



Art21 Marks 25 Years With Launch of Archive Holding Over 4,000 Hours of Unseen Footage of More Than 300 Artists

Seed funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies and The Hearthland Foundation provides access to two decades of interviews with artists including Kerry James Marshall, Bruce Nauman, and Julie Mehretu.



Top row (L-R): Kerry James Marshall, 2001; Sally Mann, 2001; Elizabeth Murray, 2003; Julie Mehretu, 2009; Michael Ray Charles, 2001
Bottom row (L-R): Bruce Nauman, 2001; Kara Walker, 2003; Sarah Sze, 2012; Phyllida Barlow, 2020; Margaret Kilgallen, 2001

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW YORK, NEW YORK—September 15, 2026—Art21 announced “[25 Years of Art21](#),” a year-long celebration to mark a quarter-century as the leading independent producer documenting the art of our time. Kicking off the landmark year is the establishment and activation of the Art21 Archive, which preserves over 4,000 hours of never-before-seen interviews, works-in-progress footage, and exhibition documentation of over 300 artists. With major seed funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Digital Accelerator for Arts and Culture and The Hearthland Foundation, the Art21 Archive will increase new content production throughout its anniversary year and beyond.

UNLOCKING THE VAULT

The Art21 Archive holds the foundation of Art21's signature storytelling style: a pioneering, artist-first, documentary approach that has influenced contemporary art coverage worldwide. The collection includes public-facing films and the raw footage gathered since filming first began in 1999. This expansive resource spotlights firsthand accounts of pivotal moments in contemporary art history, ranging from the iconic, like Kara Walker's *A Subtlety or the Marvelous Sugar Baby* (2014) to the private, like Jack Whitten's final on-screen interview or Margaret Kilgallen tagging traincars in a San Francisco railyard with Barry McGee.

"25 years ago, what you knew about artists was through written profiles or lectures. So Art21 really was something very special," says An-My Lê, the celebrated photographer who was first featured by the organization in 2007 and will be again in 2026. *"To follow an artist over 20 years really shows Art21's commitment to not just profiling artists, but to also archive the work. There's not just a breadth, but a depth to it."*

The archive tracks the long-term trajectories of celebrated artists like Sarah Sze, Kerry James Marshall, Julie Mehretu, and Kara Walker over decades and preserves irreplaceable records of legendary figures such as Phyllida Barlow, Elizabeth Murray, Richard Serra, and Sally Mann.

From this wealth of over 4,000 hours of original historic footage, Art21 will produce a slate of new public content throughout the year. Launches will include a variety of short films across social media, including "Untold Story," a series that draws on never-before-seen footage, the organization's first podcast, and written interviews.

"Art historians will be mining this archive for decades. We built it one interview at a time, never knowing it would become one of the largest living records of contemporary art in existence. 25 years later, the archive is laying the foundation for our next chapter."

—Art21 Susan Sollins Executive Director and Chief Curator, Tina Kukielski

To learn more about the Art21 Archive, please visit art21.org/about/art21-archive/.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ART21

September 2026 will mark 25 years since Art21's first broadcast on public television. What began with Richard Serra on standard-definition tape and film reels over two decades ago has grown into a global digital platform delivering 4K original content on a near-daily basis.

To date, Art21 has created 85+ hours of free films documenting over 300 artists across six continents, reaching over 50 million viewers online last year alone. Beyond film, the organization bolsters its educational mission by providing free resources, tools, and professional development training for educators in classrooms worldwide.

For a fuller history of the organization, go to <https://art21.org/about/history/>.

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026–2027 PROGRAMMING

Alongside the archive activation, “25 Years of Art21” will offer a series of public programs, new educational resources, events, and activations designed to bring its history to life.



Production still featuring Laurie Anderson from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 1 episode "Place." © Art21, Inc. 2001.

Art21 Rewind: a public screening of “Art in the Twenty-First Century,” Season 1

Date: *September 30, 2026*

Location: *SVA Theatre, NYC*

Tickets: eventbrite.com/e/art21-rewind-tickets-1997779824233

Art21 will present iconic artist segments and introductions from the first season of its Peabody Award-winning broadcast series, shown on the big screen for the first time in 25 years. Tickets will be available to the general public, limited edition and vintage merch will be sold on-site, and select artists will be in attendance.



Production still featuring hosts Emma Nordin and Jurrell Lewis, from the forthcoming online course, *An Introduction to Contemporary Art* © Art21, Inc. 2026.

Launch of first online educational course: *An Introduction to Contemporary Art*

Date: *Fall 2026*

Location: *Online via art21.org*

Continually expanding its educational offerings, Art21's first-ever online course is a hosted journey through 25+ years of contemporary art. *An Introduction to Contemporary Art* uses Art21's unparalleled catalog of artist documentaries to demystify a subject that often feels intimidating, making the ongoing story of contemporary art accessible to students of all ages.

Year-long Community Activations

Additional activations during the campaign will include social media calls to action inviting viewers to share personal Art21 stories, an Art21 giving day on the anniversary of the first broadcast, a 25-year edition of [Screening Society](#), and a line of limited-edition vintage and artist-designed merchandise in the [Art21 Shop](#).

The Art21 Archive

The Art21 Archive is made possible with support from Bloomberg Philanthropies' Digital Accelerator for Arts and Culture, The Hearthland Foundation, the Jon and Mary Shirley Foundation, the Evelyn Toll Family Foundation, and the Art21 Board of Trustees.

About Art21

Art21 documents the art of our time through the words and works of the most impactful artists working today. Operating at the nexus of contemporary art and film, Art21 produces intimate documentary portraits of artists at crucial moments of creation, inviting audiences to see the world from an artist's perspective. From its Peabody Award-winning public television series to in-person public programs, education initiatives, and film screenings, to distributing its documentary films for free online and across social media platforms, the independent nonprofit is dedicated to meeting audiences where they are and to making contemporary art accessible to all. For more information, visit [Art21.org](https://art21.org).

Bloomberg Philanthropies

About Bloomberg Philanthropies

The Art21 Archive was developed with the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies' Digital Accelerator for Arts and Culture. Launched in 2021, the program is designed to help arts organizations stabilize and thrive in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic through strategic improvements to technology infrastructure. The program supports leadership development and infrastructure investment that build audiences, increase fundraising, drive revenue, deliver dynamic programming, and help develop best practices to share across a network of nonprofit culture organizations.

THE HEARTHLAND FOUNDATION

About The Hearthland Foundation

The Hearthland Foundation was founded by Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg to harness creativity and nurture moral imagination in service of our country. It works alongside many to help create a more just, equitable, and connected America. Specifically, The Hearthland Foundation makes grants, co-creates projects, and facilitates strategic collaborations among charitable organizations. Their three areas of focus are: Building a shared democracy, Telling an honest and generative narrative about this country, and Fostering a culture of accompaniment.

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For advance screenings or to learn more, email Art21 Associate Director of Communications, Hannah DeGarmo, at hannah@art21.org.