

AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM

800 KEY HIGHWAY • BALTIMORE, MD • 410.244.1900 • AVAM.ORG

December 20, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Baltimore, Maryland

American Visionary Art Museum presents
STATE OF OUR EARTH 2012 ECO CONFERENCE

an Earth post 7 Billion human residents...

Sunday, January 22, 2012 • starting at 10:00 a.m. • Free and open to the public

American Visionary Art Museum, 3rd Floor, Jim Rouse Visionary Center

The American Visionary Art Museum's current original exhibition, "**ALL THINGS ROUND: Galaxies, Eyeballs & Karma**" explores among other subjects, the widely publicized Maya Calendar completion in 2012. In conjunction with this current exhibition, AVAM will be hosting an all day, visionary, **Eco Conference** that will be held on the third floor of the national museum's Jim Rouse Visionary Center; 800 Key Highway, Baltimore Inner Harbor, Maryland. The 2012 conference's keynote speaker will be ecologist and activist, **Dr. Sandra Steingraber**—an authority on environmental links to cancer, and author of the acclaimed book *Living Downstream: An Ecologist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment*.

The State of Our Earth Eco Conference will also feature speakers **Dr. Susan Shaw**, a marine toxicologist, Doctor of Public Health, and Founder/Director of the Marine Environmental Research Institute (MERI) addressing the state of our oceans, as well as **Dr. Shira Kramer**, an epidemiologist and expert witness who founded Epidemiology International—an international organization that focuses on using scientific data to improve community health.

The conference will begin with a morning program honoring the voices and the concerns of "First Peoples," including indigenous artists who will share their respective prophetic traditions about a coming Purification Day, as well as their modern day battles with unwanted and calamitous exploitation of their lands and mineral rights. Among these speakers are Native American artists, some of whose works are featured in AVAM's "All Things Round" exhibition, from the Huichol villages of the Mexican Sierra Madre to the Lakota heartland of America. Tibetan monks from the Gaden Jangles

Monastery in India will also be in residence building a sand mandala starting January 22 and continuing throughout the week, in addition to Visionary Artist and Sufi Master, Sermet Aslan. These collective voices, each with very synchronous visions of concern, will share their experiences with the swift escalation of earth's imbalance caused by pollution of our air, land and water.

The afternoon and evening program will present internationally respected scientists, whose up-to-the moment data on industrial, chemical, and radioactive poisoning of large eco systems and living communities will echo the prophetic cautions of the First Peoples' morning testimonies, as well as lay out what positive actions can still be cooperatively accomplished. AVAM is also pleased to present two visually stunning films: Antrim Caskey's "The Last Mountain" focusing on civil disobedience in the effort to stop Mountain Top Removal and Suzanne Taylor's "What On Earth?," an award-winning film on the phenomenon of Crop Circles. Dr. John B. Carlson (Director, Center for Archaeoastronomy and University of Maryland Professor) will lead a scholarly tour of the "All Things Round" Maya-centric gallery, and share a physicist's take on the exhibition's OOPart, or "Out of Place Art"—ancient objects engraved with what appears to be UFOs and alien beings.

The American Visionary Art Museum's **State of Our Earth 2012 Eco Conference** will be made possible by the vision and generosity of The Corfu Foundation, The Ceres Trust, and the Jim and Patty Rouse Charitable Foundation. The event is free and open to the public, and all donations are gratefully welcome. Please visit avam.org for more information about this event.

BIO: Dr. Sandra Steingraber (source: <http://steingraber.com/bio/>)

Ecologist, author, and cancer survivor, Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D. is an internationally recognized authority on the environment links to cancer and human health.

Steingraber's highly acclaimed book, *Living Downstream: An Ecologist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment* presents cancer as a human rights issue. Originally published in 1997, it was the first to bring together data on toxic releases with data from U.S. cancer registries and won praise from international media including *The Washington Post*, *Publishers Weekly*, *The Lancet*, and *The London Times*.

Released as a second edition in 2010, *Living Downstream* has been adapted for film by The People's Picture Company of Toronto. This eloquent and cinematic documentary follows Steingraber during one pivotal year as she travels across North America, working to break the silence about cancer and its environmental links.

