, Saxer found work as an apprentice to a glass artist. He learned ornamental glazing and was so successful that by 1983, when only 18 years old, the Swiss Glass Museum purchased three of his works for their permanent collection—a very high honor.

Mental illness was a lifelong struggle for Saxer. After several repeated psychiatric episodes, Saxer put himself in the care of the Waldau Clinic, a mental institution at the University Hospital of Psychiatry Bern. It was at Waldau that Saxer became truly free to focus on his art exclusively. Saxer did not resent the hospital, but rather felt more at home there than he had at group residences or when living on his own. When Saxer's room in the clinic was overflowing with his artwork, he was referred to the Waldau painting workshop led by Otto Frick. Frick was an important promoter of the arts at Waldau, and offered Saxer a space at the clinic's painting shop where he was encouraged to freely pursue his art. It was there that Saxer created his largest paintings. Saxer worked quickly to maximize the connection to his spirit and emotions; Otto Frick observed that the artist would study blank paper or an empty canvas as if in a trance or a state of ecstasy before reaching for a brush or paint to convey that vision in a great and explosive rush.

Philippe Saxer's thousands of works range from glasswork, to oil paintings, watercolors, drawings, and sculptural figures. During his lifetime his art was exhibited in numerous group exhibitions from Europe to Kyoto, Japan. Alfredo Knuchel's 2004 documentary film, Hallelujah! The Lord is Mad, depicts Philippe Saxer alongside other artists from the Waldau Clinic. Philippe Saxer died at age 48 on the longest night of the year, December 22, 2013. He had taken an overdose of pills at his home in Ostermundigen. His loss is much mourned by his loving family and wide circle of friends, collectors, and admirers.
Linda St. John grew up the eldest of four siblings in a poverty-stricken family in southern Illinois. Her Irish-American and Native American father was a physically abusive alcoholic who worked gas station and factory jobs, but somehow managed to earn a Ph.D. in microbiology. Her mother, a Hungarian immigrant with a poor command of the English language, neglected her children and encouraged their father’s abuse of them.

St. John graduated from law school in 1982 and passed the Georgia bar exam. She was planning to move to Atlanta when she and her husband went to New York to visit a friend. St. John then changed course and decided to stay in the city and open a vintage clothing shop.

St. John didn’t start making pastel crayon drawings until after she learned that her father had been diagnosed with a brain tumor that eventually killed him in 1989. In 2001, St. John wrote a memoir entitled *Even Dogs Go Home to Die*. In it, she writes about growing up in rural Illinois with her brother and two sisters. Many of St. John’s drawings illustrate episodes found in her memoir. Exhibited here, St. John’s drawings are shown alongside excerpts that she wrote in order to describe the moments depicted in her artwork.

“I did my first ‘painting’ like how I wrote my book, out of the corner of my eye,” St. John told *The New York Times* when her memoir was published. “It’s all the same theme, which is I’m trapped into being a 12-year-old.”
Robert Sundholm is a New York native. He was born to Helen and Richard Sundholm, two desperately poor and violent alcoholics. Two days before Christmas in 1948—when only 7 years old—Sundholm and his twin brother were dropped off at the Kalman House, an orphanage in Brooklyn, NY. His father lied to the boys, telling them that they were just there to attend a holiday party at a children’s home. When the party was over, Sundholm says his father disappeared. The twins were in the care of the Kalman Home for the next seven years of their lives. Sundholm began drawing at the orphanage, saying he started “out of loneliness.”

By the time he was 15, Sundholm dropped out of high school and found odd jobs working as a dishwasher and delivery man. He eventually resorted to selling himself for fast money to men on the streets.

Due to his disrupted childhood, Sundholm didn’t learn to read or write until the age of 32. While working at the counter of a restaurant, he met a former schoolteacher, Marian O’Conner. She grew fond of Sundholm during her frequent visits to the establishment, and when she learned Sundholm was illiterate, she took it upon herself to teach him to read and write using a simple children’s dictionary. When O’Conner passed away, she left a small inheritance to Sundholm, which he used to purchase a modest apartment in New Jersey. Sundholm was completely devastated by the loss of the only person who had ever really ‘parented’ him. He turned to alcohol as a way to cope with his grief and only stopped drinking when his liver had become so swollen that it caused him serious pain and health issues.

After moving to New Jersey, Sundholm found work as a janitor; mopping floors at the North Berger Town Hall. At his new job, Sundholm would sketch the people working in the building, but he didn’t “start painting in color” until he was 60 years old. Since then, he has painted hundreds of works and was a fresh highlight at the Outsider Art Fair, New York. A very gentle, polite, and quiet man, Sundholm wants children to know that “anything is possible no matter who you are.”

