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Guest Artist John Bramblitt returning to Arts & The Park

Many remember John Bramblitt, the incredibly talented, soft-spoken artist who also happens to be blind who has twice been to Hot Springs. He first came as a guest artist for Arts & the Park 2015 and again when the documentary made about his life, "John," premiered at the Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival last fall. John and his loyal companion and guide dog, Echo, will be included in the Arts & the Park line-up April 29 – May 8.

John Bramblitt is an artist living in Denton Texas. His art has been sold in over thirty countries and he has appeared internationally in print, TV and radio. He has appeared on CBS Evening News with Katie Couric, ABC, NBC, FOX, Discovery Channel and BBC Radio and TV to name a few outlets, and he's been featured in The New York Times and Psychology Today as well as designed the artwork for numerous magazine covers and even the artwork for major film productions. He's the subject of the award winning documentary shorts "Line of Sight" and "Bramblitt." His work has received much recognition including the "Most Inspirational Video of 2008" from YouTube and three Presidential Service Awards for his innovative art workshops.

John is also the author of the award winning book, *Shouting in the Dark*, and is the current selectee for the Texas Governor's Disability Employment Awareness poster. He currently works as a consultant for museums in developing programs that are designed to include everyone – no matter their ability or disability. *Shouting in the Dark* is the story of Bramblitt's life, his journey navigating through this new territory of blindness, and how he ultimately rekindles his joy, passion, and relationships through art.

Prior to his blindness, John studied at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas, where he graduated with honors. When Bramblitt lost the last of his vision in 2001 due to complications with epilepsy and Lyme's disease, his hopes of becoming a creative writing teacher were shattered and he sunk into a deep depression. He felt disconnected from family and friends, alienated and alone. But then something amazing happened-- he discovered painting. He learned to distinguish between different colored paints by feeling their textures with his fingers. He taught himself how to paint using raised lines to help him find his way around the canvas, and through something called haptic visualization, which enables him to "see" his subjects through touch. He now paints amazingly lifelike portraits of people he's never seen--including his wife and son.

While art was always a major part of John's life it was not until he lost his sight in 2001 that he began to paint, and it was then that he says, "Art reshaped my life." John's paintings are intensely personal, and are mostly taken from real people and events in his life. John's workshops are unique in the art world in that they not only span the gap between beginning and professional artists, but also include adaptive techniques for people with disabilities. According to John, "Everyone has an artist somewhere in them; sometimes they just need a little help letting it out."

There will be several opportunities to see his work, meet him, and even see a screening of the film of his inspirational life during Arts & The Park.

The Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival is partnering with Maxine's, located at 700 Central Avenue, showing the documentary, "John" on Tuesday, May 3 at 6:00 p.m. Following the screening there will be a time for Q&A with Bramblitt.

On Wednesday, May 4, John will visit Gardner Magnet School in Hot Springs in the morning where the kids will be able to hear John's story and meet Echo. He will hold two programs, one for Kindergarten through second grade and a second one for the third and fourth grades.

Last year John conducted a workshop for the adults at First Step. According to the program director, "Our Adult Clients in our Art AJAR workshop welcomed Mr. Bramblitt with open arms and with much enthusiasm and the workshop went off without a hitch. Our clients were blown away to learn that Mr. Bramblitt was blind and still able to create amazing pieces of art using other senses rather than sight. A big part of what we do at First Step is to help our clients find creative ways to be as independent as possible, which is what Mr. Bramblitt brilliantly did, not only for our client during our workshop, but for himself throughout his life. Mr. Bramblitt was presented with an original art piece created by one of our adult clients in Art AJAR Program as a thank you for his time and the gifts he shared with our clients. First Step looks forward to following Mr. Bramblitt's amazing career, and hopes to expand our relationship with the Hot Springs Area Cultural Alliance." Thursday, May 5, John will again conduct a workshop for the adult clients at First Step.

Friday, May 6th at 10:00, there will again be a special showing of the film "John" at the Ponce de Leon Center in Hot Springs Village. Following the film there will be a workshop that have a \$20 fee. For more information about the how to reserve your spot for the film of the workshop, visit <http://hsvpoa.org/event-tickets/>.

The Arts & the Park Celebration of the Arts will culminate with a weekend outdoor arts festival May 7-8 at Hill Wheatley Plaza in downtown Hot Springs. John's work will be on display at that event and the public will have an opportunity to meet John and see him at work.

Arts & the Park is a 10 Day Celebration of the Arts sponsored by the Hot Springs Area Cultural Alliance that includes a Launch Party, Studio Tours, a Pop Up Gallery, Gallery Walk, and other arts events sponsored by many other arts and non-profit organization. For more information and a complete schedule of events visit the organizations website <http://hotspringsarts.org/view-event/>.



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