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THE ART OF STORYTELLING ARTISTS

ANONYMOUS ARTIST (PATIENT #52643) • ANONYMOUS ARTIST (AFRICAN AMERICAN PUPPETS) • ANONYMOUS ARTIST (SOUTH AFRICAN GROUP) • CHRIS ROBERTS-ANTIEAU • CALVIN & RUBY BLACK • ART BRUN • BÉATRICE CORON • TIMMERMAN DAUGHERTY • JIM DORAN • EMILY DUFFY • NANCY DUVALL • VANESSA GERMAN • ALLEN HICKS • LESLIE HOPE • GEORGE KENNARD, M.D. • ESTHER NISENTHAL KRINITZ • PATTY KUZBIDA • ANTHONY HORTON & YOUNE LANDOWNE • GERALDINE LLOYD • P. NOSA • BEN ORTEGA • ANDI OLSEN • BRIAN PARDINI • NINA SHAPIRO-PERL • POSTSECRET ARTISTS • RESCUED CHILDREN OF FRIENDS-INTERNATIONAL CAMBODIA • BETTY ROSEN • ALLIE LIGHT & IRVING SARAF (LIGHT-SARAF FILMS) • DEBBIE & MIKE SCHRAMER • MARCELLIN SIMARD, M.D. • WILLIAM STOCKLEY, D.D.S. • JUDY TALLWING • ALEX Todorovich • MARS TOKYO • FRANK WARREN • HARRIET ELIZABETH THOMPSON, A.K.A. “PRINCESS WEE WEE” • MATTHEW “BAY BAY” WILLIAMS • LARRY YUST (left) MARS TOKYO, (detail) Teatro della Seduta Spiritica (The Séance) c. 2005–2007, Box assemblage, Collection of the artist

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STREETS TELL STORIES by LARRY YUST

The two-volume book, STREETS TELL STORIES, by photo documentarian Larry Yust captures stories in time with real life streetscapes—photographing old industrial and decaying back streets and aging ethnic neighborhoods in transition—those in the lively visual processes of absorbing new waves of immigrants and cultures. All proceeds of the sale of STREETS TELL STORIES will directly benefit our American Visionary Art Museum through the great generosity of both the author, Larry Yust, and Jamie Rigler of the Lloyd E. Rigler-Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

1. EXPAND THE DEFINITION OF A WORTHWHILE LIFE.
2. ENGENDER RESPECT FOR AND DELIGHT IN THE GIFTS OF OTHERS.
3. INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE WIDE VARIETY OF CHOICES AVAILABLE IN LIFE FOR ALL — 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, INTUITION, SELF-EXPLORATION, AND CREATIVE 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 SOMETHING REALLY REALLY WELL.

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NESTLED AT THE BASE OF FEDERAL HILL, American Visionary Art Museum is the perfect spot for small or large events. Weddings, corporate events, bar/bat mitzvahs, holiday parties—you name it! AVAM 800 KEY HIGHWAY, BALTIMORE, MD | 410.244.1900 X 228 | RENTALS@AVAM.ORG
Welcome to our American Visionary Art Museum (AVAM)'s 18th annual, thematic exhibition, *The Art of Storytelling: Lies, Enchantment, Humor & Truth!* You, dear reader, constitute a special, one-of-a-kind story told in code by your inherited DNA and by your every action, reaction, word and circumstance.

From scripture to fairy tale, cartoons to cyberbullying, the raw power of stories to inspire and enchant, spread lies or to inform, simply has no equal. In fact, stories are pesky, inescapable forces—as insidious in our lives as the outlawed “buy popcorn now” message subliminals employed in old 1950’s movie theaters. Stories, including all sorts of propaganda and family lore, infect and affect us even when we think that they don’t.

*The Art of Storytelling*’s ‘table of contents’ overflows with theme-related quotes, story jokes (even the classic “a guy walks into a bar. . .” has a defined who, what, where and why to it), and timeless sub-categories like Shakespeare’s “All the World’s a Stage, and All the Men and Women Merely Players.” Another section, “Misuse of Story: Bullying, Lies & Unkind Words,” examines the dark underbelly of storytelling magnified via the Internet to spin negative and hurtful stories. It has been said that, “Hurt people hurt people.” This healing exhibition is an articulate plea for greater civility and kindness, forgiveness and respect in our ways of telling stories about, and speaking to, one another.

