TERESA, a child in a residence for disturbed children, grew up in a concentration camp. She drew a picture of “home” on the blackboard. © David Seymour/Magnum Photos

ADOLF WÖLFLI IN his cell next to the stack of his books. © Adolf Wöllli Foundation Museum of Fine Arts Bern, Switzerland
Teresa, a child in a residence for disturbed children, grew up in a concentration camp. She drew a picture of “home” on the blackboard.

© David Seymour/Magnum Photos

Switzerland 1921

Adolf Wölfli in his cell next to the stack of his books.

© Adolf Wölfli Foundation

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3. INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE WIDE VARIETY OF
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   PARTICULARLY STUDENTS.
4. ENCOURAGE EACH INDIVIDUAL TO BUILD UPON HIS
   OR HER OWN SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE AND INNER
   STRENGTHS.
5. PROMOTE THE USE OF INNATE INTELLIGENCE,
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   SELF-RELIANCE.
6. CONFIRM THE GREAT HUNGER FOR FINDING OUT
   JUST WHAT EACH OF US CAN DO BEST, IN OUR
   OWN VOICE, AT ANY AGE.
7. EMPOWER THE INDIVIDUAL TO CHOOSE TO DO THAT
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ALL THINGS ROUND
galaxies • eyeballs • & karma

There is nothing strange in the circle being the origin of any and every marvel. —Aristotle (384–322 BCE)

Why Galaxies, Eyeballs & Karma?

GALAXIES • At the micro atomic level it’s all a spin dance of electrons encircling a nucleus. At the mega scale, it’s planets orbiting around some central sun. Everything that exists gets expressed via some grand circular or spiraling motion. The circle, be it manifest as an egg, cell, DNA helix or cosmos, is always at the center of LIFE.

EYEBALLS • We read these words and take in the wide world via two round gelatinous eyeballs that feature telescoping and concentric circles—an iris and a pupil.


WELCOME to our American Visionary Art Museum’s 17th original mega exhibition, All Things Round: Galaxies, Eyeballs & Karma—are our most voluptuous art exhibition to date! Spinning dizzying visions from master visionary artists like Scott Weaver and his 100,000 toothpick wonder, ‘Rolling Through The Bay’; Adolf Wölfli and his intricate mandala-like works; and the micro dot sock-thread embroideries of Ray Materson.

Seventy plus visionaries—artists, inventors, tribal elders and philosophers—join in exalting ALL that’s circular, spiraling, mysterious and bubbling throughout the elixir of life. Featured is a scholarly look into cyclical notions of time including the 2012 Mayan Calendar; the visual wonder of crop circles; and the celebration of circular inventions of all stripe—from industrial wheels, cogs, and cyclotrons to hula hoops and balls in play and sports. How powerful is a circle? One hurricane’s wind force can equal the energy of 10,000 atomic bombs.

Exhibition films pay special tribute to Scott Weaver’s Rolling Through the Bay and to Wild Wheels’ art cars, along with free 3-D guest glasses for use here. (Don’t steal ‘em, please!) There is also OOPart—ancient artifacts that contain ‘out-of-place’ modern images resembling UFO’s that inspire us to question our notions of history. Sight-impaired artists help us all to exalt the curve in human touch.

I cannot say adequate-enough fabulous things about my guest co-curator—Mary Ellen “Dolly” Vehlow—she never tired of going around and around to help make this exhibition dance in total joy. The result is All Things Round is a feast of circular delights in form, function, fun and food (including Chef Mario Batali’s edible ball recipes) with its visitors of all ages always at our center ring table.

We all live together upon a very swiftly spinning ball. Earth rotates at a speed averaging just over 1,000 miles per hour! Consolation for our imperfect human condition comes as a verbal hug from comic genius, Mel Brooks: “As long as the world is turning and spinning, we’re gonna be dizzy and we’re gonna make mistakes.”

Here’s to not being afraid to make mistakes in the visionary effort to birth more new wonder. Thank you all for a most intensely full, first sixteen sweet years of life for our American Visionary Art Museum here in Baltimore, a place truly unlike any other on ‘blue ball’ Earth.

With a full heart,
Rebecca Alban Hoffberger, Founder & Director

Very special thanks to the ephemeral bubble-making artistry of FELIX CARTAGENA. This ‘BUBBLE-GUY’ master volunteer has never failed to bring his spherical joy-making machines to our museum campus whenever he heard a crowd was gathering.
Curators’
The late legendary photographer David Seymour, himself a Holocaust survivor, captured the wordless turmoil reflected in the eyes and frantic chalkboard circle drawings of Teresa, a nine-year old resident of a WWII Polish concentration camp. This photo hauntingly speaks volumes about her inner life and experience.

