JOY IS THE INNALIGNOL SIGN OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD. – Teilhard de Chardin
welcome to our birthday celebration for the love-filled Persian poet, Jelaluddin Rumi, born 800 years ago this year. The American Visionary Art Museum has quoted the writings of Rumi more than any other source of wisdom. The United Nations has proclaimed 2007 the international, “Year of Rumi,” and Rumi has become the No. 1 best-selling poet in both America and Europe.

All Faiths Beautiful: From Atheism to Zoroastrianism, Respect for Diversity of Belief, our museum’s 13th original art exhibition, is dedicated to the inclusive spirit of Rumi and to the personal illumination of what belief can mean for each of us. Be it deeply personal and whole, a work in progress, a torment or a blessing, what we believe—and especially what we don’t—is our most precious life-shaping human experience. Freedom to express that belief is central to any notion of individual liberty. Our All Faiths Beautiful exhibition is a communal invitation to open heart and mind.

The good news of our modernity is that where religious identity was once almost exclusively dictated by geography and biology—the “where” and “to whom” you were born—we now have unprecedented access and freedom to explore and examine the core teachings, traditions and practices behind many beliefs. We can study the course and influence of those beliefs through history, and make more deeply informed choices for ourselves.

It is not our intention in this exhibition to dissuade or preach to anyone, but rather to encourage a reflection on Faith. In the words of The Buddha, “Believe nothing, no matter where you read it, or who said it, no matter if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense.”

As Rumi, whom we celebrate, wrote, “Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I’ll meet you there.”

May this museum and special exhibition constitute that safe field for public communion, spiritual refreshment, and Peace.