The 26th Leonardo Challenge

LITERALLY CREATIVE

In Leonardo’s lifetime, the printing press began to standardize letter forms and grammar and to elevate the caste of the literati. Leonardo was a skeptic: What letters can report the intricate details my drawings capture? Can a poet’s letters evoke longing to rival my sketch of a distant lover?

Leonardo was strikingly modern, however, in the collateral applications of letters in musical and geometrical notations. He practices elegant, if reversed calligraphy. He twists letter forms in riddles and rebuses.

LETTERS
Letters are a code that guides our eyes and lips to make sounds from symbols or moves our ears to instruct our hand to write. As children, we sense that letters are a passport to vast worlds. As children, we sense that we will be judged by the accuracy and speed of our letters. Our hand aspires to artful clarity. Then we settle for a script that is recognizably our own, one of the first markers of individuality.

Letters are versatile building blocks. We play with them outside of words. We construct patterns with them. We expand letters into drawings well before we learn that the calligram is a universal art form. We ascribe them powers – will initials inscribed on a desktop invoke a friendship? We emulate the scripts of those we admire. We construct codes to express aspirations we are not yet ready to speak.

Letters are evolving. Steve Jobs imbued the Macintosh computer with graphical agility that begat 100,000 fonts. Our thumbs can set type and publish effortlessly. We compress communication into textspeak abbreviations – a language of letters drained of tone or nuance. Elementary schools are abandoning training hands in the discipline of cursive. What will happen to individuality?

THE CHALLENGE
Engage common letters in an uncommon message. Apply found letters. Invent new letter constructions. Embrace iota scale irony or cosmos-defining alphas and omegas. We ask that sculptural works rest on a 12” x 12” footprint. In past Challenges, some of the works have been constructed for wall display; some suspended; a few used electricity; the others were free standing and 3-dimensional. We expect variations in scale and presentation. Please include your display requirements or instructions and include any unique display elements. Please, if this is a wall piece which belongs in a frame, please bring it already framed, or bring the frame and we’ll install it for you.

• We would appreciate receiving entries by April 20th latest.
• For your entry fee you get 2 tickets for the April 23rd event and a t-shirt. These will be held for you at the Museum until the night of the event.

There is a page below with FAQs and a Call for Entries.
Other questions, please call Sally Hill 203.777.1833 or email: sh@eliwhitney.org

ENTRY FORM
Please enclose this with your finished entry.

Your name: _____________________________________________
Your address: ___________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Your phone:  _________________________________
E-mail address: ________________________________________
Title of Work: __________________________________________

Please check one:
☐ I wish to donate the work to the EWM.
☐ I wish to have the work returned to me.

(Donated works will be auctioned off by silent bid the night of the opening to benefit the Museum scholarship fund.)

The Eli Whitney Museum
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**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Who can participate?

Adult artists, artisans, and designers contribute to the Challenge. Others with many different day jobs contribute.

There is a $60 entry fee (though underwriting is available.) Please contact Sally Hill (sh@eliwhitney.org) to let us know you will enter. You receive 2 tickets to the benefit, a tee shirt, and the Museum’s gratitude.

What kinds of work is submitted?

Wall pieces, hanging pieces, free standing and pedestal pieces, jewelry, artist books. Some that require electricity. We are not sure we will be able to accommodate constructions that require darkened spaces. And if the entry is living, and requires water, please be sure a spot to do that is easily accessible.

Are all submissions contributed for sale?

Almost all are. But some are not and are returned after May 20th. You can also set an opening bid. Your piece will be returned if the bids do not reach that level.

Are there size and display guidelines?

We expect variations in scale and presentation. Our pedestals best accommodate pieces that fit within a 12” x 12” footprint. Let us know early if your work will require a large space or special handling. Our space limits the number of large submissions we can accept. Wall pieces should be mounted or framed. Display guidelines are helpful.

What is the deadline for submissions?

April 20th, 10pm. We may be able to accommodate later work if you send a picture and dimensions. Just give me a call to discuss.

**CALL FOR ENTRIES**

Please fill out your name, address, email and phone number below. Enclose a $60 entry fee (patron underwriting is available) and mail to the Eli Whitney Museum, 915 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT, 06517 in the enclosed envelope.

We will send you, via email, Entry Guidelines and a display form to bring in with your entry. We anticipate that most everyone will have access to some kind of lens, but we do have a supply of hand lenses like the one in the invitation should you need that. Just give us a call.

Please deliver the finished piece to the Museum by Monday, April 20th. Your tee shirt and the tickets to the April 23rd event for you and your guest will be held at the door that evening. Please call Sally Hill at 777.1833 or email sh@eliwhitney.org for more information or questions.

name: ______________________________________________
address:____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
phone: ________________________ cell: ________________
email: ______________________________________________

☐ I enclose a check for ____________.
☐ Please charge to my Visa, Master Charge or Discover Card.
#_______________________________________________
Exp date: _________________ CVC code__________

☐ I would like to request underwriting. ____________.