

Healing power of art on display

City Hall exhibition features works by people in treatment

AN exhibition of paintings and other art forms created by artists receiving mental health or substance abuse services from city-funded programs opens June 8 in the basement gallery at City Hall.

"As We Live It," 94 works by 33 artists, is co-sponsored by the San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery and San Francisco Study Center, the nonprofit publisher of Central City Extra and a CBHS contractor.

The exhibition was inspired by Phillip Cha's poignant, powerful 30-minute film "Unheard Voices." Cha is case manager at Citywide and Community Focus Center, a major mental health services provider.

Study Center's special projects manager Heidi Swillinger saw Cha's film and was so impressed — especially by one of the featured artists — that she contacted Aimee Le Duc, manager of the Arts Commission City Hall gallery. Le Duc hatched

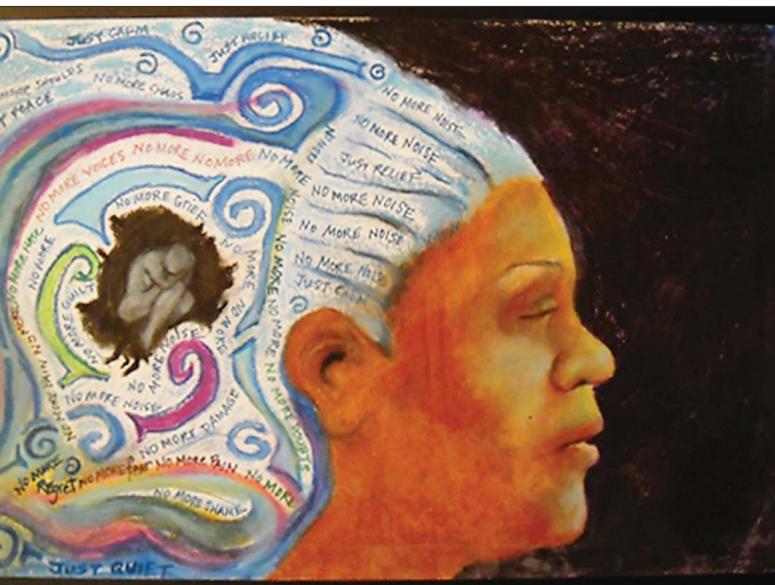
the idea of presenting works by artists in behavioral health treatment.

The 33 chosen for the exhibition, who are among the more than 20,000 adults in the Community Behavioral Health Services system, represent 18 CBHS treatment programs. Swillinger wrote profiles for five artists that are featured in the show, which runs through Aug. 25.

"Study Center is honored to help the Arts Commission mount a show that is as meaningful to the artists as it will be to viewers," said Geoff Link, executive director of the Study Center.

"But it couldn't have happened without Heidi and Maria Leach, a CBHS consumer staffer and artist herself, who conceptualized and organized this citywide tribute to the healing power of art." ■

