

"Life, Liberty & The Pursuit Of Happiness" Visionary Art Exhibition Opening October 3

Source: American Visionary Art Museum

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The quest for human rights and the search for personal fulfillment, as proposed in the 1776 American Declaration of Independence, provide the starting point for this international exhibition of visionary art curated by Roger Manley.

BALTIMORE, MD

Opening to the public on Saturday, October 3, 2009, "LIFE, LIBERTY & THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS" is the 15th annual thematic exhibition produced by the American Visionary Art Museum – America's official national museum for self-taught, intuitive artistry - and runs through September 5, 2010.

The quest for human rights and the search for personal fulfillment, as proposed in the 1776 American Declaration of Independence, provide the starting point for this international exhibition curated by Roger Manley (curator of three shows at AVAM, including the mega-popular Inaugural Exhibition "Tree of Life" in 1995.) Works by the last surviving descendant of the Tsars of Russia, Iroquois Indians, French Revolutionaries, illegal immigrants, Algerian War veterans, Guantánamo Bay detainees, Holocaust survivors, incarcerated prisoners, African-American civil rights activists and Iraqi doctors are among those by the 80 visionary artists to be featured. Illustrator Renaldo Kuhler's vast imaginary country of Rocaterrania, Tilden Stone's masterful Furnitures of Secrets, and Duncan Laurie's Purr Generator (a "happiness machine") are among the many works that will never have been shown publicly before.

"We think of big ideas like 'life' and 'liberty' as if they have to do with sweeping numbers of people," says curator Manley, "but in fact they begin with the individual. And who could be better suited to reveal that, than self-taught visionaries? By definition, these are some of the most independent and individual thinkers and doers of all, and they've found some amazing, revealing, and entertaining ways to express their take on what makes our country what it is—or what it should be."

A Media Preview is scheduled for Wednesday, September 30 at 10 AM — featuring an exhibition tour by the curator as well as appearances by exhibiting artists. [Media, please RSVP: pete@avam.org] An exhibition preview party will be held at AVAM on Friday, October 2, 7PM. Artists, Lenders, Museum Members, exhibition curator Roger Manley, museum Founder Rebecca Hoffberger and YOU! [Media contact for tickets: pete@avam.org]. Public welcome: tickets are \$20 at the door.

The Media Preview, and the other events surrounding the opening will feature appearances by the following artists - a real treat:

- Dr. Ala Bashir, a surgeon, and formerly Saddam Hussein's personal physician (!)
- Andrew Romanoff, the last surviving full-descendant of the Tsars of Russia - who has illustrated his life story in Shrinky Dinks
- Duncan Laurie, creator of the Purr Generator (a "happiness machine") that visitors will be able to experience
- Renaldo Kuhler, a scientific illustrator whose imaginary country of "Rocaterrania" will be on display for the first time

- Kevin Sampson, former NJ cop, the son of a major civil rights organizer, and now sculptor
- Adam Morales, "the driftwood guy" from the swamps of Louisiana whose driftwood Statue of Liberty has already become an icon of the show
- and more

AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM (AVAM) is America's official national museum for self-taught, intuitive artistry located in Baltimore, Maryland. Founded in 1995, the museum seeks to promote the recognition of intuitive, self-reliant, creative contribution as both an important historic and essential living piece of treasured human legacy. The one-of-a-kind American Visionary Art Museum is located on a 1.1 acre wonderland campus at 800 Key Highway, Baltimore Inner Harbor. Museum hours: Tuesday–Sunday, 10 AM–6PM. Museum admission is \$14 for adults, \$10 for seniors (60 and up), \$8 for students, Children 6 and under are Free! For additional information regarding the museum or the exhibition, please contact: Pete Hilsee • American Visionary Art Museum • 410.244.1900 x241 • pete@avam.org

ROGER MANLEY has worked as a photographer, folklorist, curator, filmmaker and writer with areas of interest ranging from outsider artists and tribal peoples to fairy tales and gardens. For the past eight years he has lived in Paris, where he co-directed a film for French cultural television, MANA—beyond belief. Roger currently resides in Durham, NC.

Manley has produced numerous award-winning books, catalogues, videos and films as well as exhibitions of his own photographs of Hispanic migrant farmworkers, Palestinian villagers, Gullah Sea Islanders, Australian Aboriginals, Native Americans, Canadian gold miners, prisoners, textile mill and factory workers, and self-taught artists. His photographs are in the collections of a number of internationally recognized institutions.

He was formerly the curator for NC State University's Gallery of Art & Design (now the Gregg Museum), and has been a fellow of the Headlands Center for the Arts, the Art Foundation of La Napoule (France), as well as long-term artist-in-residence programs in Virginia, and North and South Carolina. He is a recipient of both the NEA Artists Fellowship and the NEH Scholars Fellowship Grants. Manley founded the biennial Meta Conferences at Black Mountain, which has brought together hundreds of artists, scientists and other creative individuals from all over the world for regular collaborative exchanges over the past two decades.

Manley was born in 1952 in San Antonio, Texas, and graduated from Davidson College in 1974, after which he spent two years living in the Australian Outback among a tribe of Aboriginals with a Thomas J. Watson Foundation Fellowship. He later completed graduate work in Education at the University of Denver, and in Folklore at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is married to writer/photographer Theadora Brack.

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Category Arts, Travel, Tourism
Tags visionary, outsider, museum, self-taught, baltimore, folk art, life, liberty, happiness
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