

A black and white photograph of a building's exterior porch. The porch features a series of white columns with decorative finials. Large, dense evergreen branches are hanging from the porch ceiling, partially obscuring the view of the building. The text 'East Village Magazine' is overlaid in a large, white, serif font, with 'December 2024' in a smaller font below it.

East Village Magazine

December 2024

Photograph By

Edwin D. Crocker



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Commentary

How to explain the cult-like appeal of Donald Trump

By Paul Rozycki

For the last decade, since he rode down the escalator in Trump Tower in 2015, Donald Trump has been a dominant factor in American politics. He lost the popular vote but won an Electoral College victory in 2016. He lost both the popular vote and the Electoral College in 2020. Then, he won both in 2024. Above and beyond the specific factors that won Trump the victory this year, he has a unique cult-like following that perhaps no other president or candidate has ever had.

In the years to come many books and articles will be written about Trump's appeal, how it persisted so long, and its impact on American politics. It's true he raised significant issues to support his candidacy, such as immigration, crime, and the economy, but many other candidates raised similar issues and didn't have the same fervent supporters.

For past presidential candidates, once the election is over the yard signs, flags, and bumper stickers disappear. That hasn't been the case with Trump. Even after his 2020 loss, the yard signs and MAGA hats stayed on lawns or atop heads.

He converted the traditional conservative/Christian/country club/chamber of commerce Republican Party into the Trump party – a party where loyalty to Trump is the core requirement. Many of those who had been Trump's harshest critics, like J.D. Vance or Nikki Haley, have

become loyal supporters. And those who were not, like Mitt Romney or Liz Cheney, have left the party or were driven out.

One of the biggest surprises to me was that Kamala Harris' appeal to the never-Trump Republicans didn't deliver enough votes to make a difference. The long list of Republican officials who worked with him and who denounced him seemed to have minimal effect on voters. As I discussed last month, Trump has even found increased support among groups that have traditionally favored Democrats strongly, such as Hispanic and African American voters, as well as white working class voters. Why?

The outlaw

As a candidate, Trump broke almost every traditional rule of politics and not only survived but prospered.

What other candidate could insult veterans, women, people with disabilities, Hispanics and African Americans (and many others) and still get support from those same groups? What other candidate could use a police mugshot as a campaign fundraising device? What other candidate would be caught paying off a porn star, cheating on his wife, hiding classified documents, and still be a viable candidate? What other candidate could face 34 felony convictions and still be able to run for anything? What other candidate would go on TV selling bibles, gold coins, guitars, athletic

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Cover: Whaley House facade on a winter's day. (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)



Photo of the Month: The arched entry to St. Matthew's Church on Beach Street. (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Education Beat

Renovated Brownell-Holmes campus reopens to students

By Harold C. Ford

After nearly a calendar year, the dramatically upgraded Brownell and Holmes school buildings along Oxley Drive on the city's north side have reopened to Flint students from pre-K to eighth grade.

Holmes STEM Middle School Academy marked the reopening with a "homecoming celebration" on Nov. 22, 2024, and Brownell STEM Academy hosted a similar celebration on Nov. 25 at which East Village Magazine (EVM) was present.

Financial support totaling \$40 million was provided for the project between \$26 million in Elementary and Secondary School and Emergency Relief (ESSER) dollars and \$14 million from the Flint-based C. S. Mott Foundation.

During construction, Brownell and Holmes students were shuttled to available classroom spaces in other Flint Community Schools (FCS), including Southwestern Academy on the

city's south side.

According to a Nov. 13 FCS press release, Brownell-Holmes campus improvements include:

- upgraded facades of both buildings;
- a new Early Childhood wing that serves children from ages six weeks to four years;
- two new age-appropriate playgrounds;
- replacement of a running track;
- an upgraded football field;
- newly-installed basketball courts;
- improved and rerouted parking lots.

While work on the playgrounds and track area is ongoing, one other promised improvement was also incomplete during the November celebrations: the campus' showpiece building, The Cube, is yet to be built.

The Cube is slated to be a brand-new, multi-purpose 5,000-square-foot facility situated between the Brownell and Holmes buildings. District officials indicated from the start of renovations that The Cube would open in the spring or summer of 2025.

