

WELCOME TO THE  
**UNITED NATIONS**





# Perceptions of Sentience

— Commemorating the observance of  
World Autism Awareness  
April 2 as World Autism Awareness  
Day, designated by the United Nations  
General Assembly resolution  
(A/RES/62/139), passed in council on  
1 November 2007, and adopted on  
18 December 2007.

**Perceptions of Sentience** Is a group exhibition of paintings curated to inspire dialogue about mental health and the alternative pathways through which environmental awareness is processed and expressed. The works in this exhibition are a diverse selection of works by twenty-four “neurodiverse” artists. Featured are 29 acrylic, oil, mixed media, graphite, and watercolor paintings by artists from around the globe, including the Republic of Serbia, Israel, Republic of India, Federative Republic of Brazil, Republic of Ireland, United Kingdom, Commonwealth of Australia, Asia, the Philippines and the United States of America.

By delving into the artwork's visual elements and emotional nuances, Perceptions of Sentience offers viewers a perspective on canvas that debunks historical myths regarding autism, such as “autistic people have no empathy or lack feelings.”

<https://www.autismempowerment.org/understanding-autism/facts-myths/>.

Although there has been progress in debunking this view, there is still a persistent narrative within society that autistic people lack empathy.

Our intention is for viewers to experience a cathartic and powerful emotional release when engaging with these artworks. This emotional journey can lead to a deeper understanding of the abilities of individuals with autism, fostering positive change. The primary goal is for the audience to connect with the artists’ work on an emotional level, whether the art is a portrait that captures a moment of joy, sadness, or laughter or a piece that delves into the complexities of bullying, loneliness, seclusion, mental health, and emotional regulation. The secondary goal is to shine a light on disability-related stigma and systemic barriers, fostering empathy and reducing inequalities and vulnerabilities.

**World Autism Awareness Day (April 2<sup>nd</sup>)** is an annual internationally recognized day encouraging Member States of the United Nations to take measures to raise awareness about autistic individuals throughout the world. It was designated by the [United Nations General Assembly resolution \(A/RES/62/139\)](#), passed in council on 1 November 2007, and adopted on 18 December 2007 as a supplement to previous UN initiatives to improve human rights.

**Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2007 [on the report of the Third Committee (A/62/435)] 62/139. World Autism Awareness Day**

“...Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that manifests itself during the first three years of life and results from a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain, mostly affecting children in many countries irrespective of gender, race or socio-economic status, and characterized by impairments in social interaction, problems with verbal and non-verbal communication and restricted, repetitive behaviour, interests and activities.”

Recalling that early diagnosis and appropriate research and interventions are vital to the growth and development of the individual:

1. Decides to designate 2 April as World Autism Awareness Day, to be observed every year beginning in 2008;
2. Invites all Member States, relevant organizations of the United Nations system and other international organizations, as well as civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to observe World Autism Awareness Day in an appropriate manner, in order to raise public awareness of autism;
3. Encourages Member States to take measures to raise awareness throughout society, including at the family level, regarding children with autism;
4. Requests the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Member States and United Nations organizations. (76th plenary meeting 18 December 2007)

The latest research in 2023 from the United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC) shows that one in 36 children are now diagnosed with autism. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that worldwide about 1 in 100 children have autism. This estimate represents an average figure and reported prevalence varies substantially across studies. Some well-controlled studies have, however, reported figures that are substantially higher. The prevalence of autism in many low- and middle-income countries is unknown. Autism spectrum disorders are also 4 times more common among boys than among girls. A 2020 meta-analysis showed that victimization of individuals with ASD is significantly higher than that in typically developing students and students with other disabilities.

Recent meta-analysis reviews of systematic studies of the literature show the global burden of suicide mortality among people on the autism spectrum is rising. Suicide crisis hotlines can be found in many countries worldwide, and guidelines are being developed to aid crisis center workers in identifying and supporting callers/texters with autism who may be in crisis. The International Association for Suicide Prevention provides worldwide hotlines for support.

<https://www.iasp.info/suicidalthoughts/>

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FOR REFERENCE ONLY:

[https://www.cdc.gov/autism/data-research/?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html](https://www.cdc.gov/autism/data-research/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html)

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/autism-spectrum-disorders>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7593096/>

Autism acceptance may be one of the most important components to debunking myths. Acceptance, inclusion and non-discrimination may be a powerful tool toward this end. The capacity to have feelings (sentience) requires a level of awareness and cognitive ability. Early definitions of autism often included “lack of feelings and emotions” and an “unawareness of environment” as some of the defining characteristics of autism.

