

Envision Opens First-Of-Its-Kind National Gallery Exhibiting Art for and by Artists and Audiences Who are Blind or Visually Impaired

Nation's premier service provider to and employer of BVI individuals opens the Envision Arts Gallery and Community Engagement Center

WICHITA, Kan. (Jan. 20, 2022) — Envision, a leading non-profit employing and furthering possibilities for those who are blind or have low vision, has opened a first-of-its-kind national permanent gallery that gives artists who are visually impaired a stage to showcase their work. Located in Wichita, Kansas, the Envision Arts Gallery and Community Engagement Center defies the obstacles faced by marginalized artists who are blind or visually impaired (BVI) and gives those with Intellectual and Development Disabilities (IDD), as well as sighted and neurotypical audiences, a chance to experience art through multiple senses.

As the gallery space rotates, the exclusive exhibits will host nationally renowned BVI and IDD artists such as John Bramblitt, whose art has been sold in over 100 countries around the world, later this year.

"It's about something much greater than art. It's the foundation of where it all stems from," said Sarah Kephart, program manager of Envision Arts. "Everyone has a story to tell. Whether you're sighted, or blind from birth or in an accident, we all want to tell our story. The sighted world has put perceptions and parameters around what the blind and visually impaired community wants to do and can do. Envision is expanding these limits. We help people realize their potential through self-expression."

The first Envision Arts Gallery exhibition has been designed to showcase portraits of the Envision Arts program's dedicated artists who are blind or visually impaired and/or have disabilities. Highlighting their stories and success, the Main Gallery features inspiring work from [18 different BVI artists](#). The Community Portrait Wall in the Patricia A. Peer Window Gallery offers an experiential photo exhibit in which the community can directly engage and participate in — giving an opportunity and dedicated space for conversations about accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion.

Artist Roshunda Holt's piece, "Waterfall with Willow Tree," is among the first of the work exhibited. Small and shiny ceramic pieces are combined to create a mosaic landscape depicting a waterfall that flows into a river on the horizon in front of a large willow tree. While the weeping willow tree symbolizes shade over sadness, the cascading water helps purify to wash it away and bring in new life. Its tactile and colorful surface allows for people to touch and experience the artwork with multiple senses other than just vision.

"Art cannot be put into a box — that's what makes it special," said Holt, who has been recognized by the American Printing House for the Blind, Annual Insight Art Exhibition in Louisville, Kentucky. "I was diagnosed at 23 with Retinitis Pigmentosa, which is a genetic condition, so I knew I was going to lose my sight — but that did not stop me from pursuing art. And now, I hope I can inspire young artists of all abilities to never stop creating."

In addition to showcasing artwork by Envision Arts BVI artists, the Gallery demonstrates a fully accessible environment with navigational tape on the floor for white cane users, scannable QR codes with artwork descriptions for screen readers, Braille cards and booklet, and large font printed booklet of all artwork descriptions. Gallery staff are trained sighted guides that will help anyone visiting the gallery as needed.

The Gallery will also feature an Artist in Residency program designed to connect the BVI community to other artists working within the creative community of Wichita. Members of the program can showcase their work in the Gallery and will work alongside Envision Arts to help reinforce accessibility more prominently into the art world.

"This has been a dream spearheaded by Sarah for a long time," said Michael Monteferrante, president and CEO of Envision. "Envision is thrilled to bring to life this one-of-a-kind art gallery and what it represents: inclusion and accessibility to all."

All proceeds from artwork and merchandise purchased from the exhibit directly supports the artists as well as helps to fund artistic endeavors for the Envision Arts program. You can learn more about the Envision Arts Gallery and Community Engagement Center by visiting www.envisionartsgallery.com or by calling (316) 440-1699.

About Envision

Envision promotes advocacy and independence for those who are blind or have low vision. Founded in 1933, Envision is one of the largest employers of individuals with vision loss in the nation. Headquartered in Wichita, Kansas, Envision's mission is to improve the quality of life and provide inspiration and opportunity for people who are blind or visually impaired through employment, outreach, rehabilitation, education, and research. For more information, visit www.envisionus.com.