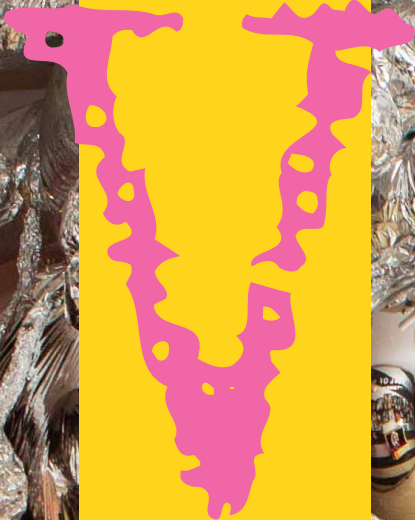




VISIONS



AMERICAN
VISIONARY
ART MUSEUM

THE BIG HOPE SHOW
21



(FRONT & BACK COVERS: ARTIST WAYNE COYNE AND THE KING'S MOUTH)



WAYNE COYNE began making art and music as a youngster, dropped out of high school, and formed the psychedelic rock band The Flaming Lips in 1983. Coyne worked for fifteen years as a fry cook at a local Long John Silver's, and, one night, armed intruders burst into the restaurant, held a gun to his head, and demanded money. Coyne recalls thinking, "This is really how you die—one minute you're cooking up someone's order of French fries and the next minute you're laying on the floor and they blow your brains out. There's no music, there's no significance; it's just random." After the robbers exited without harming anyone, Coyne and his coworkers felt an overwhelming surge of gratitude and began hugging one another. "It was as if we'd won a million dollars," he recalls. "It changed me." The experience also unlocked a streak of fierce and hopeful creativity in Coyne, who transformed the Lips'

live shows into visually-stunning, communal spectacles and penned songs with titles such as "All We Have Is Now" and "Enthusiasm for Life Defeats Existential Fear." He created enduring album cover art, released new music on flash drives embedded in Gummy skulls, produced an upbeat "10 Reasons for Living" set of postcards, opened a funhouse-style arts venue (The Womb) in Oklahoma City, and even directed a science fiction Christmas film. Coyne's visual art—which is being exhibited for the first time in a museum setting—is similarly spirited, with elements of transcendent psychedelic fantasy mingling with the hopeful struggle that often infuses his music. Inspired by THE BIG HOPE SHOW theme, The Flaming Lips composed and recorded original music exclusively for your enjoyment inside the King's Mouth. Photo by Shawn Levin.

THE VISIONARY EXPERIENCE ARTISTS & FILMMAKERS

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10am–6pm Tuesday–Sunday
Closed: Christmas and Thanksgiving
*Open Monday, January 18, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. FREE.

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See WEBSITE: www.avam.org for current prices and special discounted group rates.

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410.244.1900 fax: 410.244.5858 WEBSITE: www.avam.org

FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF THE EXHIBITION
ARTISTS, WORK, AND LENDERS WEBSITE: www.avam.org

GROUP SALES/GROUP+SCHOOL TOUR INFO
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All of the animal proteins are carefully chosen, selecting those who have been raised humanely with a GMO free diet, and their seafood reflects what is available locally from some of the best fisherman on the east coast.
LEVEL 3, THE MAIN BUILDING
HOURS: Tuesday–Saturday 11:30 am–10:00 pm
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*“Too much sanity may be madness.
And maddest of all, to see life as it is and not as it should be.”*
—MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA, *Don Quixote*

WELCOME to our American Visionary Art Museum’s 20th Anniversary celebration, featuring *The Big Hope Show*—our most unabashedly idealistic exhibition ever. It stars the radiant and transcendent qualities of hope, though no true understanding of hope can be complete without a cameo appearance by those ancient dark forces that have long sought hope’s



annihilation: cynicism, fear, and despair.

Our *Big Hope Show* philosophers are wildly diverse, from poets Hafez and Emily Dickinson to ancient Greek wise man Aristotle and cowboy actor John Wayne. Their insights on hope help illuminate the art and stories of our twenty-five spectacular *Hope Show* artists, many of whom were specifically chosen as transcendent and hope-filled veterans triumphant over some great personal trauma.

Our *Big Hope Show* takes special delight in honoring a major hope-maker, the now-retired California Highway Patrol Officer Kevin Briggs, who gently encouraged upwards of 200 would-be suicide jumpers off the Golden Gate Bridge and back to solid ground. Briggs constitutes caring community policing at its best.

