



THE LEADERSHIP

When Alex Poots was weighing whether to take the job as artistic director of The Shed, he was ultimately convinced by the board's openness to creating a commissioning institution, rather than a more standard performing arts center. "I wanted a sense of risk and adventure, and to share the thrill of those emotions with the public," says Poots. Board chairman Dan Doctoroff has been attached to the project for 13 years: "To just sit there and see it as it's ready to open is one of the most gratifying things I can imagine," he says. *From left: CEO and artistic director Alex Poots, chairman of the board Dan Doctoroff, COO Maryann Jordan, vice chairman of the board Jonathan Tisch, associate director Laurie Beckelman, chief civic program officer Tamara McCaw, chief marketing and communications officer Jeff Levine, chief development officer Margaret Pomeroy Hunt, CFO Peter Gee and CTO Ezra Wiesner at The Shed's Bloomberg Building.*

SHEDDING A LIGHT

The Shed, a dynamic cultural center, opens in New York's Hudson Yards development on April 5. Its objective is to commission innovative works by risk-taking artists of all genres, including the talents in this portfolio, who will headline the inaugural year.

BY NATALIA RACHLIN PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEREMY LIEBMAN

LONG BEFORE THE SHED had a name, before its mission had been fully articulated or its physical structure defined, it was just a red dot on a map of New York City's Hudson Yards. Circa 2006, the point marked one of the most valuable plots on this once-sleepy swatch of Manhattan's West Side, and the vague but ambitious plan for it, as set forth by the administration of then-mayor Michael Bloomberg, was to build a cultural institution unlike any other in the city. On April 5, after more than a decade of work and planning, The Shed finally opens, and it's as ambitious as ever. The 200,000-square-foot structure—already known for its movable shell, which rolls out to cover the adjacent plaza—is set to offer equally attention-grabbing programming, striving to be a new model for how culture is created and consumed in the 21st century.

"The Shed is, quite simply, a commissioning center for all arts and all audiences," says CEO and artistic director Alex Poots, who signed on in 2014 after serving as founding director of the Manchester International Festival and artistic director of the Park Avenue Armory. "We facilitate the making of original work across performing arts, visual arts and pop culture. We put all these different forms of human expression on an equal plane."

New Yorkers got an early taste of The Shed's multifarious interests in May 2018, thanks to a pre-opening pop-up festival of dance, concerts and talks.

The year-one program builds on that momentum with new work by internationally recognized artists, musicians, dancers, composers and writers, from Gerhard Richter to Trisha Donnelly to Arvo Pärt. Sharing the limelight will be a crop of emerging names, including a group of artists and collectives participating in the Open Call program.

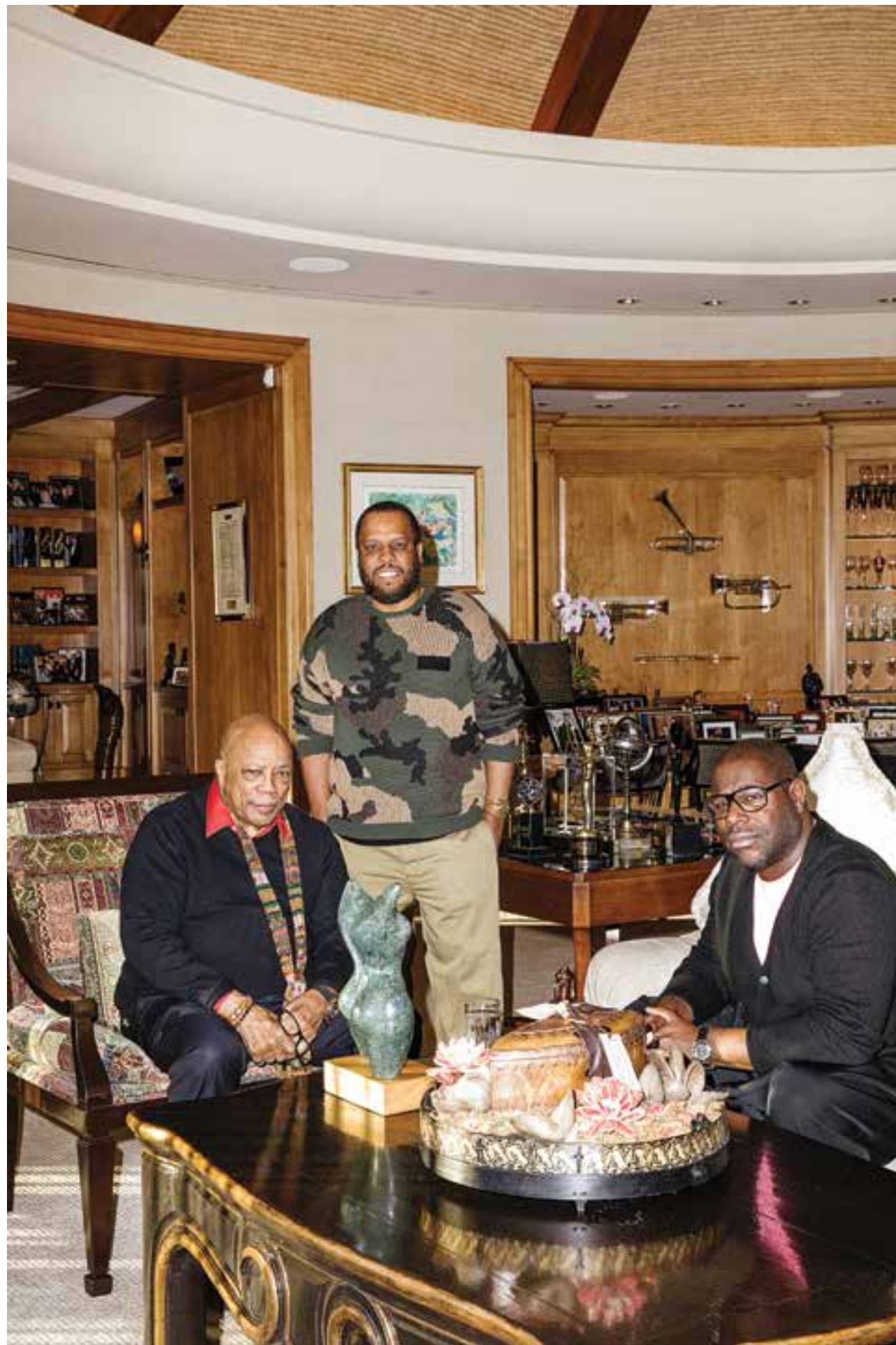
What all the far-reaching commissions have in common, aside from being world premieres, is a theme of collaboration, whether among several artists, among a long list of co-creators or simply between maker and space. As part of the inaugural events, poet Anne Carson will debut a theater piece, *Norma Jeane Baker of Troy*, directed by Katie Mitchell and starring the actor Ben Wishaw and the opera singer Renée Fleming, while musician Björk will collaborate with director Lucrecia Martel on *Cornucopia*, a show running May 6 to June 1.