“It feels great to say I’m an artist,” Sundholm said in an interview with People magazine, “because I was always told I was nothing and didn’t have any talent. I became something from nothing.”
Sally Diane Mericle was born in Baltimore, Maryland to William Mericle, an Italian American metallurgical engineer, and Virginia Mericle, a housewife. Raised primarily in Peoria, Illinois, Sally was a child savant at drawing precise figures as early as age two. Her art making was much encouraged by her mother and many others in her early life. She now produces work under her preferred art name, Mars Tokyo, which she says came to her in a dream.

Some of Mars Tokyo’s key memories from childhood include exploring the woods behind her house, drawing rolls and rolls of tiny figures on adding machine tape, and sewing miniature fashions for her Barbie dolls. Later at Bradley University, Sally concentrated on general studies while pursuing art on her own. “I am 100 percent self-taught as an artist,” she proclaims. Mars Tokyo was able to make a living as a self-taught graphic designer and college professor for nine years. In 1995, she traveled to China to attend and present at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women.

She was diagnosed with major depression following a suicide attempt at age 21 and has battled depression for decades. She says she keeps diaries in part as a way to express herself, especially after undergoing electroconvulsive therapy treatments in 2007. Mars Tokyo wishes her viewers to know, “My stories presented in my ‘theaters’ are ones of personal rejection, alienation, and pain. They often reflect a life dealing with major depression. But throughout them, there is also a great beauty and hope, because there is that in life.”

Mars Tokyo’s favorite funny storyteller is local performance artist Joe Wall who also constructed the illuminated display base for her theaters. She has been happily married to a local reporter for 26 years, and together they have one son. Sally’s best advice is, “Even if everyone tells you to give up, you should keep doing what you love—especially making art. Don’t ever stop.”
In 2004, Frank Warren started the PostSecret project and invited people to share their secrets on a postcard, posted to him anonymously. He set just two criteria for these submissions: 1. The secret must be true, 2. It must be something never revealed to anyone else. Since then, Warren has received more than one million postcards. The cards artistically express some personal desire, hope, fear, humor, humiliation, confession, and much more. Surprisingly, the single most common secret people send in is some variation on the personal revelation, “I pee in the shower.”


PostSecret is an ongoing community art project with a huge web-based readership. It has gained over 700 million hits since it went live. Over the years, Frank Warren and the PostSecret community have raised more than $1,000,000 for suicide prevention, and Warren was awarded the Mental Health Advisory Lifetime Achievement Award. Warren, together with his wife, Jan, and daughter, Haley, form a very happy family.
George Williams was born March 17, 1974 in the Bronx, New York. Raised by his grandparents in Westchester County, he attended military and prep schools as a youngster. Williams' grandmother developed her artistic skills while living in a convent as a teenager. Later, she would share her love and knowledge of art with her grandson. Williams taught himself to paint portraits. He took some art classes and eventually graduated from Marymount Manhattan College. During college, a friend's suicide caused him to delve deeper into the spiritual aspects of life. It also led to a breakthrough in his painting, as he shifted from straight portraiture to work emphasizing the depths of his internal life.

In 1998, Williams says he was stricken with a mental illness, and continues to struggle with schizoaffective disorder to this day. Still, he remains positive and urges others to “put positive things in your path and move towards them. If you focus on the good, the good will come. You don’t have to accept less.” He reads Joseph Campbell and Kahlil Gibran and listens to the music of Portishead and Björk, whom he particularly admires for “using simple lyrics to express deep and universal thoughts. I try to do something similar with my paintings.”

Amongst the Stars was inspired by Williams’ adored goddaughter who is pictured in his work as a newborn, and then as a little girl in Lil One - Revision. “I don’t have children of my own,” he says, “and [my goddaughter] provides contented and familial feelings in my life. The painting represents the kind of simple beauty and hope those sort of feelings can instill in a person.”
Born in Washington, DC, Chris Wilson was raised by his grandmother during the work week and by his beloved mother on the weekends. Some of his sweetest childhood memories are those of his mother reading him bedtime stories, especially Aesop's Fables, and the times they would sing and dance together to old Motown songs. Wilson was doted on by his mother, he shares, “when we went out she would buy my friends and I whatever we wanted.”

