



Creative Design 2007

The Concept: What's up With the Artwork?

In 2007, the AIDS Walk for Life decided to redesign the creative look and feel of the event. Many ideas were discussed, but one concept stood out from the crowd – a concept that fit perfectly into both the history and the mission of the AIDS Walk for Life.

Each year, the AIDS Walk for Life will select a piece of artwork from a different Canadian HIV-positive artist to grace all of our national promotional materials. This artwork will serve as a link between the AIDS Walk for Life and the very people we are trying to help, and will help the general public relate to the event in an intimate and meaningful way. Moreover, the selected artwork will be displayed on promotional materials all across the country, helping support Canadian HIV-positive artists and increasing their national exposure.

To honour his role as a pioneer in the Canadian HIV/AIDS movement, and to celebrate the significant contributions he has made to the history of the AIDS Walk for Life, we chose a piece of artwork from acclaimed Canadian HIV-positive artist *joe average* to inaugurate our new creative concept for 2007. The piece is called *My Thinking Cap (Life with HIV)*.

For over a decade, *joe average* has contributed many of his images to the AIDS Walk for Life in Vancouver. In so doing, *joe average* and his art have created a symbolic imagery and tradition for the grassroots-based fundraising work in the AIDS community there.

The AIDS Walk for Life would like to thank *joe average* for his contribution and invite other Canadian HIV-positive artists to become part of a new, national tradition with the AIDS Walk for Life. For information on how to submit artwork to be considered for next year's AIDS Walk for Life, please see the section "Art Competition for AIDS Walk for Life 2008" below.

About the Artist: *joe average*

joe average is a Canadian artist who lives in Vancouver, British Columbia. Diagnosed with HIV at age 27, *joe* made the decision to commit the rest of his life to art, and challenged himself to live solely by the proceeds of his art.

Inspired by Native artists in British Columbia, *joe average* plays with the simplicity of graceful lines and curves and the emotional impact of bright and primary colours. He is known for his cheerful, colourful, cartoon-like work, including images of flowers, animals, insects, and people.

Increasingly well-known across Canada and the world, *joe average's* art has captured the attention of art critics, celebrities, the public, and even royalty. His art graced the first national AIDS awareness poster in Canada in 1991, and the art he created for the XI International Conference on AIDS in Vancouver became Canada's first AIDS postage stamp in 1996.

joe average has received many awards and honours, including civic merit awards, the Caring Canadian Award (1998), and the Queen's Golden Jubilee Silver Medal for Outstanding Community Achievement (2002). Vancouver's mayor pronounced November 3, 2002 as "*joe average* Day," and he was honoured as one of two Grand Marshals of the Vancouver Pride Parade in August 2006.

In addition to the AIDS Walk for Life, *joe* frequently donates his work to other charitable causes, including the Vancouver International Children's Festival, A Loving Spoonful (a charity that provides meals to people living with HIV/AIDS and other terminal illnesses), and Vancouver's annual Art for Life auction. And if you have travelled around Vancouver, you may even recognize *joe's* artwork that graces both Davie Village and Granville Island.

For more information, please visit *joe's* web site at www.joeaverageart.com.

About the Artwork: *My Thinking Cap (Life with HIV)*

A self-portrait, *My Thinking Cap (Life with HIV)* is one of *joe average's* works that speaks specifically to his personal experience of living with HIV/AIDS. At the same time, it speaks universally to the human need to love and be loved, to live with health, and to have a sense of purpose, safety, and community in our lives.

My Thinking Cap (Life with HIV) contains the image of a cap on a man's head, with the cap sectioned out similar to a phrenology diagram (the theory that believed certain parts of the brain related to personality and other human characteristics). The elements in the thinking cap speak to the many components of life that both determine and constitute health, and to the range of life experiences that are vital for maintaining balance and quality of life. Living without illness, many of us may take these elements for granted, but they may become increasingly important to us as our health is compromised.



On the man's face, where a nose should be, a set of pills sits, securing the thinking cap. Vital to the experience of staying alive, these represent *joe average's* 3TC, d4T and AZT pills – one of many cocktail regimens *joe average* has taken to treat HIV over the course of his life.

As *joe average* explains: “When I first started the cocktail treatment, I did a few images about AIDS – including *My Thinking Cap (Life with HIV)* – because I wanted that out of me a little bit. For the most part though, my images aren't so much AIDS-related – they're more about how the child in me wants to see the world: happy and with love. There is so much communication with colour. Over the years, I've learned how much of a language colour is. Colour creates joy in me and it creates joy in other people.”

The AIDS Walk for Life chose this particular piece of *joe's* art because it speaks directly to the work AIDS service organizations are doing across Canada: serving and supporting the needs of people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, so they, too, may experience quality of life. That is why we walk– for life.

Art Competition for AIDS Walk for Life 2008

Are you a Canadian HIV-positive artist? We encourage you to submit a piece of your artwork to be considered for AIDS Walk for Life 2008. If selected, your art will become part of our national creative for 2008 and will give you and your art vast exposure all across Canada.

To submit artwork to be considered for 2008, entrants must complete a brief submission form, and return it along with a copy of their artwork by December 31, 2007. For complete competition details, and to request a copy of the submission form, contact Joshua Snider, the National AIDS Walk for Life Coordinator.

For More Information, Please Contact:

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