In sharp contrast, Angola inmate Herman Wallace suffered under a criminal justice system at its most flawed. Our *Herman’s House* installation documents his miraculous true story of unexpected friendship and ultimate exoneration.

It is our hope that our national museum’s beloved hometown of Baltimore, Maryland, now famously struggling despite its many strengths and charms, will be collectively inspired by our exhibition’s many true stories of possible positive transformation. Indeed, Kevin Briggs will be our inspirational Keynote Speaker at our Spring 2016, free-to-all, “Big Hope for Baltimore Conference.” Albert Camus said it beautifully: “Where there is no hope, it is incumbent on us to invent it.” Can there be any better use for our creative imagination?

Let’s give The Duke the last word:

“Tomorrow is the most important thing in life. Comes to us at midnight very clean. It’s perfect when it arrives and puts itself in your hands. It hopes we’ve learned something from yesterday.” —John Wayne

We have learned so much from exploring with you, our cherished visitor, all those grand themes from our past exhibitions that have always inspired, challenged, and delighted humankind. Thank you for being an essential part of our American Visionary Art Museum’s first twenty years, and for making us very, very hopeful in regard to our next!

Truly, and on behalf of all our staff, volunteers, and board,
Rebecca Alban Hoffberger,
The Big Hope Show Curator and AVAM Founder/Director



Curator's



BOBBY ADAMS



In 1970, Bobby Adams began working with John Waters, who filmed *Pink Flamingos* at the Baltimore County farm where Adams was living. Ever since, Adams has been the filmmaker's

unofficial documentarian, taking photographs on film sets, chronicling the exploits of Waters' band of inclusive renegades, known as the Dreamlanders. "I never learned how to do the camera," notes Adams. "I just point and shoot. My approach is simple: I start with love, and the camera sees it." Adams has made an art of maintaining friendships. A self-professed Christmas addict, he makes hundreds of personalized, handmade, labor-of-love holiday cards for friends and family each year.

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. He created 50 multi-media tribute pieces to Odie and installed them throughout his waterfront cottage. Until now, Adams's art has never been exhibited publicly, and, when asked if he's ever had an unrealistic hope fulfilled, he says, "Yes, being included in this show."

AVAM is delighted to celebrate Bobby Adams as the Artistic Honoree for our 20th Anniversary Gala on November 21.

REBECCA ALBAN HOFFBERGER, CURATOR

notebook



*“Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all.”*

—Emily Dickinson

EMILY DICKINSON

AND THE HOPEFUL FEATHERED THING

FEW WRITERS HAVE DEFINED AND entwined the relationship between hope and soul as succinctly and memorably as Emily Dickinson. The reclusive poet, who saw few of her 1,800 poems published during her lifetime, related hope to the unforgettable bird imagery that endures to this day. With great economy of words, Emily also expressed the depth of her own soul’s despair, writing: “Will there really be a ‘Morning’? Is there such a thing as ‘Day’?”

Ancient and modern cultures express near-universal agreement in their depiction of soul as some winged thing—be it bird or butterfly. Perhaps this is because those creatures famously negotiate both a presence here on earth and a non-earthbound capacity to touch heaven. When we imagine our super heroes, they often have a singular gift for flight. Angels of various ethnic stripes are depicted as winged, on every continent.

The child prisoners of Theresienstadt Concentration Camp instinctively etched 1,000’s of tiny butterflies into the wood of their bunks. Who among us has not had a dream of flying?



THE BOUNDARY-LESS POWER of what is truly great lies in a capacity to express and connect to the Technicolor highs and lows of our own secret hopes, fears, emotions, and ideals. At their best, art, music, and literature endure to make sense of our world after wars have taken their best shot at humanity’s annihilation.



(full image and detail) **NANCY JOSEPHSON**, *Erzulte Kouvez*, 2015, mixed media, courtesy of the artist. Photos Dan Meyers





HOPE & OUR FAVORITE THINGS

“Stay close to everything that makes you glad you are alive.” —Hafez

IN THE CLASSICAL MUSICAL *The Sound of Music*, the sunny young novice nun, Maria, while employed as governess to the children of an anti-Nazi Austrian widower, tries to teach her young charges to be brave and hopeful in the face of fear. She does so by singing them the song “My Favorite Things,” which lists her most cherished, simple, and joyful things. Similarly, in the recent British hit play *Every Brilliant Thing*, the plot involves an 8-year-old boy struggling to uplift his suicidal mom by providing her with his list of what he loves most dearly in life; it’s a childishly sweet list that he then develops and grows for decades to come. Although his list of personal happy wonders ultimately fails to save his mom, the very act of compiling it helps equip him with the courage to live his own life focused on life’s beauty and joy.

