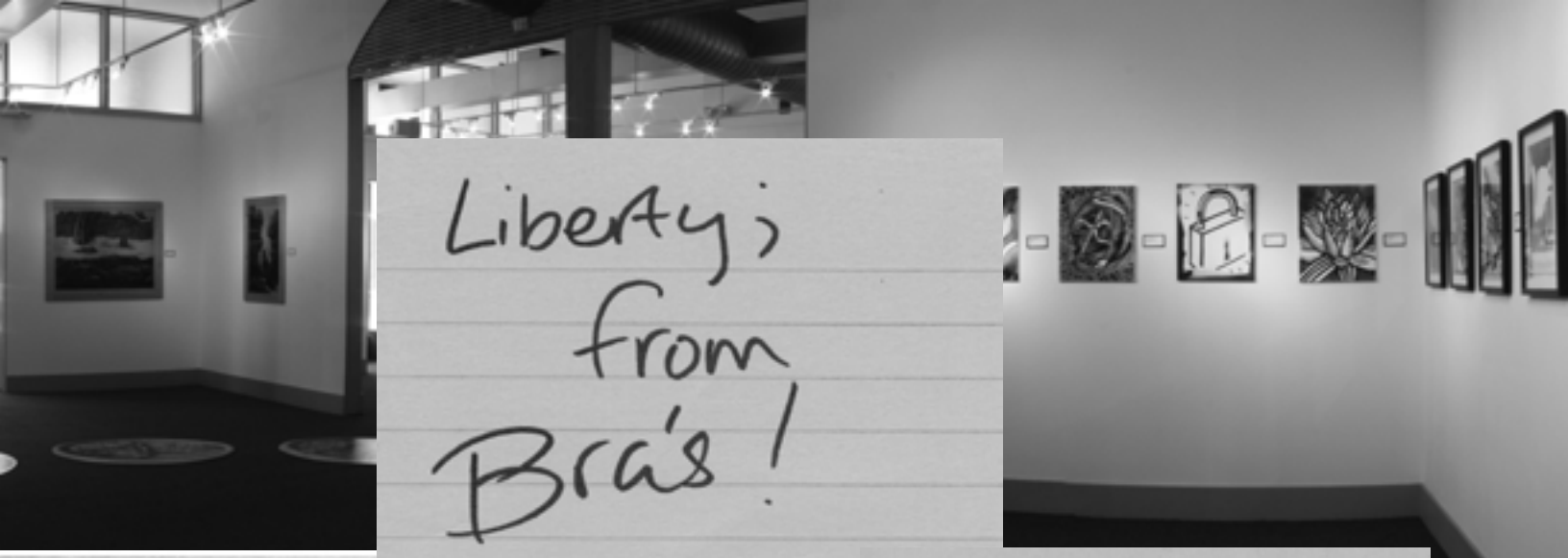




ARTWORKERS

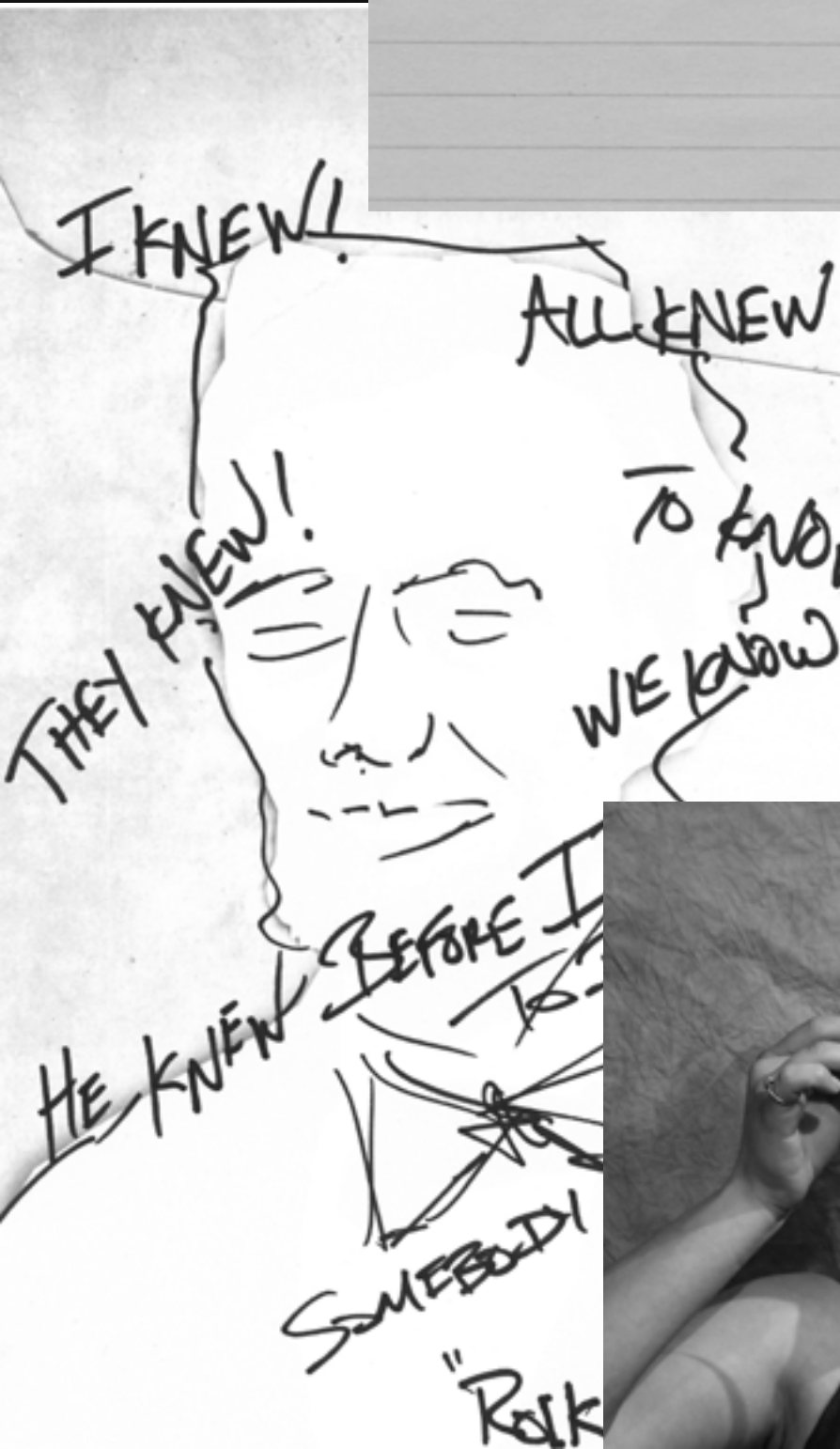
CREATIVITY AND AMERICA

GEORGE A.
spiva
CENTER FOR
THE ARTS



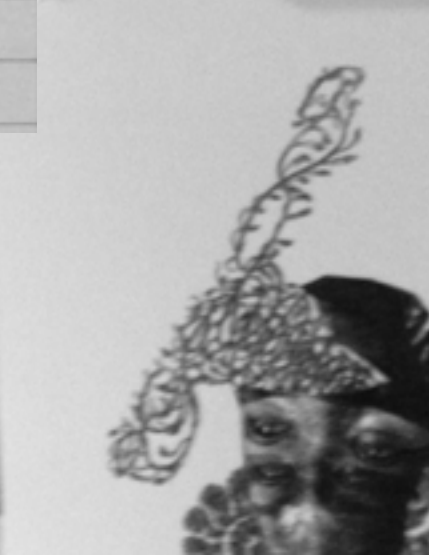
Liberty;
from
Bra's!

Liberated
From
War!





Liberate
From Hate, inju
and judgement.
Does not matter skin
religion, beliefs, sexual
orientation. We are all
human and are equal.



This account and the exhibition of *ArtWorkers: Creativity and America* are made possible by EaglePicher Technologies, LLC, and supported in part by awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Joplin Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency.



Special appreciation to Dee Dunn, Eric Fischl, David E. Martin, Kathy Norris, Corporate Business Systems, and Hilton Garden Inn for their support of *ArtWorkers*.



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ARTWORKERS

CREATIVITY AND AMERICA

GEORGE A. SPIVA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

MAY 16 – JULY 7, 2013

INTRODUCTION

On May 23, 2011, the westbound lane of Interstate-44 in Joplin, Missouri, was the setting for multiple national media crews creating newscasts about the direct strike Joplin had taken from a massive EF5 tornado. Unlike the rest of the immediate area, which had been leveled in places, the Interstate appeared to passersby to offer a place to stand and observe the damage. Joplin looked like it had been chewed up by a giant lawnmower from the sky. One hundred sixty-one people were killed and many more were injured.

Two years later, the exhibition ***ArtWorkers: Creativity and America*** opened to the public at George A. Spiva Center for the Arts in Joplin. Sponsored by EaglePicher Technologies, LLC, the project was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts grant with additional underwriting provided by the Missouri Arts Council and the Joplin Convention and Visitors Bureau.

ArtWorkers emerged from the efforts of artist Hugh Merrill, working in Kansas City with myself and Amanda Rehagen of Chameleon Arts & Youth Development, while collaborating with Josie Mai and Spiva in southwest Missouri. From May 16 – July 7, 2013, the Center was taken over by the public and invited local artists, who created art works based on a series of thematic prompts provided by Merrill.

