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ARTS LUMINARIES CELEBRATE ROLEX ARTS INITIATIVE IN MEXICO CITY

Major artists and arts leaders from around the world gather to mark the culmination of the 2014–2015 cycle of Rolex’s international mentoring programme

Geneva, Switzerland, 4 December 2015

Mexico City, with its rich and diverse arts scene, will play host to some of the world’s greatest artists on 5 and 6 December for the Rolex Arts Weekend. The two-day event, which is open to the public, will celebrate the achievements in the past year of the seven protégés and seven mentors in the 2014–2015 edition of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative.

World-renowned artists Olafur Eliasson, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Michael Ondaatje, Alexei Ratmansky, Kaija Saariaho, Jennifer Tipton and Peter Zumthor – mentors respectively in visual arts, film, literature, dance, music, theatre and architecture – and their protégés will participate in the Arts Weekend, which will take place at the Centro Cultural del Bosque, Mexico’s largest performing arts complex.

For the first time in the history of the Rolex Arts Initiative, the celebration of the conclusion of the Arts Weekend will be open to the public. It will be held at Centro Cultural del Bosque’s Teatro Julio Castillo on the evening of 6 December. The event will culminate with the announcement of the new mentors for the 2016–2017 cycle.

“With its dynamic cultural life, Mexico City is the perfect location for the Arts Initiative’s first visit to Latin America,” said Rebecca Irvin, head of philanthropy at Rolex. “The performances, including two world premieres, readings, conversations and site-specific exhibitions that comprise the Arts Weekend, bear testament to how much the mentoring process benefits both master and emerging artist.

“We are thrilled that most of the protégés of the six previous cycles will join us in Mexico City, as well as many past advisors and mentors. A remarkable community of artists has been built up since the programme was launched in 2002,” she said.



Unique to this year's celebration is the participation of Joseph V. Melillo, Executive Producer of the famed Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) in New York, who is curating the Arts Weekend, along with young Mexican curator Allegra Cordero di Montezemolo, his official apprentice for the occasion.

Highlights of the 2014–2015 mentoring year were:

Architecture

Switzerland, Paraguay and South Korea were the principal settings for Peter Zumthor and Gloria Cabral's busy, collaborative partnership that grew rapidly from the start. Cabral became project manager for Zumthor's design of a tea chapel near Seoul. She also made several visits to Haldenstein, Zumthor's Swiss base, spending up to a month each time working with her mentor and his team. Another highlight was Zumthor's visit to Cabral's home town, Asunción, Paraguay.

Dance

The conviction that classical ballet is a living, evolving art provided a shared faith for mentor Alexei Ratmansky and protégé Myles Thatcher. They were able to find time to observe each other at work on both east and west coasts of the United States and in Munich, where the Russian choreographer was preparing a new production of *Paquita*. Thatcher observed Ratmansky's friendly but firm direction of the dancers and assisted his mentor. Ratmansky visited San Francisco where Thatcher was rehearsing dancers for a new piece of choreography.

Film

In a highly eventful mentoring year, protégé Tom Shoal was invited to watch post-production work on Alejandro González Iñárritu's masterpiece, *Birdman*, and was present when his mentor received three Academy Awards for his film at the 2015 Oscars. Iñárritu invited Shoal to witness the filming of his new feature film, *The Revenant*, in the Canadian Rockies. The young director was almost overwhelmed by his mentor's generosity in terms of the access he was given.

Literature

With much in common – they have both changed countries and cultures, and have careers as both teachers and writers – Canadian Michael Ondaatje and United States-based Bulgarian Miroslav Penkov quickly developed a strong literary friendship, exchanging messages and travelling to Bulgaria together. A major focus of the mentorship was Penkov's debut novel, which he was writing in English, his second language. At the end of the mentoring year, Penkov had completed his novel – which is scheduled for publication in March 2016.

Music

In several encounters in cities from Los Angeles to Helsinki, Finland's Kaija Saariaho and her protégé, Portugal's Vasco Mendonça, established a professional friendship that was both dynamic and highly productive. Mendonça attended performances of Saariaho's music around the world – and twice his music was played at the same event as hers. They were able to engage in stimulating intellectual discussions about their work and other artistic matters.

Theatre

Throughout the mentoring year young Mexican lighting designer Sebastián Solórzano Rodríguez sat alongside mentor Jennifer Tipton as she lit up rehearsals and performances in London, Barcelona, Paris, New York, Houston and Madrid. Solórzano Rodríguez also invited his mentor to Mexico City, his home town. They had a concrete plan of action, the results of which, Solórzano Rodríguez later said, were that his life "has changed forever".

Visual Arts

Sammy Baloji's mentoring year consisted of a series of short but intense encounters with Olafur Eliasson, mainly in Berlin, at Eliasson's studio. The mentor said that he too wanted to learn from the process and the pair collaborated without a fixed plan, quickly building a strong rapport, combining intellectual discussion with clear advice for Baloji to develop his creativity across a spectrum of artistic media and in preparation of his first installation for exhibition at the Venice Biennale.

About the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative

The Rolex Arts Initiative is a biennial philanthropic programme created by Rolex to ensure that the world's artistic heritage is passed on from generation to generation, across continents and cultures. Since its launch in 2002, the initiative has built a remarkable artistic community that connects artists around the globe. Some of the world's most distinguished artists have served as mentors. They are: Margaret Atwood, John Baldessari, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Trisha Brown, (the late) Patrice Chéreau, (the late) Sir Colin Davis, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Olafur Eliasson, Brian Eno, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, William Forsythe, Stephen Frears, Gilberto Gil, Sir Peter Hall, David Hockney, Rebecca Horn, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Sir Anish Kapoor, William Kentridge, Jiří Kylián, Lin Hwai-min, Toni Morrison, Walter Murch, Mira Nair, Youssou N'Dour, Jessye Norman, Michael Ondaatje, Alexei Ratmansky, Kaija Saariaho, Martin Scorsese, Kazuyo Sejima, Peter Sellars, Álvaro Siza, Wole Soyinka, Julie Taymor, Saburo Teshigawara, Jennifer Tipton, Kate Valk, Mario Vargas Llosa, Robert Wilson, Zhang Yimou, Pinchas Zukerman and Peter Zumthor.