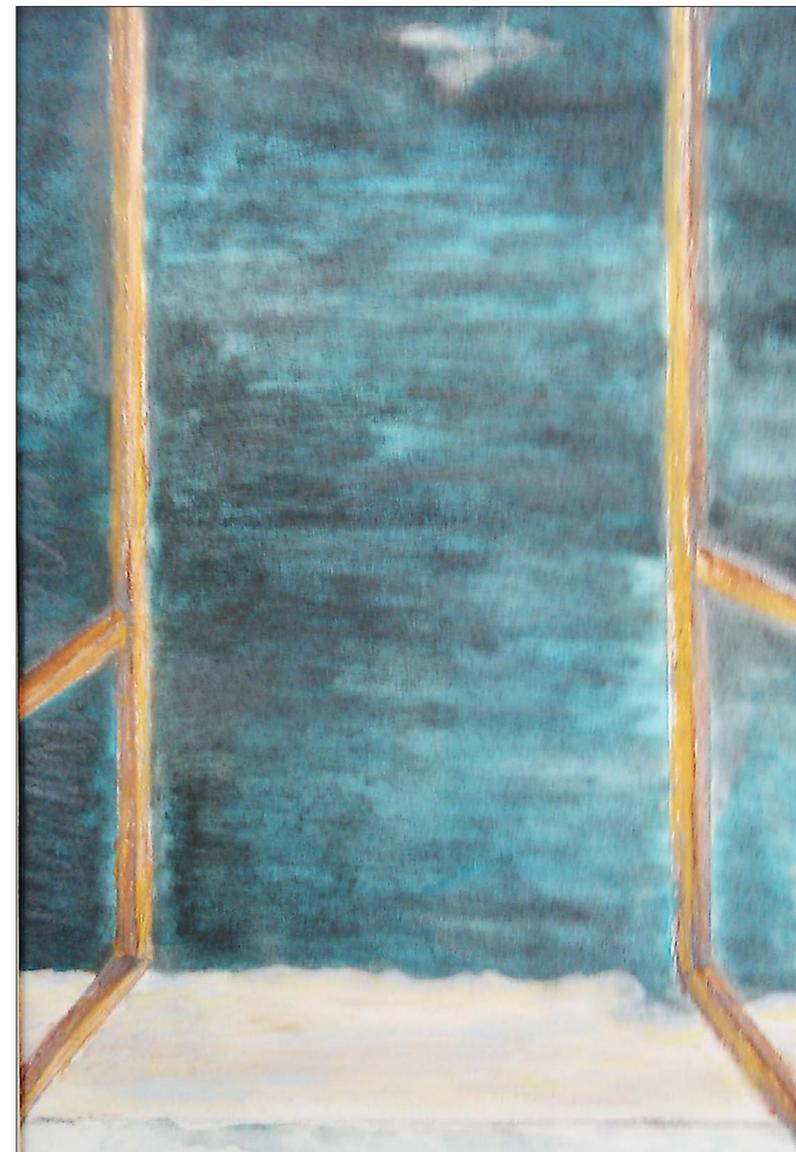
— CENTRAL CITY EXTRA STAFF REPORT



"Wish So Hard," above, and "13 Voices in a Tired Head," below, by Kami Cheatem, Mission Mental Health



"I Don't Reflect What I Feel," left, by Anamar, RAMS Adult Outpatient Program; "Gem," middle, and "Walkie Talkie," right, by Jeff Roysdon, South of Market Mental Health



"Not Sense Anymore," above, by Anamar, RAMS Adult Outpatient Program

The multimedia creations of 'Kiteman' soar skyward on a mission of simplicity and fun



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topography from the University of Houston, where he taught high school photography, burned out, moved to California and took up painting and sculpting.

"When I turned 50 I realized I had been chasing a money career and didn't even want it," says Marshall, homeless before coming to the Boyd. Now he makes art for pleasure, with SSI sustaining him. "I'm a pretty happy camper."

Marshall also makes kites at Hospitality House, where he stores hundreds of them and

teaches kite-making.

For the kite skeleton he buys thin bamboo skewers in Chinatown, hundreds in a bundle for \$1.99, or longer bamboo rods, "the ideal material" for kites. "Bamboo bends, dowels break." For facing, he buys colored tissue paper, 100 sheets for \$5, or Tyvek, plastic sheeting by DuPont for big kites, at Blick or dollar stores. The thousands of feet of string in multiple spools under a wall drawer he gets for next to nothing at SCRAP, the recycle trove for teachers and artists; and tails are from ruined cotton fabric.

Portraits in his airborne pantheon of heroes

include: Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Harriet Tubman, Helen Keller, Che Guevara, Sitting Bull, Frida Kahlo, Oscar Wilde, James Baldwin and others. From a printed image he makes a plastic overlay on a copy machine and at home with an overhead projector displays it on a wall where he hangs kite material. Then he traces the image with Japanese black ink and paints it "by the numbers," he jokes.

Most of his kites are far smaller than the 5-by-8-foot, black-and-white image of Nelson Mandela hanging on the wall now. His largest, 8-by-14-foot, which took three weeks to make, is of Harvey Milk, done from a photo by Dan

Nicoletta, who worked in Milk's Castro Street shop. Marshall tried to fly it in front of City Hall a year ago May 22 — Milk's birthday — but the wind was too violent. He's 6-foot-6, but rail-thin, and it took a second person on the string to battle nature. So he disassembled the leviathan and stored it. This year he took aloft a small version.

Marshall is practically giddy about discovering recently that phone book pages make great kite material. And they'll carry recycled names heavenward. Meanwhile, inspired by Claus Oldenburg, who, he says, "exalted the common," he's sketching and painting new

subject matter on his kites: hand tools, fishing lures, gasoline cans and other ordinary items.

Marshall flies kites at U.N. Plaza, where the "vortex of winds" heightens "the kite's dance," but above the building tops wind slams a kite back toward earth, amusing passers-by, the street people he knows and idlers clutching brown paper bags. All call him "Kiteman," an identity he embraces. He sees himself as "a bit of a wind god," not so great as Zephyrus, the Greek god of the west wind, but in Z's company.

On occasion Marshall sells a kite. May 13, during the Art in Storefronts opening, a couple in Hospitality House's Market Street storefront

asked him how much he wanted for one. "Whatever you think," he said. They gave him \$40. Once, at a Hospitality House fundraiser, his Helen Keller kite went for \$450 to a couple with a disabled daughter.

Marshall has already achieved a measure of immortality: A likeness of him flies a kite atop the Boyd Hotel, one of 300 characters in the neighborhood's major mural across the street. And he's a supporting voice in Paige Bierma's 20-minute film, "A Brush with the Tenderloin," which captures the impact that creating the big mural had on the community.

Marshall's forever seeking the satisfying scratch for his artistic itch. Recently, he went to a library book sale with \$1.01 in his pocket. Something caught his eye — a hardback volume of "Gone with the Wind." He snapped it up for \$1. After he reads it, guess where those pages are going? Soon the image of Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara may be flying high above the city. ■



Marshall can be seen flying a kite as one of 300 characters in Mona Caron's mural across the street from the Boyd Hotel on the exterior walls of a former hard-core porn movie theater.



PHOTOS BY TOM CARTER

Jeff Marshall creates a kite in his SRO room: First, he glues skewers for the skeleton, then wraps them with string, next puts tissue paper together, cuts it to size, glues the paper to the skeleton, and, last, cuts and attaches the tail for the finished kite.