MAIN BUILDING
Critically acclaimed as an "architectural jewel," the 36,000-square-foot main building combines an elliptically shaped, three-story, historic industrial building with extensive new architecture to contain six galleries, filled with work that explores one central exhibition theme at a time. The central stair balustrade and garden gates were handcast by metal artist David Hess and have been described as "alone worth the price of admission."

TALL SCULPTURE BARN
Formerly the Four Roses whiskey warehouse, the 45-foot ceilings can accommodate towering sculptural works. The Tall Sculpture Barn features a life-size, INTERACTIVE CHESS SET of sculpted metal angels and aliens made exclusively from found objects by North Carolina artist Lyle Estill and the 1300 square-feet of painted panels called THE SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION by visionary William Thomas Thompson. The Barn also functions as a host site for lectures, private receptions and celebrations. FREE during museum hours. Adjacent to WILDFLOWER SCULPTURE GARDEN.

JIM ROUSE VISIONARY CENTER
LEVEL 5 JRVC: The Center for Visionary Thought and Expression, a whitewashed, barn-styled hall with seating capacity for 500 and access to David Hess’ 58-foot wide Bird’s Nest observation balcony.

LEVEL 2 JRVC: The Hall of Social Visionaries, the place to link creative acts of social activism with the real art of living and home to an interactive exhibition on JIM ROUSE: REMEMBERING JIM INTO OUR FUTURE; The Thou Art Creative Classroom and The Creative Social Activism Classroom, two blue-glass-walled classrooms—one for hands-on art making inspired by visionary artists and the other hard-wired for exploring best global innovations to better community life.

LEVEL 1 JRVC: Visionary Village, a cavernous exhibition arena for large sculptures, art cars, and whole visionary environments; The current exhibits feature Baltimore’s famed Screen Painters and London’s Cabaret Mechanical Theatre automata, Emily Duffy’s 5-foot diameter Bra Ball and Andrew Logan’s 12-foot Divine.

OUTDOOR SCULPTURES AND AMENITIES: Dick Brown’s mosaic Bluebird of Happiness; Dr. Tom Evermore’s 40-foot Phoenix; Andrew Logan’s 8-foot Cosmic Galaxy Egg; Adam Kurtzman’s 11-foot gold-en Divine Hand; The Hughes Family Outdoor Movie Theater; Small Outdoor Amphitheater; Giant "spangled" and neon O Say Can You See sign, a tribute to both vision and the National Anthem’s birthplace; The LeRoy Hoffberger Speaker’s Corner, a platform for celebrating and exercising free speech.

GIANT WHIRLIGIG
Baltimore’s most beloved outdoor sculptural landmark. Fifty-five feet tall, this brilliant, multicolored wind-powered sculpture was created in salute to Federal Hill and Life, Liberty & The Pursuit of Happiness by 76-year-old mechanic/farmer and visionary artist Vollis Simpson. FREE to visit anytime. CENTRAL PLAZA.

WILDFLOWER GARDEN
Wildflowers provide the ideal visual metaphor for the Museum’s visionary artists. Wildflowers, aromatics, and climbing vines surround the museum’s wooden MEDITATION ALTAR built by visionary artist Ben Wilson, 2 GIANT FISH by Clyde Jones and the FIVE-HEAD RIVER ROCK FOUNTAIN by Ted Ludwiczak.

SCULPTURE PLAZA
Terraced and paved with granite and quartz stone, the outdoor plaza is where large groups gather; it is also the central circulation area between the main museum building, tall sculpture barn and garden. Plaza functions as the ground level connector to Federal Hill and Baltimore’s Inner Harbor. Site of the GIANT WHIRLIGIG.

SIDESHOW/MUSEUM SHOP
Surround yourself with original art, great books, jewelry, fun toys, novelties, vintage memories, and a great selection of cards and stationery. Come shopping, leave smiling. LEVEL 1 MAIN BUILDING.

MR. RAIN’S FUN HOUSE/CAFÉ
A unique café and dining experience complementing the American Visionary Art Museum, providing a sophisticated yet playful setting for both museum patrons and restaurant clientele. Nestled between the picturesque Baltimore Inner Harbor and Federal Hill, the Fun House sets the stage for Chef Bill Buszinski’s menu, comprised of focused renditions of “Americana” fare influenced by immigrating cultures and farm to table philosophies.

LEVEL 5 MAIN BUILDING.

CAFÉ HOURS
LUNCH: Tuesday thru Thursday 11:30 am to 3:30 pm
BRUNCH: Sunday 11 am to 5:00 pm
DINNER: Tuesday thru Thursday & Sunday 5:30 pm to 9 pm
DINNER: Friday & Saturday 5:30 pm to 10 pm

MUSEUM HOURS
Open 6 days per week; closed Mondays*
10am–6pm Tuesday–Sunday
Closed: Christmas and Thanksgiving
*Open Monday, January 18, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, FREE.

