



## **Jerry Beck, Visionary Artist In Search of Community**

by Rebecca Alban Hoffberger, Founder & Director

Each day, every day, about one to two feet of mail arrives, unsolicited, at our national museum, the American Visionary Art Museum located in the heart of Baltimore. Most of it hails from artists, their agents, their mothers, widowed partners, or from curators certain that they just know what our next exhibition should be. Such an unrelenting onslaught of ideas, proposals, images, and egos has sadly, but none-the-less understandably, thickened our skins and weighted our reactions. That is why our response to Jerry Beck was so extraordinary.

About a year after our grand opening in November 1995, teacher, artist, and museum founder Jerry Beck walked in. Our entire staff was quickly enthralled. Here was a very modest man with a fiery passion to transmit art and dialogue to community-at-large who came equipped with multi-decade, uber-fresh, full-spectrum experience from projects and programs that he had generated, orchestrated, and/or directly inspired. His presentation and our subsequent decade's-long relationship of collaboration have convinced me that Beck truly has no equal in the United States. This is an opinion that has not wavered.

We are presented with the opportunities to work with some pretty fabulous global art and creativity innovators. The "Glorious" Founder of Kinetic Sculpture Racing, Hobart Brown; Harrod Blank, the "big daddy" of art cars and parades; UK's Andrew Logan, creator of The Alternative Miss World's Contest, among many others. But it is Jerry Beck who has succeeded in routinely generating different, first-rate public awareness and family-loving arts experiences for people of all ages and diverse cultural backgrounds. Beck instinctively knows how to create a common and welcoming ground. His Florida House of Bread project kneaded together, with respect and fun, the various cultures of children from many ethnic traditions. This program created a giant sculptural reality in service to a much greater community harmony.

Jerry Beck was born to teach and to inspire, to promote a strong sense of community and unity. His own art communicates this in ways that people can access and drink deeply. He has the capacity to empower people to make their own original art true to their own best angles and talents. Beck comes fully equipped with a vast knowledge of how the artistic experience can have an impact on peoples lives and the world around them.