

July 17, 2012

- **by kgriffinmoreno**
- **in Events**
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30 Women, 30 Stories: A Multimedia Project Documents Stories of Women in Recovery

(<https://baltimoreartplusjustice.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/gallery.jpg>)

Marshall Clarke's portraits of Marian House alumnae adorned the Cork Gallery walls.

Close to 100 people packed the Cork Gallery on a sweltering June afternoon for the release of a remarkable book of photographs and stories about Baltimore women who have transformed their lives.

Through prose vignettes and portraits by local photographer Marshall Clarke (<http://www.marshallclarke.com>), *30 Women, 30 Stories: Journeys of Recovery and Transformation* (<http://www.marianhouse.org/stories>) profiles alumnae of the nonprofit housing program Marian House (<http://www.marianhouse.org/>), which marks its third decade of operations this year.

Since opening its doors to 16 women on April 12, 1982, Marian House has helped over 1,000 women tread the difficult path from hardship to recovery. The organization plans to use the book and related media to raise awareness and spark conversation about issues of addiction, incarceration, homelessness, mental illness, and trauma.

Marian House executive director Katie Allston engaged artist Peter Bruun (<http://www.audaciousideas.org/2008/09/art-filled-spaces-dedicated-to-issues-art-and-community/>) to spearhead the book project, which was funded by grants from from the Open Society Institute-Baltimore (<http://www.soros.org/about/offices-foundations/open-society-institute-baltimore>), the TKF Foundation (<http://www.tkffdn.org/>), and the David and Barbara B. Hirschhorn Foundation (http://www.blaufund.org/foundations/davidandbarbara_f.html). Bruun worked with Marian House staff, clients, and alumnae to tell the women's stories using a wide range of media and disciplines.

The exhibit incorporated multimedia elements, including QR codes like this one.

(<https://baltimoreartplusjustice.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/qrcode.jpg>)

event offered an impressively rich and well-integrated multimedia experience. Photographs of each woman profiled in the book adorned the walls, paired with quotes and QR codes leading to the Marian House website, where attendees could listen to recordings of the women telling their stories in their own voices. Guests also had the option of taking a cell phone tour of the exhibit.

On one wall of the gallery hung a quilt created by four Marian House residents and a local textile artist. On another, a resident-created painting inspired by the book project shared space with portraits of the women taken by local photographer Marshall Clarke. A DVD and forthcoming touring exhibition of Clarke's photographs are aimed at introducing Marian House to a wider audience, including policymakers and advocates.

Bruun explains that the collaborative, multi-dimensional nature of the project is designed to engage a diverse following.

"The notion is different contexts and different audiences are more or less accessible depending on what works for them," he says. "Some will flip through a book, some will go to a web page, some will go to an exhibition. The goal is to use each platform as a gateway to another — though the audio was a bust at the event, it helped people be mindful of the stories existing on the website."

Bruun hopes that the stories collected in the book act as a "springboard for conversations in neighborhoods about the value of having treatment services."

(<https://baltimoreartplusjustice.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/quilt.jpg>) For all the

visual, audio, and online elements that comprised the exhibit, the focus of the June 21 event was the Marian House graduates and their personal journeys. Two of the women profiled in the book took the microphone to share their stories, which were emblematic of the struggles and triumphs experienced by all of Marian House's residents and graduates.

"I think of our women each like a puzzle," Allston told the audience quietly. "They started in this world as a whole and complete picture but their being and sense of self have been shattered into pieces long before we meet them." Marian House, she continued, "is simply the platform upon which those pieces come back together and holes are filled."

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*Read the full piece, "The Art of Tribulation and Redemption" at [mobtownblues.com](http://mobtownblues.com)*  
(<http://mobtownblues.com/2012/07/16/the-art-of-tribulation-and-redemption-a-multimedia-project-documents-stories-of-women-in-recovery/>)

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