ADMISSION
Adults $14; Seniors $12; Students $8; Children 6 & under FREE
Groups of 10+ (K–12) $5 per person / Groups of 10+ adults/seniors $8 per person.

FAN CLUB
Become an official member and receive FREE ADMISSION FOR ONE YEAR to AVAM and all special exhibitions | 10% discount in Museum Shop | Two BIG FAN guest passes | VISIONS Magazine | FANS ONLY advance mailings for programs and special events | The Official Fan Club Declaration | A very Special Fan Club Card, and some Cool Stuff for fans only!

$25 Student Fan | $35 Senior Fan/Far-out Fan (fan outside MD) | $50 Single Fan | $75 Couple Fans | $100 Family Fans

PARKING
Parking lot on Key Highway near Rusty Scupper Restaurant. $ Abundant metered parking. Handicap accessible.

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!

BOARD MEMBERS
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INFORMATION
AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM
800 Key Highway, Baltimore, MD 21230
410.244.1900 fax: 410.244.3585
Website: www.avam.org

MUSEUM RENTAL/SPECIAL FUNCTIONS
410.244.1900 x. 228 Alicia Karoll

GROUP SALES/GROUP+SCHOOL TOUR INFO
410.244.1900 x. 236 Ted Frankel

JRVC CLASSROOM WORKSHOPS
410.244.1900 x. 232 Felice Cleveland

Museum Store, Sideshow
410.244.1900 x. 236 Ted Frankel

Cafe, MR. RAIN’S FUN HOUSE
445.524.7579 mrrainsfunhouse.com

PUBLIC RELATIONS/PRESS
410.244.1900 x. 241 Pete Hilsee
to the American Visionary Art Museum’s fifteenth original mega-exhibition, celebrating the Americans’ “unalienable” rights to life, liberty, and the (individual and communal) pursuit of happiness. In the words of Ira Gershwin, “Oh no, they can’t take that away from me!”

But they can try. The “unalienable” rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are ideals that have long been imperfectly practiced. “All men” did not originally include women, nor people of color. As the late political columnist Molly Ivins observed, “It is possible to read the history of this country as one long struggle to extend the liberties established in our Constitution to everyone in America.”

This struggle continues today. Evidence of our continued need for vigilance in cherishing and safeguarding the essential freedoms for all people abounds, especially as we communally examine how we fell so short of our own standards in the sanctioned abuse at Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, and in the current unprecedented rate of imprisonment of our own citizens.

The good news is that we can use the lessons of truth and reconciliation to move forward, admit mistakes, make needed change, and more fully realize the promise of the ancient, beautiful dream.

This exhibition marks the return of guest curator Roger Manley and PostSecret’s Frank Warren, and is dedicated to two social visionaries—both ardent Visionary Museum fans—the civil rights lawyer Pam Horowitz, and her husband, Julian Bond. When Julian recently retired as chairman of the NAACP, he and Pam committed themselves to the fulfillment of another American civil liberty—full gender equity: “The lessons of the civil rights movement of yesterday . . . is that sometimes the simplest of ordinary everyday acts—of taking a seat on a bus, of sitting down at a lunch counter, of applying for a marriage license—sometimes these can have extraordinary consequences that can change our world.”

In Harrod Blank’s film Automorphosis, art car artist Jeff Lockheed put it simply, “To me, the greatest patriots are the ones that use their freedoms the most.” To you, our visitors of all ages and from many different parts of this world, we wish a full-throttle enjoyment and determination in your precious lives.

Creative acts of social justice are life’s best performance art.

Rebecca Alban Hoffberger
Founder/Director, American Visionary Art Museum
ROGER MANLEY, curator

GERMAIN TESSIER, Le bagne et la Statue de la Liberte (The convict and the Statue of Freedom), 1960, enamel on masonite, collection of Laurent Danchin. Photo by Dan Meyers.
O SAY CAN YOU SEE? WE FIND OURSELVES AT A MOMENT IN OUR NATION’S HISTORY WHEN MORE AND MORE AMERICAN CITIZENS SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT SECURITY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN FREEDOM.

that maintaining ever-tighter borders is more vital than developing real bonds between peoples, and that hanging on to the toeholds on property and wealth we have accumulated is more crucial than extending equality to the have-nots surrounding us, both at home and abroad.

In the midst of such trends, it’s appropriate to revisit the goals outlined in the great documents that our founders created as they set out to fashion a new country from a loose cluster of angry colonies. *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness* offers a bracing look at some of the many ways that the revolutionary spirit of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America lives on, both in individual artistic creations and in a myriad of creative, grassroots acts of social justice. The works in this exhibition remind us of the value of taking risks, and suggest that the things we most desire—happiness, freedom, and peace of mind—can never be held onto for long, unless and until we are willing to extend them to others.