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Further information about the Rolex Arts Initiative is available at rolexmentorprotege.com.

CONTACT SHEET



Protégés of the 2014–2015 mentoring year
©Rolex/Régis Golay



Architecture, Peter Zumthor, mentor,
with Gloria Cabral, protégée
©Rolex/Marc Latzel



Dance, Alexei Ratmansky, mentor,
with Myles Thatcher, protégé
©Rolex/Tomas Bertelsen



Film, Alejandro González Iñárritu, mentor,
with Tom Shoval, protégé
©Rolex/Kimberley French



Literature, Michael Ondaatje, mentor,
with Miroslav Penkov, protégé
©Rolex/Bart Michiels



Music, Kaija Saariaho, mentor,
with Vasco Mendonça, protégé
©Rolex/Ambroise Tézenas



Theatre, Jennifer Tipton, mentor,
with Sebastián Solórzano Rodríguez, protégé
©Rolex/Hugo Glendinning



Visual arts, Olafur Eliasson, mentor,
with Sammy Baloji, protégé
©Rolex/Tomas Bertelsen

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ARCHITECTURE

Switzerland, Paraguay and South Korea were the settings for Peter Zumthor and Gloria Cabral's mentorship which began as busily as it was to continue for the next 12 months. Cabral flew to Seoul with Zumthor at the beginning of the mentoring year to discover the architectural wishes of a local client, a Catholic priest who wanted to build a tea chapel. Zumthor assigned Cabral to the project. During the year both mentor and protégée developed a strong bond and, as they come from different architectural traditions, she found there was much to discover. For Cabral, the year provided a steep learning curve on several fronts – she quickly improved her English so she could communicate with Zumthor's team at his base in Haldenstein, Switzerland. More crucially, she immersed herself in her mentor's architectural principles, according to which the personal and human have priority over stylistic flourishes: "My philosophy is ... not to make a lot of architectural noise," says Zumthor. She made several visits to Haldenstein, spending up to a month each time working with her mentor and his team. Another highlight of the year was Zumthor's visit to Cabral's hometown, Asunción, Paraguay, where he was able to see the ingenious use of bricks by his protégée's architectural firm. Having originally chosen her as his protégée for her craftsmanship and fondness for building materials, he was delighted to find that her architecture is beautiful and impressive. "My experience here [in Asunción] has been very strong, getting to know another culture. Their work is very grounded, and there's a good aesthetic touch," says Zumthor.

Peter Zumthor

Mentor

Widely revered Swiss architect Peter Zumthor has gained international renown for his timeless buildings that incorporate his masterful use of materials and light in projects such as Switzerland's Therme Vals (1996). In 2008, the Pritzker Prize winner was commissioned by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art to bring the museum into the 21st century. He won RIBA's Royal Gold Medal in 2013.

Gloria Cabral

Protégée

For Paraguayan architect Gloria Cabral, designing buildings is based on thinking about how the space will be used rather than conceiving them as objets d'art. Cabral studied architecture at the Universidad Nacional de Asunción. While still studying, she was employed as an intern at prestigious Asunción-based architecture firm, Gabinete de Arquitectura, and was made a full partner in 2004. For the past 10 years, she has worked with the Gabinete team on projects informed by strong environmental and social concerns, notably the Teletón Children's Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre, which won first prize at the 2010 Bienal Panamericana in the recycling category. Also a committed teacher, Cabral has been a professor at the Universidad Nacional de Asunción since 2009, and has served as visiting professor at universities in Panama and Peru. She also lectures at universities in several South American countries.

PETER ZUMTHOR

“It was sort of like a couple getting to know each other. You learn from each other. I feel sorry that we have to stop. But the way I do architecture, it is a long-term project. I'm sure we'll stay in contact – so you could say that Rolex has started something.”

On working with his team and with Gloria Cabral: “I ask them what they think is good or bad about it? Everybody speaks. We then try to develop the design together. Basically, we share everything. Gloria has worked here like a normal project architect.”

GLORIA CABRAL

“I think the role of a protégée is to learn from the roads already travelled by their mentor, and then for the protégé to choose his or her own path.”

“In February 2015, at Peter's studio, I had to give a presentation about the Korean tea chapel project to the design team. That experience was special to me, because in explaining the project I described it in a way that made it mine, in a way, but also completely part of the whole team effort.”

YEAR OF MENTORING

DANCE

It would be difficult to think of a better career boost for a rising young choreographer like American Myles Thatcher than a year-long mentorship with one of the world's most gifted contemporary masters of dance, Alexei Ratmansky, former artistic director of the Bolshoi Ballet and now artist-in-residence at the American Ballet Theatre. Absolutely devoted to classical dance, Thatcher embraced the many opportunities Ratmansky gave him to watch, and comment on the master choreographer's work. Thatcher spent several weeks in New York, where the mentor is based, and a month in Munich, where Ratmansky was preparing a production of *Paquita*. Ratmansky travelled to San Francisco to see his protégé's work – and give feedback on Thatcher's new choreography. Even when mentor and protégé were in their respective home companies, on the east and west coasts of the U.S., they exchanged videos and emails to keep constantly up-to-date on each other's work. Although they have different choreographing styles, the pair found they share a core ballet ethos, as well as agreement on ballet technique; both believe classical ballet is not frozen in the past, with a focus purely on precision and discipline; rather, they are convinced that ballet is a living, evolving art, with many possibilities for the future. At least one critic saw Ratmansky's influence in *Manifesto*, Thatcher's ballet that premiered in February 2015. "Signs of the mentorship appear readily in *Manifesto*, which displays a tension between the classical and the contemporary," wrote Craig Hubert on the Blouin Art website.

