

## **THE ART OF AUTISM**

### ***An International Project Featuring Creatives on the Spectrum***



**Guy McDonnell "Love in Action"**

*"The Art of Autism is a handful of glittering stardust, hinting at the exuberance, the infinite possibility, that can happen when people with autism create."* Keri Bowers

### **Mission Statement**

The Art of Autism is a collaborative project that brings awareness to the general public the creative abilities of people with autism. We accomplish this by facilitating exhibits events that feature the creative gifts of people on the spectrum. By bringing awareness about the artistic gifts of people on the spectrum, The Art of Autism inspires community members, gives hope to parents of children on the spectrum, as well as adults with autism, and shifts consciousness about autism.

### **The Art of Autism**

The Art of Autism project combines book signings with art from local and traveling visual artists, as well as poetry, film festivals, and entertainment shows.

The Art of Autism helps to boost confidence of artists on the spectrum and enhance their career choices. This is accomplished by: (1) media attention given to local artists who contributed to the book; (2) display and sale of their art at the show itself; (3) creating their work on site, which shows the process behind their art; (4) recitations of poetry by artists on the spectrum, and (5) presentations and films about autism and art and other relevant subjects by experts in the field (6) entertainment shows that feature singers, dancers, songwriters, and musicians.

### **Participants**

The Art of Autism has a database of over 250 artists, poets, authors, musicians, and entertainers from age 4 to 70. Participating from all parts of the world – including the United States, Canada, Israel, Pakistan, India, The Philippines, Morocco, France, Germany, Japan, and England.

Well-known artists such as Temple Grandin and Donna Williams are part of this project, as well as children, teenagers, professional and emerging artists. Dr. Stephen Shore and Dr. Darold Treffert, the author of Savant Syndrome, are contributing essayists. In 2012, many of our artists were internationally recognized by the United Nations (stamp winners), The McCarton Foundation (Strokes of Genius finalists), VSA Arts (Smithsonian), and Council on Exceptional Children Yes! I Can Award winners.

## **Founders**

Debra Hosseini is the mother of three children. Her youngest child, Kevin, is an artist on the autism spectrum. In 2005, she began curating art shows for people with developmental disabilities. In 2008, she was approached by *Autism Today* to write the second *Artism: The Art of Autism* book.

In 2011, the book *Artism: The Art of Autism – Shattering myths through the voices and art of those on the spectrum* was released. The book features fifty-four artists with autism from around the world. Some of the artists in the book are well-known, such as Temple Grandin and Donna Williams. Others are struggling to make a viable career out of their passion. In 2012, her second book *The Art of Autism: Shifting Perceptions* was released. This book featured seventy-seven artists and poets on the autism spectrum. It also included stories of love, determination, and faith.

Debra is a founding board member of a number of nonprofits in the Santa Barbara area including The Autism Society of America Santa Barbara, The Rhythmic Arts Project, and Project Angels Bearing Gifts. She currently is a board member of Chance Inc (coalition of housing for the developmentally disabled) in Santa Barbara, and Eco-Artism in Houston, Texas.

Keri Bowers is the mom to two children. Her youngest Taylor is on the autism spectrum. Keri is a film producer, international speaker, author, and artist. She is the founder of PAUSE4Kids, a nonprofit that serves children with developmental disabilities in the Thousand Oaks Area. She sits on the board of The Miracle Project.

Debra Hosseini & Keri Bowers founded The Art of Autism collaborative in 2011. Since its inception the project has been well-received with art and entertainment events in California, New York, Massachusetts, and Canada.

## **Funding**

One goal of the Art of Autism is to enhance the community in which the show takes place, increasing awareness of the art and the artists themselves, as well the local agency which promotes the show and serves people with autism. The majority of monies made from sale of the art go directly to the artists themselves. Each show also generates donations for a local nonprofit.

The majority of expenditures relate to travel, sometimes accommodations and meals for the artists and curator. Funding for framing and shipping the art is also needed. In the past, traveling artists have covered their own expenses. Funding is also needed for accounting, graphic design, promotion, and website and database maintenance.

## **Benefit to the Community**

*They say it takes a village to raise a child. It takes a caring community to raise a child with autism.*

Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States. Unfortunately, the media broadcasts negative news about autism on a regular basis. Many people with autism internalize these negative news stories. The Art of Autism show aspires to change the media coverage and educate the general community about autism.

The Art of Autism publicizes events in local areas, and brings positive attention to local artists, poets, and authors participating in the show. This boosts the self-esteem of participants and contributes in a major way to shifting consciousness about autism.