Honoring the reasons this country was established doesn’t mean wearing blinders to the detours and missteps that have occurred along the way, nor does it mean ignoring the dangers and pitfalls that will always surround us. But as the works in *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness* demonstrate, when we lose our way, the remarkable achievements of spirited individualists—like the artists and thinkers whose works and ideas fill this museum—can serve as signs pointing back to the original path.

What better place to undertake a re-examination of our national values than here at the base of Federal Hill, where American patriots saw their flag still flying on a September morning in 1814 after a night’s heavy bombardment of Fort McHenry? This stirring sight inspired Francis Scott Key to write our national anthem, whose opening line—“O say, can you see?”—poses perfectly the question of individual inspirations and perceptions that lies at the heart of all the works in this exhibition.
In May and June 1776 a contingent of Iroquois diplomats attended the Continental Congress at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, where the delegates were struggling to find a way to unite the American colonies in a mutually supporting union. Dating back to 1142, the Iroquois Confederacy, or Haudenosaunee, was perhaps the oldest surviving participatory democracy on earth. In recognition of the Iroquois' wisdom in the art of union, John Hancock welcomed these Native American diplomats as “brothers.”

Over a decade later, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and others struggled to frame a constitution for the new democracy. Among the influences on the Constitution of the United States of America were the ancient Greeks, New England settlers, and the doctrines and ideals of the Iroquois Charter (Ne Gayanashagowa). Ne Gayanashagowa incorporated cherished principles like freedom of religion, freedom of speech, representative government, rules of order in meetings, the idea that elected leaders are servants of the people, and a commitment to peace and mutual respect among all individuals. The charter also included the concepts of checks and balances, impeachment as a way to remove bad leaders, and a federal government run by all members of the Six Nations.

Unfortunately, the Framers did not adopt the portions of the Iroquois Charter that outlawed slavery and spelled out the intrinsic equality of men and women. As a result, slavery lasted legally in the United States until the Civil War (and in practice well into the twentieth century) while equal gender rights remains an ongoing struggle today. It took over 130 years for the Nineteenth Amendment to give women the right to vote, and equal pay took still longer. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act—the first bill signed into law by President Barack Obama—was not enacted until 2009.

Although it took almost two centuries, when Congress passed Concurrent Resolution 331 in 1988, the United States finally recognized the influence of the Iroquois Confederacy on America’s most sacred founding documents.
RIGHT TO LIFE?

The rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” asserted by the Declaration of Independence are natural rights that all human beings receive from their Creator. A natural right is what an individual has by the very fact of being a human being. Such rights are “unalienable” because they cannot be given away, and should not be taken away by someone else.

But in asserting the unalienable right to “life,” the Founders were not addressing (or answering) the question about when life begins. Their focus was on what people do, how they act, and how they should treat one another once they get here. They were envisioning a new kind of country in which inhabitants would be both permitted and challenged to spend their lives bettering themselves.

The Founders’ vision wasn’t perfect; they were products of their own times and experiences. Achieving equality and realizing America’s full potential remains a work in progress.

CIVIL RIGHTS, HUMAN RIGHTS

For millennia, there was virtually no concept of political art separate from religious art. Monarchs were believed to be enacting the will of God, or were even regarded as gods themselves. But in the late eighteenth century, about the same time that the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution declared the separation of church and state (along with freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to assemble, and the right to petition), artists began to make objects focused on political topics. Expressing the artists’ hope for greater fairness and equality from the state, this art became a form of free speech, or a part of the struggle to achieve it. Since the mid-twentieth century, a major catalyst for art in the United States has been the civil rights movement, which has inspired hundreds of artists to express their deepest concerns about discrimination regarding race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation.

The quest for human and civil rights is a struggle that continues throughout the world. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) begins with the assertion that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” Like the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and much earlier sources like England’s Magna Carta (1215) or the Charter of Medina (drafted by Muhammad in 622), the Universal Declaration is an attempt to formulate some of our most basic notions about what makes us human and what every person deserves to expect of life and one another.

HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES

When 21-year-old Dane Jacob Riis arrived in New York City in 1870, he was appalled by what he saw in the slums and tenement houses of what he had thought would be the bright new streets of the Land of Liberty. In Manhattan’s Lower East Side, more than 330,000 people were crammed into a single square mile, making it the most densely inhabited
place on earth. People slept ten to fifteen per room in filthy squalor. Disease and crime were rampant, and corrupt officials looked the other way.