ArtWorkers explored interdisciplinary creative processes that intertwined visual art, dance, music and poetry with public input to create an ongoing exhibition. Such a concept is based on the idea of art-making as an active force that encourages participation to enrich and honor society. It celebrates the creativity of everyday

folks and their community, rather than a single artist's work. Essentially, it is a democratic medium, available to all who are interested.

GENESIS OF THE PROJECT

The role of the artist as a facilitator, rather than as the creator of individual works, is a fundamental shift that was highlighted by Kansas City's art community in 2011. A well-known New York artist, Eric Fischl, became deeply involved in social artistic practice when he formed ***America: Now and Here (ANH)***, a creative dialogue focusing on America that mixed nationally known contemporary artists with local artists in Kansas City.

The *ANH* exhibition, presented at Leedy-Voulkos Art Center, included non-arts audiences by providing creative interactive events that allowed the public to leave its mark on the project. Merrill and Chameleon Arts & Youth Development were enlisted by Fischl and *ANH* administrator Dee Dunn to develop the interactive events, which included *Portraits of Liberty*, *Diversity Masks*, *Make a Better President* and *American Zines*. Highly regarded national artists who contributed artwork to the exhibition included Cindy Sherman, Chuck Close, Jeff Koons, and Tom Friedman, among others.

THE JOPLIN CONNECTION

The same year as the Kansas City *ANH* community arts actions, Merrill was invited by Spiva Center for the Arts to exhibit *Divergent Consistencies: Forty Years of Studio and Community Art*, which featured works from 1969-2009.

Merrill felt it would be more interesting to change the focus from a retrospective to an exhibition based on the goals, values and processes found in *ANH*.