"We are thrilled to celebrate the accomplishments thus far," said Kevelin Jones, FCS superintendent in a public statement. "This open house is a testament to the resilience and spirit of our school community, and we are grateful for the ongoing support of our scholars, staff, families, and partners."

A win-win

Shamarion Grace, Brownell STEM Academy principal, said the upgraded building has been "a great experience," and "a win-win."

"Students love it," she beamed as she discussed the space she's admin-

Education Beat ...

(Continued from Page 4)

istered for the past seven years. “You can see the smiles on their faces, excitement when they come to school.”

Beginning as a middle-high school teacher, Grace has served Flint’s public schools for 35 years. Before that, she earned degrees from the University of Michigan-Flint, Eastern Michigan University, and Wayne State University after graduating from Beecher High School, which is in the midst of its own upgrades nearby.

The Cube and possibilities

“We need our babies back,” Superintendent Jones declared in May 2023, as the financial impact of eight in ten “babies” choosing not to enroll in Flint schools, despite their Flint zip codes, was taking its toll on the district.

The rollout of the Brownell-Holmes Cube project at an Oct. 16, 2023 FBOE meeting emphasized the new building’s “possibilities” beyond just the students’ needs in North Flint. Namely, it envisioned “a com-



Shamarion Grace, Brownell principal, greets students during the school’s reopening. (Photo by Harold C. Ford)

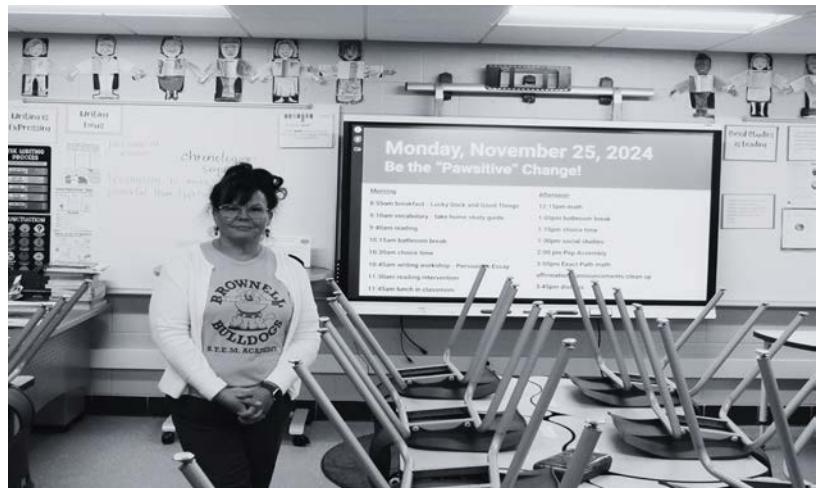
munity Hub for resources residents need in North Flint [including] a gymnasium, athletic fields, academic success programming, workforce development, arts exploration, health and wellness” and other services.

Printed “priorities” also included “expanded opportunities that allow the district to be competitive for enrollment in North Flint.”

Arguably, the disadvantage of the Brownell-Holmes upgrade strategy to attract students is that its enrollment possibilities end at the 8th grade. Whereas nearby Beecher High School and New Standard Academy go through 12th grade, there are no FCS high school options on the city’s north end.

Nonetheless, FCS leadership remains hopeful the investment in Brownell-Holmes will foster pride and possibility, according to language found on the district’s website:

“The vision is coming to pass, and FCS is Reenergizing the Pride, Renovating the Plans, Rebuilding the Possibilities, and Repurposing for a Brighter Future! Let’s Go, Flint! We are moving forward. Who’s ready to catch the spirit and join us?” ●



Clockwise from top left: a welcome sign at Brownell STEM Academy’s “homecoming celebration” to mark the school’s reopening after renovations; Brownell teacher Kerry Downs in a newly remodeled classroom; Cheryl Henige, pre-K teacher at Brownell in a newly remodeled classroom.

(Photo by Harold C. Ford)



Commentary ...

(Continued from Page 3)

shoes, or digital trading cards like a carnival barker?

For all the reverence we have for “law and order” in this country, we also have an affection for “the outlaw” and those who go out of their way to break the rules. How many country western singers brag about the fact that they served time in prison? Many rappers or rock stars make the same claim. While we mostly desire law and order for ourselves, we still enjoy movies and books about crime and glory, like the Godfather, Bonnie & Clyde, and Billy the Kid who made their marks breaking the law or traditions.

