

For immediate release

## The Architectural League of New York Awards the 2019 President's Medal to Darren Walker

League honors pathbreaking leader in social justice and the arts

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At an April 9 dinner in New York, Architectural League President Paul Lewis awarded the League's 2019 President's Medal to Darren Walker. Since becoming president of the Ford Foundation in 2013, Darren Walker has reshaped the Foundation's work to challenge inequality in all its forms, and to combat the forces that drive it.

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

The League honors Walker for his passionate stewardship and visionary reimagining of the Ford Foundation and powerful work to build a better economic, social, and cultural structure and environment for the common good.

Architect and planner Vishaan Chakrabarti, principal of Practice for Architecture and Urbanism | PAU; Director of Planning and Development for the City of Detroit, Maurice Cox; and Director and Chief Curator of The Studio Museum in Harlem, Thelma Golden along with Mr. Lewis and League executive director Rosalie Genevro celebrated Walker with remarks. Arts patron Agnes Gund served as honorary chair.

Vishaan Chakrabarti said: "Darren reminds us that there is no aesthetic, no theory, no trend we can hide behind when confronting our responsibilities as designers. He reminds us that we are what we build, what we leave behind, what communities and ecologies we keep and strengthen."

Maurice Cox stated: "Darren Walker believes that all citizens have a basic democratic right to live in a socially, economically, and environmentally healthy community, a beloved city, where all feel a deep, deep sense of belonging. He inspires, he aspires, to construct the just city."

Thelma Golden said: "He believes in architecture, but not just in buildings. He understands that the built environment is deeply connected to equity, and that sense of equity is what guides his vision for the world. He can envision a better future, and then works to actualize it."

In his presentation of the Medal, Paul Lewis read the following citation: "Darren Walker leads by giving forceful voice to our highest aspiration: for a just society, in which inequality is challenged at every turn and equity, opportunity and hope prevail over greed and exclusion. The Architectural League awards its President's Medal to Darren Walker with deep admiration for his clarity, his conviction, his optimism, and the manifold manifestations of his ideas in action in New York and around the world. We celebrate and are inspired by his embrace of the power of architecture and place to communicate values, nurture the soul, excite the spirit, and give form to the empathy that will drive our collective progress."

In accepting the Medal, Darren Walker said: "The highest compliment, I believe, about architecture, [is that] what architecture can do, and buildings can do, is to give people who inhabit those buildings dignity."

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The dinner's 285 guests included architects Deborah Berke, Charles Renfro, Thomas Phifer, Annabelle Selldorf, Robert A.M. Stern, and Billie Tsien; New Museum Director Lisa Phillips; and philanthropists Jo Carole Lauder and Donald and Catie Marron.

Recent recipients of the President's Medal include Christiana Figueres, HH the Aga Khan, Michael R. Bloomberg, Henry N. Cobb, Richard Serra, Renzo Piano, and Amanda Burden. Earlier recipients include Massimo and Lella Vignelli, Ada Louise Huxtable, 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](http://archleague.org/presidents-medal-dinner)**

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## About Darren Walker

Darren Walker is president of the Ford Foundation, an international social justice philanthropy with a \$13 billion endowment and \$600 million in annual grant making. He is also co-founder and chair of the U.S. Impact Investing Alliance. Before joining Ford in 2013, Walker was vice president at the Rockefeller Foundation, overseeing global and domestic programs. In the 1990s, he served as COO of the Abyssinian Development Corporation, Harlem's largest community development organization, where he oversaw a comprehensive revitalization strategy, including building over 1,000 units of affordable housing and the first major commercial development in Harlem since the 1960s. Earlier, he had a decade-long career in international law and finance at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton and UBS.

Walker co-chairs New York City's Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers, and serves on the Commission on the Future of Riker's Island Correctional Institution and the UN International Labor Organization Commission on the Future of Work. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and is the recipient of many honorary degrees and university awards, including the W.E.B. Du Bois Medal from Harvard University. Educated exclusively in public schools, he was a member of the first class of Head Start in 1965 and graduated from the University of Texas at Austin, which in 2009 recognized him with its Distinguished Alumnus Award—its highest alumni honor.

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## About The Architectural League

The Architectural League nurtures excellence in architecture, design, and urbanism, and stimulates thinking, debate, and action on 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 publication, *Urban Omnibus*, spotlights innovative and exemplary ways of interpreting and intervening in the urban environment.

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