“I hoped to encourage both residents and artists from Joplin to express their feelings and concerns about America through a series of thematic prompts. We were on the path to replicate, collaborate and evolve the *ANH* project for Joplin. The *ANH* vision was that the project would travel in converted semi-trucks to cities and small towns across America for a decade or more. As with many complex and ambitious creative projects, things did not go as planned. After a highly successful beginning in Kansas City the fortunes of *ANH* changed and what had started so successfully was forced to shut down.”

Merrill partnered with Josie Mai, an artist, educator, and friend who was teaching at Missouri Southern State University in Joplin, and took the lead in reinventing the project for Spiva with the help of gallery coordinator Shaun Conroy and director Jo Mueller.

Acting as exhibiting artist, curator, and ringleader for the Joplin community arts actions, Merrill exhibited his own work in concert with pieces by Joplin area artists. Merrill's artwork provided the exhibition's themes: politics, iconic American monuments, the environment and ecology, diversity, and family. Visitors encountered America as envisioned by *ArtWorkers* from numerous disciplines: visual arts, music, dance and the literary arts. More than 500 people

participated on opening night, and thousands more came to add their touches to the exhibit and events over the seven-week run of the event.

This book is designed not as a catalog, but as a collage of the people and events that made up *ArtWorkers: Creativity and America*.

– Adelia Ganson
Chameleon Arts & Youth Development

During my tenure at Spiva Center for the Arts, my focus has been to “blow the doors off” the Center and secure the reputation of this 65-year-old, independent community arts center as a welcoming place – a place where anyone who enters may feel at home, be inspired, and encounter something memorable. Spiva’s mission is to celebrate the creative experience. Our aim is to open that experience to all.

ArtWorkers: Creativity and America proved to be a touchstone of that vision. The opening was scheduled to coincide with Joplin’s Third Thursday Art Walk in May, and from the beginning it was apparent that this was not going to be an “ordinary” exhibition run.

Cameras clicked away as visitors modeled diversity masks or posed with Hugh Merrill’s Statue of Liberty banner. Some scribbled out thoughts of what they would like to be free of, then stuck them on a wall plastered with other personal sentiments about freedom. Darth Vader and 501st Legion Star Wars stormtroopers milled about with youngsters, revved with excitement. Amidst the music and excited chatter, the photocopier positioned inside the Main Gallery quietly whirred to life, printing images that immediately became part of the exhibit. People eyed the stage, curious about what might take place there. In The Lincoln Room, visitors slowly began to fill a wall with their ideas about Abraham Lincoln.

This was the beginning of a rather unusual dialogue about America – a dialogue initiated through art and open to anyone willing to express themselves. This was ***ArtWorkers: Creativity in America***.

For Spiva, ***ArtWorkers*** was a ‘first,’ an extended community arts action that required as much

input from audiences as from featured artists. It became the interactive, hands-on, seven-week celebration of visual and performing arts that we envisioned, a platform to examine how Americans view themselves and the country they live in.

“A complex show for a complex nation,” one visitor wrote on an exhibit survey.

“The feel good event of the year,” wrote another.

For Spiva, too, ***ArtWorkers*** was a feel good event. Thirty special activities in all types of disciplines – documented through blogs, surveys, Flickr and Facebook – attracted visitors who had never been to the Center, people like a gospel singer who traveled from Branson, Missouri, to take part in the roots music jam. Its participatory nature helped bring out creativity in people who thought they had none, like those who built artwork from pieces of a destroyed piano. And, it forged new relationships within the local arts community as writers, dancers, musicians, and visual artists contributed viewpoints informed by their own creative perspectives.

ArtWorkers was an artistic slice of American life expressed in all types of mediums and disciplines by all types of people. By the first week of July when ***ArtWorkers*** closed, it became clear that despite our differing values, circumstances, ages, and beliefs, our notions of America are not always as estranged from one another as we might think, and that art, indeed, can be a mighty, unifying force.

– Jo Mueller
Executive Director
George A. Spiva Center for the Arts

ArtWorkers: Creativity and America was both an exhibition and an interdisciplinary celebration of the arts. For me, it was an intense yet smooth, challenging yet successful, smashing partnership between co-creators Hugh Merrill, myself, and Spiva staff. We really were a communicative, unstoppable trio.

Hugh conceived the Big Idea and over-arching themes of the show, such as politics, ecology, and family. He also took on the role of artist in residence at Spiva, traveling to Joplin from Kansas City every weekend to create with patrons in the gallery. I wore many hats: grant-writing advocate, artist curator, events organizer, blog and survey writer and teaching artist! I am particularly proud to have helped with the successful National Endowment for the Arts grant – a high achievement for a small community arts center, indeed.

The images in this book represent many of the moments that I had a direct or indirect hand in, including ones that perhaps touched me the most. By no means is this representative of the entire exhibition.

Special thanks to EaglePicher Technologies for sponsoring the show; Hugh Merrill for his leadership and mentorship in community art; the tireless, super-professional and visionary Spiva staff; Eric Fischl for his inspiration; and the Conrad family who live their lives around art. Cheers to more of this in southwest Missouri!

– Josie Mai
Associate Professor of Art
Missouri Southern State University

ARTWORKERS

CREATIVITY AND AMERICA

an interactive festival of the arts

Sponsored by EaglePicher Technologies, LLC

MAY 16 - JULY 7, 2013

conceived by artist Hugh Merrill



GEORGE A. SPIVA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

222 West Third Street | Joplin, MO 64801 | 417.623.0183 | www.spivaarts.org

Monday - Saturday 10am-5pm | Sunday 1-5pm | Closed Mondays and Major Holidays



ART WORKS.
2013



Convention and
Visitors Bureau



ArtWorkers and *The Lincoln Room* are sponsored by EaglePicher Technologies, LLC and are supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional financial assistance: Joplin Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency.