One life-changing, American math teacher brought similarly positive list making to her classroom with an assignment that is well-worth repeating. Sister Helen

P. Mroska had her students list the names of everyone in class, leave a space beside each name, and write down only the nicest things that came to mind about the people on the list. Mroska then assembled the cumulative praise, which she customized for each student, and provided a copy to each as a gift. Years later, those now-raggedy lists were found carried into battle, tucked into purses, wallets, and Bibles, or framed on the walls of homes—all of them enduring testimonies to their powerful importance in the lives of her now-grown, former students.

Rockstar and artist Wayne Coyne has long kept lists of his happiest reasons for living and turned them into visual art. He even wrote the song “Enthusiasm for Life Defeats Existential Fear.” Romaine Samworth, a 94-year-old artist who is blind inventories and savors her favorite beautiful memories and reincarnates them into her joyful art.



ART IN MY VEINS

no flying lost Krumping at the
Avalon at 4:15 AM
on Nov 8, 2014
with
All three of
These
& VERTIGO

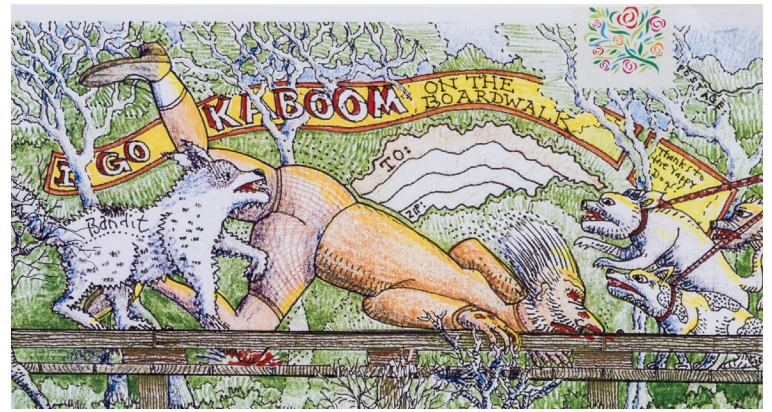
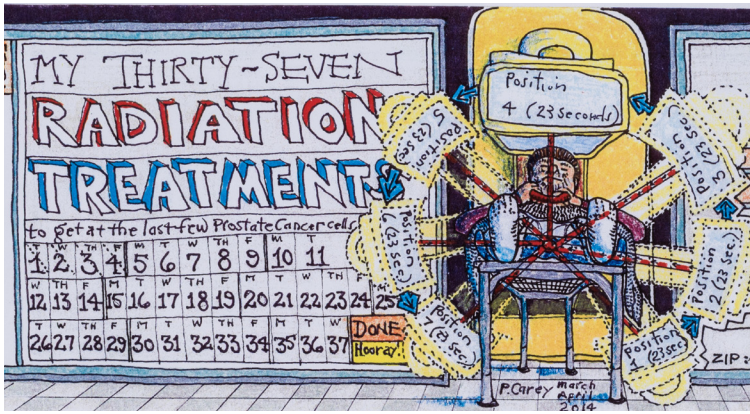
Rescuing the
But Don't
Work

Self
Portrait
made from my
Dialysis
Bandaids

PHILIP'S
MAIL ART
FROM DIALYSIS

250,000 YEARS
OF
HUMAN
EVOLUTION

SURGERY
NO
ADMITTANCE



WAITING AND HOPING

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

ARTIST AND SINGER PHILIP CAREY HAS BEEN WAITING AND HOPING for a much-needed kidney transplant for the past 12+ years. During all that time, his kidney function has been sustained by faithful, extremely time-consuming, machine-based dialysis. While tethered, Carey illustrates business envelopes to chronicle both his experiences as a patient and his vivid dreams.

The additional blow of a cancer diagnosis sent Carey to the bottom of the transplant wait list, negating years of patient, hard-won ascent. Carey turned the newest health crisis into inspiration for his most recent work—a bigger-than-life, self-portrait sculpture composed of packaging from the cancer meds used to keep him alive. Now cancer-free and, once again, climbing the transplant wait list, Carey sees his artwork as a powerful means of sustaining hope and humor.