Continuing the investigation begun in *Living Downstream*, Steingraber's book, *Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood*, explores the intimate ecology of motherhood. Both a memoir of her own pregnancy and an investigation of fetal

toxicology, *Having Faith* reveals the extent to which environmental hazards now threaten each stage of infant development. In the eyes of an ecologist, the mother's body is the first environment for life. The *Library Journal* selected *Having Faith* as a best book of 2001, and it was featured in a PBS documentary by Bill Moyers.

Called "a poet with a knife" by *Sojourner* magazine, Steingraber has received many honors for her work as a science writer. She was named a *Ms. Magazine* Woman of the Year and later received the Jenifer Altman Foundation's first annual Altman Award for "the inspiring and poetic use of science to elucidate the causes of cancer." The Sierra Club has heralded Steingraber as "the new Rachel Carson," and Carson's own alma mater, Chatham College, selected Steingraber to receive its biennial Rachel Carson Leadership Award. In 2006, Steingraber received a Hero Award from the Breast Cancer Fund and, in 2009, the Environmental Health Champion Award from Physicians for Social Responsibility, Los Angeles.

An enthusiastic and sought-after public speaker, Steingraber has keynoted conferences on human health and the environment throughout the United States and Canada and has been invited to lecture at many universities, medical schools, and hospitals—including Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Columbia, and the Woods Hole Research Center. She is recognized for her ability to serve as a two-way translator between scientists and activists. She has testified in the European Parliament, before the President's Cancer Panel, and has participated in briefings to Congress and before United Nations delegates in Geneva, Switzerland. Interviews with Steingraber have appeared in *The Chicago Tribune*, *USA Today*, *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, on National Public Radio, "The Today Show," and "Good Morning America."

A columnist for *Orion* magazine, Sandra Steingraber is currently a scholar in residence in Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York. She is married to the artist Jeff de Castro, and they live in a 1000-square-foot house with a push mower, a clothesline, a vegetable garden, and two beloved children.

Oceans In Crisis: What You Should Know

by Susan D. Shaw, DrPH

"It is clear that human activities are altering ocean ecosystems beyond a point of return. We urgently need to prevent further ocean degradation and reverse the damage before it is too late. We have less than 10 years to save living oceans."

– State of the Oceans Forum, The Explorers Club 2009

1. We are coming to the end of the oceans unless human activities radically change – the cumulative impacts of pollution, overfishing, and climate change are killing ocean life faster than predicted, and could lead to a globally significant marine extinction within one generation.

2. The oceans are becoming more toxic from the billions of tons of man-made pollutants, plastics, metals, and pharmaceuticals we release to the sea annually -- and climate change is exacerbating the toxicity. At the top of the ocean food web, marine mammals are the most polluted animals on earth and many populations are living at the edge of their physiological tolerance range.
3. Since the 1980s, mass mortalities have been sharply increasing among marine mammals. Tens of thousands of seals, dolphins, porpoises, and small whales inhabiting the Baltic Sea, North Sea, Caspian Sea, Mediterranean, US Atlantic coast, and other polluted waters have succumbed to sweeping epidemics, most of which are linked with immunotoxic pollutants that compromise the animals' resilience to disease. The IUCN predicts that 1/3 of all marine mammals will go extinct by 2030 from man-made pollution and physical destruction (ship strikes, hunting).
4. Rapidly increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions during the 20th century are radically altering ocean chemistry, acidifying the oceans, propelling global warming, and decimating corals and other calcareous species and larval fish. Approximately half of the world's coral reefs, supporting an estimated 25% of all marine life, have already disappeared and 75% of corals are at risk of dying. As oceans become warmer and more acidic, all the world's corals will be threatened by mass bleaching, disease, and mortality.
5. More than 500 dead zones have formed along the world's coastlines near densely populated urban areas where runoff of pesticides, fertilizers and human sewage create anoxic (oxygen deficient) or hypoxic (oxygen starved) waters that suffocate fish, shellfish, and almost all other marine species. Altogether dead zones account for 95,000 square miles, about the size of New Zealand.
6. Huge volumes of human plastic debris the size of small continents are collecting in ocean gyres in every ocean. Plastics photo-degrade into tiny microplastic particles that persist for centuries and release toxic chemicals into the sea, killing hundreds of thousands of marine mammals and millions of seabirds annually.

Can the Oceans Be Saved?