**Myth:** People with autism exist in their own world and can't feel or express emotion—happy or sad. With this exhibition, we hope to change mindsets to curtail this persistent narrative within society.

**Fact:** Autism doesn't make an individual unable to feel the emotions you feel, it just makes the person communicate emotions (and perceive your expressions) in different ways.



## **“Fear vs. Safe”**

**Artist: TRENT ALTMAN**

*acrylic and mixed media*

*18x24x.75*

*2024*

The painting features a dark golden background that sets a profound tone. The dark side media strips are cut-out mixed media strips from his previous canvases that represent his fear and uncertainty, conveying heaviness and apprehension. In contrast, the other half of the painting showcases vibrant rainbow-colors, symbolizing safety and acceptance, radiating positivity and warmth. Together, these halves create a striking dichotomy, illustrating the contrasting experiences of the autistic artist and capturing the complexity of navigating between fear and safety in his emotional journey.



**“Hope”**

**Artist: VIKTOR BEVANDA**

*pastels on paper*

*9” x 12”*

*2021*

The eyes tell a tale of hope and resilience.

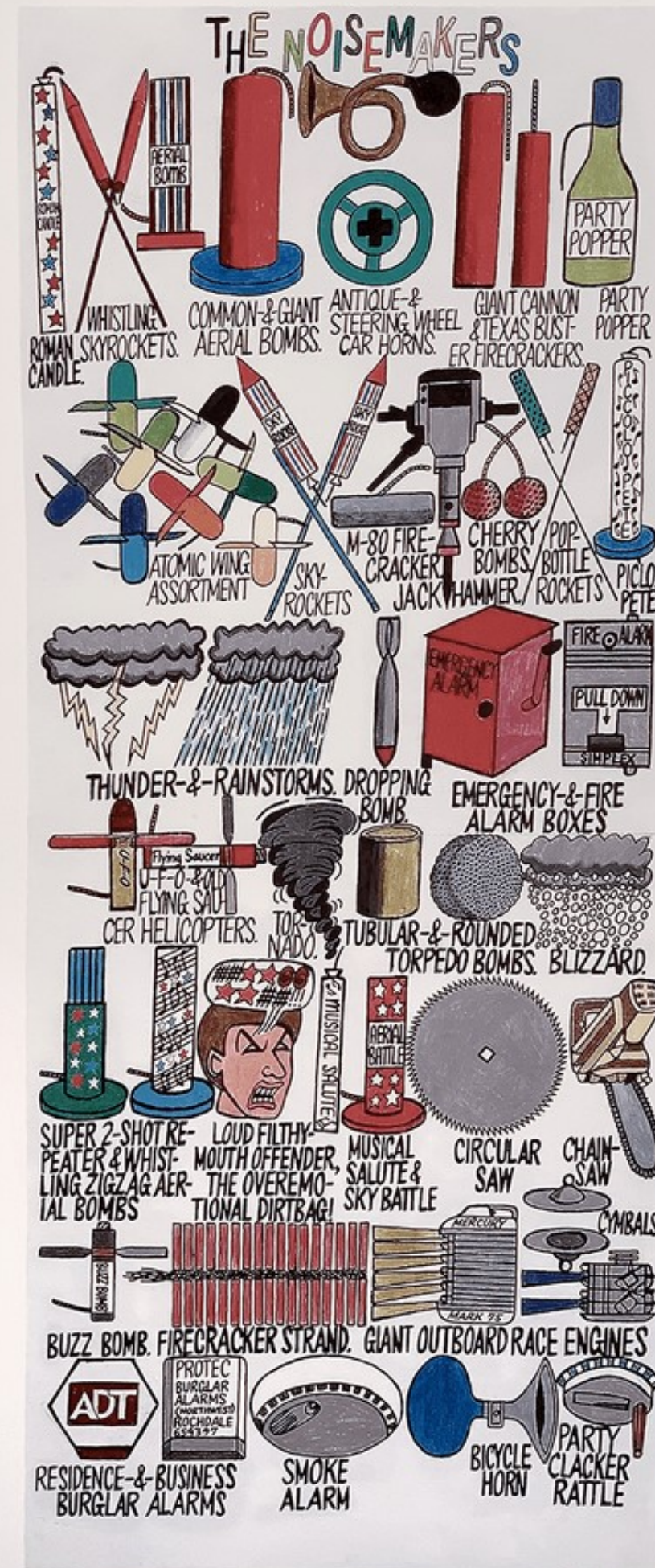




**“The Noisemakers”**  
**Artist: GREGORY BLACKSTOCK**  
*archival pigment print*  
*30 x 14.25 inches*  
*edition of 15*

