



The Phillips Collection

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The Phillips Collection Annual Gala Celebrates the Restorative Power of Art

Proceeds benefit the museum's innovative education and community initiatives; leaders and visionaries in the arts and philanthropy were honored



WASHINGTON, DC—[The Phillips Collection 2023 Annual Gala: Threads of Connection](#) celebrated the Phillips's robust efforts in education, cultural diplomacy, and innovation in modern and contemporary art, paying tribute to the contributions of leaders that are woven into the Phillips, the DC region, the country, and the world. This year's theme, Threads of Connection, reflected upon the engaging power of the arts and the Phillips's mission to cultivate an inclusive environment for communities in Washington and beyond to expand the definition of the museum experience.

"The programs of this museum are extraordinary. We are meeting people where they are and doing this through programs such as family workshops, yoga classes, meditation, and partnerships with schools across the city. Not everybody is ready to walk right into the Phillips. Many people need to get to know us, and we are making that extra effort," says **Vradenburg Director & CEO Jonathan P. Binstock**. "By supporting the Phillips, you are helping us to do the important work that we do, which is to show the world how art can heal, transform, and lead to social justice."

The first gala at the Phillips under Binstock's directorship, the night also honored esteemed individuals who exemplify a commitment to the advancement and understanding of art and its far-reaching impact. This year, the museum honored **Sam Gilliam** (*posthumous*), influential Washington, DC-based color field painter and pioneering abstract artist; **Klaus Ottman, Ph.D.**, respected writer, scholar, and Chief Curator Emeritus of The Phillips Collection; **Mera and Donald Rubell**, visionary collectors and founders of the

Rubell Museum in Miami, FL, and Washington, DC; and **Darren Walker**, transformative changemaker, philanthropist, and President of the Ford Foundation.

The Gala brought together more than 350 guests to the Phillips, including Members of Congress and the diplomatic corps, corporate executives, artists, philanthropists, humanitarians, national media, leaders within the Washington, DC, community, and friends of the Phillips for an unforgettable black-tie evening.

Special guests included: The Phillips Collection’s Vradenburg Director & CEO Jonathan P. Binstock; Gala Chair Judy Pomeranz; The Phillips Collection Director Emerita Dorothy Kosinski; Honorary Chair and Trustee Emeritus George Vradenburg; Alice Phillips Swistel (grandniece of The Phillips Collection’s founder Duncan Phillips); Annie Gawlak (partner of Sam Gilliam); Stephanie and Leah Gilliam (daughters of Sam Gilliam); Jenn De Palma (studio assistant of Sam Gilliam); Dr. Klaus Ottmann; Mera and Donald Rubell; Darren Walker; Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (Washington, DC); Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr.; Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia Phil Mendelson; H.E. Ambassador of the State of Qatar Meshal bin Hamad Al Thani; H.E. Ambassador of France Laurent Bili; H.E. Ambassador of Portugal Francisco Duarte Lopes; H.E. Ambassador of Iceland Bergdís Ellertsdóttir; H.E. Ambassador of Denmark Christina Markus Lassen; Dame Karen Pierce DCMG, British Ambassador to the US; H.E. Ambassador of Estonia Kristjan Prikk; Madame Angélique Gakako Pitteloud; Embassy of Luxembourg’s Deputy Chief of Mission Mr. Gilles Bauer; Embassy of Italy’s Deputy Chief of Mission Alessandro Gonzales; Embassy of Australia’s Minister Counsellor, Strategic Communications Damien Miller; Embassy of Chile’s Press and Cultural Attaché Fernando M. Garcia Naddaf; artists Desmond Beach, Marta Pérez García, Barbara Liotta, Aaron Maier-Carretero, Victor Ekpu, and Linling Lu.