The solutions to the crisis include immediate reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, control of pollution (including plastics), a network of marine protected areas, and a way to protect ocean life that goes beyond national jurisdictions. To succeed will not only require unprecedented cooperation between nations and international government bodies -- it will take political will and pressure from informed citizens and policymakers to drive change in the face of opposing political and economic interests.

Susan D. Shaw, DrPH

Director, Marine Environmental Research Institute (<http://meriresearch.org/>)

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AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM (AVAM) is America's official national museum and education center for self-taught, intuitive artistry. Since its opening in 1995, the museum has sought 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. Three renovated, historic, industrial buildings house wonders created by farmers, housewives, mechanics, retired folk, the disabled, the homeless, as well as the occasional neurosurgeon – all inspired by the fire within. From carved roots to embroidered rags, tattoos to toothpicks, the visionary transforms dreams, loss, hopes, and ideals into powerful works of art.

CURRENT EXHIBITION:

ALL THINGS ROUND: Galaxies, Eyeballs & Karma
October 7, 2011–September 2, 2012

The American Visionary Art Museum's seventeenth annual, thematic mega-exhibition "**ALL THINGS ROUND: Galaxies, Eyeballs & Karma**" is a celebration and call to awareness of the circular and voluptuous nature of life. From the micro-atomic spin of electrons encircling a nucleus, to the macro orbit of planets rounding our sun, "**ALL THINGS ROUND**" delights in the curves, spirals, orbs, and bubbles of full-bodied beauty that playfully manifest throughout art, science, and beyond.

This wholly original art exhibition features the exuberant works of 70+ inspired, intuitive artists including: Scott Weaver's 100,000 toothpick wonder, "Rolling Through The Bay;" Adolf Wölfli's intricate mandala-like works; spherical sculptures of artists who are sight-impaired; and the micro dot sock-thread embroideries of Ray Materson. Don't miss Frank Warren's all-time best true karmic "PostSecrets;" the 3-D sacred yarn paintings of the Huichol Indians; and a cosmic tribute to cyclical notions of time – including an exploration into the fast-approaching 2012 Winter Solstice "end" of the Mayan Calendar!

Co-curated by Museum Founder & Director Rebecca Hoffberger and Mary Ellen 'Dolly' Vehlow – award-winning graphic designer & founder/sponsor of Washington, D.C.'s H Street Festival, "**ALL THINGS ROUND: Galaxies, Eyeballs & Karma**" is a lively circle dance with its visitors of all ages at its center!

SINGLE GALLERY EXHIBITIONS:

Out Of This World

Centennial Celebration of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein

Extended through March 2, 2012 – Third Floor Gallery, Main Building

Permanent Collection Gallery

Selections from the museum's permanent collection featuring Wayne Kusy's "Lusitania"; Anonymous "Applewood Figure;" and James Franklin Snodgrass' "Untitled (Seven Panels)."

Ongoing – First Floor Gallery, Main Building

Jim Rouse Visionary Center

Cabaret Mechanical Theatre; Baltimore Painted Screens; Kinetic Sculptures; DeVon Smith's "World's First Robot Family;" Andrew Logan's "Divine;" Leonard Knight's "God is Love Balloon;" David Best's Community ArtCar Project; & more!
Ongoing – First Floor, Jim Rouse Visionary Center

Exterior Plazas

A three-ton, four-story "Whirligig" by Vollis Simpson; Andrew Logan's "Cosmic Egg;" Adam Kurtzman's giant "Golden Hand;" David Hess' "Bird's Nest Balcony;" Dr. Evermor's "Phoenix;" Dick Brown's "Bluebird of Happiness;" Wildflower Sculpture Garden featuring Ben Wilson's wooden meditation chapel/wedding altar; the glittering Community Mosaic Wall; and more!
Ongoing – Throughout Museum Grounds

VISITOR INFORMATION

The American Visionary Art Museum (AVAM) is open Tuesday through Sunday, 10am–6pm. The museum is closed on Mondays,* Christmas Day and Thanksgiving Day. AVAM is located next to historic Federal Hill park at 800 Key Highway, Baltimore Inner Harbor, 21230. Admission prices, general museum info, directions, and parking info can be found online at avam.org or by calling (410) 244-1900.

**OPEN Monday Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as AVAM's celebration of all of life's possibilities! Free admission & special programming.*

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MEDIA CONTACT:

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PRESS IMAGES are available for download from AVAM's website:

<http://avam.org/news-and-events/media-info.shtml>

Email nick@avam.org for password