THE NOISEMAKERS from THE INCOMPLETE HISTORICAL WORLD, PART II, 2021

The images in Noisemakers suggest strong emotions. Thunder and lightning storms, party poppers, tornadoes---and all manner of fireworks are loud, noisy, invasive sounds to one’s environment. Consider the "Loud, Filthy-mouthed Offender, the Overemotional Dirtbag?" Exciting? Aversive? Over stimulating? Sensory overload?





**“Emotional Breakdown”**

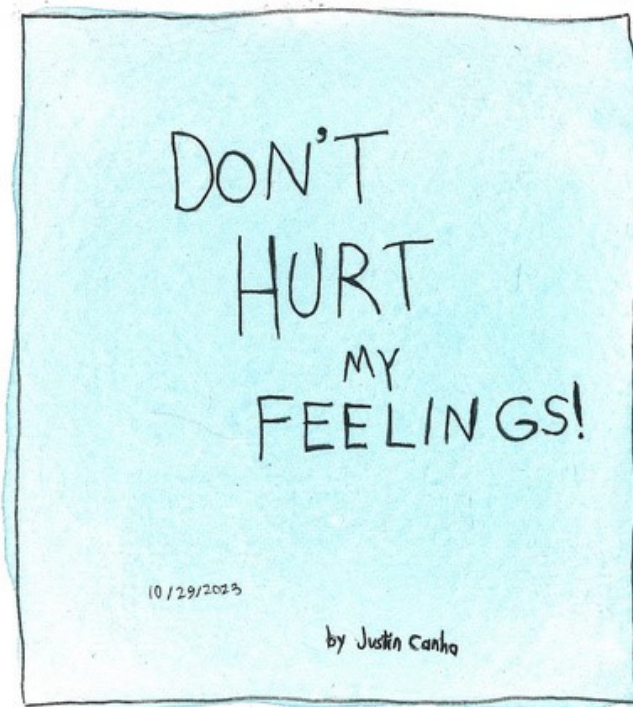
**Artist: AMOAKO BUACHIE**

*acrylic on canvas*

30” x 30”

2024

Explore the complexities of human behavior, a physical tantrum, and the vulnerability of raw emotion and chaos. The drinking cup may symbolize a thirst for friendship as seen in the proximity of the dog; love and prayer as seen in the book titles.



**"Don't Hurt My Feelings"**

**Artist: JUSTIN CANHA**

*watercolor on paper*

12" x 18"

2023

"Don't Hurt My Feelings" is a thought-provoking comic strip that explores the nuances of human interaction and emotional intelligence, detailing the view of a person with Asperger's and acceptance of their interests.