*The Art of Storytelling* champions the courage and inventiveness of its visionary artists exploring distinct aspects of all that a story can be. They have done so via first person testimony, embroidery, diorama, sculpture, historic artifact, film, graffiti documentation, graphic novel, and *PostSecret* confession—promoting all manner of acute ‘visual listening’ and surprise for the whole family.

This tale-filled exhibition is a sequel for our co-curatorial team of Mary Ellen ‘Dolly’ Vehlow—a tireless, story-loving, award-winning graphic designer, and founder/sponsor of Washington, D.C.’s H Street Festival—and me, a founder and the Director of AVAM.

*The Art of Storytelling: Lies, Enchantment, Humor & Truth* underscores the role all museums, media, and governments play as public storytellers as well as their inescapable influence on what we think, hold true, reject, and/or ultimately understand. Our religious beliefs also get conveyed via stories, usually starring one super being engaged in some archetypal conflict. Such beliefs have inspired both noble action and grievous religious warring over just how one particular storied version of the Divine Unknowable must triumph over that held dear by another.

May the story you live right now and the one we play out in concert with each other astound in the beauty of its telling and aid in establishing revolutionary new heights of happily ever after-ness!

Yours in this ‘Once Upon A Time,’
Rebecca Alban Hoffberger

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*Our Art of Storytelling Ambassadors: Julian Bond, Civil Rights and AVAM Champion • Josh Charles, Actor and Committed to Anti-Bullying Initiatives • Linda Kavelin-Popov and Dan Popov, Ph.D., Founders of The Virtues Project • Lyn Pentecost, Founder Lower East Side Girls Club • Ken Waissman, Tony Award Winning Broadway Producer and (If You Insist) Musical Storyteller • Laura Wexler and Jessica Henkin, Co-Founders and Co-Producers, The Stoop Storytelling Series • Jean L. Wyman, LCSW-C*
ESTHER KRINITZ, Road To Krasnik, 1994, embroidery and fabric collage, collection of Bernice Steinhardt and Helene McQuade. Photo courtesy ArtandRemembrance.org
ESTHER’S TRUE STORY

Esther Nisenthal Krinitz grew up in the exquisite countryside of rural Poland. Her talents as a seamstress were evident by age eight when she sewed and embroidered a festival folk costume that earned the amazed admiration of the village professional seamstress.

Esther was just twelve years old when Nazis arrived on horseback at her rural homeland and began occupying her village for the next three years. One fateful day in October 1942, Esther, her family, and all the other Jews in their Polish village were suddenly ordered to leave their homes by ten o’clock or be shot and to report immediately to the nearby train station. The night before the train’s departure, 15-year old Esther decided she would not go but would instead take her 13-year old sister, Mania, and look for work among Polish farmers. The next morning’s black clouds and birds confirmed omens of her fears. Esther and Mania would become the only members of their family to survive the Holocaust.

After being turned away by friends and neighbors too frightened to take the two sisters in, Esther and Mania made their way to another village where they were not known. Pretending to be Polish Catholic farm girls who had been separated from their family, the sisters found work and stayed in the village until liberating Russian troops arrived in 1944. After the war ended, Esther and Mania made their way to a displaced persons camp in Germany where Esther met and married Max Krinitz. She wore the one communal wedding dress shared in turn by brides. In June 1949, Esther, Max and their infant daughter, Bernice, immigrated to the United States.

Esther Krinitz first began her series of fabric pictures in 1977 at the age of 50. The first two depicted the beauty and happiness of her rural childhood home and were presented as gifts for her two adult daughters, Bernice and Helene. Although trained as a dressmaker and highly skilled in needlework, Esther had no training in art and no conception of herself as an artist. Yet, her first embroidered pictures were so well received by her family and friends and so personally satisfying that she would later create 34 other pieces, unveiling a sequential narrative series of increasing complexity. With the addition of text, Esther’s art became an exquisite embroidered testimony to her true story of survival. After a long illness, Esther Krinitz died in 2001 at the age of 74.
**THE BEAUTY OF TRADITION**

**PARABLES, TRIBAL WISDOMS, ORAL TRADITIONS, SACRED MYTHS**

**Parable. noun.** A simple story used to illustrate and impart a moral or spiritual lesson. From a Greek word meaning comparison, illustration, or analogy.