Tragedy struck when a DC police officer violated Wilson’s vibrant mother and then struck her in the head, causing serious brain trauma. The officer was convicted for the viscous attack, but served only a minimal sentence—a year and a half. Upon his release from prison, the former officer began to stalk and harass Wilson’s mother and her children. Unable to cope and never fully recovered, Wilson’s mother fell into a deep depression, self-medicating with drugs and alcohol. Believing he was set up by the convicted officer, Wilson was cornered and violently attacked. Fighting for his own life, Wilson took another’s. Barely 17, Wilson was tried as an adult and sentenced to life in prison. Learning of her son’s tragic fate, Wilson’s mother spiraled even further down, spending everything she had on drugs. Although Wilson’s brother cared for his mother to the best of his ability, their mother tragically took her own life in 2011, leaving Chris a personal letter underscoring her love. Parts of this letter are woven into his painting, *Momma’s Boys*.

During the 16 years Wilson spent in prison, he used his time to meet specific goals. He earned his GED and studied to become fluent in five languages. Due to his outstandingly good behavior, a judge granted him release contingent on his promise to fulfill the remaining milestones on the long list of positive goals he set for himself in prison. True to his word, Wilson attained an associate’s degree in Sociology from the Anne Arundel Community College. In January 2018, artist Jeffrey Kent gifted Wilson art lessons for his birthday. Wilson credits this experience as when he “fell in love” with making art. Wilson explains that there were only three colors prisoners were permitted and provided to use: white, grey, and blue. Now, without restrictions, Wilson loves to employ the use of vibrant colors and hues in his art and creates artwork with the intention of starting conversations, and hopefully inspiring others to tell their own stories. His works have already been featured in exhibitions in Paris, and plans for a book and movie on his life are afoot. Wilson is also a treasured participant in The Francis Scott Key young leadership group, founded by investment advisor Zach Garber.

To parents visiting *Parenting: An Art Without A Manual*, Wilson urges, “Remind your children how much you love them as often as you can.” To children, he wishes them to “Cherish the moments with your parents, because they won’t always be there.”
THE AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM is America’s official national museum and education center for self-taught, intuitive artistry (deemed so by a unanimous vote of the U.S. Congress). Since its opening in 1995, the museum has sought to promote the recognition of intuitive, self-reliant, creative contribution as both an important historic and essential living piece of treasured human legacy. The ONE-OF-A-KIND American Visionary Art Museum is located on a 1.1 ACRE WONDERLAND CAMPUS at 800 Key Highway, Baltimore Inner Harbor. Three renovated historic industrial buildings house wonders created by farmers, housewives, mechanics, retired folk, the disabled, the homeless, as well as the occasional neurosurgeon – all INSPIRED BY THE FIRE WITHIN. From carved roots to embroidered rags, tattoos to toothpicks, ‘the visionary’ transforms dreams, loss, hopes, and ideals into POWERFUL WORKS OF ART.

WHAT IS A VISIONARY?

Visionaries perceive potential and creative relationships where most of us don’t. English writer Jonathan Swift put it simply, “Vision is the art of seeing things invisible.” Such vision lies at the heart of all true invention, whether that special vision manifests as an astonishing work of art like those created by the intuitive artists featured at the American Visionary Art Museum or as a medical breakthrough, a melody never before sung, some deeper understanding of the cosmos, or as a way in which life could be better, more justly lived. Visionaries have always constituted human-kind’s greatest “evolutionaries.”

Without visionaries’ willingness to be called fools, to make mistakes, to be wrong, few new “right” things would ever be birthed. Visionaries are brave scouts at the frontier of the unknown. They explore their visions with a passionate single-mindedness. Albert Einstein rightly observed, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.”

Creative acts intended to uplift, defend, and enlighten fulfill every function that can be asked of a work of art. They inspire us, make us think in new ways, and birth new beauty and dignity into our world.

WHAT IS ART?

The ancients—the Greeks, Egyptians, Hopis, and New Guinea tribesmen—were among earth’s most prolific art-making peoples. Yet, none had any word for “art” in their respective languages. Rather, they each had a word that meant “well-made” or “beautifully performed.”

Our American Visionary Art Museum believes that this view of what art really means is as perfect an understanding of art as ever was. It speaks to an art incumbent upon all its citizens, pervasive throughout all the acts of our daily life. Its emphasis is on process and consciousness, not mere artifact.

Martin Luther King, Jr. expressed his profound respect for the true artistry each member of a society can uniquely evidence to bless our communities, “If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the Hosts of Heaven and earth would pause to say, Here lived a great streetsweeper who did his job well.”
AVAM PROGRAMS & EVENTS CALENDAR

2018

PREVIEW PARTY
Fri. Oct. 5 • 7pm
Mix & mingle with exhibition artists, meet the curators and some new visionary friends! Light hors d’oeuvres and beverages, music, and fun! All ages welcome.