Riis decided to dedicate his career to doing what he could to correct these conditions. After landing a job as a reporter and learning photography, in 1890 Riis published How the Other Half Lives, a pioneering work of photojournalism that revealed not only the crowded apartments and grimy alleyways of the poorest parts of New York, but also scenes of child labor, sweatshops, and criminal gangs. The book quickly became a landmark in social reform and resulted in laws requiring better ventilation, sanitation, indoor toilets, and fire safeguards. President Theodore Roosevelt later called Riis “the best American I ever knew.”

Like Jacob Riis, visionary and self-taught artists respond in their own ways to the conditions surrounding and affecting their lives. Some concerned artists, like Dick Lubinsky, Lily Yeh, and Purvis Young, have cast a clear eye on the conditions they found in their own neighborhoods. Others, like Leroy Almon and Ned Cartledge, have used their art to examine root causes like racism and income inequality. Still others, like Bessie Harvey and Kevin Sampson, have made objects that embody their deepest fears and feelings. Whatever strategies they employ, all the visionaries in this exhibition have had a single goal: To make art that isn’t merely decorative, but that somehow matters.

**THE IDEA OF THE OTHER**

The habit of dividing things into two opposing categories is as old as thought itself. While still hunkering in their caves, the earliest hominids had already begun dividing things into opposing sets: harmless versus dangerous, poisonous versus edible, useful versus useless, and so on.

At some point, the tendency to establish opposing categories led to the concept of Us versus Them: “The sounds those folks make and the way they eat make them different from Us. They must be some Other.” Later on, encounters with groups from farther afield drew attention to differences that could be spotted at long range—physical traits like hair, skin, and ornamentation.

But binary categorizing is self-fulfilling: The more we categorize people as Others, the more we look for differences instead of similarities—and the more mutually hostile our relationships become. Although the idea of Otherness may have been useful way back when the biggest Other we all contended with was Nature, it long ago ceased being very useful regarding our fellow beings. Black vs. White, Protestant vs. Catholic, Hutu vs. Tutsi, Aryan vs. Semite, and now Islam vs. the West—the list of artificial binary oppositions is synonymous with the record of human suffering.

With its patchwork population and its history of striving (if sometimes faltering and stumbling) in the general direction of equality and liberty for all, the United States may still offer the best example in human history of how a gathering of Others can somehow come together and become an Us. The hard part is doing that without insisting that there must also be a Them.

**WE ARE A NATION OF DIFFERENCES. THOSE DIFFERENCES DON’T MAKE US WEAK. THEY’RE THE SOURCE OF OUR STRENGTH. —JIMMY CARTER**
The Declaration of Independence is at the same time one of the most universal and most personal documents ever written. Embedded in its underlying structure is the belief that what is ultimately most important to “a people” are the acts and efforts of each individual.

The document begins with grandly sweeping generalities like “in the course of human events,” “the powers of Earth,” “the Laws of Nature,” “Nature’s God,” and “the opinions of mankind.” Then it lays out the “unalienable” rights of “all men.” But as it continues, it becomes more focused, more specific, and more individualized.

“Governments”—first brought up as a general concept—quickly becomes “Governments long established,” and then becomes a particular government (England’s) with a “train of abuses” leading to despotism. Ultimately the document cites

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Shrinky Dink artist Andrew Romanoff, grandnephew of Tsar Nicholas II. Andrew as a child with his mother, Elisabeta (left) and grandmother, the Grand Duchess Xenia (right) at Windsor Castle in 1928. His father (shadow, taking the picture) was Prince Andrei.
The surest defense against evil is extreme individualism, originality of thinking, whimsicality, even—if you will—eccentricity. That is, something that can’t be feigned, faked, imitated; something even a seasoned imposer couldn’t be happy with. —Joseph Brodsky

A list of particular acts perpetrated by one man, “the present King of Great Britain,” George III.

In the same way, the “one people” mentioned in the first paragraph transmutes into “these Colonies,” and then “we,” before it ultimately comes down to the gathering of individuals who helped write the document and signed their individual names to “mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”

The concept of the importance of the individual and his or her rights, freedoms, acts, and responsibilities is the crucial distinction between the United States and every other country that preceded it. Even now, the core American value of individual freedom offers the possibility of distinguishing the United States from nearly every other nation—if only we strive to follow the Declaration’s original precepts.

Seen in this light, the artists in this exhibition, who are often characterized (rightly or not) as loners, outsiders, cranks, or visionaries, illustrate exactly what the Declaration proposed. Each of them, in his or her distinctive way, has declared independence on the path to seeking happiness, self-determination, and expression.
Some sobering statistics: The Land of the Free has both the highest number of people in prison and the highest rate of incarceration of any nation on earth. More than 7 million Americans are currently enrolled in the U.S. penal system, and a third of them are behind bars. According to the federal government, the average American male has a one in eleven chance of ending up incarcerated at some point during his life, and the odds are one in four if he is black. Although only one out of every twenty-one human beings on earth is an American, roughly one out of every four prisoners on earth is doing time in an American prison.