Alexei Ratmansky

Mentor

Russia's Alexei Ratmansky, recognized as one of the world's most influential and sought-after choreographers, is currently artist-in-residence at the American Ballet Theatre. He is credited with moving ballet forward while maintaining its classical origins and revitalizing storytelling in his productions. Ratmansky performed with the Kiev Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Royal Danish Ballet before becoming artistic director of the Bolshoi Ballet in 2004.

Myles Thatcher

Protégé

Acknowledged for his versatility and profound talent as a rising star of classical ballet, American dancer Myles Thatcher has been described as a choreographer with incredible potential by Helgi Tomasson, Artistic Director and Principal Choreographer of the San Francisco Ballet. “I am intrigued by the endless possibilities of moving bodies in space,” says Thatcher, who remembers choreographing a piece to the *Nutcracker Suite* when he was a child. Thatcher attended the Harid Conservatory in Florida and studied at New York’s Ellison Ballet School before joining the San Francisco Ballet School Trainee Program in 2008. In 2009, he joined the company as an apprentice and was accepted into the corps de ballet a year later. Two of his latest works for the school’s trainees are *Spinnae* (2011–2012) and *Stone and Steel* (2013). In February this year, at age 24, he became the first San Francisco Ballet corps member in three decades to choreograph a work – *Manifesto* – for the company’s subscription season. Recently, he was invited to create new works for the Joffrey Ballet and New York City Ballet.

ALEXEI RATMANSKY

Asked why he had selected Myles Thatcher as his protégé from three finalists, Alexei Ratmanky said: “I just thought his work was the best. I even had the selfish idea that maybe I could learn something from him.”

“I wanted to give him [Thatcher] some feedback. You try to find the logic, to see the thought behind the movement. I tried to be inside his mind, to look at things through his eyes.”

MYLES THATCHER

On being mentored by Alexei Ratmanky: “To have a role model who is so humble, so lacking in ego... I needed to see that it was possible. Ratmanky’s integrity means the world. If I’m going to look up to somebody, I want it to be someone I believe in and respect wholly.”

On developing his choreography: “I’m trying to experiment with the formula of the layout of ballets to see what I can get away with. I think, especially now, I need to take those risks and make sure to learn something from new work.”

YEAR OF MENTORING

FILM

Tom Shoval's mentoring year was one filled with extraordinary experiences. After the young Israeli director was selected as a protégé by Alejandro González Iñárritu, he found himself catapulted into the world of Hollywood film-making. Iñárritu invited him to watch the post-production of his masterpiece, *Birdman*, followed by six weeks on the set of Iñárritu's new feature film, *The Revenant*, in the snow-bound Canadian Rockies. The young director was overwhelmed by his mentor's generosity in terms of the access he was given, which included a visit to the famous studios founded by George Lucas in San Francisco. Iñárritu insisted that he too was learning from the mentorship and that Shoval was a colleague as much as a pupil. "I have to say," said Iñárritu, "that the experience was not only great, it was pleasurable to experience the film [*The Revenant*] through the eyes of a younger film-maker whose hunger is so big, who has talent and sensitivity." By a happy coincidence, Shoval was able to be present with his mentor at the 2015 Oscars' ceremony – *Birdman* won four awards, three of them for Iñárritu personally, while the short film *Aya*, for which Shoval co-wrote the script, was nominated for Best Live Action Short. Shoval had the good fortune to share time with one of the greatest contemporary film directors at the peak of his career. But Shoval hopes that, even with the mentoring year over, his good fortune will continue – he would dearly like the continuing advice of Iñárritu as he works on his second feature, *Shake Your Cares Away*, a dark satire set in contemporary Israel.

Alejandro González Iñárritu

Mentor

The much-lauded film-maker Alejandro González Iñárritu, a three-time Oscar winner at the 2015 Academy Awards for his film *Birdman*, is celebrated for his compelling films that capture the interconnectedness of human beings and mine the complex realm of dramatic realism. His debut feature, *Amores perros* (*Love's a Bitch*, 2000), was followed by *21 Grams* (2003); *Babel* (2006), for which he won Best Director at Cannes; and *Biutiful* (2010).

Tom Shoval

Protégé

Israeli film-maker and screenwriter Tom Shoval has won rave reviews for his sharp visual style and storytelling abilities. Influenced by his father who was passionate about film and, among other cinema adventures, took his 13-year-old son on a life-changing trip to Hollywood, Shoval became a devoted cinephile early on. He was a film major in high school, and served in the army's film unit. In 2007, he graduated from Jerusalem's Sam Spiegel Film & Television School where the founding-director, film-personality Renen Schorr, described him as "one of the most significant and committed talents I have ever seen". Shoval's award-winning, short films, including *The Hungry Heart* (2005), *Shred of Hope* (2007) and *I will drink my tears* (2011), have been screened at film festivals worldwide. His debut feature, *Youth* (2013), a social drama and thriller depicting the challenges of middle-class life in Israel, premiered at the Berlinale and was, among other awards, named Best Film at the Jerusalem Film Festival. Shoval co-wrote the script for the acclaimed short film *Aya* (2014), which was nominated for the 2015 Oscars' Best Live Action Short.

ALEJANDRO GONZÁLEZ IÑÁRRITU

“More than anything else, I was interested for him [Tom Shoval] to understand how things really work... He saw how I conceived and blocked the scenes. He attended production meetings.”

