

**SEVEN SAVANT ARTISTS, A SAVANT MUSICIAN, AN AUTHOR/MINISTER, AND A PRODIGY:  
SEEING BENEATH AND BEYOND**

*What is savant syndrome? Savant Syndrome is a rare, but spectacular, condition in which persons with various developmental disorders, including autistic disorder, have astonishing islands of ability, brilliance or talent that stand in stark, markedly incongruous contrast to overall limitations.*

[www.savantsyndrome.org](http://www.savantsyndrome.org) **Darold A. Treffert MD** See **EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE & ISLANDS OF GENIUS**

**RICHARD WAWRO** was born in Scotland, April 14, 1952, with cataracts in both eyes and severely developmentally delayed. A series of needling operations within the first six months allowed light to reach the retina. Very early in life he was diagnosed with lympho-sarcoma and received massive radiation therapy. He was also diagnosed as severely and profoundly mentally retarded and at seventeen as diabetic and received daily insulin shots the rest of his life. Because of his limited vision, he worked just a few inches from the paper to produce his beautiful landscapes. His sole medium was wax-oil crayons. He was fascinated by light and shadows. Laurence A. Becker, Ph.D. introduced his original art to the United States in 1977, at a conference on Creativity for the Gifted and Talented in New York City. In 1979, Richard made his first of many trips to the US where he was the only artist having a major exhibition during the International Special Olympics in Brockport, NY. His art received many international awards, including 1<sup>st</sup> Prize in the National Exhibits by Blind Artists, the Harmarville International Art Exhibition, and the Sister Kenny International Art Exhibition. He often toured in the US and Europe. His last exhibition in the US was in 2004 during the International Very Special Arts Festival in Washington, D.C. **WITH EYES WIDE OPEN**, an international, award-winning documentary film about Richard had its world premiere in 1983. Richard's art is included in the permanent collection of the M.I.N.D. Institute of California. Examples of his art may be viewed at his website [www.wawro.net](http://www.wawro.net), [www.mindinstitute.org](http://www.mindinstitute.org), and [www.savantsyndrome.org](http://www.savantsyndrome.org), [www.strokesofgeniusinc.org](http://www.strokesofgeniusinc.org). On February 22, 2006, Richard passed away because of cancer. He was 53 years old. His life and art were an inspiration for young and old throughout the world. His art is included in the **M.I.N.D. Institute** permanent collection and in **ART OF THE M.I.N.D.**

**CHRISTOPHE PILLAULT** was born in Iran, April 2, 1982, but now lives in France. An autistic savant, he is unable to talk, walk, or feed himself. He discovered painting in 1993, using his hands though unable to use his fingers functionally. His abilities were discovered by his special education teacher and then encouraged by his mother. A singular figure in art, he paints with his hands and uses acrylic on paper, canvas, and cardboard. Dr. Becker also first introduced Christophe's art to the US in 1998, at the Mill Pond House Gallery in Smithtown, Long Island, NY. His paintings are striking due to the imaginary, fascinating, and at times mystic characters presented. It appears that Christophe is painting ethereal beings. Christophe has exhibited throughout France, Italy, Japan, and the US. One of his paintings was featured on the cover of the program of the 2003 DAN (Defeat Autism Now) Conference. His art is included in the **M.I.N.D. Institute** permanent collection and in **ART OF THE M.I.N.D.** See [www.savantsyndrome.org](http://www.savantsyndrome.org), [www.dialogueautisme.org](http://www.dialogueautisme.org).

**PING LIAN YEAK** was born November 18, 1993, in Malaysia. He now lives in Australia. His art stands on its own demonstrating a remarkable artistic ability for one so young. His drawings are colorful, cheerful, and impressive. He was diagnosed at age four as having ADHD with autistic features. Initially he had very poor fine motor control, but his mother started him tracing and coloring as a daily part of his training. He has limited communication and social skill. His advanced artistic skill, in addition to providing beautiful art, serves as a source of satisfaction, development, and growth for him, helping eventually to minimize whatever limitations might spring from his disabilities. Dr. Rosa Martinez and Dr. Becker first introduced his original art to the US in January 2006, in an exhibition at the Henry Gregg Gallery in Brooklyn and Cooper Union University in Manhattan. Examples of his art may be seen at [www.pinglian.com](http://www.pinglian.com), [www.savantsyndrome.org](http://www.savantsyndrome.org), [www.strokesofgeniusinc.org](http://www.strokesofgeniusinc.org)

**GRANT MANIER**, born in 1995, and resides in Houston, Texas. He has autism and developed an obsessive repetitive behavior for tearing paper at a very young age. By his early teens Grant began recycling and collecting paper. Using cool colors, cool shapes, cool textures, and calling his art "COOLAGES" Grant created his eco-art as a form of therapy for his autism. Having autism has not stopped Grant; it has only lifted him and has inspired others to believe in themselves, even if their behavior seems "out-of-sync or obsessive" to others. Grant says, "It's not what we can't do....It's what we can do!" He has received many awards and recognition for his beautiful art and his outstanding educational outreach to children and adults. See [www.GrantsEcoArt.com](http://www.GrantsEcoArt.com) and [www.jigsawgrant.com](http://www.jigsawgrant.com).

