POBA partners with DIFFA, LifeBEAT, and Visual AIDS to kickoff Art Lives initiative with online exhibits of work by Sylvester, Mel Cheren, Patrick Kelly, Martin Wong & more

NEW YORK (December 1, 2015) – POBA | Where the Arts Live and a coalition of HIV/AIDS organizations, including DIFFA (Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS), LifeBEAT: Music Fights AIDS, and Visual AIDS, have joined forces to provide the public with a permanent online platform to honor and showcase the creative legacies of a generation of artists lost to AIDS while also promoting AIDS awareness.

The initiative, Art Lives, kick-offs on World AIDS Day (December 1st) with online exhibits of works by seven artists from the music, design, and visual arts worlds whose lives were cut short by AIDS. Recognizing that the works of many artists who died in the early years of the crisis in the 1980s and 1990s were created before digital preservation was possible, the initiative affords the public a rare opportunity to experience some of their works online and to add to the Art Lives collection over time.

The inaugural Art Lives galleries include such highlights as:

- Early footage and audio recordings of disco icon, Sylvester
- Paintings by pioneering record executive and "Godfather of Disco," Mel Cheren
- Original sketches and fabrications by acclaimed fashion designer, Patrick Kelly
- Paintings by influential Lower East Side artist, Martin Wong
- Paintings by East Village art critic, curator and painter, Nicolas Moufarrege
- Designs and personal sketches by architect and department store designer, Jim Terrell
- Graphics by Ken Kendrick, famously known for designing the “Just Say No” to drugs logo

The permanent exhibit will add artists from all genres in the coming months by nomination from other HIV/AIDS organizations and the public. Members of the public can participate in the Art Lives campaign by nominating exceptional artists lost to AIDS, even if unknown, in the fields of visual arts, performing arts, literary arts, design, film, music, and object arts or by creating a online gallery showcasing the work of their family member or friend. To nominate an artist or create an online portfolio for Art Live, go to POBA Nominate A Great at http://poba.org/nominate-a-great/

"More than 30 years after HIV was first identified, it continues to affect all of us, everyday," said Jennifer Cohen, Managing Director of Songmasters, and developer of POBA. "Besides the heartbreaking loss of life, there is the loss of the creative energy, vision and talent of a whole generation lost to AIDS. While we can never know all of the great work these artists had ahead of them, we can and should celebrate the great work and stories they left behind."

Launched in July 2014, POBA is a program of the James Kirk Bernard Foundation, a nonprofit organization created to honor the artistic interests of Jamie Bernard, a young writer and artist (1987-2010). Recognizing that many artists leave behind a wealth of work with little or no direction on how it should be preserved for future generations, POBA helps heirs and estates to preserve, promote, and showcase a deceased artist’s creative legacy and introduce their work to new audiences.
For the initiative, POBA worked closely with each of the three participating organizations to identify artists from their respective fields and curate exhibitions that highlight their extraordinary talents. The inaugural focus has been on artists who died of AIDS in the 1980s and early 1990s, when AIDS was a swift killer and before technology made digital preservation of art works common.

DIFFA Executive Director Johanna Osburn remarked “So many of the design creatives who we lost to AIDS in the 80s and 90s shaped our lives today in ways we might not recognize. Art Lives gives DIFFA a chance to honor the enduring talent of visionaries of fashion, of spaces, and of important cultural images that might otherwise be left to the footnotes of design history.” Art Lives presents three designers in association with DIFFA (Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS):

- **Patrick Kelly** (1954 –1990) – Patrick Kelly, whose work was featured in a major exhibit at the Philadelphia Museum of Art last year, went from a Mississippi childhood to being a celebrated African American fashion designer in Paris. Presented with assistance from the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Shomberg Center for Research in Black Culture.

- **Ken Kendrick** (1949 –1992) – Graphic designer Ken Kendrick, a former art director for *The New York Times Magazine*, also designed the "Just Say No" poster for Nancy Reagan's controversial anti-drug campaign and numerous commercial graphics, including a re-design of Coca-Cola branding. He also created the iconic “heart strings” logo and poster for one of the earliest AIDS education campaigns.