**“How Do You Feel Today?”**

**Artist: NOA DAVIS**

*watercolor and ink on paper*

*20.5” x 14”*

*2022*

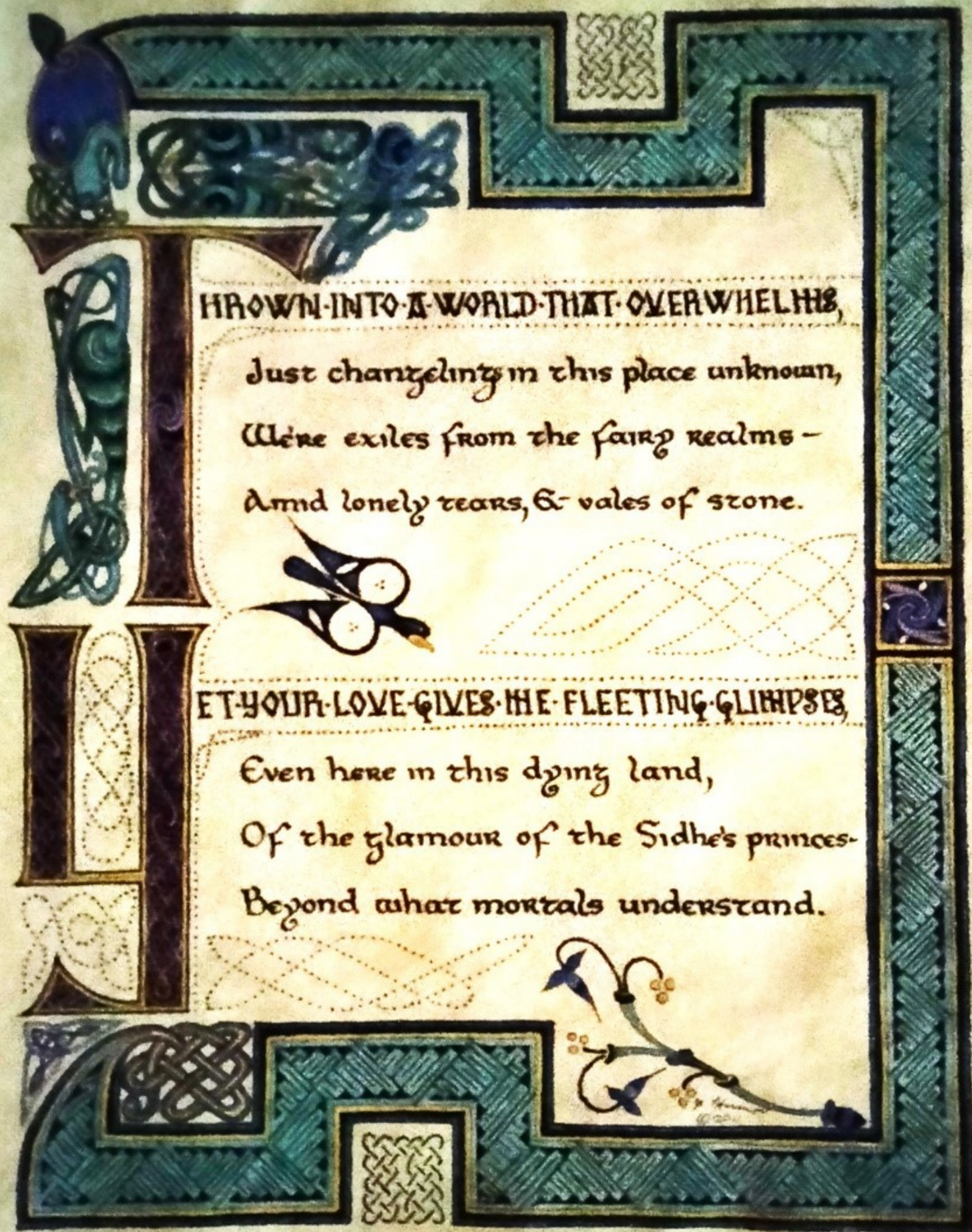
“My artwork expresses all the feelings that we **all** experience. I like that.”

*.....Noa Davis*



**“Tears From Heaven”**  
**Artist: BRYAN FRIEDLAND**  
*acrylic on canvas*  
*21”x 21”*  
*2023*

"Tears from Heaven" was done " shortly after the recent war with Hamas began. Empathy is apparent in God’s tears pouring down from the heavens to put out the fires in hopes that this .war would end soon



**D**ROWN INTO A WORLD THAT OVERWHELMS,

Just changeling in this place unknown,  
We're exiles from the fairy realms -  
Amid lonely tears, & vales of stone.



**L**ET YOUR LOVE GIVE ME FLEETING GLIMPSES,

Even here in this dying land,  
Of the glamour of the Sidhe's princes -  
Beyond what mortals understand.



**“Thrown Into a World that Overwhelms”**

**Artist: MICHAEL HANNON**

*ink, watercolor & gouache on parchment paper*

8.5” x 11”

2011

Working in forms from Asian brush painting and medieval manuscript illumination, this piece is influenced by Chinese calligraphy and poetry.



**“Self-Portraits”**

**Artist:**

**DAVID KARASOW**

*acrylic on bristol board  
37” x 25” (1994)*

**“Angry”  
and  
“Insecure”**







**“Whispers In Bloom”**

**Artist: AMRIT KHURANA**

*acrylic on canvas*

5 ft. x 4 ft.

