

## THE ROLEX MENTOR AND PROTÉGÉ ARTS INITIATIVE

### THE BEGINNING

Rolex has a deep, long-term commitment to global arts and culture that is part of the legacy of the vision and values of its founder, Hans Wilsdorf. An entrepreneur and philanthropist, his goal from the earliest days was to foster excellence, performance and continuous improvement in all of Rolex's activities. Transmission of knowledge is integral to the company – whether in watchmaking, or in its support for the arts and culture.

Established in 2002 to assist in the transfer of knowledge from one generation of artists to the next, the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative is based on the belief that art is a continuum, an accumulation of past experiences over generations, and that all artists are inspired by those who went before them.

In its goal to give emerging artists time to learn, create and grow, the programme exemplifies Rolex's long-standing dedication to encouraging individual achievement.

### THE ARTS INITIATIVE

In keeping with the Rolex tradition of encouraging individual excellence, younger artists of exceptional promise – the protégés – are given the rare opportunity to spend significant periods of time in creative exchange with recognized masters in their particular field – the mentors – on a one-to-one basis. Through time spent together in a collaborative relationship, both mentor and protégé are invigorated in their art.

The Arts Initiative today encompasses the disciplines of architecture, dance, film, literature, music, theatre and visual arts. There is also a variable, or "open category", mentorship that can take place in other fields or in an interdisciplinary pursuit. These mentorships are grouped in alternating periods according to discipline. In 2018–2019, they took place in architecture, dance, literature and music. In 2020–2021, the programme addresses film, theatre, the visual arts and the eighth open category.

Rolex asks its mentors and protégés to interact for at least six weeks during the mentoring period, which takes place over two years. Most pairs spend considerably more time together. Although the programme encourages participants to make plans that foster significant bonds through sustained engagement, often extending long after the mentorship, mentors and protégés are entirely free to determine where, how and when they will interact. It is common for protégés to undertake specific projects of their own choosing, with the advice and support of their

mentors. At the end of the mentoring period, Rolex invites the participants and guests to honour the achievements of the mentors and protégés at a public weekend of celebrations.

### **SELECTION OF MENTORS AND PROTÉGÉS**

Every two years, a new Advisory Board of distinguished artists and arts practitioners suggests and endorses potential mentors. Once the mentors have been approached and have agreed to take part, Rolex works with them to establish a profile of the protégé they would like to work with. Each mentorship is therefore tailor-made.

Young artists cannot apply directly to the programme. Rather, nominating panels – one panel for each artistic discipline – are assembled. The expert panel members identify suitable potential protégés who are then invited by Rolex to submit applications. Panel members study these applications and recommend three or four finalists from their respective discipline. Finally, Rolex arranges for the mentor to meet the finalists and choose his or her protégé.

### **IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME**

Over nearly two decades, protégés have reported how the mentorships provide a period of both practical guidance and deep insight. For many, the programme has been life-changing. They say the experience deepens knowledge of their artistic discipline, liberates their thinking, while also boosting their confidence, international profile and connections with other people in the arts.

Outcomes for protégés vary: a new novel, a new stage production, a career dancing with the mentor's company, or a collaborative artwork created with the mentor. These are all examples of achievements through the programme. For many of the young artists, the benefits of the Initiative continue, and so Rolex keeps in touch, following their careers with interest. Among other achievements, former Rolex protégés have been appointed as artistic directors of major theatre companies and have had their work presented at leading international exhibitions such as the Venice Art Biennale and the International Architecture Exhibition. A literature protégée in 2010–2011, Tracy K. Smith, served as Poet Laureate of the United States from 2017–2019.

### **PASSING ON KNOWLEDGE**

In addition to interacting with their mentors after their official time together, in some cases collaborating on artistic projects and forming lasting friendships, many protégés team up with those from other disciplines in the programme, stimulated and challenged by their peers in different artistic areas. Past protégés, inspired by their own mentorships, have in turn been motivated to mentor younger artists – another example of the transmission of knowledge that is key to the programme.



## **A GLOBAL CREATIVE COMMUNITY**

Over nearly two decades, the Rolex Arts Initiative has evolved into a community of artists embracing different generations, cultures and disciplines. More specifically, since its beginnings, almost 1,200 young professional artists from 107 countries have been nominated to participate, thereby coming to the attention of experts in their fields. A total of 273 influential figures in the arts have nominated young artists and selected protégé finalists, and 133 major artists and creative leaders have served as advisors to the programme. To date, 58 artists have served as mentors and have chosen 58 protégés from 36 countries. Rolex considers the development of this global creative community to be one of the greatest achievements of the Rolex Arts Initiative.

The evolving legacy of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative demonstrates the company's ongoing dedication to the transmission of knowledge that stands the test of time.

## **ARTISTIC MASTERS**

The 58 mentors who have given of their time and vast talent are among the world's greatest artists. They are: Sir David Adjaye, Margaret Atwood, (the late) John Baldessari, Tahar Ben Jelloun, (the late) Trisha Brown, (the late) Patrice Chéreau, Sir David Chipperfield, Mia Couto, Alfonso Cuarón, (the late) Sir Colin Davis, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Olafur Eliasson, Brian Eno, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, William Forsythe, Stephen Frears, Gilberto Gil, Philip Glass, Alejandro G. Iñárritu, (the late) Sir Peter Hall, David Hockney, Rebecca Horn, Zakir Hussain, Joan Jonas, Sir Anish Kapoor, William Kentridge, Jiří Kylián, Robert Lepage, Lin Hwai-min, Phyllida Lloyd, Spike Lee, Lin-Manuel Miranda, (the late) Toni Morrison, Walter Murch, Ohad Naharin, Mira Nair, Youssou N'Dour, (the late) Jessye Norman, Michael Ondaatje, Crystal Pite, Alexei Ratmansky, Kaija Saariaho, Martin Scorsese, Kazuyo Sejima, Peter Sellars, Álvaro Siza, Wole Soyinka, Julie Taymor, Saburo Teshigawara, Jennifer Tipton, Colm Tóibín, Kate Valk, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carrie Mae Weems, Robert Wilson, Zhang Yimou, Pinchas Zukerman and Peter Zumthor.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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