“All the people in every department loved Tom, everybody wanted to be close to him and he was generous. He was always respectful, there was real pleasure in being around someone with his education and knowledge. I enjoyed it times two and I would invite him again any time.”

TOM SHOVAL

On being on set with Iñárritu for the filming of *The Revenant*: “It was unbelievable for me. I thought I'd just be watching Alejandro, but it's been quite the opposite. He kept me involved, took me to all the meetings, standing by the monitor, watching the dailies, giving me answers to all my questions. I could see the evolution of the directing, especially in how you keep the *mise en scène* vital all the time. From the reading to rehearsals to the actual shooting, I was really with him.”

“[Iñárritu grasps] something very profound about cinema. He really understands the metaphysical aspects of time and space and movement in this medium and how to make all of this dance together. He is like a choreographer and a musician and a painter combined, and refers to space and time as his stage. He is also a very physical and sensual director, and you can feel in every scene he creates a sense of life and the romantic side of it.”

LITERATURE

From the start of their mentorship, a deep core of shared experience – both changed countries and cultures, both have careers as teachers and writers – united Canadian Michael Ondaatje (originally from Sri Lanka) and Bulgarian Miroslav Penkov. Each had moved from far away to build a literary career in North America. Spurred on by these similarities and by a profound love of writing and literature, the pair developed a strong literary friendship, exchanging messages and books, and travelling together in Canada, the United States and Bulgaria. They discussed a multitude of books – and films, another shared interest. A major focus for the young Bulgarian short-story writer was his debut novel, which, for three years, he had been writing in English, his second language. Ondaatje was highly impressed with his protégé’s first draft, but suggested one change to the narrative structure of the work. “It made a big difference,” said Penkov. “It was a small adjustment. But it was huge.” At the end of the mentoring year, Penkov was delighted with the whole experience, especially as he had completed his novel – which has now been bought by an American publisher. Scheduled for publication in March 2016, *Stork Mountain* has already been described by one reviewer as “a marvel of a novel. Penkov has written a rollicking, poignant delight.” Penkov also now has a literary pen pal, who happens to be one of the world’s most renowned contemporary novelists.

Michael Ondaatje

Mentor

Considered one of today’s greatest writers, Sri-Lanka born, Canadian Michael Ondaatje is recognized for his evocative narrative and lyrical style. Over nearly five decades, he has won international acclaim and numerous literary awards for his poetry and best-selling novels, including the Booker Prize-winning *The English Patient* (1992) and, more recently, *Anil’s Ghost* (2000), *Divisadero* (2007) and *The Cat’s Table* (2011). He is also known for his non-fiction.

Miroslav Penkov

Protégé

Bulgarian-born writer Miroslav Penkov wants to “give voice to a voiceless people” by allowing the world to read about Bulgaria, and for the people of Bulgaria to start reading local literature again, after years of being mired in economic crisis. An Associate Professor of English in the Creative Writing Program at the University of North Texas, Penkov first came to the United States at age 19 to study psychology at the University of Arkansas. He ultimately received an MFA in Creative Writing in 2009, after short story writer and professor Ellen Gilchrist recognized his talents and encouraged him to keep writing. Penkov’s first story collection, *East of the West: A Country in Stories* (2011), won the BBC International Short Story Award in 2012, among other prizes. His story *Blood Money* (*Granta*, 2013) covers racial intolerance in Bulgaria. He perceives his books, written in English and Bulgarian, as links in a single chain. His first novel, *Stork Mountain*, completed during his year with mentor Michael Ondaatje, will be published in March 2016.

MICHAEL ONDAATJE

“What was important, what was similar for both of us, is that we were from other countries and now in North America, and we were writing about these other countries where we had come from.”

“I found Miro’s short stories remarkable. They were vivid and exciting. I read about a new landscape – where the characters had a distinct value system and so behaved by necessity in a different way. When I turned to his novel, I discovered an entirely new and ambitious creature.”

MIROSLAV PENKOV

“I think the longest, deepest effects of this mentorship won’t emerge until book three, four or five. It’s about learning about being a writer for the rest of my life.”

MUSIC

The mentorship of Finland's Kaija Saariaho and Portugal's Vasco Mendonça unfolded enthusiastically in encounters across the world, from Los Angeles to Helsinki. Their professional relationship proved to be both dynamic and highly productive. They carefully planned the mentoring year, and the year passed according to plan, as they attended performances of each other's music around the world – in Mexico, music by each of them was played at the same event – and engaged in stimulating intellectual discussions about their work and other artistic matters. Most protégés, especially in dance and theatre, for example, learn by watching their mentors at work, but, as Saariaho pointed out, there was no point in Mendonça watching her as she composed music. Instead, as well as attending performances together, the mentor gave generous advice from the sublime to the practical. She helped him to step back and look at his music as a whole, while simultaneously guiding him in more mundane matters, such as what fees to charge for new works. An essential element of a young composer's success is publication of the music, and Saariaho introduced her protégé to people who would assist in this and other practical ways. At an artistic level, mentor and protégé had much to share. Though their music is very different – Saariaho's dazzling but often dark, and Mendonça's austere and sometimes experimental – they share a love of vocal music and opera, which is one of the main reasons why Saariaho chose Mendonça as her protégé. Most important of all, they discovered that, as the basis for their highly creative lives, they each have a strong commitment to their families, which underpins all their work. Family life, says Saariaho, "makes professional problems and successes relative".

Kaija Saariaho

Mentor

Acknowledged as one of the leading and most original composers of recent times, Kaija Saariaho is known for her brilliant creations that often blend traditional instruments with electronics for chamber music, orchestral works and operas, which she produces in collaboration with artists such as Amin Maalouf, Peter Sellars and Esa-Pekka Salonen. The Finnish composer was awarded Sweden's prestigious 2013 Polar Music Prize.