As a visitor to our national museum, perhaps you will be inspired to consider registering as an organ donor—a supremely hopeful and caring act. Last year, approximately 29,000 transplant operations were performed in the United States using gifted eyes, hearts, lungs, livers, intestines, kidneys, and kidney/pancreas and heart/lung combinations. But data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicates a severe shortfall of donations, and Carey is one of more than 122,000 people currently waiting and hoping for some sort of life-sustaining organ transplant. That list grows every ten minutes. On average, 22 Americans die each day while waiting for their organ match.

There is very hopeful health news on the horizon! United Therapeutics Corporation, a Maryland-based company founded by Martine Rothblatt, has a promising, potentially revolutionary development in its research pipeline. Their goal is nothing short of using 3-D printing technology to create an identical sculptural match to an organ that needs replacing and to use that harmonious structure to host growth of the patient's own stem cells and produce a healthy and functional match, bespoke to the patient's own body. This process would have the additional benefit of alleviating the need for post-transplant rejection medication. Because lung transplants are the most difficult of all organ transplants, United Therapeutics has focused its research on producing viable lungs knowing that if they are successful in this area, the development of other needed organs will be far easier by comparison. *Consider the gift of hope, www.organdonor.gov or through your state registry.*





HERMAN'S HOUSE OF HOPE

IN 2003 JACKIE SUMELL ASKED HERMAN WALLACE A VERY SIMPLE QUESTION: *What kind of house does a man who has lived in a six-foot-by-nine-foot-cell for over thirty years dream of?* Herman Wallace spent over 4-decades in solitary confinement in the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. On October 1st, 2013 his conviction was overturned Herman left the prison unshackled, free and innocent in the eyes of the law. Less than three days later Herman joined the ancestors passing peacefully in his sleep, surrounded by supporters who loved him dearly.



THE HOUSE THAT HERMAN BUILT is an on-going art project that radically transformed the lives of both Jackie Sumell and Herman Wallace. It began as a simple exchange between two and over the course of a decade has expanded into an international art exhibition, a book, a documentary film and now it is in the fundraising stages to build Herman Wallace's dream home in the city of New Orleans—where Herman grew up and Jackie now lives.

JACKIE:

“USING A TOOL—THE IMAGINATION— that had long helped me to negotiate the impossible, I encouraged Herman to dream: to liberate his mind from Camp-J, to play, to repair his imagination, and to rediscover the fighting spirit required for his survival. I never conceived that this action would grow wings and propel Herman's story across the globe, uniting people in committed compassion. Through nothing less than the sheer force of Herman's imagination and his relentless dedication to use his experience as a vehicle for change, hundreds of thousands of people around the world have heard his voice, accessed his vision, and joined the struggle to end the prolonged use of solitary confinement.

Herman and I collaborated on the design of his dream home for over a decade. I also developed an exhibition, which included a life-sized version of Herman's cell, again based on his drawings and letters. The cell is critical to the exhibition; as I meticulously built Herman's cell to-scale, I entered the world he had inhabited for decades, while, simultaneously, Herman imagined his way out of his cell to inhabit the house of his dreams. The House That Herman Built/Herman's House has become an international symbol of hope in the struggle to expose and ultimately end the inhumane practice of solitary confinement in the United States. It illustrates not only what is wrong, but also what is possible.”

HERMAN:

I AM HERMAN WALLACE from the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, and I want to thank every last one of you for coming out and being part of what we as artists and international revolutionaries are trying to establish. First and foremost, I will dis-

cuss the power of one's imagination, and particularly my experience in building this house. I was recently asked, “What are the benefits of my building this house,” and it occurred to me that if you can dream it, you can create it. To create, you must be courageous and prepare to fight for what you believe in; prepare to defy all obstacles in advance.

This house is not your typical or ordinary house. It is a community structure, set in motion by a united effort of international political prisoners, artists, designers, and, of course, my co-comrade, the legendary Jackie Sumell. This is a house being built by the people, financed by the people, labored by the people, and it is structured to serve the people.

We must keep in mind: I have been held in prison for the past 41 years, and for 36 of those years, I was kept in solitary confinement for no other reason than

my views being different from those of my keepers. Indeed, it is not easy to envision such a project, isolated from society for so many decades under such harsh conditions.

My friend, the late Anita Roddick, once said, “If you think you're too small to make a difference, then you've never been in a room with a mosquito.” I will allow no man, woman, or force to obstruct my path, not short of death, in determining what I believe is just for my people, or for myself for that matter.

