“America Now”: Innovation at Three Smithsonian Museums

Museums Will Present Three Programs That Capture American Innovation in Dance, Portraiture, Music and Art

“America Now” is a three-part program jointly organized by the National Portrait Gallery, National Museum of American History and Smithsonian American Art Museum. The three programs are free, with no reservations required. The three museums collaboration on programming for America Now will continue for the next ten years and all are made possible by the support of the Robert and Arlene Kogod Foundation.

**National Portrait Gallery**
“America Now Pilobolus and Portraiture”
Friday, May 22; 7–10 p.m.
Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard
Eighth and F streets N.W.

The National Portrait Gallery will kick off the “America Now” series with “Pilobolus and Portraiture” in the Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard.

The museum will be filled with movement and music with choreography and performances by Pilobolus, an American modern-dance company, and close-up innovative video portraits of the troupe created by 2013 Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition-winner Bo Gehring.

As part of the program, Pilobolus—known for their combination of dance and acrobatic choreography using the human body—will offer free dance workshops. Visitors can also have Gehring make their video portrait, which will be projected on a screen in the courtyard and immediately shareable. Music is integral to Gehring’s experimental video portraits, which capture such minute details of the subject that they are typically invisible to the eye. His commissioned portrait of jazz musician Esperanza Spalding will be on view in “Eye Pop: The Celebrity Gaze.”

**National Museum of American History**
“Raise It Up: America Innovates”
Naturalization Ceremony and Global Innovation Summit
Thursday, June 11; 11 a.m.–4 p.m.
Flag Hall
Constitution Avenue, between 12th and 14th streets N.W.
The second event of the “America Now” series is the “Raise It Up: America Innovates” celebration, which will feature a Music Innovation Festival, Naturalization Ceremony and Global Innovation Summit at the National Museum of American History.

On the morning of June 11, the museum will host a naturalization ceremony in Flag Hall, marking how America’s democratic and economic systems continue to be strengthened by the diversity and ingenuity of its citizenry. During the event, the museum will present Sebastian Thrun, CEO and founder of Udacity, with the James Smithson Bicentennial Medal, recognizing his achievements in business through invention and innovation and his commitment to education. Prior to Udacity, Thrun founded Google X and launched projects such as the Google Self Driving Car and Google Glass.

During the afternoon, Flag Hall will vibrate with new musical expressions in an exploration of how place informs musical genres. Meanwhile, digital audiences can participate in the day via webcast of “The Internet Age: Founders to Future,” a live summit in partnership with the Internet Society to examine America’s unique contributions to innovation in a global society. For more information, visit http://americanhistory.si.edu/.

Smithsonian American Art Museum
“America Now Innovation in Art”
Saturday, June 27; 4–7 p.m.
Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard
Eighth and F streets N.W.

On Saturday, June 27, the Smithsonian American Art Museum will close the series with “Innovation in Art.” Visitors will be able to explore how artists are using technology to propel their work.

Digital-paint pioneer Jeremy Sutton will paint a la David Hockney-style on an iPad, with the image projected on a large screen using motion-capture technology. Sutton will paint to the beats of electro-swing band Good Co. and DJ Eliazar.

Visitors will be able to wear an Oculus Rift, a virtual-reality headset for 3-D gaming, to explore Craig Gilbert’s 360-degree films, Earthborn Interactive’s games or be transported into artwork by Greg Aring.

In addition, attendees will have the opportunity to play the interactive game Starry Heavens, which debuted at MOMA in 2011. Created by architect Nathalie Pozzi and video-game designer Eric Zimmerman, the giant canopy for the game has been customized for the museum’s Kogod courtyard space to invoke the experience of the northern lights.

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