WEEKEND WALK-IN: BOT SHOP
Sat. Oct. 6 • 1–4pm • $5 plus museum admission
Bring new life to recycled and found objects and create a reclaimed robot!

SIP & SHINE: AN AFTER-HOURS EXPERIENCE
Sat. Oct. 11 • 6pm-9pm • $35, $30 members
Join us for an after-hours experience with wine, scavenger hunt, and workshop!

EDUCATOR OPEN HOUSE
Thurs. October 25 • 4–7pm • FREE for Teachers!
Educators of all kinds are invited to collect visionary resources for the classroom and learn about the educational programming available here at AVAM.

AVAM’S FREE FALL HALLOWEEN CELEBRATION!
Tues. Oct. 30 • 4–7pm • FREE
Boos and ghouls are invited to create their own paper monster. Plus enjoy free museum admission and face painting. In conjunction with Free Fall Baltimore!

BAZAART: HOLIDAY ART MARKET
Fri. Nov. 23 12–6pm, Sat. Nov 24, 10am–6pm • FREE
AVAM’s annual Holiday Marketplace of original creations by regional artists and craftspeople that defy categorization!

SOCK MONKEY SATURDAY!
Sat. Dec. 8 • 10am–2pm • FREE Entry!
Don’t let the holidays drive you BANANAS! Relax by making your very own Sock Monkey—a great last-minute gift, and just something fun to do with the family.

2019

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY CELEBRATION
Mon. Jan. 21 • 10am–6pm • FREE
A celebration in honor of the life & dreams of one of history’s greatest visionaries. AVAM opens its doors for FREE all day! Join us for guided tours, birthday cake, special performances & more—all celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King’s vision & legacy.
PARENTING: AN ART WITHOUT A MANUAL
OCT 6, 2018 - SEP 1, 2019
1st & 2nd flr, Main Building: AVAM focuses public attention on what might be humanity’s most essential performance art — the intuitive, transformative, and complex art of parenting. AVAM’s upcoming exhibition showcases works by 36 artists, created out of every conceivable medium, to best express their own personal life experience of parenting and being parented — be it good, bad, horrific, and/or sublime, alongside revelations from the latest scientific research, globally sourced wisdoms, and fun.

REV. ALBERT LEE WAGNER: Miracle at Midnight
Now open from JUL 1, 2017
3rd flr, Main Building: This first national retrospective provides rich visual testimony to a life begun amidst dire poverty and racism of the South, to spiritual peace.

PERMANENT COLLECTION Ongoing
1st & 2nd flrs, Main Building: Experience the all new updated 1st floor gallery, featuring even more enchanting wonders from our expansive permanent collection & a major renovation. We hope you’ll discover new inspiration & fresh visionary favorites to cherish in this all new gallery experience!

OPEN TUESDAY–SUNDAY 10AM–6PM
(CLOSED: MONDAYS*, THANKSGIVING & CHRISTMAS.)
*Open Monday MLK, Jr. Day as AVAM’s tribute to teachers—FREE admission for all!

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NOW SHOWING

JIM ROUSE VISIONARY CENTER Ongoing
1st fl: The Cabaret Mechanical Theatre of London: a collection of whimsical, interactive automata | Screen Painters Of Baltimore exhibit: a celebration of the uniquely Baltimore art form with full-size replica rowhouses displaying screens painted by Baltimore’s finest & a documentary film that shines a light on the artists and their desire to paint | Kinetic Sculpture Race Vehicles (featured in our annual East Coast Championship Race) | DeVon Smith’s Robot Family | Leonard Knight’s Love Balloon | Andrew Logan’s giant sculpture of Baltimore icon Divine.
2nd fl: Remembering Jim Rouse Into Our Future exhibit | Thou Art Creative Classroom.
3rd fl: Large banquet room for museum events & private rentals with access to the Bird’s Nest Balcony.

PUBLIC ART Ongoing
Throughout Museum Grounds: A three-ton, four-story Whirligig by Vollis Simpson; Nancy Josephson’s mirror-mosaic Gallery-A-Go-Go bus; Andrew Logan’s Cosmic Egg; Adam Kurtzman’s Giant Golden Hand; David Hess’s Bird’s Nest Balcony | The glittering Community Mosaic Wall–the work of a wonderful apprenticeship program for at-risk youth | Wildflower Sculpture Garden featuring Ben Wilson’s wooden Meditation Chapel | Critters by Clyde Jones, & more!

JOIN THE VISIONARY FAN CLUB
avam.org/get-involved-now/become-a-member.shtml

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