And to think—to think!—that a foolish prison cell could break my will in and of itself must be viewed as a victory for the people. It's not what we are advocating that matters here. We ask that you maintain your focus on what we are putting into practice.

Someone asked me a very good question, “What is the benefit of this project for me?” In 1971, I became an official member of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and was instrumental in establishing its first chapter inside of any prison system anywhere in the world. To be a Panther is to be a servant of the people—mind, body, and soul.

This is Herman Wallace

from Angola State Penitentiary.

June 18, 2008

(from *The House That Herman Built*,

a book by Jackie Sumell & Herman Wallace)



CYNICISM, FEAR, DESPAIR

THE 3 MOST POWERFUL ANTI-HOPE FORCES

*"Fear is the cheapest room in the house.
I would like to see you living in better conditions." – Hafez*



TO BEST UNDERSTAND HOPE, it is crucial to be aware of the forces that can thwart and kill it. Let us take stock, individually and communally, of all the ways cynicism, fear, and despair have been permitted entry into our lives. Let us identify the forces that are pure poisonous Kryptonite to hope's very existence and shine a light on those dark thoughts that promote hopelessness, divide us, and underlie suicide, both individual and collective.

A true hero of *The Big Hope Show* is the former California Highway Patrol trooper Kevin Briggs, who embodied community policing at its best during his two decades of service. While patrolling San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, Briggs successfully talked down an estimated 200 would-be jumpers, losing just two. Briggs tapped into feelings and emotions from his own early brush with cancer to connect with those suffering from hopelessness. He practiced a

masterful gift for caring and listening, sometimes staying seven hours or more beside would-be suicide jumpers, whom he refused to abandon.

The sign posted over the Gates of Hell in Dante's *Inferno* read, "Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate" —Latin meaning, "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here." Truly, losing all hope would in itself constitute a hell, yet the brilliant existentialist philosopher, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, cynically railed against the very idea of hope, believing, "Hope is the worst of all evils because it prolongs the torments of man." Author Henry Miller expressed similar anti-hope sentiments, though a bit more charmingly. Miller said, "I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive."

Perhaps these seemingly oppositional stances on hope—pro and con—can be rectified by a transcendent sense of thankfulness for both the good and the bad in our lives. As Bahá'u'lláh put it, "A thankful person is thankful under all circumstances. A complaining soul complains even if he lives in paradise."

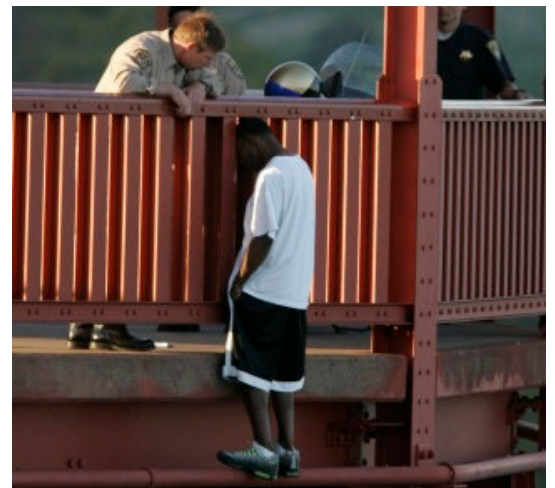
The following words were found scratched onto the walls of a Nazi death camp:

I believe in the sun even when it's not shining.

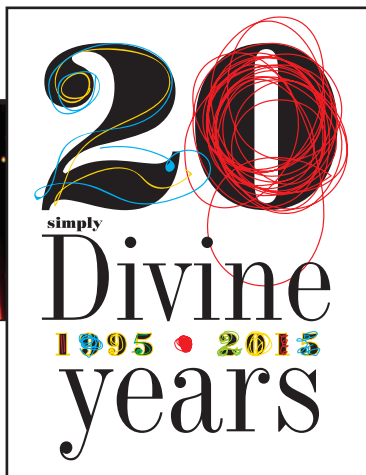
I believe in love even when I don't feel it.

I believe in God even when He is silent.

—excerpted from *Sister, Sister* by Anna Rosner Blay



Opening Day, November 1995
Artists Vollis Simpson & Gerald Hawkes



AVAM campus during construction
from Federal Hill

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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, inflatable pontoons, and a strong cycling team, Fifi 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, 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 Le Pink Poodle on Facebook.

SOCK MONKEY SATURDAY ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2015

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 2016

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.

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Artist Vollis
Simpson
installing parts
of AVAM's
Giant Whirligig