- **Jim Terrell** (1944 –1989) – An architect and one of the “beautiful people” of the New York City scene of the 1970s and ‘80s, Jim Terrell was best known for his work as a store designer, pioneering the idea of the department store as theater for such New York City landmarks as Saks Fifth Avenue, Macy’s, and Bloomingdale’s. His sister, Nancy Terrell – formerly "Miss Nancy," of the kids’ TV show *Romper Room* – helped curate the collection.

**LifeBEAT: Music Fights HIV/AIDS** identified two icons of music - one an executive and the other a performer - to capture the impact of AIDS on HIV+ artists and the world of music. “Both Sylvester and Mel Cheren broke new ground in music – Sylvester by being openly out and out there in fashion, in style and in an unmatchable voice, and Mel by bringing the music that defined an era to the world and by being one of the pioneers of the fight against AIDS,” said Gary Dell’Abate, Board President. “Art Lives helps LifeBEAT to keep the ground they walked on fertile - so we can share their art and keep young kids who love music safe from AIDS now as well.” Art Lives presents two artists in association with **LifeBEAT**:

- **Mel Cheren** (1933–2007) – Music-industry executive Mel Cheren earned the title "Godfather of Disco" as co-creator of the Paradise Garage, the epicenter of the 1970s and ‘80s disco scene, and as a co-founder of West End Records, which invented the 12-inch single. He was also a gifted painter. His artwork will be featured in this exhibit.

- **Sylvester** (1947–1988) – Dubbed "the Queen of Disco," Sylvester James Jr. earned international fame under his stage name *Sylvester* and broke barriers for cross-dressing on mainstream television – a revolutionary act at the time. His hit “You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)” remains a dance floor anthem, though he had best sellers in gospel and soul as well. The exhibit includes video footage of his performing career and audio tracks showcasing his early work.

“At Visual AIDS, we are about art, AIDS, and action. Working with Art Lives is an opportunity to promote the work and history of HIV+ artists - many who unfortunately are no longer with us - while raising awareness that AIDS is not over, and getting the public involved,” said Nelson Santos, Executive Director. Art Lives presents two artists in association with **Visual AIDS**:

- **Nicholas A. Moufarrege** (1947–1985) – As a critic, curator, and artist, Nicholas A. Moufarrege was an important catalyst in the early 80's East Village art scene. He created idiosyncratic embroidered paintings that drew on his cultural roots as an Egyptian-born Lebanese raised in Beirut and influenced by Paris and New York, reflecting a distinct artistic sensibility.
Martin Wong (1946–1999) – A performer, painter, and art collector whose meticulous visionary realism is among the lasting legacies of New York's East Village art scene of the 1980s and a precursor to the identity-driven work of the '90s, Wong mixed Chinese, Latino and urban motifs into evocative and complex works.

About POBA | Where The Arts Live
Launched in July 2014, POBA | Where The Arts Live is a program of the James Kirk Bernard Foundation (JKBF), a nonprofit organization created to honor the artistic interests of Jamie Bernard (1987–2010), a young writer and artist. POBA is an online arts hub and resource center whose mission is to celebrate, showcase, promote and preserve the creative works of exceptional 20th and 21st century artists – known and unknown – who died without recognition of the full measure of their talents or creative legacies, regardless of genre or medium.

For visitors, POBA is a place to discover and enjoy the work of these gifted artists. Among POBA’s collections are painting and drawing, sculpture, poetry and other writings, photography, music and performing arts, and more. Among these are photos, videos, and clippings showcasing performances and choreography by American Ballet Theatre wunderkind Clark Tippet; a selection of author Norman Mailer’s rarely seen Picasso-inspired drawings; and rarely heard performances by acclaimed lyricist and musician Andrew Gold.

POBA was designed and developed by Songmasters for JKBF.

About DIFFA: DIFFA (Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS is one of the country’s largest supporters of direct care for people living with HIV/AIDS and preventive education for those at risk. Merging care and commerce, supporters of DIFFA come from all fields of fine design and the visual arts, including: architecture, fashion design, interior design, photography and consumer product design. http://diffa.org/

About LifeBEAT: LifeBEAT (Music Fights HIV/AIDS educates America’s youth (13-29) about HIV/AIDS and STD prevention by mobilizing the music industry ‘s resources to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and STDs at live music events, and via broadcast, digital, social, and print platforms. LifeBeat also provides quality of life services and support for people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. http://lifebeat.org/


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