The outsider

Among all of our presidents Trump is unique in many ways, but one of the most notable is the fact that he is the only president who never held a government position before being elected to the White House. All previous presidents, and nearly all past major party nominees, have either held an elected or appointed government position or been a military leader prior to their presidential bid. Trump had none of that.

That fact alone allowed him to tap into the distrust that has grown over all levels of government in recent decades.

As the outsider he could

and used his celebrity status and the media to his advantage.

While he loves to condemn the “mainstream media” and attack those he deems part of it with regularity, he has also been able to manipulate them to keep his name and face in front of the public endlessly. When was the last time there were two days in a row without some news story about Trump, either positive or negative? As a former reality TV celebrity, he often brags about his media ratings or crowd sizes as much as any actual political accomplishments.

He knows how to use the media, and they can use him. Trump is good copy. When an airplane



President Donald J. Trump hosting his second “Made in America” product showcase at the White House.
(Official White House Photo)

Trump may be the quintessential outlaw politician who takes a certain perverse pride in his rule-breaking, and he finds support from those who wish they could do the same thing. The persona allows him to play the victim of “the elite” or “the establishment” – who he claims are out to get him as he appeals for public sympathy. He gets votes from those who also feel left out by those vague entities, and Hillary Clinton’s labeling of Trump supporters as “deplorable” in her 2016 campaign widened that divide.

blame many problems on the “deep state” governmental bureaucracy, and more than a few of his nominees to cabinet positions are also outsiders who attack the very departments they are expected to lead.

The celebrity

In his infamous Access Hollywood tape Trump said, “When you’re a star... you can do anything,” as he brags about groping women. He has also claimed that he could “shoot someone on Fifth Avenue and not lose any votes”

lands safely that isn’t news, but when it crashes it is. When Trump makes crazy claims about Obama’s birth certificate, windmills causing cancer, and drinking bleach to cure COVID-19, it’s hard to turn away. After all, what story is likely to grab your attention: a story about Haitian immigrants eating pets or a story about a congressional hearing on the capital gains tax?

In the final analysis on Trump’s celebrity, it’s not the media to blame. We, the public, are the ones who react. We read the porn star hush money story or click on the post about a “vile” rally before

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Commentary ...

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we move on to content about anything else.

And Trump the entertainer, the celebrity, knows this.

I've often joked that if we could just go three days, 72 hours, without having Trump's name in any media—not the newspapers, the TV, radio, website, social media, newsletter, or blog – that his head would explode and he would be gone. But that's not likely to happen.

To use the old Pogo phrase, "We have met the enemy and he is us." ●

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THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

Below is a selection of events available to our readers, beginning after our December publication date. To submit events for our January issue, email information about your event to eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com by December 30.

Polar Express Night

Friday, Dec. 13 | 5-8 p.m.

Bring your little ones for an evening of donut decorating and small crafts. Enjoy snacks and hot cocoa while listening to the reading of Polar Express, starting at 6 p.m. Recommended ages 3-10 years, but all ages welcome. Cost includes golden ticket, donut decorating/crafts, unlimited snacks/drinks: \$8 per child, \$15 for 2, \$20 for 3 and adults free. Fresh brewed coffee provided. Other adult drinks/snacks available for purchase. Carriage Town Bakery
604 Garland St., Flint

Flint Artwalk

Friday, Dec. 13 | 6-9 p.m.

Walk around downtown Flint and visit the many merchants, galleries, restaurants and other venues displaying art by area artists and showcasing the talents of local musicians. For more info visit greaterflintartscouncil.org or call 810-238-2787.

Making the Holidays Awesome! at Factory Two

Saturday, Nov. 14 | 10:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Join the team at Factory Two for a festive and creative holiday event at Factory Two! This free, family-friendly celebration invites the community to dive into hands-on workshops, from textile and flat stock screen printing to laser engraving, leather working, and stained glass art. Participants can create one-of-a-kind pieces in each area to keep for themselves or to gift to a loved one. Local vendors will also be onsite for holiday shopping.
129 N. Grand Traverse St., Flint

Flint Under the Stars: Drag Show

Make the Yuletide Gay

Wednesday, Dec. 18 | 7 p.m.