"Whispers in Bloom" is a visual symphony of vibrant colors and heartfelt connections, encapsulating the essence of love and family amidst a garden of blossoms. The canvas bursts with a profusion of flowers, each petal a brushstroke of vivid hues, creating an explosion of life and joy. At the heart of the composition lies a tender and intimate scene – a central piece that portrays the warm embrace of a family unit. The figures, painted with care and attention to detail, exude a sense of unity, love, and shared moments. Their silhouettes are intertwined with the blossoms, symbolizing the seamless integration of familial bonds with the natural world.



**“Count On Me”**

**Artist: AMRIT KHURANA**

*acrylic on paper*

*15”x 11”*

“If you tossin' and you're turnin' and you  
just can't fall asleep  
I'll sing a song beside you  
And if you ever forget how much you  
really mean to me  
Every day I will remind you  
You can count on me.”

*.....Amrit Khurana*



**“Van Gogh”**

**Artist: LUCAS KSENHUK**

*acrylic on canvas*

*20” x 20”*

*2024*

*“Art is to console those who are  
broken by life.”*

*.....Vincent Van Gogh*

Van Gogh believed that art has the power to heal and console. Art is a way to connect with the human experience to offer comfort and solace in times of difficulty and pain.



**“Chaos to Calm”**

**Artist: AMANDA LAMUNYON**

*acrylic on canvas*

24” x 36”

2023

An explosion of nature with beautiful flowers representing sensory issues and the need for the organization of external stimuli that is often over stimulating.



## **“Childhood”**

**Artist: MAX LAZEBNIK**

*copic and posca markers*

*and gel pens 20” x 15”*

*on illustration board*

*2021*

Reflections of being watched and judged for one’s behavior. A desire for peace and to be alone. The eyes in the dark stormy clouds represent the judgments of therapists and society. The sandbox and entering rainbow represents the peacefulness of playing alone.



**"Judy Heumann" -504**  
**Artist: MAX LAZEBNIK**  
*copic and posca markers,*  
*and watercolor pencils*  
*26" x 18" on illustration board*  
*2023*

Honoring the late disability rights activist Judy Heumann. In the 1970's, she rallied for Section 504, which granted people with disabilities the right to education, protecting them from discrimination. The numbers "504" are written all over the piece to reflect Heumann's legacy. Judy is "blended in" to the colored background to promote inclusion and her being "included", just like she did. The rainbow background represents diversity as a whole.



**“Jesus in Me”**

**Artist: LELAND LEE**

*acrylic on canvas*

20” x 30”

2018

This abstract artwork captures the essence of spirituality and faith, featuring muted yellow and blue hues.



**“Untitled” #51**

**Artist: JONATHAN LERMAN**

*charcoal drawing*

*30.5” x 27”*

A partial facial figure that has been blurred, yet the amplified eye is bound to the interpretive perspectives of the observer.





**“The God is Wrong”**

**Artist: JONATHAN LERMAN**

*charcoal drawing*

19”x 24”

From a series of portraits printed in the 2002 book Jonathan Lerman: Drawings by an Artist with Autism. “The drawings provide a glimpse of a process of visual association unfolding over time. The Man appears to be a powerful and even transgressive figure.....and the signs that appear with him (The God Is Wrong) suggest an apocalypse. “

.....Lyle Rexer



**“Self-Portrait”**

**Artist: DARYL NEESON (musical savant)**

*graphite on paper*

11.5” x 8.5”

2023

The artist expresses himself in the music he produces. His music is intense, with low-pitched chords and minor keys typically evoking emotions of sorrow, arousal, and introspection. In contrast, this "Self-portrait" expresses the happiness experienced when Neeson is creating his music and art, linked with his love of space and what is out there beyond the earth's atmosphere.



**“This is Peace”**

**Artist: EMILY SPINKS**

*mixed media, paint, pastels and ink*

16” x 20”

2023

Enduring many years of being terrified by her own environment and her hyper-sensory issues, this hodgepodge of words and peaceful doves strives to transcend tranquility.



**“The Gloomy Protane”**

**Artist: DJ SVOBODA**

*micro pens and marker*

*18”x 15”*

Gloomy is a character from the “Imagifriends” collection of Svoboda’s “Imagiville”; where no one is mistreated. The Gloomy Protane is a very harmless Imagifriend who often likes to have his time alone when he feels a little gloomy and a little bit lonely.