By comparison, the next biggest prison population is that of the People’s Republic of China. China keeps 1.5 million convicted prisoners in lockup—but since its population is four times larger than ours, in effect our legal system convicts and imprisons our fellow Americans at a rate six times greater than China’s. The only country that even begins to approach our rate of incarceration is Russia, which has a population almost three times larger than ours—but still keeps fewer people in prison.

Putting so many people in prison hasn’t made America safer than other places. The U.S. murder rate is twice as high as Europe’s, four times as high as England’s, and eight times as high as Japan’s. The rate of other violent crimes is higher here too. The reasons for our high crime rate are complex, but the lower crime rates of many other countries can in part be attributed to their social safety nets, national health care, and better public education systems—as well as their tougher restrictions on handguns.

The costs of incarceration are high, both in human and monetary terms. Two-thirds of the inmates in state prisons and 97 per cent of the inmates in federal prisons were convicted for nonviolent crimes, and we currently spend some $60 billion a year to keep them there. Could this money be better spent to solve this problem some other way?
Check the AVAM website at www.avam.org or become an AVAM Fan Club MEMBER to receive first notice on all our unique programs and events. Here is a sampling of the highlights for 2009/2010 LIFE, LIBERTY & THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

BAZAART
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2009 (First Dibs Preview)
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2009
Just in time for the holiday! The best holiday shopping ever, showcasing over 50 regional artists.

SOCK MONKEY SATURDAY
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2009
11am–3pm FREE
Don’t let the holidays drive you BANANAS! Relax by making your own sock monkey. A great last minute gift and more importantly just something fun to do! FREE, but you must bring 2 pairs of (clean) socks to get in! Instructions, stuffing, needles, thread, visionary baubles and camaraderie provided.

2010 VISIONARY FILM SERIES
THURSDAY EVENINGS IN JANUARY
JANUARY 7, 14, 21, 28 at 7 pm FREE!
PERMANENT COLLECTION GALLERY
Come see some of AVAM’s favorite award-winning films about Visionary artists and their extraordinary lives.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY CELEBRATION and FREE DAY!
MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 2010
We invite you to celebrate the life and dreams of one of America’s great visionaries Martin Luther King, Jr. In his honor, museum admission is FREE to all---so bring your friends and family and see our current exhibition: Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Happiness.

THE KINETIC SCULPTURE RACE
SATURDAY, MAY 1, 2010
This is the almost-famous race of wacky, imaginative, and sometimes even serious problem-solving homemade vehicles. These totally HUMAN-POWERED WORKS OF ART designed by ordinary folks must travel on land, through mud, sand, and over deep harbor waters. The most coveted prize? The Mediocre Award (finishes right in the middle.) Do you have THE RIGHT STUFF? www.kineticbaltimore.com.

FLICKS FROM THE HILL
THURSDAYS IN JULY /AUGUST 2010
JULY 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29, AUGUST 5, 12, 19
Outdoor family films on Federal Hill screened under AVAM’s Golden Hand! It’s free and the flicks are related to the theme of the exhibition—Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness. Museum is open and free from 6–9 pm before the flick.

VISIONARY PET PARADE
SUNDAY, JULY 4, 2010
Dress your pet & strut your stuff. Animal fun! Animal prizes! Trophies awarded for Best Costume • Most Patriotic • Most Visionary Pet • Owner & Pet look-alikes • Least likely to succeed as a Pet • Visionary Pet Tricks • and more! Pets of all kinds are welcome. The best dog-gone parade in town! Pets must be leashed or carried.

VISIONARY SUMMER CAMP
A WORLD OF YOUR OWN MAKING: VISIONARY EXPERIENCE SUMMER CAMP
FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS
WEEK I: JULY 6–9, 2010
WEEK II: JULY 13–16, 2010
WEEK III: JULY 20–23, 2010
FINAL RECEPTION: SATURDAY JULY 25
This summer at the American Visionary Art Museum, we will be hosting our third annual Visionary Experience. For the month of July our doors will be open to students who want to spend some quality time at AVAM. There will be encounters
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**LIFE, LIBERTY & THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS**

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**LIFE & LIBERTY BALL**
**PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS AFTER PARTY**
**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2010**
7 PM–12 MIDNIGHT
AVAM’S JIM ROUSE VISIONARY CENTER
A seated feast followed by dancing to the Amish Outlaws, parade, and costumes. Think Broad stripes and bright stars!

**AVAM BRIDAL HAPPY HOUR**
**THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 2010**
JRVC 3rd floor banquet room. Free for brides and their guests. Baltimore’s best wedding vendors in this intimate bridal show. To pre-register, please contact rentals@avam.org.