JOPLIN GLOBE INSERT SPONSORED BY DAVID E. MARTIN



Hugh Merrill – *Liberty*, mixed media

STORIES: PLACE AND FAMILY





Image by image, a picture of community emerged when photocopies of family photographs and memorabilia, including citizenship papers and war rationing cards, were displayed in Spiva's Third Street "window gallery." The collage covered the walls from floor to ceiling and drew in passersby who spotted long-lost friends, and sometimes relatives, from the street.





Bring
ART



Free from
inhibitions

I WANT TO BE
LIBERATED FROM
MY OWN UNREAL
EXPECTATIONS

the ants

in the

kitchen!

As

Others
opinions

Freedom
From
Every Day
Idiots

STATUES OF LIBERTY



The question was posed, “What would you like to be free from?” Using Post-It® notes, the community began expressing their inner-most wishes – everything from freedom from diets or depression to escape from cell phones or particular political ideologies. Hundreds of notes covered the walls surrounding the Statue of Liberty banner, which also served as the backdrop for photographs of participants decked out in Americana. Most chose to wave flags, sport a star-spangled hat or wear a Lady Liberty crown.

MAIN GALLERY EXHIBITION





Created equal, that they

never ends among



Opposite:
Josie Mai – *Declaration of Independence*, cut paper (detail)

Above:
Kyle McKenzie – *Just Us Kids*, oil on panel (detail)

Right:
Jacque Moody-McDonald – *Case #08675*
ceramic sculpture and encaustics (detail)





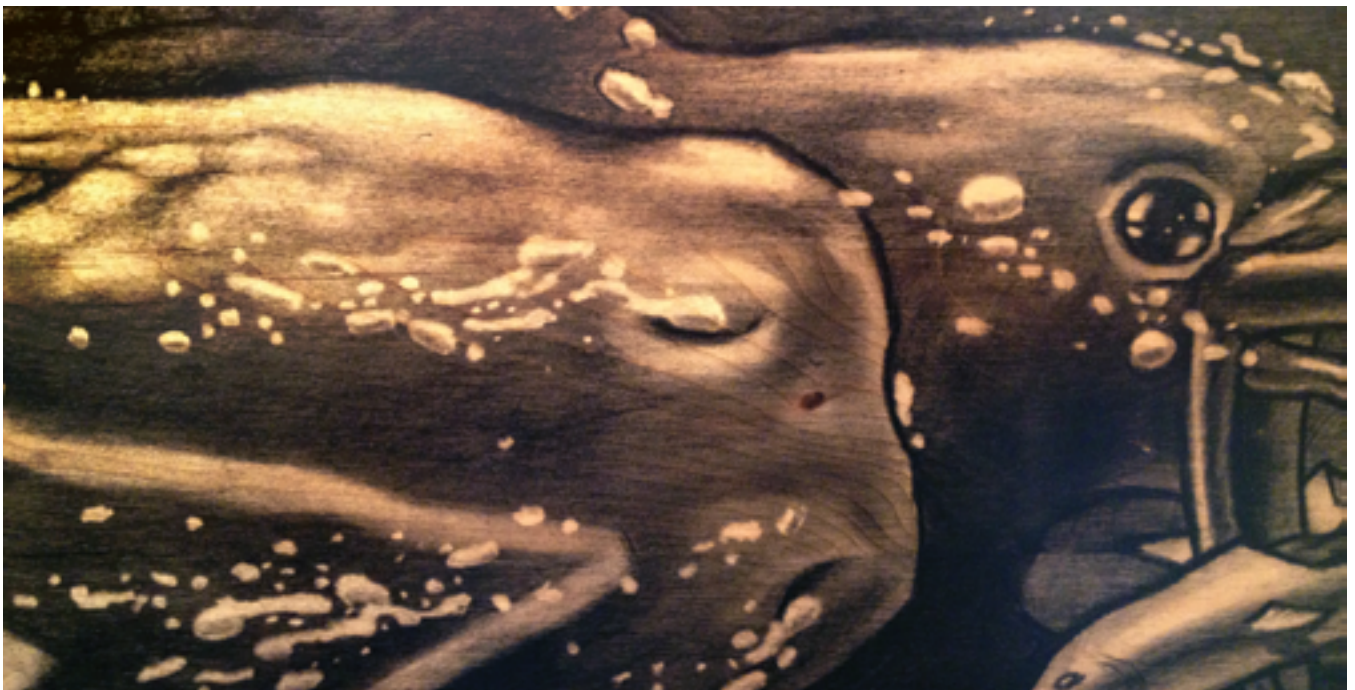
Opposite Above:
Gene Arehart – *#313 Loss of Innocence*
latex paint on plywood (detail)

Opposite Below:
Sandra Conrad – *Lady Liberty*, oil (detail)

Right:
Hugh Merrill – *Bird 10*, mixed media (detail)

Below:
Hugh Merrill – *Bird 4*, mixed media (detail)





Opposite Above:
Michael Steddum – *Reflections*, oil on board (detail)

Opposite Below:
Jason Stamper – *Dynamics of the Classroom #1*, charcoal on alder panel (detail)

Right:
Michael Strahan – *Broken Arrows*, mixed media (detail)



DIVERSITY PHOTO BOOTH



Sorting through cut-outs of varied facial features from old and young to black, white and Asian, people pieced together masks representing the diversity of America. Most of the masks were comedic, transforming the sessions into a playful photo shoot for each participant.