Vasco Mendonça

Protégé

Portuguese composer Vasco Mendonça is attracting considerable attention for his work on the international music scene. “Mendonça is a genuine artist, whose work displays a high level of craftsmanship and a fine aural imagination,” says British composer and former teacher George Benjamin. Following music studies in Lisbon and Amsterdam, Mendonça studied at King’s College, London, from 2007–2008. He has also taught analysis and composition in Lisbon for five years. Recent notable works include the chamber music piece *The Boys of Summer* (2012), co-commissioned by the Aldeburgh, Aix-en-Provence and Verbier festivals, and an hour-long chamber opera, *The House Taken Over* (2013), commissioned by Aix-en-Provence Festival (which has premiered several of his pieces and invited him to give masterclasses) and LOD Muziektheater. Mendonça’s *Ping* recently premiered in the United Kingdom. *Adultery*, his new piece for soprano, clarinet and cello, premiered in Helsinki in February. In July this year, he began work on a new opera.

KAIJA SAARIAHO

“It’s given me a chance to have several interesting discussions with a talented younger colleague – and to get to know his music and ideas better. I really am learning from Vasco when I see music and life and problems through his eyes.”

“You can watch someone paint or sculpt or dance or conduct, but composing is a solitary profession. There’s nothing Vasco could gain by sitting and watching me compose,” she says. “So, instead, I have been looking at and hearing his music, conversing with him about music and life, and bringing him to assist at rehearsals and performances of my music so that he can also get to know my colleagues.”

VASCO MENDONÇA

“Kaija has been very generous and very active in introducing me to people and facilitating ways for my work to be shown. I think that is one of the most important aspects of this programme. There are so many good composers nowadays, but to get to the level of achievement and recognition Kaija has, is something quite unique.”

“My discussions with Kaija about the libretto [for his second opera] were helpful. To have a second pair of eyes, and such talented and experienced ones, is invaluable because you have to put a lot of thought into what you want to do with a libretto, what type of opera you want to create.”

“We’ve established a connection and a personal relationship, and I don’t see why it won’t continue.”

THEATRE

Lighting is a key ingredient to any successful performance or artistic event, be it theatre, opera, ballet, concert or exhibition. Jennifer Tipton has won deep respect throughout the artistic world for her mastery of the medium. The Rolex Arts Initiative enabled young Mexican lighting designer Sebastián Solórzano Rodríguez to sit alongside Tipton as she lit up rehearsals and performances in London, Barcelona, Paris, New York, Houston and Madrid, and to invite her to his hometown, Mexico City. While Solórzano Rodríguez and Tipton had a concrete plan of action at the beginning of the mentoring year, he later said he could not have foreseen how dramatically his ideas about lighting design would change. He observed her in rehearsals and she studied her protégé's work and delivered incisive critiques. An important element in Rodríguez's learning process was being able to compare one production – and its lighting – with another. In some the lighting dominated, in others it was invisible. Solórzano Rodríguez was delighted to discover that his mentor, some of whose classes at Yale University's School of Drama he was able to attend, is a gifted teacher. At the end of the mentoring year, Solórzano Rodríguez said his life had "changed forever".

Jennifer Tipton

Mentor

Hailed as "the world's most remarkable creator of lighting", American Jennifer Tipton has made significant contributions to her profession over nearly 50 years of lighting theatrical, dance and opera productions. She is currently principal lighting designer for the Paul Taylor Dance Company and the Wooster Group. A long-serving adjunct professor of design at Yale, Tipton has influenced a generation of lighting designers.

Sebastián Solórzano Rodríguez

Protégé

Mexico's Sebastián Solórzano Rodríguez uses light to express himself as an artist. The son of a dancer and an actor, he grew up playing backstage in the theatre. Having decided to learn lighting design through work instead of school, he began his career by painting scenery and becoming scenography and lighting assistant for Cornamusa, a production agency. He then began creating stage lighting for many companies, such as Ceprodac, the National Contemporary Dance Production Centre of Mexico. Concurrently, he works with Luz Y Fuerza, an interdisciplinary group he co-founded that makes handmade light devices for art installations and expanded cinema performances. He is now focused on researching the choreographic dimension of lighting design.

JENNIFER TIPTON

“I felt very strongly that Sebastián should observe, as opposed to assist me, because in lighting, if you assist, your head is always in the paper or the computer screen, and you're not looking at the stage.”

“Rolex protégés see how someone works on the world stage; I think that is a rare opportunity.”

SEBASTIÁN SOLÓRZANO RODRÍGUEZ

“I have learned about [Jennifer Tipton's] creative process, how she makes decisions and works with technicians, how she establishes a dialogue between the work and the space in a scene. Afterwards we talk about what I have seen. I am like a shadow and I am happy with that.”

“She [Jennifer Tipton] told me something that I will never forget: 'Lighting is a composition in space and time'.”

“Jennifer loves to teach. That is something very important when you are teaching. She really loves to spread information. It's just incredible how she works and how she sees.”

VISUAL ARTS

The mentorship of Sammy Baloji by Olafur Eliasson consisted of a series of numerous short but intense encounters, mainly in Berlin, where Eliasson has his studio. From the start, according to Baloji, his mentor declared that “I [Baloji] shouldn’t treat him as the one who knew everything. He also wanted to learn from me. There was no plan. He said it would bring what it would bring. If I started to expect something, then I would be lost.” They built – quickly and apparently effortlessly – a strong rapport, combining intellectual discussion about art with clear advice for Baloji to develop his creativity across a spectrum of artistic media. Eliasson, known worldwide for his highly inventive art installations, was the ideal mentor to work with Sammy Baloji at a crucial point in the protégé’s artistic path – Baloji’s move from photography to new media was at the centre of many of his exchanges with Eliasson. Baloji’s first installation, created for exhibition at the Venice Biennale, was a major focus of the mentoring process. A recreation in shining copper of a church dome in Belgium dedicated to Europe’s war dead, Baloji covered it with motifs of scarification – the etching of a pattern on to the body, a practice once common in Africa. The dome is a powerful evocation of the relationship between colonizers and colonized. Eliasson declared the work was a great success at Venice, but he played down his own contribution. Baloji disagreed: “He showed me other approaches,” he said. “It was not just a case of listening.” Eliasson added that not only the dome, but all the processes involved constituted a work of art: “The world might not necessarily see it, but it doesn’t matter. If Sammy sees it, it’s enough.”