**KINETIC WORKSHOPS**
**ENGINEERING & BEAUTIFYING**
**SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 2010**
10 AM AT BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF INDUSTRY
2 PM AT AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM
Engineering Workshops will be hosted at the Baltimore Museum of Industry to help make sure that your vehicle stays afloat and together! After you have mastered those basics, come over to AVAM and technical beautifying skills like pom-pom puffing and bicycle wrapping. Make your vehicles beautiful!

**WHAT MAKES US SMILE**
**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2010**
Curated by The Simpsons’ creator, Matt Groening along with artist Gary Panter and AVAM Founder Rebecca Hoffberger. An original exploration into all that delights, enlightens, and speaks truth to power.

**AND COMING...**

**MOSAICS WITH RICK SHELLEY**
Rick Shelley (recently seen at AVAM as “the Man Behind the Curtain” during Theatre Serenissima) is also the co-founder of Baltimore Clayworks and a commissioned artist extraordinaire for mosaic projects all over the region—from the mosaic map of the ancient and medieval world at the Walters Museum to Stations of the Cross in St. Francis Xavier’s in Hunt Valley.

**SHINY HAPPY THINGS WITH BOB BENSON**
As seen on the Universal Tree Of Life on Key Highway in front of the museum entrance. Learn to make your own “FLASHIES”:
dynamic, sparkling decorations made from mirrors and marbles. Each participant will receive instructions for cutting and assembling and will leave this workshop with at least two finished decorations to keep and dangle. Check out www.shinyhappythings.com to see more of Bob’s work.

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**GEORGE WILLIAMS**
**Statue of Liberty**
**Date Unknown**
carved and painted wood
Permanent Collection
American Visionary Art Museum
Photo by Dan Meyers
ON THE BORDER BETWEEN CANADA AND UPSTATE NEW YORK, just south of the St. Lawrence River, lies a tiny nation of eastern European immigrants who share a rich culture and a tumultuous history. Fraught with political turmoil since its inception in the early 1930s, Rocaterrania has seen the rise and fall of empresses, czars, presidents, dictators, and premiers, slowly developing from a monarchy into a democratic society. It’s also a nation that is paradoxically fascist about individualism.

The oral and illustrated history of Rocaterrania is the satirically encoded life story of its creator, Renaldo Gillette Kuhler, a 77-year-old retired scientific illustrator in Raleigh, North Carolina.

In his thirty-year career as a self-taught scientific illustrator, Kuhler made hundreds of precisely-rendered illustrations depicting the diverse flora and fauna of North Carolina for scientific journals and reference books. His meticulous style of drawing harks back to the nineteenth century, with finely hatched lines of black ink and careful stippling to capture essential details of natural forms, ranging from the patterning of scales on reptile skin to the minute dentition and bone sutures of vole skulls or the complex articulation of insect limb joints. Kuhler’s professional work was aesthetically pleasing as well as functional, but has been seen by few people beyond the small circle of professional biologists who have studied the journals and scientific papers he illustrated.

His truly artistic undertaking has long been an even deeper mystery. In addition to the staggering number of scientific illustrations he’s made, Kuhler has worked in secret most of his adult life to create a substantial body of personal art that almost no one had ever seen until documentary filmmaker Brett Ingram learned about it while completing a video project at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences (the largest natural history institution in the southeastern US). Sharing part of the museum basement lab where Kuhler worked, it was hard for Ingram to overlook the strangeness of a scene that the illustrator’s regular colleagues had apparently become so familiar with that they no longer paid it any attention.

Resembling an oversized scribe from an Orthodox monastery in his long white beard and hair, the 6′4″ Kuhler spent his days hunched over a stereo microscope gazing at rare specimens while painstakingly rendering them in three dimensions with his array of technical pens. But instead of a lab coat or clerical garb, he wore a peculiar, tight-fitting three-piece uniform that included shorts, tasseled knee-length white socks, and a neckerchief with an odd slide made of what Ingram later learned was laminated paper.
This daily outfit—equal parts Boy Scout, Civil War reenactor and Eastern European border guard—along with Kuhler’s habit of speaking loudly to himself in a booming, vaguely foreign-sounding brogue, had earned him the right to be left alone in an isolated workplace in the windowless bowels of the museum. Ingram, however, was intrigued by Kuhler’s peculiarities, and not only made friends with him but spent the next twelve years slowly gaining his trust and gradually unearthing and documenting the secret life of a major new find in the world of self-taught creation (Kuhler loathes being called an “artist,” insisting on being called an illustrator). The result is Rocaterrania, a feature-length documentary film currently making the rounds of the film festival circuit.