**“Second Movement”**

**Artist: JA TAN**

*acrylic on canvas*

*30” x 24”*

*2017*

“Second Movement” is part of a 3 - part series of ‘Sound and Movement’ paintings created with music quietly playing in the background.

“Art is my silent dialogue with the world I see and hear. Each stroke brings clarity and expression of these varied situations and states of mind and feeling. Words fade....but colors, like music, continue to speak long after some of its vibrant shades are gone.”

*.... JA Tan*



**“Rage”**

**Artist: HAILE KING-RUBIE**

*acrylic on art paper*

*36” x 48”*

*2011*

“Rage” expresses intense frustration, anger, and inner turmoil in a world of developmental challenges.

“I scream, I cry, I'm lost. You will only find me in my art.”

*..... Haile King-Rubie*



**“Sleep”**

**Artist: DANIEL WATTENBARGER**

*oil on canvas*

*30” x 40”*

*2007*

Self-portrait - drifting from chaos



**“Invitation”**

**Artist: DONNA WILLIAMS**

*acrylic on vinyl*

*11.5”x 17.5”*

*2012*

One step beyond daring  
is invitation. Is that the  
point where one stops  
being self-contained and  
becomes curious? ... open  
to the viewer.

*...Donna Williams*





**“Different Natural Selection”**

**Artist: DONNA WILLIAMS**

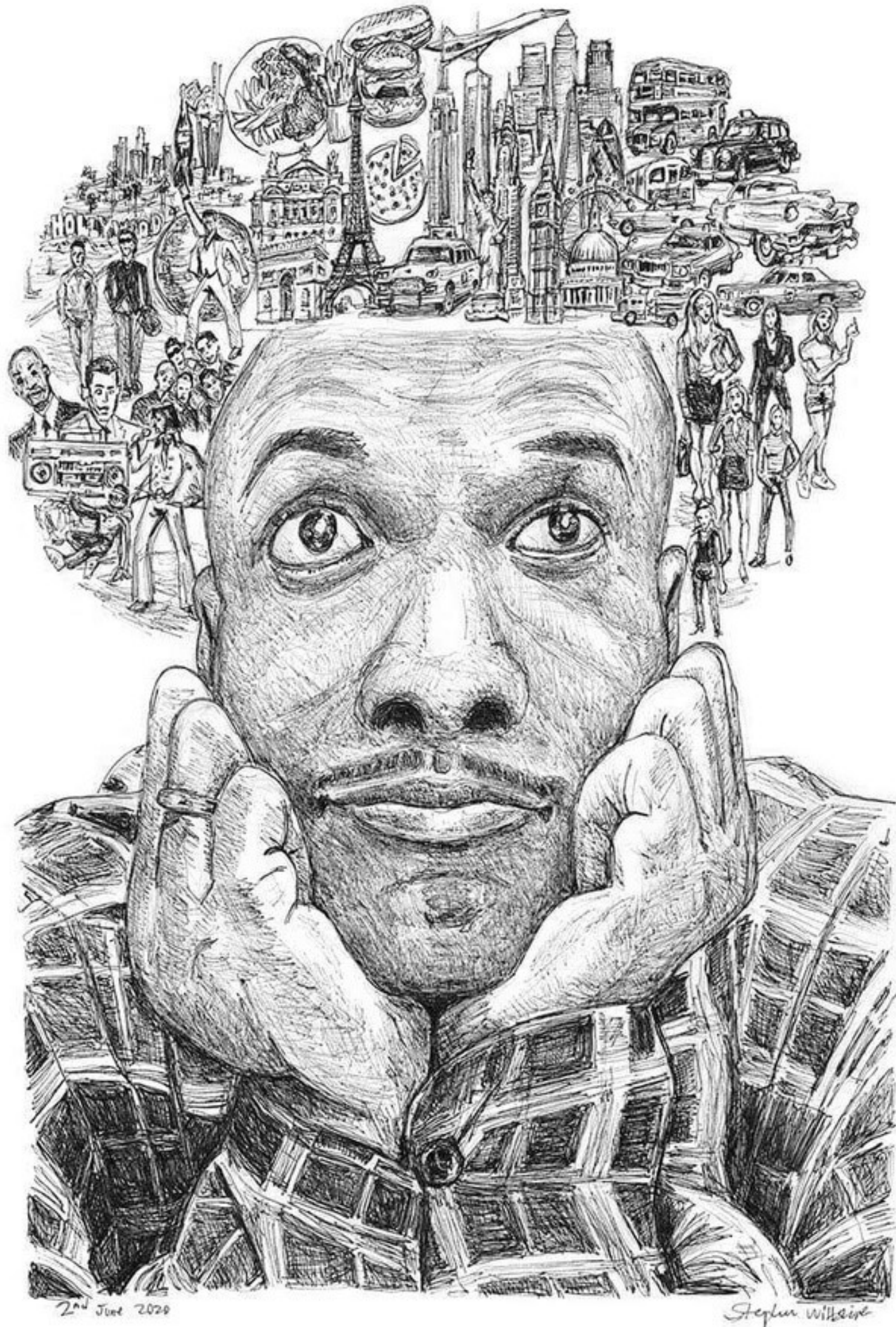
*mixed media on vinyl*

9.5” x 8.5”

2011

Natural selection is a pun. On the one hand it is about the idea of evolution and the place of people with autism or disabilities within that concept. On the other hand it is about being wild, spontaneous, real, and begs the question ‘If you knew I was like this, would you have chosen me?’

.... Donna Williams



**“My Thoughts”**

**Artist: STEPHEN WILTSHIRE**

*pen and ink*

16.5” x 23.4”

2020

This time he presents us with a direction that even his closest confidants have never seen before, an unexpected and deeply personal subject, a frozen moment in time, his thoughts.



**“My Mummy”**

**Artist: PING LIAN YEAK**

*acrylic on paper*

*24” x 20”*

*2021*

The emotional bond with “Mummy” is evident in this heartwarming painting, which radiates joy, warmth, and love. The tilt of the head expresses an acknowledgment of understanding and patience, capturing the warmth and grace of the mother with much attention to detail.

# EXHIBITING ARTISTS

*Each artist is listed in alphabetical order by last name.*

*Express consent has been given for each artist in the exhibit for their image to appear.*

- Altman, Trent (United States of America)
- Bevanda, Viktor (Republic of Serbia)
- Blackstock, Gregory (United States of America)