In contrast with this war child's dramatic expression of personal chaos, the Enso (Japanese for "circle") drawing depicted below, beautifully expresses a Zen Buddhist master's disciplined practice of painting a near perfect brushed circle, reflective of a high attainment of inner tranquility. Often, the students of these Zen masters would meditate upon these peaceful circles for their own enlightenment, or attempt to produce their own. Enso painters were also adept at making concise spiritual poems to accompany their simple circle drawings. With few words, they might express some beautiful observation of life or nature. At times, their poems evidence an ironic, even humorous human truth, such as: “AFTER THE ECSTASY, THE LAUNDRY!”

Mandala comes from the Sanskrit word for “circle.” Mandalas are a centuries old favorite traditional form in both Hindu and Buddhist sacred painting and embroidery.

Students of the teachings of the great intuitive Swiss psychiatrist, Carl Jung (1875–1961), utilize the therapeutic creation of personal mandalas both with their patients and themselves. Taking a dinner plate, comparable to the size of an adult human head, to trace a circle on paper, they then infill the circle to reflect a wordless expression of their own inner psyche. Often, mandalas contain a 'squaring of the circle,' with four directions of the round construct highlighted by division into four equal quadrants. This instinctive homage to the four part world is also found in Native American medicine wheels.

Carl Jung was fascinated by the mandala-like voluminous drawings of Swiss mental patient, Adolf Wölfli. He owned two of Wölfli’s works in his personal collection.
TIME
Cyclical, Linear, or All-At-Once?

Twenty-two years ago, PostSecret creator Frank Warren wrote his graduate thesis exploring the ways that human beings view time and how those views impact the way their time gets used. For thousands of years, volumes have been written attempting to define time by classical philosophers, famed physicists like Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking, poets, and even rock stars. Many cultures have collectively addressed time as central to their understanding of reality. Notable among them are: the African Dogon, Maya, Hopi, Eskimo, Hindu and Australian Aboriginals with their consciousness-shifting notion of ‘Dreamtime.’ Frank summarized some key considerations in our communal contemplation of time:

1. The invention of electric light changed long-established sleep and work cycles.

2. The proliferation of clocks in schools, workplaces and homes standardized work and living rhythms, at times at high cost to personal liberty, pride in workmanship, and enjoyment. The adage, “Time is Money,” the stopwatch, and idealization of machine-like productivity in humans all came with the age of industrialization. Church bells, factory whistles, and other forms of repetitive, timed, calls to worship or work attempt to unify and dictate collective behavior.

3. Booze and clocks—surprisingly it was Benedictine Brethren who evolved mechanical clocks to increase efficient production of their famed Brandy!

4. Natural, faithful, and universal repetitions: day follows night; seasonal and weather cycles; agricultural planting and harvesting weather windows; lunar waxing and waning; female fertility cycles; the precession of equinoxes and solstices; trans-species conception to birth gestation periods; solar flare, comet and planetary cycles.

5. The English word for time has its root in the word for tide. The verbs used to describe the behavior of both water and time share close ties—clocks, faucets and rivers ‘run and flow.’ Observing the nature of time, Greek philosopher Heraclitus wrote, “You cannot step twice into the same stream.” Geoffrey Chaucer observed, “Time and tide wait for no man.”

6. Hesiod, one of the early (700 BCE) Greek poets, wrote about five grand cycles of human-kind—the earliest or first age conceived as the most idyllic ‘Golden’ era—with subsequent ages downhill from then on. What is surprising is how many disparate ancient peoples (Hindu, Buddhist, Norse, Huichol, Hopi, Maya, Aborigine) have held very similar beliefs in grand scale cyclical realities composed of three or four prior worlds, with today’s being the fourth or fifth. All agree that this current age is the most corrupt, vibrationally challenged, of all the ages!

7. Judaism and Christianity respectively ushered in the view of linear time—time as a progression, not a cycle, and focused on leading either to a climactic birth, or return, of a Messiah or Judgment Day.

8. Philosophers Kant and Durkeim believed that standard notions of time units can’t be seen as givens, but are rather social constructs.

9. As people age, they often feel that time seems to speed up. As perception of time is relative to some fixed experience or place, the more days an individual has lived gets divided by a greater percentage of prior total days than when they were young. Maybe this is one reason memories of childhood summer days seems so suspended in time and kids seem, as in the advice of Ram Dass, to live more in the “Be Here Now.”

