



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: September 25, 2026

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The American Visionary Art Museum Announces 31st Annual Major Themed Exhibition: Flaunt: When Appearance Speaks Opening October 10, 2026

*“The thing that’s always worked for me is the fact that I look so totally artificial,
but am so totally real.”—Dolly Parton*

(Baltimore, MD) – The American Visionary Art Museum (AVAM) will debut its annual major themed exhibition, [**Flaunt: When Appearance Speaks**](#) on **Saturday, October 10, 2026**. The year-long exhibition marks AVAM’s 31st year as the Congressionally-designated museum for self-taught, intuitive artists and visionaries of all sorts, consistently ranked among Baltimore’s favorite destinations by visitors from Maryland and beyond.

A special Press Preview that will include artist Beau McCall will be held on Wednesday, October 7, 2026, from 5:30-7:30 PM. Media are advised to email Valerie Williams, valerie@avam.org to confirm their attendance.

[**Flaunt: When Appearance Speaks**](#) explores the powerful ways we use clothing, adornment, portraiture, gesture, and personal style to declare who we are—or who we want the world to believe we are. The myriad of works in *Flaunt* begin at skin-level, revealing and exploring the intimate: How we choose to adorn ourselves, and what that adornment shows about our identities.

The exhibition will transform the **2nd floor gallery space of the Zanvyl A. Krieger Main Building**, and present **101 artworks**, in mediums ranging across drawing, portraiture,

photography, fiber, wearable form, and sculpture, often using transformed everyday materials like buttons, pipe cleaners, and bark. Visitors will encounter brightly colored and patterned walls with intricately woven sweaters, fuzzy full-body suits, denim dripping with buttons, hats made of woven wood, and many other unexpected wearable objects.

Flaunt will blend the work of internationally-known artists—such as **Erkki Pekkari**, who created his famous “Forest Folk” suit from weaving birch wood, and Beau “The Button Man” McCall—with local artists such as **Sam Barsky**, who knits sweaters featuring famous places he has visited. For *Flaunt*, Barsky will unveil a never-before-seen sweater featuring an image of AVAM. The works of Austin-based artist **Montrel Beverly**, who drew major attention at the Outsider Art Fair in New York City last February, will also be exhibited. For *Flaunt*, his first major museum feature, Beverly created high fashion items such as a Louis Vuitton handbag and Rolex watch, using his signature medium: pipe cleaners.

Other artists presented in *Flaunt* include: **Lee Godie; HML; Lucy; Shawn Payne; Helen Rae; Maria "Maima" and Satu Tani; and Eugene Von Bruenchenhein.**

In developing the exhibition, **AVAM Curator Gage Branda** drew from the expertise of advisors **Jennifer Lauren Gilbert of the Jennifer Lauren Gallery in Manchester, U.K., and Cleá Massioni**, a Ph.D. candidate in Art History and Archaeology at the University of Maryland. Both advisors champion and advocate for neurodivergent, learning disabled, self-taught artists, and several progressive art studios were also consulted. The exhibition showcases many works by artists that fit this description and doubles down on AVAM’s mission that everyone’s creativity matters.

“In the height of fast fashion and micro-trends, the artists that we showcase in *Flaunt* make intensive artworks that stand the test of time, forming a sharp contrast to the disposable nature of our manufactured world. Here, the hand-hewn and the outrageous help us step outside of our day-to-day ‘uniforms’ and enter new realms of our identity’s possibility and performance through our appearance. With disarming individuality, these artists lead us to question the nature of visual and tactile consumption and counter the market forces that drive the mass production of our appearance today,” says **AVAM Executive Director Ellen Owens.**

In a twist on conventional thinking, *Flaunt* asks visitors not to go below the surface, but rather to examine how much feeling, invention, humor, protection, and self-authorship are right in front of our eyes. Guests can fulfill their desire to feel the texture of these artworks with touchable fabric swatches near many of the displays. The exhibition will also host a custom interactive photo booth selfie-station for visitors to style and experiment with their own self-image.

AVAM members and the general public will be provided a special preview during the **Exhibition Preview Party on Friday, October 9 from 7-10 PM**. Admission to the Preview Party is free for AVAM Fan Club Members, while non-members may purchase tickets through the [EVENT PAGE](#).

The theme of this exhibition lends itself to many fabulous programs throughout the year, including *Flaunt: Werk of Art* on **November 13, 2026, from 7-11 PM**, a partnership with Innova Talent Agency and SADBrunch Entertainment, the largest Black-owned traveling drag entertainment company in the country. The event will feature the artistry of drag with a cocktail reception, red carpet experience, drag performances, dance party, and more. Tickets for this are also available through the [EVENT PAGE](#).

For media inquiries, please contact Valerie Williams at marketing@avam.org.

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ABOUT AVAM

[The American Visionary Art Museum \(AVAM\)](#) offers an immersive journey into the boundless creativity of self-taught artists. Located along Baltimore's Inner Harbor, AVAM reimagines the museum experience as a vibrant exploration of human imagination, where monumental sculptures, intricate works, and kinetic installations fill each space with energy and discovery.

Exhibitions invite visitors into deeply personal worlds shaped by creativity, humor, spirituality, and lived experience—presenting art that challenges and inspires. Designated by Congress as the nation's museum for intuitive artistry, AVAM has earned national acclaim. CNN has called it “one of the most fantastic museums anywhere in America,” while readers of *The Baltimore Sun* and *Baltimore Magazine* consistently rank it among Baltimore's leading cultural destinations.