Fables are much like parables, but are teaching stories that use animals, plants and/or inanimate objects to convey their simple truths and morals lessons in a symbolic way. Jesus, Confucius, Buddha, and other great and enduring spiritual teachers associated with centuries of varying geographic and cultural traditions have all exquisitely employed parables to teach specific lessons. The Book of Matthew, in the New Testament, quotes Jesus, “Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they don’t see, and hearing, they don’t hear, neither do they understand.”

One of the greatest marvels in human history has been the faithful ancestral whispering of epic stories, imparted from one generation to the next, by much of the world’s indigenous peoples. The gift of accurate recitation from memory of these sacred stories was a treasured responsibility, incumbent upon each new generation. From this tradition, the creation account of the Finnish Kalevala was kept intact and allowed its transcription into print and many other Aboriginal tales and prophesies were successfully preserved and lovingly passed from one generation to the next, in a multi-centuried unbroken line, so that the whole world could enjoy and profit from their ageless beauty.

*Every death of an elder is as if an entire library had been burned to the ground.* —AFRICAN PROVERB

**THE PIPE CARRIERS**

* (opposite page)

“This painting is not really traditional, but has elements of tradition in it. In the past, in many Native nations, women did not carry prayer pipes; they were guardians of many of the sacred objects of their families, but seldom carried or used the objects in their own worship. Women are realizing there is great power in their prayers as well. More Native women are carrying prayer pipes, more are dancing in sacred circles and there’s even a very powerful women’s sun dance ceremony in New Mexico. The women in this painting are carrying my own prayer pipe. I inherited the pipe from my Grandmother.” —JUDY TALLWING, ARTIST AND APACHE ELDER

**WHITE SPIRIT BEARS**

* (above)

“This painting was given to me in a dream. I knew of the White Spirit Bears from living on the NW coast, but had no idea they were in danger. The White Spirit Bears was done to help save this most sacred animal and its habitat. The elements added to it, are to help amplify the energy needed to protect them. There are only about 400 of these bears in the world. In all of my paintings the beads represent a prayer.” —JUDY TALLWING

*“Yah teh hey sho na,” Apache greeting meaning, “Walk in beauty, my friend”*
Vanessa creates “contemporary power figures,” as she defines them, made of everyday objects transformed into icons of astonishing metaphors. Vanessa believes her power figures are “alive by sight, and the adventure that sight incites in every piece” has its own meaning.

Vanessa’s visual and performance work contend with the power and fragility of the human spirit. She grew up surrounded by Africans, Koreans, white folks, Mexican folks, strange folks, gay folks, sights, sounds, and scents according the ever-fabled melting pot. She also grew up at the foot of AIDS and gang violence, churches, co-ops, street vendors, house fires, and street music, from hip hop to merengue, each facet still found fibrous and illuminated in her story. Writer Graham Shearing observes, “She is a witness to what she finds and declares it loudly and passionately, and, for a shy woman, also fearlessly. She intuitively transforms her findings, her evidences, into her work.”

“There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside you.”

—ZORA NEALE HURSTON (c.1891–1960)
Married for almost 40 years, Debbie and Mike Schramer began creating their art from nature when their sons were in grade school. Both Debbie and Mike were born to families with a passion for music, creativity and nature, and both have cited struggling with deep depression as a driving impetus for their work. After undergoing treatment for depression as young adults, their visions began to blossom in the first months of their marriage as “both [their] creative desires and energies had companionship and environment in which to work,” according to Mike. Together they were inspired by nature, their surroundings, and one another. They used recycled natural materials, such as flowers, moss, leaves, seaweed and stones, to sculpt small pieces of furniture and dwellings.
Calvin and Ruby Black began building the Possum Trot Shop and Fantasy Doll Show in 1954 as an attraction to lure tourists off the main highways and to their small rock shop in Possum Trot, California, in the Mojave Desert. Possum Trot fast became the couple’s artistic obsession.