Head to The Capitol Theatre for an exhilarating show featuring queens from all across mid-Michigan and a special guest: Miss Gay America 1982! This is an adults-only show with recommended donation of \$10. For tickets or more information visit: <https://tickets.thefim.org/yuletidegay>
140 E. Second St., Flint

African American Film series

December, Dec. 19 | 5:30 p.m.

Communities First, Inc. (CFI) continues its 10th Annual African American Film Series with "Farming While Black." The event features a free dinner at 5:30 p.m. with the film following at 6:30 p.m. For more information visit CFI's social media pages.
Flint Institute for the Arts
1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint

Holiday Pops

Saturday, Dec. 21 | 7 p.m.

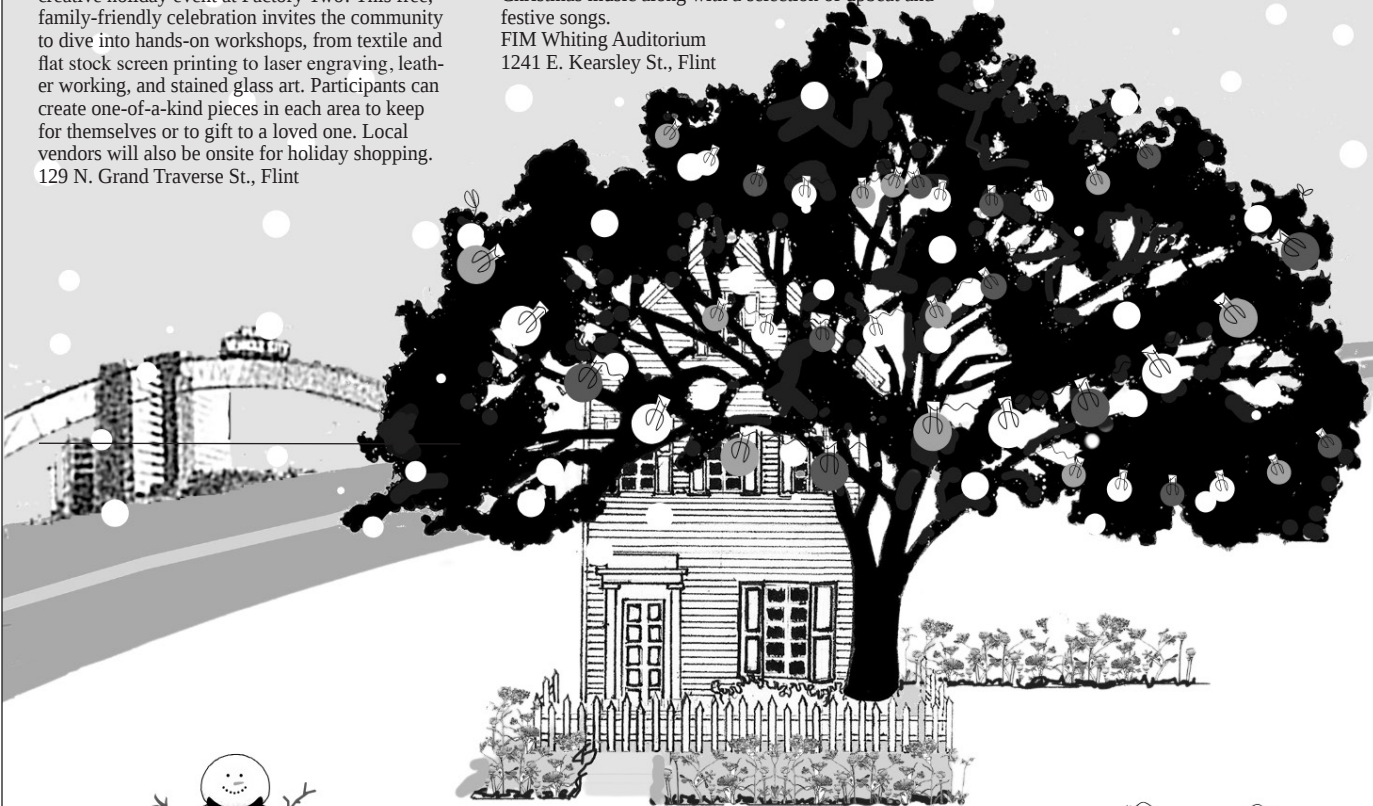
The Flint Symphony Orchestra is back with this year's performance: Holiday Pops — Home for the Holidays! The FSO will be playing time-honored audience favorites of traditional and contemporary Christmas music along with a selection of upbeat and festive songs.