Born Ronald Otto Louis Kuhler (he legally changed his name in 1967) in Teaneck, New Jersey in 1931, Renaldo is the only son of Otto Kuhler, a German immigrant who served under Kaiser Wilhelm during World War I. Like many European readers of German novelist Karl May, the elder Kuhler had long romanticized the Wild West and the pursuit of the American dream of independence and success. Renaldo’s father was able to live out this dream when he quickly rose to fame as a major figure in the Streamlined era of 1930s and 40s industrial design after arriving at Ellis Island in 1921 with only seven dollars in his pocket. Powerful-looking steam locomotives like the Hiawatha, Black Diamond, John Wilkes, and Royal Blue owed their sleek, aerodynamic looks to Otto Kuhler’s late Art Deco design aesthetic.

In 1948, when Renaldo was seventeen, his father retired from the railroad business and moved his family from the suburbs of New York City to a remote valley in the Colorado Rockies to fulfill his other lifelong fantasy: living the independent life of a cowboy on his own cattle ranch. Young Renaldo, however, did not share this fantasy. Instead, he found the cultural isolation, limited visual stimulation, and near-total lack of anyone else to talk to almost unbearable. In reaction he secretly retreated to a fantasy world of his own creation.

It began with two imaginary friends: Augustin Valtovin and Hallock Jenkins. Jenkins played the cello while Valtovin played first violin in the orchestra of what would become the Schwartz Opera House in Cuidad Eldorado (or “Golden City”—a name inspired by the shimmering yellow aspen leaves of autumn in the Rockies). Cuidad Eldorado soon emerged as the capital city of Rocaterrania, an imaginary country where Renaldo envisioned himself playing second violin alongside Valtovin in its major venue for classical music. To help further transform the fantasy into reality, Renaldo created a violin with wood scraps and laminated paper, as well as drew illustrations of the opera house, his new-found friends, and the city where they lived. As the cast of characters grew, their intricate interrelationships and individual life stories yielded political movements and created national crises that breathed life into the whole prolonged and ever-expanding vision. At the same time, Renaldo’s quest to make everything as real as possible encouraged him to progress from his first crude sketches to near-photographic renderings of events he could see vividly in his mind’s eye.

Rocaterrania became a lifelong obsession, over time evolving from dystopia to utopia in a complex and secret history documented for the most part in plain, spiral bound notebooks that Renaldo hid from the stern and disapproving glares of his parents, and later, from his colleagues.

His extremely detailed illustrations of Rocaterrania’s daily life, famous personages and historical events are rendered in a wide assortment of media: graphite and colored pencil, pen and
Rocaterrania became a lifelong obsession, over time evolving from dystopia to utopia in a complex and secret history.

Uncle Julius Hoffenstauffer, who figured prominently in the Provisional Government just after the First Revolution.

A Planetarium Projector.

A scene depicting Ohallaism, the primary religion of Rocaterrania.

Margot, age 23, daughter of Jacobi Hoffenstauffer.

The written language of Rocaterranski with English translations. Rocaterranski, the national language, is grammatically rooted in Yiddish, Spanish and Serbo-Croatian, written in an alphabet derived from some of those same sources.

Fort Worten, a federal prison named for Kuhler’s grouchy dishwashing supervisor in the mid-1950s, and inspired by the Rahway State Prison in New Jersey.

Sewer Plant outside of Ciudad Eldorado.

Rocaterrania has its own film industry, capable of producing everything from 18th century maritime battles to space epics. Photos by Dan Meyers.
ink, pastels, oil paint, and acrylics (often common house paint)—generally using whatever was easily available at the time. Kuhler insists that his father—who was a skilled landscape painter as well as industrial designer—never gave him any lessons in art or illustration, and that Rocaterrania was his private (and entirely self-taught) art school. But while Otto Kuhler may not have actively schooled his son in art techniques, he most certainly passed on some extraordinary genes.

A reflection compounded from Renaldo’s cultural and aesthetic tastes, Rocaterrania resembles a vaguely familiar, yet ultimately inscrutable nation of eastern European immigrants. Its name derives from Rockland County, NY, Renaldo’s childhood home, but it lies just north of northern New York, where it straddles the border between the United States and Canada. Here its citizens speak Rocaterranski (written in an original alphabet largely derived from Cyrillic and Yiddish), inhabit a unique form of architecture, and follow their own code of ethics. The national religion is Ohallaism, an odd amalgamation of beliefs borrowed from other religions like Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity, but that seems to be folded in with the kind of worship of natural mysteries found in both German Romanticism and the völkisch movements of the 1920s and 30s. Ohallic shrines depicted deep in caves or on lonely hillides easily call to mind some of Caspar David Friedrich’s ruined chapels or isolated crucifixes.

Rocaterrania’s geographic location and cultural peculiarities may not be as farfetched as may at first sound. The St. Lawrence River region is already home to dozens of communities of Amish, Mennonites, Hutterites and other Anabaptist sects that also keep to themselves, speak their own languages, and follow lifeways that are largely disconnected from modern “progress,” while the Mohawk community of Akwesasne spans the border between northern New York, Ontario and Quebec, where it, too, tries stubbornly to ignore laws and regulations handed down by either national government.

