

For immediate release

The Architectural League of New York Awards the 2018 President's Medal to Christiana Figueres

League lauds visionary leader on climate change

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At a June 20 dinner in New York, Architectural League President Billie Tsien awarded the League's 2018 President's Medal to Christiana Figueres. As Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), she led the nations of the world to achieve the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The President's Medal is The Architectural League's highest honor and is bestowed, at the discretion of the League's President and Board of Directors, on individuals to recognize extraordinary achievements in architecture, urbanism, art, design, and the environment.

The Architectural League honored Christiana Figueres for her courageous, imaginative, indefatigable work on behalf of our planetary home.

Architect and technological innovator Anna Dyson, founding director of Yale Center for Ecosystems in Architecture; conservation ecologist Eric Sanderson, author of *Mannahatta*; and landscape architect and MacArthur Fellow Kate Orff, along with Ms. Tsien and League executive director Rosalie Genevro celebrated Figueres with remarks.

Eric Sanderson said: "When she has the ear of presidents and business people and power brokers on the global stage – including all of you tonight – her optimism creates a platform for connection. It enables us to do what we really did want to do after all, to sign up to voluntarily reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and work together to transparently measure our progress. To use our wealth, our intelligence, our creativity, to care for, rather than destroy, the natural bases of life on Earth."

Kate Orff stated: "It is an honor to speak this evening at an occasion where Christiana Figueres, a courageous woman working on the front lines of diplomacy, advocacy, and creativity in the quest to save the earth, is the recipient of the President's Medal of The Architectural League. Moreover, it's an incredible moment for the League, a treasured cultural organization that over the years has lauded artists, architects, planners, and patrons of the city, to pivot to a broader context and honor a champion of the planet itself. By celebrating Christiana tonight, we honor the act of convening, of advancing dialogue, and...stewardship as deeply creative acts, that combine grace and vision, grit and gravitas."

In her presentation of the Medal, Billie Tsien said: "As citizens of the world, we honor her for her commitment to science, to innovation, to international diplomacy and compromise, to inclusive decision-making, to environmental justice and a just world order. As architects, designers, and builders, we honor her for offering us a model of action based on moral commitment and hope, and for demonstrating how to act with urgency and boldness to take on the encompassing challenge of our era, and in doing so, to imagine the possibility of a better world."

Ms. Figueres has stated: "Climate change is the major opportunity we have to modernize our transport, our energy generation and efficiency, to become more energy independent, to clean our air, to improve land-use, to create jobs, and to have more livable cities ... Let's leave no one behind." In accepting the Medal, Figueres remarked: "I happen to think that urban spaces are where the new relationship between nature and society will germinate and thrive. And I also happen to think that this is where a lot of...societal healing is going to take place."

The dinner's 260 guests included Amale Andraos, Tod Williams, Annabelle Selldorf, Charles Renfro, Tom Phifer, Guy Nordenson, Torkwase Dyson, Florian Idenburg, Coren Sharples, William Sharples, Christopher Sharples, Jonathan Marvel, Mario Gooden, Marion Weiss, Michael Manfredi, Brad Cloepfil, Rob Rogers, Stephen Kieran, James Timberlake, and Frances Halsband.

Recent recipients of the President's Medal include HH the Aga Khan, Michael R. Bloomberg, Henry N. Cobb, Richard Serra, Renzo Piano, and Amanda Burden. Earlier recipients include Massimo and Lella Vignelli, Hugh Hardy, Ada Louise Huxtable, Kenneth Frampton, Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, Robert A.M. Stern, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Hugh Ferriss, and Joseph Urban. **Learn more at archleague.org/presidents-medal-dinner**

About Christiana Figueres

As the leader of the UN's climate change negotiations, Ms. Figueres engaged diverse stakeholders including governments, corporations, activists, and faith communities to achieve what many had thought impossible: a global compact on climate change. The 195 countries that adopted the Paris Agreement of December 2015 pledged to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C...."

Since stepping down from her UNFCCC role, she has worked with immense energy to encourage governments, civil society organizations, and the business sector to act quickly and decisively to decarbonize the world economy. She currently serves as the Vice-Chair of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and is the convener of Mission 2020, which builds global awareness that steep declines in greenhouse gas emissions must be initiated by 2020 if the worst impacts of climate change are to be avoided.

Ms. Figueres began her life of public service as Minister Counselor at the Embassy of Costa Rica in Bonn, Germany in 1982. Moving to the U.S., she was Director of Renewable Energy in the Americas (REIA) and in 1995 founded the non-profit Center for Sustainable Development of the Americas (CSDA), which she directed for eight years. She has a Masters Degree in Anthropology from the London School of Economics, and a certificate in Organizational Development from Georgetown University. Her honors and recognitions include the Legion of Honor of France; Grand Medal of the City of Paris; Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau of The Netherlands; Ewald von Kleist Award, the Munich Security Conference; Medal of Honour from *The Guardian*; Hero of *El Pais* newspaper of Spain; Global Thinker of *Foreign Policy Magazine*; World's 50 Greatest Leaders, *Fortune Magazine*; and the *TIME* 100 Influential Leaders of the World.

About The Architectural League

The Architectural League nurtures excellence in architecture, design, and urbanism, and stimulates thinking and debate about the critical design and building issues of our time. League live events, digital media, publications, installations, and exhibitions present important work and ideas to inspire and help shape the path to a better future. The League encourages the development of talented younger architects and designers through competitions, commissions, and travel grants. In addition, the League creates opportunities to explore solutions to problems in the built environment, through design studies and commissioned work, and pursues important areas of inquiry to help support the contribution of architecture to the common good, through research and sustained attention to selected topics. Current projects include work on architecture, climate change, and our economic future, and an interconnected set of initiatives focusing on housing in New York City. The League's online magazine, *Urban Omnibus*, spotlights innovative and exemplary ways of interpreting and intervening in the urban environment.

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