



For Immediate Release

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Alice Walton & Wangechi Mutu To Receive 2016 AFA Cultural Leadership Awards



Philanthropist and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art Board Chair Alice Walton. Photo by Stephen Ironside, courtesy of Crystal Bridges; Artist Wangechi Mutu. Photo by Cynthia Etorh, Getty Images, courtesy Wangechi Mutu.

New York, New York (August 4, 2016) –The American Federation of Arts (AFA), is pleased to announce that the recipients of this year’s **Cultural Leadership Awards** will be **Alice Walton** and **Wangechi Mutu**. The awards will be presented at the **AFA Gala on November 1** at The Metropolitan Club in New York City. The Cultural Leadership Awards are given annually to an artist, museum leader, or philanthropist in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the art community. Proceeds from the event benefit the distinguished exhibitions toured to museums nationwide by the American Federation of Arts.

“It is a true honor to present the Cultural Leadership Awards to Alice Walton and Wangechi Mutu. Ms. Walton’s singular commitment to the arts, as well as her pioneering efforts to bring world-class art to her community in Bentonville deeply resonate with the AFA’s mission of bringing art of the highest quality to communities throughout the country. Ms. Mutu’s powerful, sensitive, and thought-provoking work highlights and questions important and timely subjects such as gender, race, and our dialogue with history,” said AFA Director **Pauline Willis**.

Alice Walton is a committed patron of the arts and philanthropist who led her family in founding Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and now serves as Chairwoman of the museum’s Board of Directors. An avid nature lover and art collector, Ms. Walton envisioned creating a significant art museum in her hometown of Bentonville, Arkansas, so that people of the region would have ready access to great works of art. She conceived Crystal

Bridges as a celebration, not only of American art and history, but of the Ozark landscape she loved and explored as a child, and planned to build the museum on land that had belonged to the Walton family for years. In 2005, Ms. Walton involved her family in her dream for Crystal Bridges, and the Walton Family Foundation agreed to fund the project.

Nestled in 120 acres of Ozark woodlands—a gift from the Walton family to Crystal Bridges—the museum opened on November 11, 2011 with the mission of welcoming all to celebrate the American spirit in a setting that unites the power of art with the beauty of nature.

Since that time, the museum has welcomed more than 2.5 million visitors and garnered 9,000+ households in its membership. More than 110,000 schoolchildren have taken part in the museum's school visit program.

The establishment of the museum and its impact within the region has prompted numerous accolades for Ms. Walton, such as inclusion in the 2012 *TIME* list of the 100 most influential people in the world. She is a recipient of the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art Medal, the John Cotton Dana Medal for Visionary Leadership in Museums, and the Leonore and Walter Annenberg Award for Diplomacy through the Arts for her significant philanthropic contributions.

Ms. Walton has served as a member of the Board of the Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth, Texas, and the Trustees' Council of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. She is a Board Member of the Walton Family Foundation.

Wangechi Mutu is considered one of the most important living artists. She studied at the Cooper Union and Yale University, and has made art in New York for almost twenty years. She is the recipient of the United States Artist Grant (2014), the Brooklyn Museum's Asher B. Durand Artist of the Year Award (2013), and was honored as Deutsche Guggenheim's first Artist of the Year (2010). Ms. Mutu recently participated in the Venice Biennale: All the World's Futures (2015), and the Dak'Art Biennial (2014). She has exhibited at numerous one-person shows worldwide including the Deutsche Guggenheim Museum in Berlin, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Staatliche Kunsthalle in Baden-Baden, the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in Sydney, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Nasher Museum of Art in Durham, North Carolina, among others, and her work is included in the collections of many major institutions.

Her work is concerned with questions about self-image, humanness, and representation. Her hybridized, altered, and enhanced characters may have the appearance of cyborgs, archaic objects, and animal-life forms, making them seemingly unknowable. Ms. Mutu seeks to investigate the subject's consciousness both of its inherent power and of its vulnerability, thereby questioning the role each and every one of us plays in our own self-determination, as well as in the recognition of others' humanity, and our awareness of the state of our ailing planet. In her experiments with animation and film, she uses her own body to enact gestures that explore complex questions about the female African subject. These works investigate deeper representations of subjects usually relegated to the borders and the margins or the silent spots of our shared histories.

Previous AFA Cultural Leadership Award honorees have included: Marina Abramović, Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Rosa & Carlos de la Cruz, Milton Esterow, Frank Gehry, Wade Guyton, Arnold Lehman, Shirin Neshat, Roy Neuberger, Sarah Sze, Spencer Finch, Eugene V. Thaw, Kehinde Wiley, and many others.

For more information about the 2016 Gala & Cultural Leadership Awards tickets and table sales, contact Amanda Haber at ahaber@afaweb.org or 212.988.7700 x 209.

About the American Federation of Arts

The American Federation of Arts is the leader in traveling exhibitions internationally. A nonprofit organization founded in 1909, the AFA is dedicated to enriching the public's experience and understanding of the visual arts through organizing and touring art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishing exhibition catalogues featuring important scholarly research, and developing educational programs. For more information about the AFA, visit www.afaweb.org.

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