REGIONAL FOCUS GALLERY

FINDING LINCOLN/THE LINCOLN ROOM

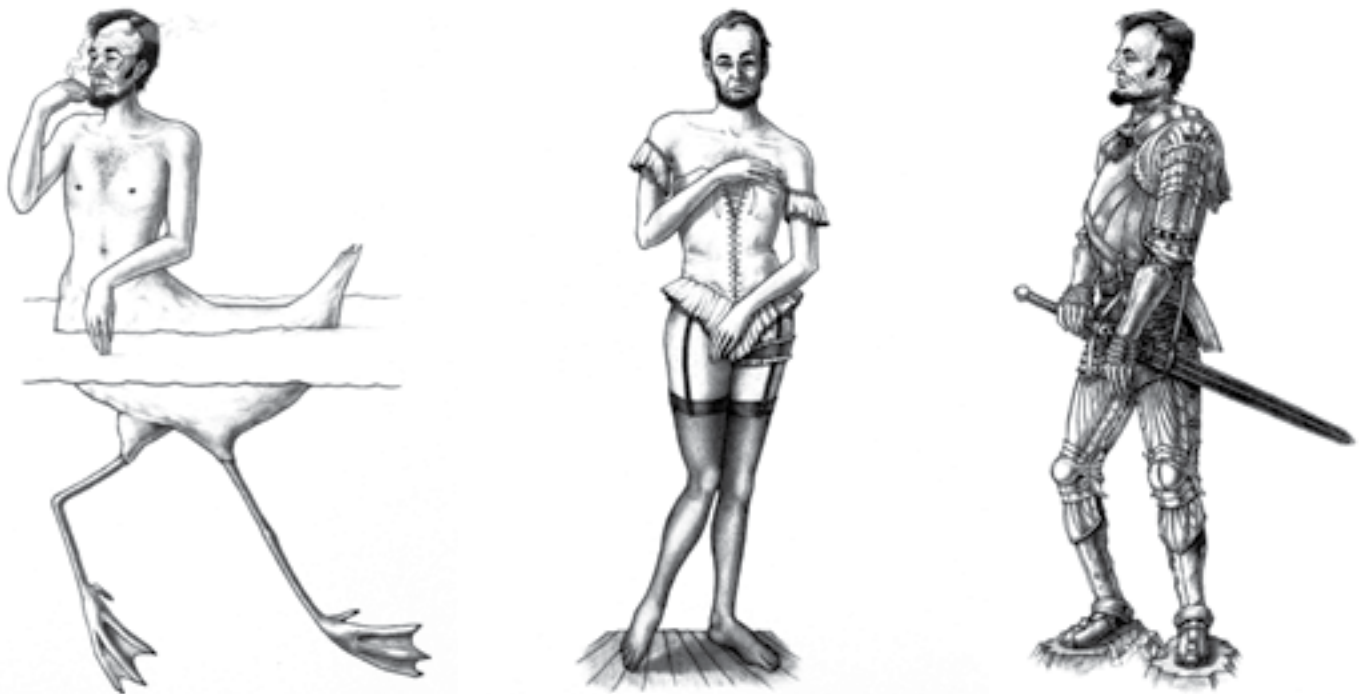
Abraham Lincoln is considered by many to be America's greatest and most beloved President. He is the benchmark against which all others are judged, yet he stands for many different things for many different people. Recently, a major motion picture was made about his presidency and the National Geographic Channel produced the TV series, *Killing Lincoln*. Today, he is again a role model to help find a way out of our own major political divide.

