

For immediate release

The Architectural League to Award 2020 President's Medal to Andrew Freear

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"We encourage aspiring young architects to address the ethical responsibility for the social, political, and environmental consequences of what they design and build." –Andrew Freear

January 29, 2020—The Architectural League announced today that it will award its 2020 President's Medal to Andrew Freear, director of Rural Studio in Newbern, Alabama. 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 Medal will be presented at a dinner in New York City on April 14, 2020.

Andrew Freear has directed Rural Studio, a program of the Auburn University College of Architecture, Design and Construction, since 2001. During that time he has shaped a deeply considered, widely influential model of architectural education that has enriched and intensified the training of more than 1,000 architecture students, helping them develop as "citizen architects" prepared to use design as a tool for social good. The Studio is a residential, off-campus, hands-on design/build program based in rural Hale County, Alabama. It was founded in 1993 by architects Samuel Mockbee and D.K. Ruth on the belief that "everyone, both rich and poor, deserves the benefit of good design." As director, Freear has developed the pedagogical approach of the Studio to emphasize design learning through making, the practical discipline of achieving design quality while hewing to stringent budgets, and deep engagement with communities to discern "what should be built, rather than what can be built." Through semester- and year-long programs, architecture students work in teams to research, propose, design, present, modify, and construct projects for the benefit of individual residents and the overall community. Over the years, Rural Studio has built more than 200 projects, ranging from houses, to a farm, to a library and community hub for Newbern in a former bank building, to a firehouse for Newbern's new volunteer fire department, to multiple projects in Lions Park in Greensboro, Alabama. Recognizing the systemic drivers and pervasive nature of poor housing conditions in rural America, Rural Studio has also developed projects such as the Front Porch Initiative, which "aims to develop a scalable, agile, and resilient delivery process for beautiful, well-designed high-performance homes titled as real property while supporting an industry to home building in under-resourced rural communities." Through two decades of sustained effort, Andrew Freear has transformed what matters in architecture and architectural education through the agency of design and action in rural communities.

Freear will be celebrated at the April 14 dinner in remarks by architects Billie Tsien, Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects | Partners, New York City and President of the American Academy of Arts and Letters; Marlon Blackwell, Marlon Blackwell Architects and E. Fay Jones Chair in Architecture and a Distinguished Professor in the Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville; and Architectural League President Paul Lewis, LTL Architects, New York City.

Recent recipients of the League's President's Medal include Ford Foundation President Darren Walker; climate activist and UN Paris Agreement negotiator Christiana Figueres; HH the Aga Khan; former New York City mayor Michael R. Bloomberg; architect Henry N. Cobb; artist Richard Serra; architect Renzo Piano; and planner 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, and Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown.

Freear will also deliver a lecture, **Stories from the Hinterland**, in the Architectural League's Current Work lecture series on April 15, 2020.

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. The League's online publication, Urban Omnibus, spotlights innovative and exemplary ways of interpreting and intervening in the urban environment.

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