FIM Whiting Auditorium
1241 E. Kearsley St., Flint

Roaring 20's New Year's Eve

Tuesday, Dec. 31 | 9 p.m.

Ring in the New Year in Gilded Age style at the Whaley Historic House. We will provide an hors d'oeuvre buffet in the dining room, cash bar, and dancing in the Music Room. 1920s black tie is encouraged but not mandatory. Tickets are \$35 or two for \$60 and can be purchased online.
Whaley Historic House
614 E. Kearsley St., Flint



Farewell to Michael Lluberes, founding producing artistic director of FIM Flint Repertory Theatre

By Kate Stockrahm

Michael Lluberes, the founding producing artistic director of FIM Flint Repertory Theatre, is leaving the theatre after more than six years of service.

In an interview just days ahead of his departure from the non-profit stage on Kearsley Street, Lluberes told East Village Magazine (EVM) that he had too many fond memories of his experience to count.

“The Flint Mural Plays – a community project where we commissioned and produced 25 world

ing the world premiere of the new LGBTQIA+ version of “The Fantasticks” (rewritten with original book writer and lyricist Tom Jones); the two-piano version of “Ragtime;” “Death of a Salesman” starring Lewis J. Stadlen; and most recently the sold-out, extended run of “Godspell,” which broke records for the theatre.

Lluberes, originally from Okemos, Mich., is returning to New York City to pursue freelance directing and writing opportunities, and the Flint Rep’s Managing Director,

Lluberes added that his time as the theatre’s artistic director has been a wonderful “a roller coaster ride.”

“It’s been the thing that I’m most proud of and also the most challenging thing. But, you know, the thing that I truly believe in – I mean, I truly believe, it’s not bullshit,” he laughed. “I really believe that theater has the power to change lives... And I’ve seen that. I’ve seen the most beautiful things happen in that little space, in the Elgood Theater. We’ve created this, this magic there.”

For her part, in a Nov. 25 press



From left to right: David Guster, Jason Briggs, Madelyn Porter of Flint Mural Plays; outgoing FIM Flint Repertory Theatre Artistic Director Michael Lluberes; a still from *The Fantasticks*.

premiere audio plays during the pandemic,” Lluberes offered as one example, “that’s probably the thing I’m most proud of and something that was unique to the city and to the theatre.”

I’ve seen the most beautiful things happen in that little space...

But aside from creating theater based on Flint murals in conjunction with multiple other artists, Lluberes has many other accomplishments from his time at The Rep.

Some highlights of his tenure include conceiving of and direct-

Nicole Samsel, has been appointed interim artistic director alongside her current position.

“It’s bittersweet because I love the city, and I love the theater that we’ve created,” Lluberes said about leaving Flint for New York, where he worked as an actor, director and writer for 16 years before taking on his role at The Rep. “And I really know that it will continue on, and I really trust that the staff there, especially Nicole Samsel ... She’s done all of this work the last three years with me, produced all of these great plays with me, and I really trust her, and know that the theater will be in great hands.”

release, interim artistic director and managing director Nicole Samsel said, “Working with Michael over the past three seasons at Flint Rep has been an incredible honor and a pleasure. He is a truly visionary director and theatre maker who has dedicated himself fully to establishing and growing Flint into an artistic home for so many. Our team will miss his creativity, passion, and humor, but looks forward to not only continuing but building upon the incredible foundation he has built here.”

Lluberes’ last day at the FIM Flint Repertory Theatre is Dec. 11, 2024. ●

Parks & Rec: Exploring Flint and beyond, one park at a time

By Christina Collie

As autumn gives way to winter, East Village Magazine's Christina Collie has been on the hunt for the best places nearby to enjoy exploring nature in the colder weather. This is the first in a series she's produced on parks and recreational areas to explore in Flint and its surrounding cities. While many are dog friendly, please be aware that stray dogs are a common occurrence, so stay mindful of your surroundings at all times, regardless of where you decide to explore.

*Max Brandon Park
3606 DuPont Street
Flint, MI 48504
Hours: Dawn til Dusk*

Max Brandon Park is a lovely 120-acre park with a paved, oval loop of approximately two

miles surrounded by large oaks and maples. There are placards along the path giving information on Max Brandon and the park's history; animals of the park; and its flora.

