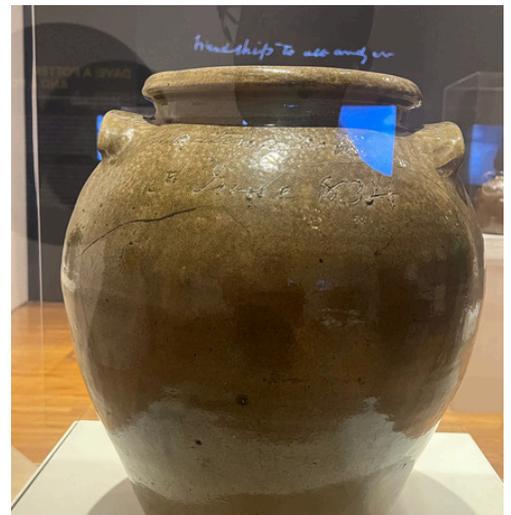


ART HEALS: I'VE EXPERIENCED IT. I'VE WITNESSED IT.

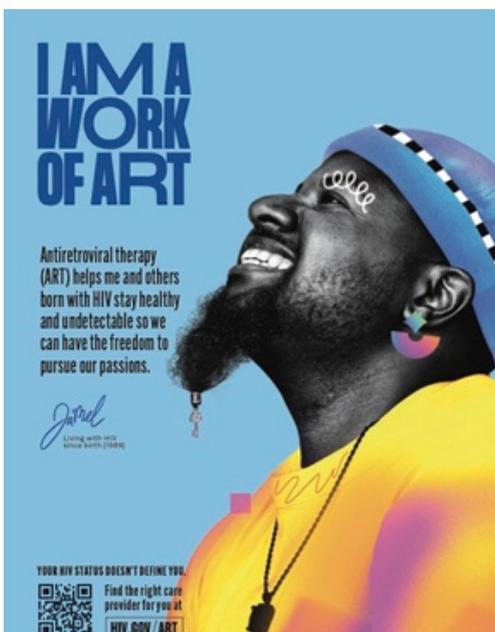
Everett L. Long, PHD | Consultant, Principal Scientist, Art Collector

As a patron of the arts and a social scientist, I've long been fascinated by the transformative power of artistic expression. My personal experiences, coupled with my learning during my time as a steering committee member of Healing Arts Atlanta and my work on public health campaigns, have solidified my belief that the arts can play a vital role in our health.

I was inspired to write a personal essay about my encounter with the healing power of art. The realization of its profound effect came after experiencing the exhibit *Hear Me Now: The Black Potters of Old Edgefield, South Carolina*. The story of Dave the Potter, a resilient enslaved and gifted potter resonated deeply with me. His unwavering commitment to creating beauty in the face of adversity allowed me to process a formative childhood experience. When I was 10-years old, my parents moved their five children from Philadelphia to Edgefield. There we experienced a confluence of poverty, housing instability, and racial discrimination that led to a collective family trauma. After experiencing the exhibit three times over the span of 12 years, I realized that Dave's story had been helping me process the trauma of my experience in Edgefield. Ultimately, I was inspired to recast my family's own story as one of resilience and let go of past hurt. Through this experience, I realized how art can serve as a catalyst for healing, helping us to process trauma, find meaning, and reclaim our narratives.



RESEARCH CONFIRMS THE HEALING POWER OF ART



Combating HIV Stigma with Art and Science

My work on HIV prevention and treatment campaigns has provided firsthand evidence of the arts' healing power. The I am a Work of ART campaign featured BIPOC individuals living with HIV, telling their stories through the lens of valuing themselves as works of art.

Their empowering journeys are a testament to their personal resilience and the advancements in antiretroviral therapy (ART)—medication that makes it so that not even blood tests can detect HIV in their bodies. Witnessing their authenticity, courage, and resilience on set was truly inspiring. This approach empowered the participants and demonstrated how art can be combined with health promotion to elevate marginalized voices and promote healing.

Whether through personal experiences, research, or practical applications, it is clear that the healing power of art is undeniable. I am excited to continue serving as a strong proponent of furthering the programs, policies, and promotion that activate and expand the use of the arts to heal.

Everett Long, PhD, is the owner of EverReady Consulting. He develops research-backed strategies and award-winning national health marketing campaigns that deliver measurable impact, transforming organizations within the public and non-profit sectors.