The Art of Autism will advertise local businesses who sponsor an artist at the art show itself, on posters, brochures, fliers, on The Art of Autism website and through social media. The Art of Autism will bring attention to a local nonprofit or business, with a similar vision to our own.

## **Education**

At recent shows artist Esther Brokaw has spoken on Savant Syndrome, Dr. Rosa Martinez on artists on the spectrum and their art and Briant Canha, parent of Justin Canha presented on his son. Future speakers will be Keri Bowers on transitions and Debra Hosseini on marketing and how to prepare art work for submission to shows and galleries. Teen Dani Bowman has spoke on Breaking the Stereotypes of Autism and Sydney Edmond and her mom Lisa has talked about communication through the letterboard. We also have combined films with an autism theme to some of our shows. This educational component is an important part of the show as it fosters independence and educates the general public.

## **Exposure**

Social media is a critical component of our project. Our website is ranked 3,500,000 by Alexa which is a very healthy rating for an autism project. We also have over 3, 750 likes on Facebook. We receive inquiries from artist and organizations on a weekly basis. A recent blog on The Art of Autism had over 240 likes.



**Donna Williams – contributor to Artism: The Art of Autism**

## **Organizations who have Benefited from Art of Autism Exhibits, Book Signings, Films, Lectures**

Autism Movement Therapy, Carpinteria, 2012  
Curious Cup A Day on the Spectrum, Carpinteria, 2012  
Texas State Autism Conference, Austin, 2012  
Koegel Autism Center, Santa Barbara, CA, 2012  
Association of Regional Centers, Pasadena, CA, 2012  
Vroman's Book Store, Pasadena, CA, 2012  
Chaucer's Book Store, Santa Barbara, CA, 2012  
Westside Art Walk, Ventura, CA, 2012  
Squag Online Community, 2012  
Autism Brainstorm Online Community, 2012  
City of Windsor, Canada, 2012  
Hacienda Oaks, Moorpark, CA, 2012

Positively Autistic, Agoura Park, CA, 2012  
 Curious Cup Bookstore, Carpinteria, CA, 2011 & 2012  
 Bohemia Coffee House, Ojai, CA, 2012  
 Seven Sisters Gallery, Morro Bay, CA, 2012  
 Farming Independence, Agoura Hills, CA, 2011  
 Cal Lutheran University, 2011 (lecture only)  
 Fishbon, Santa Barbara, 2011 (lecture only)  
 Reach for the Stars Learning Center, New York City, 2011  
 The Miracle Project, Hollywood, 2011  
 Intercare Therapy, Hollywood 2011  
 Sensory Stars Hotels, Orlando, FL 2011  
 Hidden Wings, Santa Ynez, California 2011 & 2012  
 Cate School, Autism Awareness Month, 2011  
 Autism Today, Vancouver art show, 2011  
 Autism Society of America, Ventura Chapter, 2011  
 Friends of Carpinteria Library, 2011 & 2012  
 Santa Barbara Art Walk for Kids, 2011 & 2012  
 Friendship Circle of the Conejo Valley, California 2011  
 Friendship Circle of the Upper East Side, New York 2011 & 2012  
 Friendship Club, Moorpark, CA, 2011  
 Autism Movement Therapy, Hollywood, CA, 2011  
 Ballet for All Kids, Hollywood, CA, 2011  
 Powerlight Studios, Hollywood, CA, 2011  
 Puppets of Me, Vancouver, BC, 2011  
 Sirota's Alchemy, Vancouver, BC, 2011  
 The Student Education Fund, The Good Purpose Art Gallery in The Berkshires, 2011  
 Autism Speaks, Santa Barbara art show, 2010  
 Carpinteria Valley Arts Council, 2008, 2011, 2012  
 Tri-Counties Regional Center, Santa Barbara, 2012  
 Arts for Humanity, Santa Barbara Art Show, 2008  
 Casa Magazine, Santa Barbara, 2008  
 TACA, Santa Barbara Chapter, 2008  
 The Rhythmic Arts Project Art Shows, 2005-2007

### **Future Exhibits 2013**

Mr. Musichead, Hollywood, March 2013  
 Museum of Cultural Arts, Houston, April 2013  
 Kennedy-Vanderbilt Center, Nashville, April 2013  
 The Good Purpose Gallery, The Berkshires, April 2013  
 7 Sisters Gallery, Morro Bay, April 2013  
 The Curious Cup, Carpinteria, May 2013

In 2013, we hope feature Harambee Arts, a nonprofit that works with children and adults on the autism spectrum in Kenya as part of our project.