"We want to be a platform for the creation of art, one where artists are unconstrained by the physical environment or the institutional program," says Dan Doctoroff, chairman of The Shed's board of directors. Doctoroff, who was deputy mayor for economic development and rebuilding under Bloomberg, has been attached to the project since its infancy. A point both Doctoroff and Poots underscore is The Shed's mission of inclusivity, which will manifest through a series of outreach initiatives. "[It was] important that this not be a temple of culture that you have to ascend into. This [is meant] to be a home for everybody," says Doctoroff.

The Shed's physical space—named the Bloomberg Building, thanks to a \$75 million donation from the former mayor's foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies—has made flexibility its guiding principle. Designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro in collaboration with Rockwell Group, the building houses a 500-seat theater, 25,000 square feet of gallery space, a rehearsal room and an artist lab. The much-discussed shell, which sits on six-foot-tall wheels, nests over the building when not in use, but it can be deployed in a matter of minutes to create the McCourt: an enclosed 17,000-square-foot hall complete with light, sound and temperature control.

Elizabeth Diller, a founding partner at DS+R—the firm that was also behind the resurrection of the nearby High Line—refers to the architectural approach as a "space on-demand" strategy. "Rather than thinking of the building as an object, we thought about it as infrastructure," says Diller. "It's a big machine for making art in—it's not intimidating; you can kick it around."

So far, The Shed has raised about \$488 million of its \$550 million goal, including a recent \$27.5 million gift from Jonathan and Lizzie Tisch. The project has come a long way from its days as a hypothetical speck on a redevelopment map. "We commission, take risks and offer artists the chance to create unrealized projects," says Poots. "We let them explore ideas that even they don't know where [the ideas] will go—and there is never enough of that opportunity in any city."



SOUNDTRACK OF AMERICA

“This show is about the now, about the future,” says artist and director Steve McQueen of *Soundtrack of America*, which will inaugurate The Shed’s performance program on April 5. The five-night concert series, which McQueen developed in partnership with producers Quincy Jones and Dion “No I.D.” Wilson, NYU music professor Maureen Mahon and others, will capture the impact of African-American music on contemporary culture. Each evening will feature different emerging artists, from Moses Sumney to Kelsey Lu to Smino, all representing the next generation of torchbearers for blues, jazz, gospel, R&B, rock ‘n’ roll, house and hip-hop. “You’ll experience the new, fresh talents of today, but also how they carry on a tradition from the past,” McQueen says. *From left: Quincy Jones, Dion “No I.D.” Wilson and Steve McQueen at Jones’s Los Angeles home.*



“WE NEED TO ALLOW ARTISTS TO BE CREATIVE, TO STAY CREATIVE, TO NEVER STOP, AS CREATIVITY IS OUR HOPE IN A TROUBLED WORLD.”