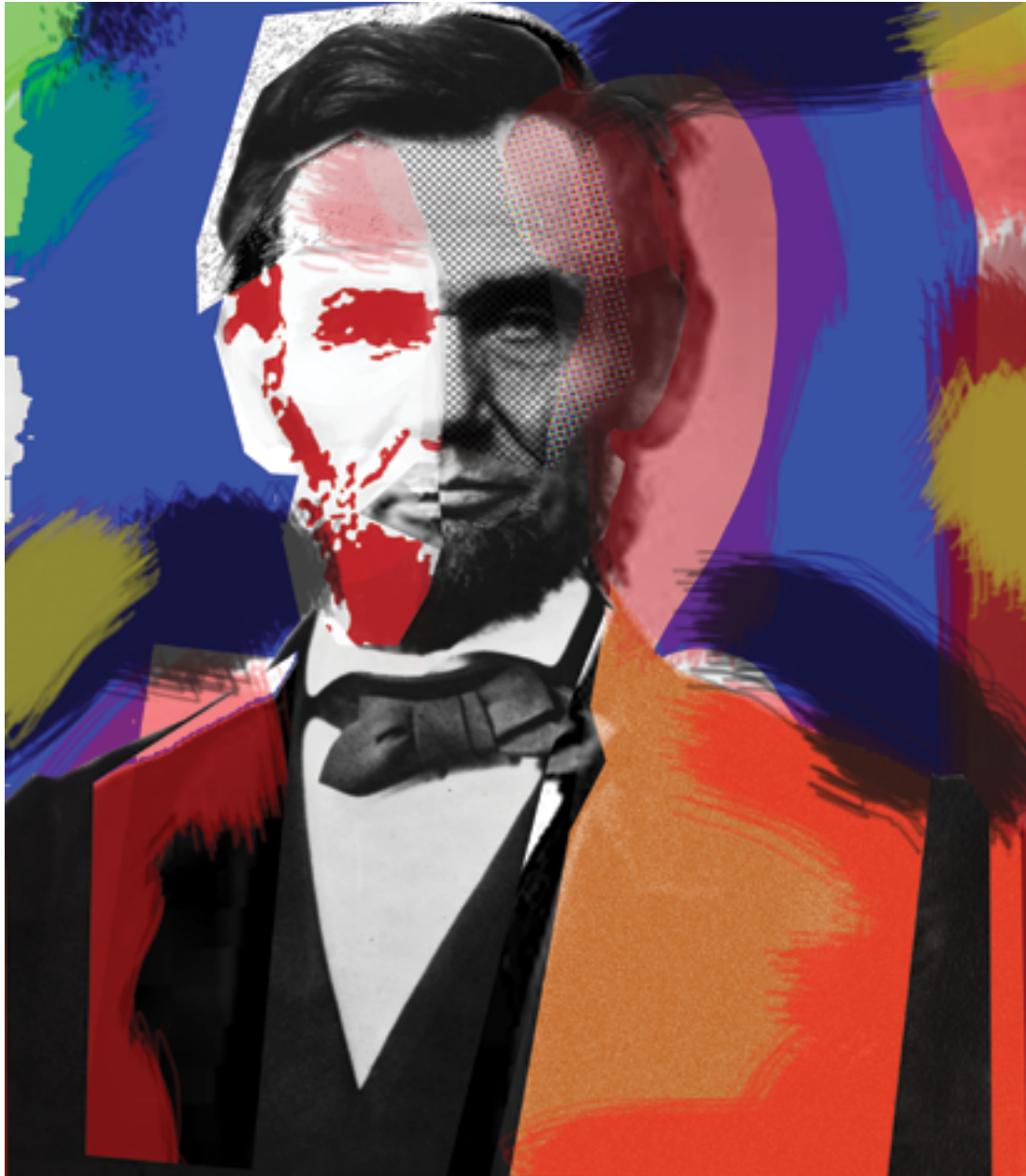
Finding Lincoln was designed to allow everyone to identify their own Lincoln, express what he means to them, and to consider what might have occurred had he not been assassinated. How would our country be different? Would civil rights have come sooner for people of color? Who would he be today? If he were an Illinois Senator elected in 2012, would he be a Republican or a Democrat? Would he support voting rights and affirmative action or be more concerned with reducing the debt and creating a smaller federal government? Would he compromise or be unbending in his beliefs?

Featured images in Hugh Merrill's series of altered portraits – some are "pop-artish," others employ camouflage – place Lincoln in a new perspective to encourage dialogue about Lincoln and America through art. Merrill also devised two versions of *Missing Lincoln Portraits* for use in the gallery. In one, visitors created "new" Lincolns by filling in missing facial features. Their portraits and words illustrated a wide range of feeling and points of view about Lincoln. These quickly realized portraits became part of the exhibit in Spiva's Regional Focus Gallery, dubbed the "Lincoln Room" during *ArtWorkers*.

Merrill's second version of the *Missing Lincoln Portraits* utilized a digitally altered, 1860s photograph by Alexander Garner. In these prints, Lincoln's face and shoulders are transparent, providing the background for text written by community leaders and elected officials. These *Missing Lincoln Portraits* became the exhibit's "Civic Lincolns."

Elementary school children contributed their own revolving display of painted Lincoln portraits and a collage of favorite facts about his presidency. A selection of 1860s historical documents, including newspapers that ran the text of the Emancipation Proclamation and news accounts on the day Lincoln died, further linked art and history.