The Phillips Collection’s programs were spotlighted throughout the evening, including décor modeled after art by students from participating schools in the museum’s educational partnerships. Following a cocktail hour in the courtyard and galleries, guests dined among the Phillips’s renowned collection for a dinner inspired by artworks in the museum’s latest exhibition, [*Pour, Tear, Carve: Material Possibilities in the Collection*](#), on view until May 14. Former lead singer of the legendary group CHIC, the District’s own **Sylver Logan Sharp** headlined the After Party, entertaining guests with a night of dancing. Attendees also created a collective piece inspired by the artwork of university students from L’Accademia Albertina di Torino in collaboration with The Phillips Collection, Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (GAM) Turin, and the US State Department.

All gala proceeds directly support the museum’s interdisciplinary education and community engagement initiatives grounded in principles of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion to enrich lives, strengthen communities, and uphold a dynamic museum environment.

2023 GALA HONOREES

Sam Gilliam, DC-based artist (*posthumous*)
Klaus Ottmann, Ph.D., Chief Curator Emeritus, The Phillips Collection
Mera & Donald Rubell, Founders, Rubell Museum
Darren Walker, President, Ford Foundation

CONGRESSIONAL HONOREES

The Honorable Donald S. Beyer Jr.
The Honorable Susan Collins

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
The Honorable Mike Simpson
The Honorable Mark Warner

DIPLOMATIC COMMITTEE

His Excellency Meshal bin Hamad Al Thani, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the United States
His Excellency Ambassador of France Laurent Bili
Her Excellency Ambassador of Luxembourg Nicole Binter-Bakshian
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Her Excellency Kirsten Hillman, Ambassador of Canada to the United States of America
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His Excellency The Ambassador of Singapore Ashok Mirpuri
Dame Karen Pierce DCMG, British Ambassador to the US
His Excellency of Switzerland Jacques Pitteloud
His Excellency Ambassador of Estonia Kristjan Prikk
His Excellency the Honorable Dr. Kevin Rudd, Australia's Ambassador to the United States
His Excellency The Ambassador of Japan TOMITA Koji
His Excellency Ambassador of Chile Juan Gabriel Valdés
Her Excellency Ambassador of Italy Mariangela Zappia

GALA COMMITTEE

Judy Pomeranz (Chair), Beatriz Bolton, Connie Carter, Sarah Eastright, Julie Garcia, Barbara Hall, Meg Hauge, Barbara Hawthorn, Matt Indre, Jennifer Lavinbuk, Denise Long, Sarah Mills, and Courtney Toomath-West

ARTIST COMMITTEE

Desmond Beach, Marta Pérez García, Barbara Liotta, and Aaron Maier-Carretero

2023 GALA SPONSORS

The Phillips Collection is grateful for all 2023 Annual Gala supporters (as of May 5, 2023):

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PRESS IMAGES

High-resolution press images are available [here](#). Please contact Lauryn Cantrell, lcantrell@phillipscollection.org for questions.

IMAGES: (Left to right) The Phillips Collection 2023 Annual Gala Threads of Connection, Photo by Pepe Gomez; Donald and Mera Rubell, Vradenburg Director & CEO Jonathan P. Binstock, Director Emerita Dorothy Kosinski, Annie Gawlak, Darren Walker, Dr. Klaus Ottmann, Photo © Tony Powell; Sylver Logan Sharp, Photo © Tony Powell

ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

The Phillips Collection, America's first museum of modern art, was founded in 1921. The museum houses one of the world's most celebrated Impressionist and American modern art collections and continues to grow its collection with important contemporary voices. Its distinctive building combines extensive new galleries with the former home of its founder, Duncan Phillips. The Phillips's impact spreads nationally and internationally through its diverse and experimental special exhibitions and events, including its award-winning education programs for educators, students, and adults; renowned Phillips Music series; and dynamic art and wellness and Phillips after 5 events. The museum contributes to global dialogues with events like Conversations with Artists and Artists of Conscience. The Phillips Collection values its community partnership with THEARC—the museum's satellite campus in Southeast DC. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

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