

Hammer Museum Honors Ann Philbin in Celebration of Her 25 Years of Leadership at 19th Annual Gala in the Garden

Evening Raised a Record-Breaking \$3.6 Million to Support the Hammer's Internationally Acclaimed Exhibitions and Public Programs



Attendees included Jodie Foster, Will Ferrell, Keanu Reeves, Jane Fonda, Owen Wilson, Ava DuVernay, Charles Gaines, Andrea Bowers & More

(Los Angeles, CA) — On Saturday, May 4, 2024, the [Hammer Museum](#) welcomed artists, collectors, patrons of the arts, cultural and civic leaders, and celebrities for the 19th Annual Gala in the Garden. The star-studded evening honored museum director **Ann Philbin** in celebration of her 25 years of leadership at the Hammer, ahead of [her retirement this November](#). The sold-out gala raised a record-breaking \$3.6 million to support the Hammer's dynamic and internationally acclaimed exhibitions and public programs, which are free to the public.

An annual highlight of the Los Angeles cultural calendar, the evening opened with remarks by Oscar-winning actress **Jodie Foster** and **Alexandra Hedison**, on behalf of their fellow co-chairs **Melina and Eric Esrailian** and **Roxana Landaverde and Charles Gaines**. Foster and Hedison began their speech by acknowledging the protests and clashes that took place nearby on UCLA's campus earlier in the week, noting that museums such as the Hammer are spaces that allow the arts to "engender and support thoughtful, respectful debate and dialogue."

Over 700 guests gathered at the Hammer Museum's largest Gala in the Garden to date to honor Philbin, who has been director of the Hammer since 1999. Over the past 25 years, she has built an esteemed

Image captions (L-R): Hammer Museum director Ann Philbin (left) with wife Cynthia Wornham; performer k.d. lang with Hammer Museum director Ann Philbin and gala co-chairs Jodie Foster, Alexandra Hedison, and Charles Gaines. Photos by Stefanie Keenan/Getty Images for Hammer Museum.

reputation in the international art community and is known for transforming the Hammer into one of the world's leading contemporary art museums. The evening featured tribute speeches by **Kara Walker**, **Robert Gober**, **Hilton Als**, **Will Ferrell**, **Lari Pittman**, **Mark Bradford**, and **Darren Walker**, who then welcomed Philbin to the stage.

During her speech Philbin reflected on her career and echoed Foster's earlier remarks. "I recognize what a difficult moment this is for a celebration, but I also want to embrace this time with all of you and acknowledge that this has always been a space where we have engaged in dialogue around some of the most fractious and difficult subjects of our time. The Hammer has always sought to educate, to build empathy and understanding, to respectfully challenge the status quo, and to build a diverse community."

Philbin looked back on career, reflecting that early on, "I realized that I was not destined to be an artist—the 'creator and maker of the soup'—but rather to be a vessel that brought the bubbling, boiling food to the table—to feed and nourish people."

Speaking in tribute to Philbin, artist **Kara Walker** recalled being the first artist, in 1999, to be featured in the museum's now-acclaimed Hammer Projects exhibition series; **Robert Gober** highlighted Philbin's AIDS activism when she was director of the Drawing Center in New York in the 1990s, at the height of the AIDS crisis; **Lari Pittman** recounted how he helped to convince Philbin to come to L.A. to lead the Hammer Museum, and how remarkable her impact on the institution has been. Actor and comedian **Will Ferrell** made an unannounced appearance on stage in a lighthearted and hilarious send-up of Philbin, including sharing a series of photographs taken by artist **Sidney Felsen** over a period of many years, featuring Philbin coming out of men's restrooms with artists including **John Baldessari**, **Ellsworth Kelly**, **Glenn Kaino**, and **Catherine Opie**.

Grammy Award-winning artist **k.d. lang** graced the stage with a stunning performance of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah," which received a standing ovation. **D-Nice** closed out the evening with an energizing DJ set.

Additional attendees included **Keanu Reeves & Alexandra Grant**, **Jane Fonda**, **Steven Spielberg & Kate Capshaw**, **Owen Wilson**, **Ava DuVernay**, **Rufus Wainwright**, **Joel McHale**, **Julian Morris**, **Viveca Paulin Ferrell**, and more, as well as artists **Andrea Bowers**, **Ed Ruscha**, **Jonas Wood & Shio Kusaka**, **Glenn Kaino**, **Rodney McMillian**, **Catherine Opie**, **Jim Shaw**, **Joey Terrill**, **EJ Hill**, **Mel Chin**, **Lorna Simpson**, **Andrea Fraser**, and **Pae White** whose art was specially curated and featured at the event.

Philbin also acknowledge her many fellow museum directors in attendance, including **Johanna Burton** (MOCA), **Anne Ellegood** (ICA LA), **Michael Govan** (LACMA), **Sandra Jackson-Dumont** (the Lucas Museum), **Timothy Potts** (Getty Museum), **Hamza Walker** (LAXART), **Susan Sayre Batton** (San Jose Museum of Art), **Thelma Golden** (Studio Museum), **Matthew Teitelbaum** (MFA Boston), and **Connie Butler** (MoMA PS1, and formerly Chief Curator at the Hammer). "I applaud all of you and encourage everyone to support these amazing individuals and the remarkable institutions they are building," Philbin said. "They really are making all of our lives better."

ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM

The Hammer Museum is part of the School of the Arts and Architecture at UCLA, and offers exhibitions and collections that span classic to contemporary art. It holds more than 50,000 works in its collection, including one of the finest collections of works on paper in the nation, the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts. Through a wide-ranging, international exhibition program and the Made in L.A. biennial, the Hammer highlights contemporary art since the 1960s, especially the work of emerging and under-recognized artists. The exhibitions, permanent collections, and nearly 300 public programs annually—including film screenings, lectures, symposia, readings, music performances, and workshops for families—are all free to the public.

HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION

Admission to all exhibitions and programs at the Hammer Museum is free. Hours: Tuesday–Thursday, Saturday–Sunday 11 a.m.–6 p.m.; Friday 11 a.m.–8 p.m. Closed Mondays and national holidays. Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Boulevard at Westwood, Los Angeles. Onsite parking is \$8 for the first 3 hours (maximum \$22), or \$8 flat rate after 5 p.m. Valet parking is available at the Lindbrook Drive entrance for \$15. Visit hammer.ucla.edu for details or call 310-443-7000.

Free Admission at the Hammer Museum is courtesy of Marcy Carsey, the Erika J Glazer Family Foundation, and the Anthony & Jeanne Pritzker Family Foundation.

Media Contacts:

SSM&L: hammermuseumgala@ssmandl.com

Hammer Museum

Santiago Pazos: spazos@hammer.ucla.edu

Scott Tennent: stennent@hammer.ucla.edu