

For Immediate Release

The Architectural League of New York to award 2026 President's Medal to Michael Bierut on May 18, 2026.

Media Contacts

Cameron King
The Architectural League
of New York
king@archleague.org

John Gendall
Chapter Agency
john@chapteragency.us

NEW YORK, NY, April 17, 2026—The Architectural League of New York will award the President's Medal to **Michael Bierut**, a leader in graphic design and a longtime partner at the international design consultancy Pentagram. The League's highest distinction, the President's Medal recognizes individuals whose enduring influence has shaped and continues to shape the cultural and built environment and whose work has made extraordinary contributions to the field of architecture, urbanism, art, design, and the environment. Bierut joins a distinguished group of past honorees spanning artists, civic leaders, and designers, including Richard Serra, Darren Walker, Renzo Piano, and Christina Figueres.

"My relationship with The Architectural League began almost the moment I arrived in New York in the summer of 1980 and has been the most rewarding of my career," says Bierut, "I learned early on that to understand a city, you had to understand its architecture. And by making architecture understandable, you could make urban life better for everyone."

With a graphic design career stretching more than 45 years, Bierut's sensibilities have helped shape the built world. From his earliest professional days in the office of Lella and Massimo Vignelli (themselves, recipients of the President's Medal) to his decades of leadership at Pentagram, Bierut has worked with a long roster of clients actively shaping public space, including the New York City Department of Transportation, Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Central Park Conservancy, and the Morgan Library & Museum.

Bierut's singular approach to graphics and his close collaborations with architects have shaped and elevated the public's experience of buildings and civic life. His work on projects as modest as the redesign of New York City's parking signs and the design of the Metropolitan Transit Authority's OMNY logo, or as iconic as the crowning inscription at the Obama Presidential Center and the expansive *New York Times* logo gracing its Eighth Avenue facade, speaks to his influence on the built environment.

"Michael Bierut has had an enormous impact on the way each of us experiences architecture in our everyday lives. His work never settles for the status quo, rather insists that levity and seriousness are not mutually exclusive, and provokes questions without creating confusion," says **Jacob R. Moore**, executive director of The Architectural League.

Bierut's contributions extend far beyond his commissioned work. In 2003, he co-founded Design Observer, which became a seminal venue for conversations about design and its role in shaping culture, commerce, society, and the planet. He has served as a lecturer at the Yale School of Management and senior critic in graphic design at the Yale School of Art. Since 1992, Bierut has served on the League's board of directors.

The Architectural League of New York will confer the President's Medal on Michael Bierut on May 18, 2026. This year's annual medal dinner will be held at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, in New York. Tickets can be purchased here: <https://archleague.org/event/michael-bierut/>

About Michael Bierut

Michael Bierut has been a graphic designer for nearly fifty years. After graduating with highest honors from the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning in 1980, his first job was in the office of Lella and Massimo Vignelli. He worked there for a decade, ultimately as Vice President for Graphic Design.

In 1990, he became a partner in the New York office of Pentagram. His clients have ranged from Mastercard, Slack, Verizon, Benetton and Disney, to the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Poetry Foundation, MIT Media Lab, Saks Fifth Avenue and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. As a volunteer to Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign, he designed the "H" logo that became ubiquitous during her presidential run, and the monumental typographic inscription he created for the Obama Presidential Center will crown the complex's central tower. Beginning in October 2024, he assumed an advisory role at Pentagram, serving as consultant to his partners on selected projects and overall business strategy.

Bierut was elected to the Alliance Graphique Internationale in 1989, installed in the Art Directors Club Hall of Fame in 2003, and awarded the profession's highest honor, the AIGA Medal, in 2006. In 2008, he was named winner in the Design Mind category of the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Awards. In 2016, he was the Henry Wolf Resident in Graphic Design at the American Academy in Rome. He has been lecturer at the Yale School of Management and senior critic in graphic design at the Yale School of Art. For the latter class, he created the "100 Days Project," an exercise involving the daily repetition of a single creative act which is now practiced worldwide. His appearance in the 2007 documentary *Helvetica* ("Any questions? Of course not!") is considered by many the movie's funniest moment.

Bierut is co-editor of the five-volume series *Looking Closer: Critical Writings on Graphic Design* and co-founded Design Observer, an online site for design and cultural criticism. His books, which include *79 Short Essays on Design* (2007), *How to use graphic design to sell things, explain things, make things look better, make people laugh, make people cry and (every once in a while) change the world* (2015 and 2021) and *Now You See It and Other Essays on Design* (2017), have been translated into German, French, Korean, Chinese, Polish and Russian.

About the President's Medal

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.

About The Architectural League of New York

The Architectural League of New York supports critically transformative work in the allied fields that shape the built environment. As a vital, independent forum, the League stimulates thinking, debate, and action on today's converging crises of racism, inequity, and climate change, in service of a more livable and just world.

archleague.org | urbanomnibus.net