Olafur Eliasson

Mentor

Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson’s works span photography, installation, sculpture and film. Eliasson represented Denmark at the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003 and later that year installed *The weather project* at Tate Modern, London. Projects in public spaces include *The New York City Waterfalls*, 2008. Harpa Reykjavik Concert Hall and Conference Centre, for which Eliasson created the façade in collaboration with Henning Larsen Architects, was awarded the Mies van der Rohe Award 2013. In 2009, as a professor at the Berlin University of the Arts, Eliasson founded the Institut für Raumexperimente (Institute for Spatial Experiments).

Sammy Baloji

Protégé

Artist-photographer Sammy Baloji works between Belgium and his native Democratic Republic of the Congo where he creates haunting photomontages of his homeland. “I use photography as a tool of observation to write on my society,” says Baloji, whose photographs have been praised for their “rich form and strong content” by the director of London’s Tate Modern. Baloji graduated from the University of Lubumbashi and began his career as a comic-book artist. In 1993, he helped establish the Vicanos Club art collective and went on to focus on photography, creating photographic series that have been widely exhibited in Europe, the U.S. and Africa. His most famous series, *Mémoire (Memory, 2006)*, juxtaposes images of Katanga’s once-rich mining industry with landscapes of today’s industrial ruins. Winner of the Prix Afrique en création (2007), the Prince Claus Award (2008) and the Spiegel Prize (2012), Baloji co-founded the Lubumbashi Biennale, which led to the formation of the Picha Art Centre whose mission is to support emerging Congolese artists. In 2015, his work was featured at the Venice Art Biennale and the Lyon Biennale. He will have a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Center Brussels in March 2016.

OLAFUR ELIASSON

“I chose Sammy [from a shortlist of possible protégés] because his idea of working was at a very early stage of gaining a formal language, but it had taken directions that I thought were inspiring. He had chosen certain trajectories and was still working on giving those trajectories form, but I could see that it was interesting. It was not a traditional white-cube trajectory; there was a non-careerist element to it that was fascinating.”

“Our encounters have been short but intense,” said Eliasson. “The more often you meet, the better you get to know each other and the better sense we get of each other’s language.”

SAMMY BALOJI

“He [Eliasson] didn’t tell me which direction I should go in,” said Baloji. “Instead, he showed me how he worked, and encouraged me to find my own way through. He said there was no rule: you have to experiment. He’s not concentrated in just one field. He can make artworks with photography or video; he can make installations; he can make art with water; sometimes he makes paintings. I am trying to understand how he chooses one medium over another, and how he knows that the object reflects his thinking.”

MENTORS AND PROTÉGÉS 2002–2015

ARCHITECTURE

(Architecture became a discipline in the Rolex Arts Initiative in 2012)

PETER ZUMTHOR (Switzerland)	GLORIA CABRAL (Paraguay)	2014–2015
KAZUYO SEJIMA (Japan)	ZHAO YANG (China)	2012–2013

DANCE

ALEXEI RATMANSKY (Russia/United States)	MYLES THATCHER (United States)	2014–2015
LIN HWAI-MIN (Taiwan)	EDUARDO FUKUSHIMA (Brazil)	2012–2013
TRISHA BROWN (United States)	LEE SERLE (Australia)	2010–2011
JIŘÍ KYLIÁN (Czech Republic)	JASON AKIRA SOMMA (United States)	2008–2009
ANNE TERESA DE KEERSMAEKER (Belgium)	ANANI DODJI SANOUVI (Togo)	2006–2007
SABURO TESHIGAWARA (Japan)	JUNAID JEMAL SENDI (Ethiopia)	2004–2005
WILLIAM FORSYTHE (United States)	SANG JIJIA (China)	2002–2003

FILM

(Film became a discipline in the Rolex Arts Initiative in 2004)

ALEJANDRO GONZÁLEZ IÑÁRRITU (Mexico)	TOM SHOVAL (Israel)	2014–2015
WALTER MURCH (United States)	SARA FGAIER (Italy)	2012–2013
ZHANG YIMOU (China)	ANNEMARIE JACIR (Palestine/Jordan)	2010–2011
MARTIN SCORSESE (United States)	CELINA MURGA (Argentina)	2008–2009
STEPHEN FREARS (United Kingdom)	JOSUÉ MÉNDEZ (Peru)	2006–2007
MIRA NAIR (India)	ADITYA ASSARAT (Thailand)	2004–2005

LITERATURE

MICHAEL ONDAATJE (Canada)	MIROSLAV PENKOV (Bulgaria)	2014–2015
MARGARET ATWOOD (Canada)	NAOMI ALDERMAN (United Kingdom)	2012–2013
HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER (Germany)	TRACY K. SMITH (United States)	2010–2011
WOLE SOYINKA (Nigeria)	TARA JUNE WINCH (Australia)	2008–2009
TAHAR BEN JELLOUN (Morocco)	EDEM AWUMEY (Togo)	2006–2007
MARIO VARGAS LLOSA (Peru)	ANTONIO GARCÍA ÁNGEL (Colombia)	2004–2005
TONI MORRISON (United States)	JULIA LEIGH (Australia)	2002–2003