Amenities include three porta-potty spots, picnic tables, and pull-up bars at 3 different heights. A nice children's playground is also right at the parking lot off Pasadena Avenue. Although dogs are allowed at Max Brandon on leash, there aren't any disposal bins with bags available, so please make sure to bring your own bags to pick up after your four-legged friends!

While on that topic, here are some other rule and etiquette tips for peak enjoyment of shared public paths for bicyclists/joggers/walkers:

- Dog owners are expected to pick up their dog's waste when walking in public.
 - Although some spots offer waste stations with bags, best practice is to have your own, in case there aren't any available where you are walking. All pet stores sell them, usually with cool dispensers that attach to the leash, or you can find them online.
 - When biking or jogging a public path and you see a person coming up in front who you are planning to pass, it is polite to give warning with a shout of "on your left/right!" so that the person in front of you is less startled – especially if they're walking a dog. This keeps everyone safer when sharing space.
- Happy exploring! ●
- Please note that it is illegal to have a dog off-leash in public spaces in Michigan.



A clearing encountered during a walk in Max Brandon Park. (Photo by Christina Collie)

Perspective ...

(Continued from Page 12)

elation would give me butterflies in my stomach or chills down my spine. Each time they proposed the question, I was able to view the artform from a new perspective.

I was able to gather concrete evidence from my own life, and the impacts of racism, the culture of racial superiority, greed and disconnect.

Yet each time the questions were proposed, I was able to shift my interpretation in a way that allowed me to continue to progress towards my own inner peace and nurturing of my soul.

That experience at MW Gallery changed my perspective so much that I started to wonder how I could apply that way of thinking not only to unfamiliar art forms but in other fac-

ets of my life: How can I gain a new perspective going into the new year? How can I shift the narrative that I'm painting in my own mind of the next four years? Is it a matter of simply asking myself, "what do I see?" and acknowledging the chaos and uncertainty, the randomness of life?

I think so.

What do I see?

So now I ask myself: what do I see that makes me say or think this? What can I see beyond the chaos and uncertainty?

Then I can ask myself again and again, noticing each time how my perspective shifts. ●

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We all hope to leave a legacy, an impact that exists long after we make the investment.

Since its inception in 1976, East Village Magazine has kept residents informed and officials accountable. Our articles regularly feature local political commentators, artists, book and theatre reviews, and editorials as familiar as an old friend. EVM also serves as Flint's very own J-School, teaching journalism fundamentals to community members who want to help keep their neighbors informed on the issues that impact them most.

As one of the city's oldest nonprofit publications still in operation, EVM is driven by donations and the volunteers and reporters who see value in tackling hyperlocal issues from a resident-focused lens.

So, this giving season, EVM is asking for your support.

As a small nonprofit, our work has an outsized impact on the quality of life in Flint, and your contribution will help us continue to ensure every issue is made by your village: a group of writers, editors, distributors and donors investing in a nearly 50-year tradition of journalism training and local coverage.

If you're able, please consider a contribution to EVM via the PayPal link on our website, eastvillagemagazine.org, or by sending a check to Village Information Center, 720 E. Second St. Flint, MI 48503. You can also support us through volunteering to deliver issues of EVM to your neighbors or sharing this call to action with your social media network.

Thank you for being a part of our village. We're so grateful to serve you.

Sincerely, Your EVM Team

Village Life

Gaining new perspective at the Mott-Warsh Gallery

By Canisha Bell

Have you ever walked or driven past a place numerous times only to discover it's actually an amazing venue that you should've paid a visit to a long time ago?

For me that place, until recently, was the Mott-Warsh (MW) Gallery – despite my going by countless times with the fleeting thought of “I wonder what it's like inside there.”

Opening its doors in 2016 in a former Internal Revenue Office on the corner of Court and Saginaw streets, the gallery now hosts the Mott-Warsh Collection, “a private collection of fine art created by artists of the African diaspora and others who reflect on it” according to its website.

While personal interest had always been there, I never really had the push to visit the gallery until this year.

I'd seen Mott-Warsh Collection pieces around the city often. My church has a few MW pieces in our fellowship hall. I'd walked past the Risky Intentions stainless steel and rubber piece on the north visitor's entrance path into Applewood Estates, and of course I'd admired the pieces on the walls of the Gloria Coles Flint Public Library.