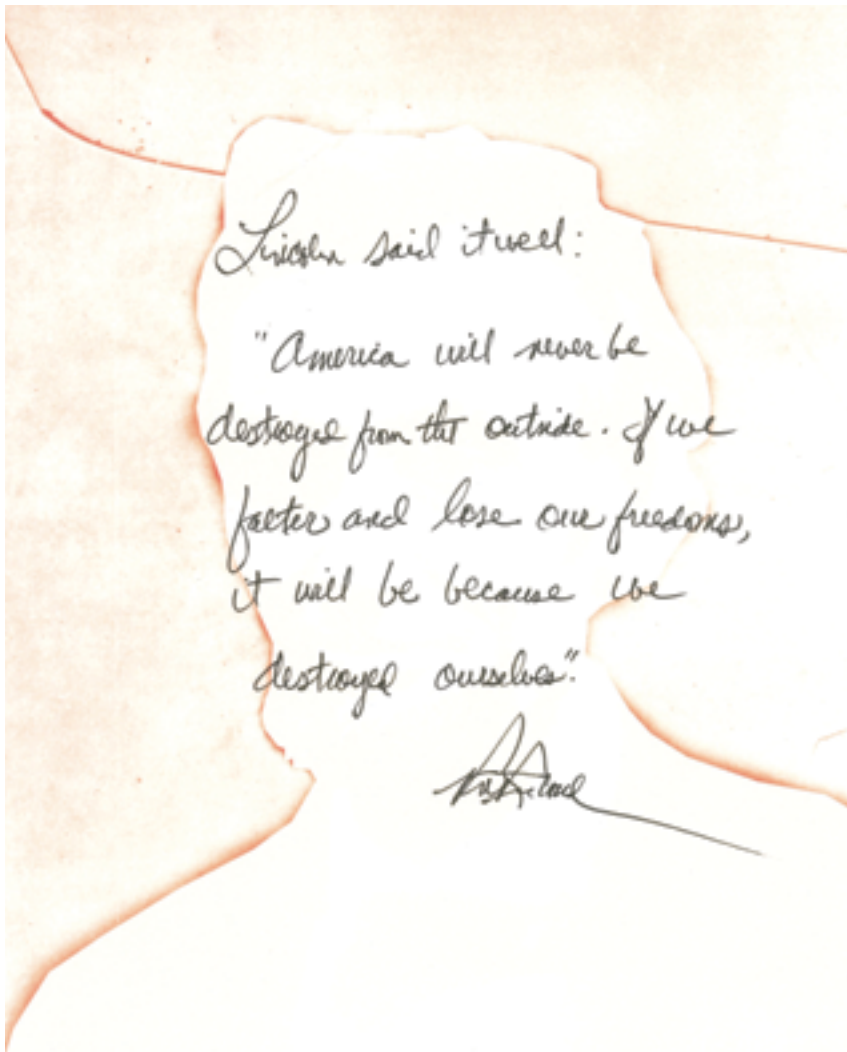


Hugh Merrill – *Lincoln Pop*, mixed media



Jorge Leyva – *Missing Lincoln*





Senator Ron Richard – *Civic Lincoln*





Webb City, Mo., Summer School Students - *Lincoln Portraits*

COLLAGE: MAKE A BETTER PRESIDENT



Using photographs of presidents and heads of state, political candidates and religious leaders, celebrities and activists, visitors to **ArtWorkers** were invited to create a collage of their own "perfect president."

Provided with photocopied portraits of present and past world figures, people pieced together eclectic faces from images of liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans, historic and modern-day leaders. The faces of Abraham Lincoln and John Glenn were paired; Hillary Clinton's face morphed into that of Richard Nixon; likenesses of Presidents Ronald Reagan and John Kennedy were blended together. Participants knew the characteristics they were looking for in their ideal president and it was always a mix of more than one leader's style. There were no world figures that captured all the leadership qualities in one package.

Once the collages were mounted on the wall, they became part art object, part history lesson and part socio-political study, generating discussions about the ideologies and leadership styles of those represented. Visitors' collages became unique teaching tools for educators who brought their students to Spiva to experience **ArtWorkers: Creativity and America**.





EVENTS, PERFORMANCES, MUSIC

After receiving a prompt from the poetry of Walt Whitman, the two artists went to work, one painting, the other sketching. The crowd watched in fascination as the first of two Art Duels unfolded and artwork emerged in extreme contrasts of interpretation and style.

The Art Duels symbolized the goals of **ArtWorkers**: providing people with artistic avenues for expressing their viewpoints and, in doing so, showing America's diversity in thinking. Integrating visual art, music, poetry, dance and history not only reminded us of the diverse disciplines that make up American and regional arts and culture, it also allowed the full voice of the arts to be heard in opening a dialogue about American issues.

During the seven-week run of **ArtWorkers**, gallery talks by history scholars examined President Lincoln and the 1960s civil rights movement while performances – poetry readings, contemporary dance and musical presentations – offered creative interpretations of America and this particular region.

Audience participation was the norm for many events. In one session, the music of John Cage – “Sonatas & Interludes” for prepared piano – served as the backdrop for audience members to create sculpture from pieces of destroyed pianos. In another, amateur musicians from as far away as Branson and Kansas City met at Spiva for an acoustic roots music jam, playing instruments native to the Ozarks and Appalachia – spoons, bones, an embellished washboard that was a work of art in itself, and more.

ArtWorkers events demonstrated that while we may have diverse backgrounds, art can be the unifying factor, opening lines of communication and softening the lines that divide us.



Body & Word: A Poetry Project



The Well

EVENTS

May 17 | Blues with Doc Brown and Jason Stamper

May 25 | Body and Word: A Poetry Project

June 7 | Acoustic Roots Jam

June 14 | I Am Disney for Tweens

June 18 & 25 | Yoga in the Gallery

June 20 | Kufara Marimba Band | Art Duels

June 22 | "Create with Cage!" Prepared piano performance; sculpture from scraps of destroyed pianos

June 23 | Allen Shirley: Finding Lincoln | Dr. Al Cade: History Alive

June 26 | Zumba in the Gallery

June 30 | "Compose Yourself!" Musical composition for the non-musician

June 30 | "The Well," improvisational contemporary dance and music

Art Duels





Dr. Al Cade: History Alive



Create with Cage

Zumba in the Gallery





Create with Cage

Kufara Marimba Band



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A CRITERION FOR COMMUNITY ART?

Most people have a firm understanding of what constitutes the fine arts and can easily recognize art as printmaking, ceramics, sculpture and so on. Community art is less recognizable and is sometimes invisible as being identified as art.

The French art critic and theorist Nicolas Bourriaud describes community art as “artistic practice considering the ensemble of human relationships and their social context as a starting point. This consideration runs counter to creation of private symbolic arts objects.” Social creative practice is concerned with socially experimental actions calling for viewer/ community interaction. The educational and studio activities are guided by collaboration and privileging social/political/cultural discourse over aesthetic experience. Community arts actions are implicitly democratic structures with a concentration on participation and relevance

to everyday life. Many times, the audiences for community works may not recognize them as art, but as something else; a coincidence or non-typical afternoon’s activities.

The difference between the community artistic process and the individual studio journey is that the community artist makes a conscious decision in the beginning to collaborate with others. The artist no longer works in a monastic and insular fashion and the audience is no longer taken for granted as the faceless visitor looking at “wall art” in the museum or gallery. By working directly with the audience, the community artist allows the community to become participants with input into the content, process, and final outcome. Community art is often based on a dialogue between all involved. The community participant is an insider with a stake in the creative process, as well as the aesthetic outcome.