MUSIC

KAIJA SAARIAHO (Finland)	VASCO MENDONÇA (Portugal)	2014–2015
GILBERTO GIL (Brazil)	DINA EL WEDIDI (Egypt)	2012–2013
BRIAN ENO (United Kingdom)	BEN FROST (Australia)	2010–2011
YOUSSOU N'DOUR (Senegal)	AURELIO MARTÍNEZ (Honduras)	2008–2009
PINCHAS ZUKERMAN (Israel)	DAVID AARON CARPENTER (United States)	2006–2007
JESSYE NORMAN (United States)	SUSAN PLATTS (Canada)	2004–2005
THE LATE SIR COLIN DAVIS (United Kingdom)	JOSEP CABALLÉ-DOMENECH (Spain)	2002–2003

THEATRE

JENNIFER TIPTON (United States)	SEBASTIÁN SOLÓRZANO RODRÍGUEZ (Mexico)	2014–2015
THE LATE PATRICE CHÉREAU (France)	MICHAŁ BORCZUCH (Poland)	2012–2013
PETER SELLARS (United States)	MAYA ZBIB (Lebanon)	2010–2011
KATE VALK (United States)	NAHUEL PÉREZ BISCAYART (Argentina)	2008–2009
JULIE TAYMOR (United States)	SELINA CARTMELL (United Kingdom)	2006–2007
SIR PETER HALL (United Kingdom)	LARA FOOT (South Africa)	2004–2005
ROBERT WILSON (United States)	FEDERICO LEÓN (Argentina)	2002–2003

VISUAL ARTS

OLAFUR ELIASSON (Denmark/Iceland)	SAMMY BALOJI (Democratic Republic of the Congo)	2014–2015
WILLIAM KENTRIDGE (South Africa)	MATEO LÓPEZ (Colombia)	2012–2013
SIR ANISH KAPOOR (United Kingdom)	NICHOLAS HLOBO (South Africa)	2010–2011
REBECCA HORN (Germany)	MASANORI HANDA (Japan)	2008–2009
JOHN BALDESSARI (United States)	ALEJANDRO CESARCO (Uruguay)	2006–2007
DAVID HOCKNEY (United Kingdom)	MATTHIAS WEISCHER (Germany)	2004–2005
ÁLVARO SIZA (Portugal)	SAHEL AL HIYARI (Jordan)	2002–2003

IMPACT OF THE ROLEX ARTS INITIATIVE

A year that lasts a lifetime

The protégés of the Rolex Arts Initiative continue to achieve success in their disciplines and beyond, emerging as artistic masters in their own right as they apply the lessons learned during the mentoring year. Spurred on by their mentors and often introduced to new facets of their art, the protégés have expanded their horizons and set out on new paths. Words common to all describing the close collaborations are “inspiration”, “guidance” and “insight”. In most cases, too, the dialogue continues as mentors and protégés interact years after the mentorship has ended, some working together on artistic projects. Many protégés also reveal how the Arts Initiative has motivated them to mentor younger artists at the beginning of their careers. The career paths of the following eight protégés illustrate the programme’s impact on the lives of rising artists.

Selina Cartmell, theatre protégée, 2006–2007

Theatre mentor Julie Taymor remains both an inspiration and a close friend to young British director Selina Cartmell, the recipient of three best director awards in Ireland. “As time goes on, we get to know each other more and more,” says Cartmell, who, following in the steps of the great American director, recently expanded her repertoire from drama to opera. Taymor also lately pointed Cartmell to *Grounded* by playwright George Brant, which now both mentor and protégée have directed.

Tracy K. Smith, literature protégée, 2010–2011

Tracy K. Smith, hailed as “a brilliant wordsmith in both poetry and prose”, describes her collaboration with German poet and author Hans Magnus Enzensberger as “one of the most genuinely rewarding things I’ve ever done as an artist”. The young American’s year of mentoring was followed by remarkable accomplishments: she published her much-lauded memoir, *Ordinary Light*; won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry; became a full professor at Princeton University at age 41; and was recently named director of Princeton’s Creative Writing Program.

Lara Foot, theatre protégée, 2004–2005

Already an award-winning director when she began her mentorship with titan of British theatre, Sir Peter Hall, South African Lara Foot has profited over the past decade from his insights into the world of theatre. “I took myself much more seriously as a writer after I saw how he valued text,” says Foot, who now has an international profile as a writer, theatre director and the first female artistic director and CEO of Cape Town’s Baxter Theatre Centre where she is mentoring a new generation of artists.

Eduardo Fukushima, dance protégé, 2012–2013

Brazilian dancer and choreographer Eduardo Fukushima spent what he calls a “life-changing” year in Taiwan under the tutelage of the country’s master of dance, Lin Hwai-min, and getting in touch with his “Asian side”, including by studying martial arts. Fukushima’s year with Lin and the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan has resulted in two prestigious prizes in Brazil, including one for his solo creation, *Crooked Man*, which was named the best composition in 2014 in São Paulo. Along with teaching dance in Brazil, Fukushima has been touring in Europe.

Dina El Wedidi, music protégée, 2012–2013

Dina El Wedidi’s collaboration with her mentor, Brazilian icon Gilberto Gil, was a true adventure of the spirit for the Egyptian singer and composer, as the two undertook a year-long journey of concerts and discussions around the world, including visits to each other’s country. “Gilberto Gil influenced me in many ways,” says El Wedidi who has taken another important step onto the world stage with the recent release of her first album, *Turning Back*, featuring a song performed by Gil. This is the “biggest gift” he could have given me, she acknowledges.

