



# Art21 Celebrates its 21st Year with a Host of New Initiatives

Festivities include a first-ever gala event, a new season of its television series and a book of artist interviews



(NEW YORK — April 3, 2018) — Art21 announced today the beginning of a year-long initiative celebrating the 21st anniversary of the nonprofit organization's founding. Since its inception in 1997, Art21 has become the world's **preeminent chronicler of contemporary art and artists**, inspiring and educating millions of viewers globally by providing unprecedented access to the greatest creative minds of our time.

Throughout its 21st anniversary year, Art21 will embark on a series of programming milestones, including the organization's **first-ever gala** event honoring Art21 founder Susan Sollins and artist Julie Mehretu, the premiere of a **new ninth season** on PBS, and the publishing of a **new book** of artist interviews assembled from Art21's comprehensive archive. These achievements signal the organization's continued dedication to recognizing **artists as role models** for creative and critical thinking.

Additional programming across Art21's digital and social channels will highlight both celebrated and discoverable moments from throughout the organization's history.

"Looking back at the incredible history of this organization, Art21 leads in cultural preservation and appreciation of contemporary art, all in the face of a rapidly evolving media landscape," said Art21 executive director and chief curator, Tina Kukielski. "Through a commitment to advocacy and education deeply ingrained in our history, we are poised to remain a leading authority on contemporary art in the digital age and beyond."

A cornerstone of Art21's accomplishments over the course of 21 years is a library of over **50 hours of film** documenting the works and words of today's foremost visual artists. Art21's film projects include multiple seasons of the Peabody Award-winning PBS-broadcast television series, *Art in the Twenty-First Century*; over 250 episodes of the long-running digital series, *Extended Play*; over 75 films from the celebrated digital series, *New York Close Up*; and the Peabody Award-winning feature film, *William Kentridge: Anything Is Possible*. Art21 films and full episodes are **always on view** at Art21.org.

## 21st Birthday Gala

Trumpeting in the 21st anniversary festivities is Art21's 21st Birthday Gala, the organization's **first gala event**, taking place on Tuesday, May 1 in New York City.

The evening will honor, through a tribute by **Agnes Gund**, the legacy created by **Susan Sollins**, Art21's founding executive director, who passed away in 2014. Sollins founded Art21 in 1997, leading the organization through seventeen years of innovation in art programming, including seven seasons of the flagship PBS-broadcast television series, *Art in the Twenty-First Century*. Previously, Sollins co-founded the nonprofit Independent Curators International.

Artist **Julie Mehretu** is also among the evening's honorees. Art21 has a long-standing history with Mehretu, initially featuring the artist in the 2009 season of the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* television series. Since the premiere of that season, Art21 has produced an additional five films delving into different aspects of the artist's work, most recently focusing

on Mehretu's historic commission for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 2017.

Artist involvement will play an essential role throughout the 21st Birthday Gala celebration. A birthday cake designed by **Pedro Reyes** will be on display and served to guests, while original artwork created by **assume vivid astro focus** will bolster the festive environment through birthday hats and invitation design. A silent auction will include unique artworks—presented as birthday gifts—contributed by **Creative Growth Art Center, Raúl de Nieves, Leonardo Drew, Daniel Gordon, Katharina Grosse, Rashid Johnson, Aki Sasamoto, Sarah Sze, Ursula von Rydingsvard, and The Estate of John Chamberlain.**

Tables and tickets are on sale now at [art21.org/gala](http://art21.org/gala).

## Season 9 of the “Art in the Twenty-First Century” Television Series

Anchoring the 21st anniversary year is a new season of the television series that served as the impetus for the organization's founding. On September 21, 2018, Art21 will premiere the **ninth season** of its flagship *Art in the Twenty-First Century* television series on **PBS** in the United States. The twelve artists to be featured in the new season will be announced on the evening of the 21st Birthday Gala on May 1.

Hailed as the **longest-running television series on contemporary art**, Art21's *Art in the Twenty-First Century* provides unparalleled access to the most innovative artists of our time, revealing how artists engage the culture around them and how art allows viewers to see the world in new ways. **Over 130 artists** have been featured throughout nine seasons of the Peabody Award-winning television series.

## New Book of Artist Interviews

Rounding out the 21st anniversary year's milestones is the release of a new publication drawing from Art21's rich archive of artist interviews. This compendium of artist interviews, titled *Being an Artist*, captures the engaging and seminal conversations that have taken place over the course of the organization's 21-year history. While serving as an essential primer on a generation of artists that have made an undeniable mark on art history, this collection reveals insight into their specific lives and works,

collectively telling the story of contemporary art in the first two decades of the 21st century.