10. A romantic inscribed a watch for his wife, “Time is more precious that I have you to love.”

One of the largest and most famous visionary environments in the world was created by a simple French postman, Ferdinand Cheval. He called it his “Ideal Palace of Dreams.” In it, CHEVAL sculpted his own sundial inscribed with this thought, “CE N’EST PAS LE TEMPS QUI PASSE, MAIS NOUS.” translated, “IT IS NOT TIME THAT PASSES, BUT US!”
Much as in the birth stories of baby Jesus and baby Moses, Krishna, too, was born a foretold liberator from the reigning evil of his time. The birth of all three was preceded by the ruling authority killing off male children in an effort to prevent fulfillment of their respective divine destinies. All three were miraculously saved from murder. All had foster Dads. Krishna was spirited away to a loving foster family where he proved a lively handful. Like the infant Jesus, who is often depicted holding an orb symbolic of his spiritual dominion, toddler Krishna holds his favorite food treat, a stolen golden butterball. Yawning, Baby Krishna’s foster Mom was astonished to witness the sight of the entire starry universe within his open mouth, confirming for her the revelation that this was not your everyday child. In India’s ancient *Mahabharata* text, tales of UFO-like airships called “vimanas” abound. A blue Krishna is shown here encased within a large black orb, while yet another heavenly orb can be seen floating in the sky above.
The almond-shaped, Vesica Piscis symbol that emerges from the mid-point section of two interlocking circles, is universally recognized as the emblem for feminine grace and fertility.

The miraculous Virgin of Guadalupe painting, inspired by the 16th century vision of a simple Mexican peasant, depicts Mother Mary enveloped in this sacred geometric form. This special pointed oval shape was widely used throughout medieval Christian art as an aureole to surround a sacred figure, male or female. Far earlier, the Greek philosopher Pythagoras proclaimed the shape sacred and mathematically expressive of the square root of three. Gothic architecture widely incorporated the vesica piscis in pointed arches and embellishments. The shape of the vesica piscis stylistically represents a woman’s life-entry anatomy, the idealized form of an eye, Holy Grail or chalice.

The ancients bore witness to one truth—all life emerges from the body of a mother. Not surprisingly, among many of Earth’s first peoples, the dominant concept of Creator was one of a nurturing and life-giving Great Mother, not a Father Creator.

Even with the later, more male-dominant major religions—Judaism and Islam—the key descriptors of a masculine God’s attributes of Divine Mercy and Compassion have their linguistic roots, both in Arabic and Hebrew, in their respective words for womb—one purely female attribute.

O IS FOR OVUM

OVUM, a Latin word meaning egg, is a female reproductive cell alive in female humans, animals and some plants. The ovum is one of the largest cells in the human body, even visible to the naked eye. A healthy baby human girl is born with one to two million ova. By maturity that number has dwindled down to about 400,000+ ova or eggs, stored in ovaries, of which only about 480 will be released during the whole of a woman’s reproductive years.

Be we destined to be a toad, giraffe, elephant or human being—we all commence life as a circle with a small dot at the center, chock-full of encoded information, waiting for a fast swimmer.


(opposite page) SCOTT WEAVER • “I always wanted to make things BIG,” Scott Weaver explains his special form of pursuing the arts. His “Rolling Through The Bay” masterpiece is constructed with 104,587 toothpicks and features inner labyrinth, helix-like, rolling ping pong ball tours that course their way through his nine-foot tall sculpture. A natural entertainer and appreciator of life and family, “Rolling Through The Bay” and “Rolling Babylon” toothpick hat, capture many of the happiest memories and influences in Scott’s life experienced around the San Francisco Bay area.