Aurelio Martínez, music protégé, 2008–2009

Acclaimed as “an emerging superstar in world music”, Aurelio Martínez credits much of his recent success to his mentorship: “The mentoring experience with [legendary Senegalese musician] Youssou N’Dour greatly influenced my ability and ambition to share [African-influenced] Garifuna music with the world,” says the young Honduran. His latest album, *Lándini*, was named album of the year in 2014 by world music magazine *fRoots* and hailed by critics in Europe and the Americas. In 2015, he was honoured for his prolific career by two Garifuna organizations.

Susan Platts, music protégée, 2004–2005

British-born, Canadian mezzo-soprano Susan Platts’s mentorship with Jessye Norman has changed the trajectory of her career. “I feel Jessye has brought my voice ‘out of me’ in both an emotional and a technical sense,” she says. Their common love of music was clear to both from the beginning and the two continue to have a strong professional relationship, with Jessye Norman attending her protégée’s concerts in such prestigious venues as Carnegie Hall and the Royal Albert Hall. Platts today has a diary full of singing engagements in North America and Europe.

Edem Awumey, literature protégé, 2006–2007

The theme of exile marks the work of both acclaimed Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun and Togo-born novelist Edem Awumey, creating a strong bond between mentor and protégé. Awumey was continuously challenged by Ben Jelloun during the course of the mentorship. Since then, influenced by his mentor’s guidance, Awumey who lives in French-speaking Canada, has published three more novels, one shortlisted for France’s top literary prize, the Prix Goncourt.

FACT SHEET

The Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative is an international philanthropic programme that seeks out gifted young artists from around the world and brings them together with great masters for a year of creative collaboration in a one-to-one mentoring relationship.

History and objectives

Launched in June 2002, the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative was created by Rolex and is administered from the company's headquarters in Geneva. It runs biennially and is currently in its seventh cycle (2014–2015). The programme's objective is to pass on the world's artistic heritage from one generation to the next, thereby fostering young talent. In keeping with its tradition of supporting individual excellence, Rolex is giving emerging artists unique access to masters in their fields.

How the programme works

In each of the seven disciplines – architecture, dance, film, literature, music, theatre and visual arts – Rolex invites a great artist (the mentor) to foster and counsel a young, professional artist (the protégé). The mentoring period takes place over one year and, except for the minimum of six weeks (30 working days) that the mentor-protégé pairs are required to spend together, there are few rules to the programme.

Selection of mentors

Every two years, a new Advisory Board of distinguished artists and arts practitioners suggests and endorses potential mentors.

Selection of protégés

Once the mentors have agreed to take part, Rolex works with them to establish a profile of a suitable protégé. Seven nominating panels – one panel per discipline – are then assembled. These panels are made up of experts who identify potential protégés from their network of contacts worldwide. To ensure that the process is impartial, panel members remain anonymous during the selection period. Young artists cannot apply directly to the programme. Each nominating panel recommends potential protégés, who are invited by Rolex to submit applications. The nominating panel studies the applications and recommends three or four finalists. Rolex then arranges for the mentor to meet the finalists and choose a protégé.

Year of mentoring

Mentors and protégés agree on where, how and when they would like to interact and typically spend more than the required period of time together. The programme encourages plans that foster significant bonds and creative collaboration through sustained periods of interaction over the mentoring year. At the end of the year, Rolex invites participants and guests to an event to celebrate the achievements of the mentor and protégé pairs.

What they receive

Each protégé receives a grant of 25,000 Swiss francs during the mentoring year, in addition to funds to cover travel and other major expenses. A further 25,000 Swiss francs are available to each protégé after the year is over for the creation of a new piece of work, a publication, a performance or a public event. Each mentor receives an honorarium of 75,000 Swiss francs.

Outcome

After the mentoring year finishes, Rolex keeps in touch with the protégés, following their careers with interest. The outcome for protégés varies: a new novel, a new stage production, a dancing career with the mentor's company, and a collaborative artwork with the mentor are all examples of achievements through the programme. Rolex believes that, for many of the young artists, the full benefits of the Arts Initiative will continue far into the future.

Global creative community

Since the launch of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative in 2002, more than 860 people from 83 countries have been nominated for the Rolex Arts Initiative. The programme's advisors include 114 major artists and creative leaders; 208 influential figures in the arts have nominated young artists and selected finalists.

Encouraging individual excellence through philanthropy and education

Driven by an unwavering pioneering spirit, Rolex SA is renowned for its many technical innovations in watchmaking that have made it a symbol of excellence around the globe. The company brand values of quality, know-how and individual achievement pervade all of its endeavours. Rolex is closely linked to many of the world's highest achievers and, since its beginnings, has supported visionary men and women in a variety of fields.

The Rolex Institute embodies this philosophy. Comprising the company's philanthropic programmes and educational initiatives, it aims at recognizing excellence and making a significant contribution to society. The Institute's activities include the following programmes:

The Rolex Awards for Enterprise were created in 1976 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Rolex Oyster – the world's first waterproof watch. They support pioneering men and women taking on major challenges in order to benefit mankind. The Awards help forward-looking individuals worldwide to carry out groundbreaking projects advancing human knowledge and well-being in the areas of science and health, technology, exploration, environment and cultural heritage.

In 2009, Rolex expanded the Rolex Awards to include Young Laureates, to support pioneers between the ages of 18 and 30.

The Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative brings together promising talents with world-renowned masters in seven artistic disciplines for a year of one-to-one collaboration. Since its launch in 2002, this programme has built a remarkable international artistic community.

The Rolex Institute underwrites highly respected educational activities in the watchmaking and technological fields. The company was, for example, the major private funder of the new Rolex Learning Center at the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) in Switzerland.

Rolex-funded watchmaking schools in Pennsylvania (United States) and Mumbai are designed for professional watchmakers and prepare them for the most demanding requirements of the industry. Graduates are not obliged to work for Rolex.