These interviews—many of which are previously unpublished—provide rare, personal, and unusual insights into the life, work, and family of artists, including: **Bruce Nauman** reflecting on how his art makes viewers struggle; **Julie Mehretu** identifying “the poltergeist” in her work; **Cai Guo-Qiang** comparing the process of drawing with lovemaking; **Nick Cave** describing art as a form of diplomacy; **Maya Lin** explaining why she keeps art and architecture separate; **Catherine Opie** narrating her work’s evolution from street photography to representational photography; **Kerry James Marshall** expounding on why art making is about fighting for recognition; **James Turrell** meditating on spirituality in the arts; and **Theaster Gates** proposing possibilities for art to go beyond the making of objects.

The book will be released in Fall 2018, to be distributed through D.A.P. / Distributed Art Publishers, Inc.

## A Pioneer in Digital Filmmaking

Prefacing the 21st anniversary programming was a special series of five film premieres across Art21’s two digital series, *Extended Play* and *New York Close Up*. The five-film series demonstrated Art21’s ongoing commitment to **digital-first video programming**, underscoring the nonprofit organization’s position as the leading producer of films documenting the creative processes of today’s artists.

Launched in March 2008, *Extended Play* is the **first and longest-running digital film series** committed to documenting the lives and works of contemporary artists. Through process-revealing footage and intimate interviews, *Extended Play* uncovers the provocative ideas and biographical anecdotes that inspire an artist’s work from conceptualization, to creation, to presentation.

Initially introduced as a digital complement to the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* television series, *Extended Play*’s scope and ambitions have since expanded. In 2018, the series achieved a new milestone by introducing an artist to the series roster not previously featured in another Art21 series, **Jack Whitten**. The series also holds the distinction of being granted exclusive access to major works in progress, including **Julie Mehretu**’s

historic commission for the atrium of the newly-reopened San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and **Kara Walker's** monumental public project at the former site of the Domino Sugar Factory in Brooklyn, NY.

Over 100 artists have been featured in the *Extended Play* series throughout its first 10 years, including **Sarah Sze, William Kentridge, Do Ho Suh, Cindy Sherman, Nancy Spero, Gabriel Orozco, Jeff Koons, Mike Kelley, Andrea Zittel,** and **Carrie Mae Weems,** among others.

Now in its seventh year, Art21's celebrated digital series *New York Close Up* profiles young artists living and working in New York City during the first decade of their career. Since its inaugural film premiere in June 2011, the series has profiled over 30 artists in over 75 films, including **Diana Al-Hadid, Lucas Blalock, Jamian Juliano-Villani, Kalup Linzy, Rashid Johnson, Keltie Ferris, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Mika Rottenberg, Jacolby Satterwhite, Erin Shirreff,** and **Mika Tajima,** among others. In the past year, the series introduced six additional artists to its roster: **Doreen Garner, Jordan Casteel, Aki Sasamoto, Meriem Bennani, Avery Singer,** and **Raúl de Nieves.**

## About Art21

Since 1997, Art21 has been recognized as a celebrated global leader in presenting thought-provoking and sophisticated content about contemporary art. It is the go-to place to learn firsthand about some of the most interesting working artists today—from the artists themselves—and is responsible for introducing millions of people to contemporary art and artists. Founded on the belief that artists are role models for creative and critical thinking, Art21's mission aims to inspire a more creative and tolerant world through the works and words of contemporary artists.

Art21.org provides an unparalleled year-round, always-on look at working artists, a continuous digital presence for an organization that is widely recognized for a biennial television series. The Art21 video library houses over 50 hours of original video content—over 500 videos all open and free to the public. Reaching audiences of over 5 million a month, Art21's digital initiatives continue the organization's long-standing tradition of using the power of digital media to inspire audiences worldwide by exposing them to contemporary artists.

Through its education program, Art21 engages audiences in dialogue about the contemporary art and artists featured in Art21 films. Art21's educational initiatives include the Art21 Educators learning community, the production of interpretive resources, professional development workshops and lectures, and participatory programs and screening events.

To date, Art21's short form films have had over 50 film festival acceptances across the world and have been nominated for a Webby Award and won a Cine Golden Eagle.

Art21 programs are made possible through the generosity of The Anna Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation; Agnes Gund; PBS; the Lambent Foundation Fund of the Tides Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation; and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

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For a full list of Art21 supporters, please visit [Art21.org](http://Art21.org).

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