Calvin ultimately carved over 80 dolls, each representing someone important in his life. Ruby made clothes for each doll. Calvin also built the “Bird Cage Theater” to install doll players that performed and sang in voices recorded by the husband and wife. Their animated displays were designed to attract as well as entertain visitors. Outside the shop, wind-powered dolls animated the home and attraction while alerting motorists that something special was happening inside.

Famed husband and wife filmmakers Allie Light and Irving Saraf became enchanted with the Blacks and their one-of-a-kind, homemade, roadside marvel, and documented Possum Trot at the zenith of its gloried existence.
Princess Wee-Wee is the featured character in the children's book HOW PRINCESS WEE-WEE GOT HER NAME by Philip J. Merrill and Illustrated by Jerry Breen and is the story of a little person who wins over her bullies by her fearless nature and extraordinary dancing ability.

The real-life Princess Wee-Wee was named Harriet Thompson and was reportedly born in Pennsylvania in the 1890s. She soon moved with her parents to Baltimore, where she lived in a tiny 2-story house.

She grew up to be a well-known dancer, performing with various circuses before two Presidents, royalty of England and Cuban authorities. She once received a proposal in marriage from a Russian prince, who was also small in size. She declined that proposal, but married three gentlemen of normal size—excluding one who was quite tall. We don't know when she died, but we do know that she was still living during World War II.
MISUSE OF STORY
BULLYING, LIES, & UNKIND WORDS

Like all the great super powers—religion, government, media, sex and money—storytelling, neither intrinsically good nor evil, has its dark underbelly. How we speak to, and of, one another affects us deeply. The Jewish sages define Loshon Hora literally as the “Evil Tongue.” The Talmud states clearly that damaging gossip is a three-pronged tongue that actually kills three people—the one who speaks it, the one who listens, and the subject of the gossip. Throughout history, both young people and adults have engaged in this dark form of storytelling most often to reduce their own insecurities at the expense of others. Today we know it as bullying.

Each day in America, more than 160,000 children miss school due to bullying. This newest twentieth-century crop of bullies has made other children captives of their own Internet-tied existence. Take away their Internet access to save them the 24/7 pain as public targets of cyber humiliation and intimidation, and we punish the innocent. Furthermore, current estimates state that teen suicide has increased an horrific 400% in just the past thirty years. No wonder since 1995 more than 45 states have passed laws to spell out legal consequences to cyberbullying and bullying in general. New Jersey now requires all its schools to have an in-house, anti-bullying specialist. The victims have too often been the most exquisitely gentle souls, like Maryland’s lost treasures: Grace McComas, who on an Easter morning took her own life, and Jason Mattison, murdered for being a gay teen who wished to one day be a doctor. Both are now most cherished memories by all blessed to have known them.


When I was in the Fourth Grade, a new kid moved into our neighborhood.

He was a charismatic leader who quickly became popular.

Soon after, he convinced two of my friends to pin me to the ground and hold open my eyelids.

They took turns spitting into my eyes.

“The children almost broken by the world become the adults most likely to change it.”
—FRANK WARREN, FOUNDER, POSTSECRET
Béatrice Coron’s work is all about storytelling and finding the story we all have to tell. “It’s about finding ourselves, and if not finding ourselves, then reinventing ourselves and our relations to the world.” Béatrice says she invents situations, cities and worlds to be explored. “These compositions include memories, associations of words, ideas, observations and thoughts that unfold in improbable juxtapositions. I invite viewers to make their own stories.”

(above) BÉATRICE CORON, Mad Growth, 2010, cut Tyvek, collection of the artist. Photo Dan Meyers
(left) Artist BÉATRICE CORON IN TYVEK CAPE. Photo Etienne Frossard
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FIFF!! AND THE KINETIC SCULPTURE RACE

FIFF! 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, inflatable pontoons, and a strong cycling team, Fiffi participates in this annual event of creative sport and artistic engineering. Part Huck Finn, part Rube Goldberg, 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, Fiffi 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 Fiffi le Pink Poodle on Facebook.

SOCK MONKEY SATURDAY ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2012

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 in! Instructions, stuffing, needles, thread, visionary baubles, and camaraderie provided.

FLICKS FROM THE HILL ON THURSDAYS IN JULY & AUGUST 2013

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

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