**KIMBERLY DIXON**, a 31 year old published poet and artist, **UNDER THE SILENCE IS ME: How it Feels to be Nonverbal**, from Round Rock, Texas, with nonverbal autism and epilepsy, passed away June 7, 2016. She communicated via typing, and enjoyed painting. She wrote poetry and stories. Her wisdom and talent inspired us all. [jandmdixon@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jandmdixon@sbcglobal.net) and [www.freepoet85.weebly.com](http://www.freepoet85.weebly.com).

**ERIK WARREN**, born 1971, lives with autism. Erik's ability to express himself with words is limited, but he found his true gift with his scroll saw creations, bringing joy to many people. His father, Jim, lived in Hays, Kansas, but he passed away in January 2018. [www.erikoriginals.com](http://www.erikoriginals.com) His brother, Jason, lives with his mother, Lynda.

**SETH CHWAST** was born in 1983. His story is found in AN UNEXPECTED LIFE: A Mother and Son's Story of LOVE, DETERMINATION, AUTISM, and ART by Debra Chwast with paintings by Seth Chwast. Bright, gentle, and imaginative, Seth is an American artist who was diagnosed with autism at 21 months. Primarily non-verbal, Seth participated in a vocational evaluation at age 18 which resulted in a career recommendation of dry mopping. At 20, he took his first art class and by 23 was on the Today Show as a featured artist. Now 34, Seth has shown in hospitals, museums and universities throughout America. He has exhibited in Galapagos, Cayman, Curacao, Kiev, the United Nations, and throughout Europe. In 2011, Seth came in first place in a world-wide United Nations competition and his art was placed on a postal stamp to promote autism awareness. In 2015, Seth had his first European exhibition in France and in 2017 he was a featured artist at the London Art Biennale, where he earned the European Confederation of Art Critics Award, Third Prize. [www.SethChwastArt.com](http://www.SethChwastArt.com) k

**TONY DE BLOIS**, lives in Boston with his mother, Janice. His story was the subject of a CBS Movie of the Week, JOURNEY OF THE HEART. He is a prodigious savant musician with autism, who plays 23 musical instruments, sings with perfect pitch in 11 languages, and graduated *magna cum laude* from the Berklee College of Music. Tony plays in a jazz band, has several CD's, and will compose original music for FIERCE LOVE and ART.

[www.tonydeblois.com](http://www.tonydeblois.com)

**Ron Sandison**, minister/author of **A PARENT'S GUIDE TO AUTISM**, who at age 5 was diagnosed with autism and was taught by his mother, who used art, to help him learn to read and write. He graduated with two degrees and a 4.0 grade point average from Oral Roberts University and currently serves a minister in Rochester Hills, Michigan. Contact Ron at [sandison456@hotmail.com](mailto:sandison456@hotmail.com),

**MARSHALL STEWART BALL**, a prodigy, arrived July 26, 1986, the first son of Charles and Troylyn Ball. Marshall is a profound thinker and writer who wishes to share his wisdom with the world. While he does not speak, the words he writes are eloquent and serve to teach each and every one of us who will take the time to listen. He writes his poetry with the assistance of someone supporting his elbow as he points with his whole hand to individual letters on an alphabet board. Another person then transcribes the letters. A single poem may take up to one hour to complete. In 1992, his writings were first shared with the public in a series of six cards at the TAGT Conference when he was only 6 years old. One title, "My Harmony Prevails to Free," continues to amaze. In 1999, **KISS OF GOD: The Wisdom of a Silent Child** was published with an initial printing of 50,000 copies. In the first three months over 200,000 copies were sold. Marshall was 12 years old.

In 2001, a second book, **A GOOD KISS, The Wisdom of a Listening Child** was published.

Contact Marshall Ball at [www.marshallball.com](http://www.marshallball.com).

**For information about these savants and the prodigy contact:**

**Dr. Laurence A. Becker, CREATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS, Producer WITH EYES WIDE OPEN (1983)**

**And FIERCE LOVE and ART (2018),**

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