

AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM

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Baltimore's American Visionary Art Museum celebrates its 20th anniversary *AVAM's "20 Simply Divine Years" Gala Celebration will be held on November 21, 2015*

Baltimore, MD—This Thanksgiving 2015, Baltimore's exuberant **American Visionary Art Museum (AVAM)** celebrates its 20th year as the congressionally designated national museum and education center for creative, intuitive and self-tutored artistry in all its manifestations. The museum is pleased to announce its **"20 Simply Divine Years" Gala Celebration will be held on Saturday, November 21, 2015 starting at 5pm**, that will honor three visionaries for their intuition, courage, and impact in their respective fields: Grand Visionary Honoree, Inventor/Humanitarian **Dean Kamen**; Artistic Honoree **Bobby Adams**, whose Baltimore-centric artwork is featured in AVAM's latest exhibition, *The Big Hope Show*; and Author/Activist Honoree, the Pulitzer Prize-winning **Taylor Branch**. A special salute to **U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski**, who was instrumental in founding support for the Museum, will kick off the festivities. Immediately following the Gala Awards Dinner will be an Honoree Parade leading to a visually spectacular, music-filled, **HairBall After Party with doors that open to non-Gala guests at 8pm**.

Expressive of AVAM's devotion to intuitive genius in a myriad of forms, inventor, entrepreneur, and tireless humanitarian advocate for science and technology, **Dean Kamen**, will receive AVAM's highest recognition, its **Grand Visionary Award**. Kamen holds over 440 U.S. and foreign patents, many of them for innovative medical devices that have expanded the frontiers of health care worldwide, including the first wearable infusion pump, an at-home dialysis system, and the iBOT mobility device. Kamen's genius was also behind the development of the Segway Human Transporter. Among his proudest accomplishments, Kamen founded FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), an organization dedicated to motivating the next generation to understand, use, and enjoy science and technology. Museum founder, **Rebecca Hoffberger** explains AVAM's choice of Dean Kamen as Grand Honoree: "For us, he's royalty—the son of a *Mad Magazine* illustrator, and a person who has always married compassion for the most acute needs of others with his inventions. Dirty water is still the leading cause of death. Dean Kamen is the linear heir to our past beloved honoree, the legendary Abel Wolman, who first made municipal water potable. Kamen has invented the Holy Grail of public health—a solar-powered machine that turns any water into pure, clean water, without the use of chemicals or filters. His work will save countless lives."

Artistic Honoree **Bobby Adams** is an exuberant outsider artist, photographer, avid scrap-booker, dog lover, and Christmas addict. His photographs which document his mid-century Baltimore upbringing, along with his artwork and assemblages have garnered much critical attention in AVAM's newest original exhibition, *The Big Hope Show*. Adams is the unofficial documentarian of filmmaker John Waters' band of inclusive renegades, the "Dreamlanders," has created artwork that pays tribute to the idea of friendship as an art, and the life-saving connection to pets—particularly his beloved late toy poodle, Odie.

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Author/Activist Honoree **Taylor Branch** is an American author and public speaker best known for his landmark narrative history of the civil rights era, *America in the King Years*. The trilogy's first book won the Pulitzer Prize and numerous other awards in 1989. Branch took on student athlete exploitation in his book, *The Shame of College Sports*, and returned to examining civil rights history in his latest book, *The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement* (2013). Few people know that Branch is also a recorded singer, with a vocal range to match the late Roy Orbison.

AVAM selects its honorees for their courage as innovators and in recognition of their life's creative work to expand the realm of human dignity, beauty, and social justice. Past American Visionary Art Museum **Grand Visionary Awardees** include: Nobel Laureate **Archbishop Desmond Tutu**; civil rights activists **Julian Bond and wife Pam Horowitz**; Nobel Prize for Science recipient **Peter Agre, M.D.**; *PostSecret* founder and suicide prevention activist **Frank Warren**; environmental activist/Body Shop founder **Dame Anita Roddick**; healthcare activist/humanitarian **Patch Adams, M.D.**, comedian/activist **Lewis Black**; and world-famous, self-taught chef **Patrick O'Connell**.

AVAM's 20th anniversary Gala celebration will begin at 5pm on Saturday, November 21, 2015, and includes a "museum crawl" of its 1.1 acre "wonderland" Inner Harbor campus. Tickets to the Gala celebration are \$500, and \$400 for AVAM Members. All Gala tickets include access to the cocktail hour, seated dinner, awards, parade and admission to the HairBall After Party. Gala tickets can be purchased by contacting **Abby Baer** (abby@avam.org or 410-244-1900 x247).

The museum is also throwing a fun-raising **HairBall After Party starting at 8pm**, with advance tickets for sale at \$40 for general public, \$30 in advance for AVAM Members, and \$50 at the door (if tickets remain). The HairBall After Party will feature a one-of-a-kind **parade** led by Gala honorees and a panoply of pageantry and performances from visionary collaborators, plus live musical performances from high-energy rockers **3AM Tokyo**, Dixeland band **Sac Au Lait**, Balkan Gypsy Brass ensemble **Balti Mare**, and music from **Classic Collective DJs**. After Party tickets include lite fare, wine, cocktails, and beer provided by **Max's Taphouse**. The museum encourages attendees to dress in their "Baltimore Best and High-Hair Glory." Advance tickets to the HairBall After Party are available now via Missiontix.com (thru Nov. 20).

All proceeds from AVAM's 20th anniversary Gala will benefit the museum's unique educational programming and critically acclaimed original exhibitions. The Gala is AVAM's annual major fundraising event—never stuffy and ever playful.

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AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM (AVAM) is America's official national museum and education center for original, self-taught, intuitive artistry. Since its opening in 1995, the museum has sought to promote the recognition of intuitive, self-reliant, creative contribution as both an important historic and essential living piece of treasured human legacy. The one-of-a-kind American Visionary Art Museum is located at 800 Key Highway, Baltimore Inner Harbor. Three renovated historic industrial buildings house wonders created by farmers, housewives, mechanics, retired folk, the disabled, the homeless, as well as the occasional neurosurgeon—all inspired by the fire within. From carved roots to embroidered rags, tattoos to toothpicks, the visionary transforms dreams, loss, hopes, and ideals into powerful works of art and thought. Open Tuesday–Sunday, 10am–6pm. Admission prices, directions, and more handy info can be found at <http://avam.org>.

Media Contact: Nick Prevas, 410-244-1900 x241, nick@avam.org.

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