But after my good friend mentioned her private tour of the MW Gallery with a group of colleagues, I decided to organize a similar outing for my work group.

As I reached out to the gallery, Michaela Mosher, the gallery manager, warmly welcomed me. She answered all of my questions and even offered to put together an agenda and theme for our visit.

“I approach every interaction

with openness and curiosity,” she told me. “I endeavor to provide a friendly, safe and positive experience for all.” Visiting the MW Gallery is an entirely uplifting and inspiring experience.

Our private tour led by Mosher and Stephanie James, Director & Curator of MW Gallery, felt so personal and thoughtful.

The gallery had this inviting warmth that instantly made me feel comfortable. From the vase of fresh flowers on a display table at the en-

sculptures, and works on paper, which will be up until Jan. 25, 2025.

Now I will admit, abstract is not my favorite form of art to view. I never understood abstract art, it just seemed so chaotic and random, and I always found it difficult to really grasp the concept. But James and Mosher eased us into engaging with the pieces using a modified version of a process called Visual Thinking Strategies or “VTS.”

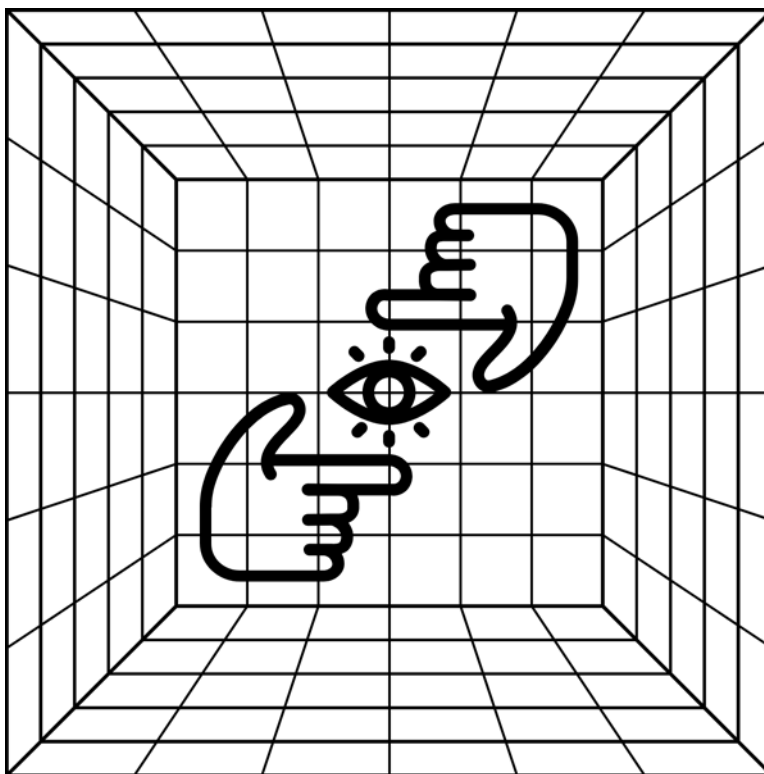
“I would describe [VTS] as an educational methodology utilized to facilitate group discussions about artworks. Participants start building a narrative around the artwork... and ground their interpretation of the visual elements... in concrete evidence... this is achieved by answering the question, ‘What do you see that makes you say that?’” explained James.

There was one particular piece that really caught my attention – matte black on one side contrasted on the other with colorful strokes of purple, teal, blue, red and a crisp black that deliberately drips down the canvas,

merging the colors and creating new hues and different gradients.

The artwork is by Mary Lovelace O'Neal and entitled “Racism is Like Rain, Either it's Raining or it's Gathering Somewhere.” It left me in awe.

Mosher and James would propose the questions like “What do you see?” and “What do you see that makes you say that?” And through each discovery, I felt something different about the artwork. Each re-



trance to the soft lighting that gently illuminates the carefully curated exhibits, I felt almost like I was in a beautifully adorned home rather than a traditional art museum.

“My aim is to create exhibits that will be visually stimulating, intriguing and thought provoking to people, whether they are longtime art enthusiasts or just beginning their exploration of the arts,” said James.

The exhibition we viewed was “Beyond the Physical World” featuring engaging, abstract paintings,

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