- Buachie, Amoako (United States of America)
- Canha, Justin (United States of America)
- Davis, Noa (United States of America)
- Friedland, Bryan (Israel)
- Hannon, Michael (United States of America)
- Karasow, David (United States of America)
- Khurana, Amrit (Republic of India)
- Ksenhuk, Lucas (Federative Republic of Brazil) residing in Florida
- LaMunyon, Amanda (United States of America)
- LaZebnik, Max (United States of America)
- Lee, Leland (Taiwan)
- Lerman, Jonathan (United States of America)
- Neeson, Daryl (Republic of Ireland)
- Rubie, Haile King (United States of America)
- Spinks, Emily (United Kingdom)
- Svoboda, DJ (United States of America)
- Tan, JA ( Philippines) currently in Canada
- Wattenbarger, Daniel Curtis (United States of America)
- Williams, Donna (Commonwealth of Australia)
- Wiltshire, Stephen (United Kingdom)
- Yeak, Ping Lian (Asia) residing in Australia

**This exhibition is organized by Strokes of Genius, Inc.**

Strokes of Genius®, Inc. (SOG) is a nonprofit organization deeply committed to supporting the artistic talents of individuals on the autism spectrum. Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by social impairments, communication difficulties, and stereotyped patterns of aberrant behavior. Strokes of Genius® Inc. seeks to empower the individual by seeking and creating opportunities to showcase the artist's works while providing a vehicle for them to enjoy doing what they love. Opportunities to enable the artists to generate income from their creativity are established, whether it is selling artwork or part-time positions as seasonal window artists, cake decorators, or authors seeking artists for their publications. We create professional artist portfolios and provide artist representation to seek out grant opportunities, juried exhibitions, and art contests for those artists who need assistance. We seek participation in mainstream galleries, curate art exhibitions, and establish personalized online art galleries for individual artists. SOG empowers neurodiverse artists by promoting individual 'abilities' in contrast to disability. Societal awareness and engagement are crucial for increased inclusion, independence, leisure, and employment opportunities for neurodiverse artists. "Don't 'dis' ability"!

*Organized and curated by Rosa C. Martinez, Ph.D., President and founder of Strokes of Genius, Inc*

**This exhibition is sponsored by the UNFPA**



Extraordinary Artworks

<https://strokesofgenius.org/>

Strokes of Genius<sup>®</sup> Inc (c) 2024