(this page) CHARLES DELLSCHAU • His earliest known artwork is contained in an illustrated diary dated 1899. He continued to work until 1922, filling at least 13 notebooks with drawings, watercolors, and collages depicting imaginative airships and an account of his mid-19th century involvement as a draftsman for a super secret Sonora Aero Club that possessed an antigravity fuel called, “NB Gas.” Dellschau’s tale was focused on the Club’s passionate desire to create humankind’s first navigable aircraft. • Charles Dellschau’s entire body of work was thrown into a Houston Texas landfill after his death at age 92, in April of 1923. It was spotted and salvaged by used furniture dealer Fred Washington who stored the piles of handmade books in his warehouse under a pile of discarded carpets. A university student named Mary Jane Victor, asked Mr. Washington to consider lending some of the books to her university for a display focused on the story of flight. Famed art collector, Dominique de Menil, then bought four of the books from Mr. Washington. Pete Navarro, a commercial artist and UFO researcher, acquired the remaining books. Strangely, Dellschau began his airship drawings shortly after a documented 1896-1897 wave of UFO-type sightings of “mystery airships.” In their book, “The Secrets of Dellschau,” authors Navarro and Crenshaw reason a possible tie between the strange sightings recorded in western newspapers of their day and Dellschau’s artful account of the secretive Sonora Aero Club.
Here’s what you need to know about the styrofoam cup: The formula to manufacture them is so secret that its inventor and maker, Kenneth Dart and his family business Dart Container Corporation, wisely, would never file a patent on the process because patents run out, and then anyone could learn to produce them. Precious few Dart employees are entrusted with ‘the knowledge.’ Here is the estimate on how many Styrofoam (expanded polystyrene, “EPS”) cups are thrown away each year in America alone—a staggering 25 TRILLION—that is the number 25 with 12 zeros that follow!

It is estimated that 30% of the total solid waste volume dumped in landfills is derived from some sort of polystyrene/styrofoam packaging, peanuts, or cups. Environmentalists and oceanographers have noted that EPS is also one of the main ocean pollutants. You shouldn’t burn Styrofoam because it releases off-gas toxins like Benzene. The good news is there are many creative ways to recycle EPS. Many of our Visionary Museum’s finest Kinetic Sculpture Race vehicles float over the Baltimore Harbor waters each May buoyed by recycled Styrofoam slabs, cups, and cut up coolers.

A SOCIETY IS DEFINED NOT ONLY BY WHAT IT CREATES, BUT BY WHAT IT REFUSES TO DESTROY. —John Sawhill

USE IT UP, WEAR IT OUT, MAKE IT DO, OR DO WITHOUT. —New England Proverb
COME OUT OF THE CIRCLE OF TIME / AND INTO THE CIRCLE OF LOVE.
—Rumi, 13th c. poet and first whirling dervish

OUROBOROS
The End as New Beginning
SUPPORT THE AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM

AVAM is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit institution. As such, we rely on the generosity and support of individuals, corporations, and foundations who love the museum and visionary art and spirit. If you’d like to see our programs and works of art continue to enlighten and inspire, please contact our Department of Development at 410.244.9900 x1247 or at development@avam.org. AVAM members and donors are critical for the museum’s glowing future!

FIFI AND THE KINETIC SCULPTURE RACE

FIFI the Pink Poodle is an icon of American Visionary Art Museum’s annual KINETIC SCULPTURE RACE. Made with over 1500 yards of pink tulle and retrofitted with a recumbent bicycle, inflating pontoons, and a strong cycling team, FIFI participates in this annual event of creative sport and artistic engineering. Part Huck Finn, part Bette Goldblatt, with a dash of Amelia Earhart, the Kinetic Sculpture Race promotes creative thinking and grassroots ingenuity. The Race clearly supports AVAM’s educational mission to uncover, encourage, and empower ordinary (actually, extraordinary) amateurs and skilled engineers, adventurers, and problem-solvers who will create imaginative, 100% human-powered works of art designed to travel 15 miles on land, through mud and sand, and over deep Baltimore Inner Harbor waters. The Kinetic Sculpture Race takes place each year on the first Saturday of May. When she’s not racing, FIFI is on view in the museum’s Jim Rouse Visionary Center. For more info about the race: www.KineticBaltimore.com or become a friend of FIFI the Pink Poodle on Facebook.

SOCK MONKEY SATURDAY ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2011

FREE! 10am-2pm. Now an AVAM holiday tradition for friends and families—making your own sock monkey! A great last minute gift and more importantly a day of creative family fun. FREE, but you must bring 2 pairs of (clean) socks and your own scissors to get instructions, stuffing, needles, thread, visionary bobbles, and camaraderie provided.

FLICKS FROM THE HILL ON THURSDAYS IN JULY & AUGUST 2012

FREE! Outdoor family films on Federal Hill screened under AVAM’s Golden Hand at The Hughes Family Outdoor Movie Theater.

AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM extends sincerest thanks to all—individuals, foundations, and corporations—who have made generous financial and in-kind contributions throughout the year. Kindness, innovation, sharing new creative visions, and harmoniously connecting across creative disciplines and cultures. ... all of it would be diminished without the security of continued stabilizing commitment of many. Contributed funds enable AVAM to maintain and grow our exhibitions and programming for visitors from around the world.