### **Advisors**

**Nirith Avraham**, resides in Massachusetts, nd was born in Israel. She has a Master's in Special Education from the Universite Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium. For the last 28 years she has been a consultant and therapist for people with special needs. She is the parent to participating artist Neri Avraham.

**Kóan Jeff "KJ" Baysa M.D.**, With more than 25 years of clinical experience in New York, California, and Hawaii, Kóan Jeff Baysa is a physician providing medical

oversight to various companies in healthcare and entertainment. Dr. Baysa also is an international curatorial consultant. With an extensive U.S. and international curatorial history, credentials as an art critic, and expertise in exhibition design, he is a liaison between contemporary art and medical science for artists, galleries, art fairs, biennials, collectors, and museums.

**Dr. Laurence Becker**, educator, film maker who over the past thirty years has introduced the art of four accomplished autistic savant artists and continues to lead workshops and consult throughout the United States. He speaks to parents, teachers, and researchers at conferences and exhibitions throughout the U.S. about his experiences in the fields of autism, disability, and creativity.

**Francine Britton**, international educator who has worked in 29 countries and lived in five. Currently living and working in Ajijic, Mexico, Francine writes, lectures and creates teaching materials in her specialty areas: the UN Rights of the Child and teaching art to young adults on the autism spectrum . Francine is the former artistic director of the Good Purpose Gallery and the national coordinator of the Student Educational Development Fund based in Lee, MA. Francine is the author of six books.

**Esther Brokaw**, savant artist and speaker on savant syndrome. Esther resides in Connecticut. Esther is a registered savant with the Wisconsin Medical Society. Esther's website is [www.savantgallery.com](http://www.savantgallery.com). Esther is a participating artist in our project.

**Julie Manier-Coy**, founder of the nonprofit Eco-Artism. The mother of two boys, her youngest son Grant is sixteen and diagnosed with Aspergers. Julie, is also the owner and manager of [Grant's Eco-Art](#). Julie's son Grant is a participating artist in the Art of Autism project.

**Steve Janak**, President, [ZenWorks Productions](#). was started in 2003 to provide primary source information to parents and professionals caring for children with special needs. They focus on three areas: social responsibility, volunteerism, and affecting change.

**Joanne Lara**, M.A., is a core adjunct professor at National University in Los Angeles, California and helped design the Autism Certificate. She was the Technical Advisor/Autism Consultant for Kiefer Sutherland's FOX TV show 'TOUCH'. Joanne holds a CCTC California Moderate/Severe Education Specialist K-12 teaching credential and taught in the Los Angeles Unified School District for over ten years, where she worked exclusively with students with autism. Founder of Autism Movement Therapy, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit, and the aut-erobics DVD, Ms. Lara teaches Autism Movement Therapy classes in Van Nuys, CA where she has a private academic and behavioral consultation practice, Autism Movement Therapy- AMT. Ms Lara produced the soon to be released documentary, Generation A: Portraits of Autism and the ARTS with Temple Grandin, Stephen Shore, Joanne Lara, Alex Plank, Ed Asner, and more. Visit [www.autismmovementtherapy.org](http://www.autismmovementtherapy.org).

**Steve Selpal**, graphic and visual artist and speaker on Aspergers, resides in Florida. Steve's website is [www.stevoartist.com](http://www.stevoartist.com). Steve is a participating artist in our project.

## Website/Social Media

[www.artautism.com](http://www.artautism.com)

The Art of Autism, Facebook page with over 800 members

Artautism, twitter

[www.artautism.com](http://www.artautism.com)

Debra Hosseini email – [hosseini58@cox.net](mailto:hosseini58@cox.net)

(805) 220-6460

(805) 259-6879



Artists Joel Anderson and Dani Bowman in Hollywood art show

## Testimonials

“The art of autism exhibit raised \$4,000 for my son’s school”

John Ordovery, owner Soho Digital Art Gallery, New York City

“The exhibit of artists with autism raised the most money of any art exhibit I’ve had at my bookstore. Now I can give the Friends of the Library a big check.” Kiona, Owner Curious Cup Bookstore, Carpinteria

## Countries Represented

- U.S.A.
- Canada
- Australia
- India
- Japan
- Germany
- Pakistan
- Israel
- England
- Mexico

- Phillipines
- France
- Morocco
- Scotland
- Malaysia
- Brazil
- Kenya