In addition to distinctions defined by language and custom, Rocaterranians dress in their own national costumes, which range from military garb largely inspired by czarist Russia (with an overlay of National Socialist Germany) to the bowler hats and vests of Edwardian England. For his own daily attire, Renaldo wears the uniform of the Rocaterranian National Labor Service (the micronation’s version of the old Civilian Conservation Corps), dozens of versions of which he has had made for him by his tailor in Raleigh, North Carolina, and that completely fill his closet.

Rocaterranian “style,” with its gaslights, hand cranked phones, pennyfarthing bicycles, Victorian mass transportation, riveted cast iron boilers and Carpenter Gothic ornamentation not only prefigured today’s steampunk fascination with the Jules Verne era by many decades, but derives from much the same rejection of how slick iPod Chic tends to obscure how things actually work. The gears and flywheels of Rocaterranian technology present a world that makes sense by making functional things obvious and comprehensible.
RENALDO KUHLER, Prostitute being interrogated during the Second Revolution, c. 1950, colored pencil, collection of the artist. Photo by Dan Meyers.
For Renaldo it was a personal statement as well, in that Rocaterranian material culture represented a refutation of his father's Streamlined Moderne machine aesthetic. In place of Moderne’s worship of industrial speed and efficiency, Rocaterrania’s tumultuous political history emphasized the strong personalities and acts of thoroughly-envisioned individuals, at the same time that it reflected parallel developments between events in recent European history and incidents in Renaldo’s “real” life. The country that began as a monarchy during the time that Renaldo felt trapped on the ranch under the rule of his authoritarian parents gradually saw its successive tyrannical regimes overturned and its governments moving towards socialism as he gained his own independence. Eventually Rocaterrania settled into a peculiar democracy after Renaldo achieved career stability as a scientific illustrator whose particular drafting skills were recognized as indispensable enough that his obvious eccentricities could be overlooked.

Renaldo escaped life on the ranch when he was accepted into college after several failed application attempts. While studying history at the University of Colorado at Boulder, he befriended filmmaker Stan Brakhage. With his innate talent for calligraphy, Renaldo created the elegant titles for Brakhage’s early film Dog Star Man. After graduation, Kuhler spent six years as exhibits curator at the Eastern Washington State Historical Society Museum in Spokane, before finally landing a job at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History (the museum’s former name) where he further honed his self-taught skills in the exacting craft of scientific illustration.

In conservative Raleigh, NC, where Kuhler has resided for the last 40 years, his odd attire, his long beard, and the fact that he often talks to himself (while referring to people or historical events that only he is privy to) has mostly resulted in his dismissal by fellow citizens as only a (probably harmless) eccentric. He lives alone in a tiny apartment in a Victorian-style house on a dead-end street, surrounded by his art, pin-ups of Gibson Girls, menorahs, and the smoking pipes and musical instruments he’s created with his laminated paper technique. Here he continues to push back the borders of time and imagination to keep Rocaterrania viable as an independent nation. He remains a kind, intelligent man possessing a vast knowledge of languages and world history, a singular talent for illustration and calligraphy, and fierce convictions about individuality and egalitarianism. Few people have made the effort to get to know him, and fewer still have known his art.

Kuhler’s illustrations of Rocaterrania are on display to the public for the first time ever in LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS. It is possible to get a glimpse of Kuhler in a trailer for ROCATERRANIA, Brett Ingram’s film about the illustrator and his art, at http://www.brettingram.org/film/RocVids.php. DVDs of the film can be ordered at this website as well. “Welcome to Rocaterrania” is reprinted with permission from RAW VISIONS.
La misère m’a pas de couleur
S. Vollin
96 München
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<td>SERGE VOLLIN</td>
<td>La Misère N'a pas de Couleur (Misery has No Color), c. late 20th century, oil or acrylic on cardboard, collection of the artist</td>
<td>Paint on board, framed</td>
<td>Courtesy of the Kansas City Art Institute</td>
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MAYDAY!!

PHOTOS by Andy Carruthers, Michael Cooney, Tom Jones of KineticBaltimore.com and Shawn Levin of shawnlevin.com

MAYDAY!!

REMAIN CALM!!

IT'S AVAM'S KINETIC SCULPTURE RACE

SAT MAY 1

A RACE OF TOTALLY HUMAN-POWERED WORKS OF ART DESIGNED TO TRAVEL OVER LAND, SAND, MUD AND REALLY DEEP WATER!

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WE ARE HONORED TO RECOGNIZE THE FOLLOWING MAJOR DONORS WHO MADE GIFTS DURING THE 2008-2009 EXHIBITION YEAR.

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