The following criterion provides a useful framework to understand and classify community art in relation to more traditional modes of artistic production. The items that form this criterion are not carved in stone – they are not laws or rules. These ideas function as guideposts to allow individuals and organizations to distinguish and recognize the territory. This approach helps them to understand the context and goals of creative community activity:

- Community art is functional; it is not purely aesthetic.
- Artistic ideas are not imposed on the participants, but are derived from direct interaction between artists and others.
- The artworks are created from time and experience in the field.
- Social practice is the beginning of a transformation from a fractured society into a communal society.
- Actions are rooted in accuracy and advocacy with an outcome that arouses the public to bring about social change.
- Creativity and imagination are the first steps for envisioning and moving toward a better future by breaking hegemonic thinking and challenging barriers of the status quo.
- Art is validated by local cultural and social context.
- Projects allow people to engage in public spaces, as well as engaging with each other.
- Art actions may lead to political action.
- Art nurtures a lost intuitive process.
- These methods dictate healing and provide new grounding for ethical, social, and spiritual insight.
- Community practice is a process that fosters awareness and is a celebration of others' aliveness, which functions to move human potential from a static nature to a dynamic force for change.

– *Hugh Merrill*
Professor of Studio Arts
Kansas City Art Institute

AMERICAN FLAG INSTALLATION



With shelving painted in red, white and blue, audience members contributed items in matching colors, eventually building a likeness of the American flag. Objects ran the gamut from ubiquitous to whimsical – red cans, blue ink pens and white coffee mugs to oversized crayons, small paintings, and spin art – all whatnots of the appropriate color.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



ArtWorkers

Ringleader for Community Arts Actions & Resident Saturday Artist

Hugh Merrill

Artist & Performance Wrangler

Josie Mai

Visual Artists

Gene Arehart
Sandra Conrad
Josie Mai
Kyle McKenzie
Hugh Merrill
Jacque Moody-McDonald
Jason Stamper
Michael Steddum
Michael Strahan

Musicians & Dancers

Dr. Stacey Barelos
Dr. Barry "Doc" Brown
Tony Bergkoetter
Raymond Castrey
David "Doc Bones" Hill
Lucile Tyler Hubbard
Marcy Kamler
Kufara Marimba Band
Terry Mai
David Ollington
Tom Polett
Susan Rieger
Jason Stamper

Bloggers, Poets & Presenters

Dr. Joey Brown
Natalie Byers
Dr. Al Cade
Amelia Carpenter
Shaun Conroy
Connellaine Gustad
Josie Mai
Hugh Merrill
Madison Pollock
Allen Shirley
Ruth Stamper
Kristine Steddum
Bailey Stehm
Peter Thompson

Civic Lincoln Writers

Brad Belk
Anson Burlingame
Dr. Al Cade
Michelle Ducre
Dhani Jones
Dr. Virginia Laas
Senator Ron Richard
R. Mark Rohr
Allen Shirley
Victor Sly
Carol Stark
Jim West
Dr. Steven Wagner

Interns

Chandler Cianci
Faith Fraser
Clayton Woolery
Ayla Yeargain



Josie Mai – *Liberty Bell*, 3rd Thursday art walk collaboration

ARTWORKER





es
rty

FREE
TO BE WHO
EVER YOU
ARE



Finding Lincoln MAY 16 - JULY 7, 2011



ne / us
ESTY

Free to
the
enjoy
Good Things
in
Life.



FREE FROM
ANXIETY

...had a dream 2 weeks before he died a boat hitting
... Did you know Abe Lincoln was an amazing president? He
...th president. He was the first president to be assassinated. He was honest
...ot Abe. Abe Lincoln was a family man. He married Mary Todd, and they
...and Tad. They lived together happily. Abe Lincoln went to war, so it was
...wants the slaves to be free. But the south did not. Then the north won. But the
...res. But even though the slaves were free, they were not treated equally. But
...inated (shot). Abe Lincoln was a freedom giver. Abe didn't want people to
...ren't pushed back, and threatened. So he wanted the slaves to be free. Abe
... Freed the slaves. And even though the slaves were free, they were not treated
...e south volunteered for a play at a theater. He was mad at Abe, so at the
...and saw her husband shot. Abe was carried and layed on a bed. Abraham Lincoln
... After a few hours, Abe Lincoln was dead. They put his face on the penny and made
...to make everyone glad. Like I said Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president
... freedom giver. And I hope Abe's honesty is a generation for years to come.



...only began the healing.
...statched for his face
...a family man, and a
...
... Did you know Abraham Lincoln was an amazing president? He was. He was also the 16th president, a family man, and he freed the slaves. Abraham Lincoln was an amazing president. Abraham freed the slaves, Abraham Lincoln helped the women to win the civil war, and Abraham Lincoln also worked with reconstruction of the Union, fighting to get his 10 percent bill passed in place of the more severe Congressional Wade-Davis bill. Abraham Lincoln died before slaves were finally free. Abraham Lincoln won the civil war against slavery and the slaves were finally free in the 13th amendment. The war between the North and the South was 1861 to 1865. Abraham had a family, Abraham Lincoln married Mary Todd. Abraham and Mary Todd had four children. Their names were Robert, Edward, William, and Tad. Mary's parents' name was Nancy Hanks Lincoln. Abraham's name was Nancy Hanks Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln was a father, and a freedom giver. I hope he was a good person. Abraham Lincoln was president.