—AGNES DENES



AGNES DENES: ABSOLUTES AND INTERMEDIATES
Hungarian-born, New York-based conceptual artist Agnes Denes made a name for herself in the 1960s and ’70s with a multidisciplinary practice that addresses environmental and ecological issues. In the fall, The Shed will host the largest New York City survey of her oeuvre to date, including *A Forest for New York*, which was conceived of in 2013 and features 100,000 trees meant to clean the air and groundwater. “The Shed offers artists the space to be creative, to make new work on their own terms,” says Denes. “We need to allow artists to be creative, to stay creative, to never stop, as creativity is our hope in a troubled world.” *Left: Agnes Denes in front of her 1984 work Teardrop—Monument to Being Earthbound at her New York studio.*

A QUIET EVENING OF DANCE
American dancer and choreographer William Forsythe is considered one of the preeminent dance makers of his generation, and his work has been performed by leading ballet companies the world over. In collaboration with London’s dance-specialized Sadler’s Wells Theatre, The Shed will bring one of Forsythe’s latest productions—*A Quiet Evening of Dance*, which premiered in London last fall—to New York this year. The performance features several of Forsythe’s closest collaborators in two new works and select repertory pieces, with only the dancers’ own breathing for accompaniment. *Below: William Forsythe at the Samuel B. & David Rose Building at Lincoln Center.*



IN FRONT OF ITSELF

The Shed's first visual-arts commission was formalized in the planning phase, when Alex Poots and senior program adviser Hans Ulrich Obrist—the curator and critic who directs London's Serpentine Galleries—asked artist Lawrence Weiner to create a permanent installation. The result is *In Front of Itself*, a 20,000-square-foot text-based work embedded into the ground out front. "This building, by its own nature, is in front of itself," says Weiner. "One of the nicest things about being able to use language to make sculpture is that it says what you mean." Obrist will continue to help shape the institution's visual-arts programming. "It has a lot to do with bringing things and people together," says Obrist, "gathering, uniting and creating new alliances for the 21st century."

Above: Lawrence Weiner (left) and Hans Ulrich Obrist at Weiner's New York studio.

JOAN JONAS AND HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD

Slated to debut in the fall is a newly announced, as-yet-unnamed collaboration between pioneering American performance and video artist Joan Jonas and French classical pianist Hélène Grimaud. A trailblazer in the genre of video art, Jonas will combine projected video imagery with a live performance by Grimaud. "The Shed connected us, and it was an interesting choice to put the two of us together. But it's been very nice. We met and really hit it off. I like her work, and she appreciates mine," says Jonas. "I think this matchmaking thing they've got going works very well." Right: Joan Jonas at her New York studio.



"YOU JUST NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO CREATE WHEN YOU GATHER ALL THESE PEOPLE. THAT'S WHEN THE MAGIC HAPPENS."

—REGGIE REGG ROC GRAY



MAZE

Co-directed by the street-dance pioneer Reggie Regg Roc Gray and theater artist Kaneza Schaal, *Maze* will be a politically charged dance performance combined with innovative set and lighting design. "The 21st century has demanded and provided new models for how humans can successfully coexist, and *Maze* will entertain the whirlpools, complexities and impasses that lie there within," says Schaal. The performances, running July 23 to August 17, will feature dancers and teaching artists from FlexNYC, Gray's citywide dance-activism program, which has been in partnership with The Shed for the past three years. "I think basically The Shed is leading by example: They're saying, OK, let's not be afraid, let's move forward, let's bolster diversity," says Gray. "You just never know what you're going to create when you gather all these people. That's when the magic happens."

From left: Kaneza Schaal, student Ebony Sexius, Reggie Regg Roc Gray and student Michael Charlot at the Samuel B. & David Rose Building at Lincoln Center.

POWERPLAY
Running May 18 and 19, *Powerplay* will mix hip-hop, spoken word, dance and moving image into a woman-centered show, organized under the direction of rising multimedia artist Latasha Alcindor. “The performance is really about how we can transform radical joy into power,” says Alcindor. Participants will include student artists from The Shed’s Dis Obey program for high schoolers, who explore protest and creative action through writing, storytelling and visual art workshops. “Our performance is the [same week as] Björk’s,” notes Alcindor. “To be able to say I’m on the same stage as someone that iconic, it’s just insane—and it says everything you need to know about The Shed’s point of view.” From left: Student Nathaniel Swanson, Latasha Alcindor and student Lela Harper at the Urban Assembly School for Collaborative Healthcare in Brooklyn.



THE ARCHITECTURE
From the start, The Shed’s home—now officially the Bloomberg Building—has stood as a physical symbol of the institution’s ambitions toward innovation. “We wanted it to be flexible without being indecipherable, a memory machine of a space that offers a whole range of experiences,” says David Rockwell, whose firm, Rockwell Group, collaborated with the project’s lead architects, Diller Scofidio + Renfro. Elizabeth Diller, founding partner of DS+R, recalls feeling a sense of urgency when the firm responded to The Shed’s request for proposals at the height of the financial crisis in 2008. “It was precisely because of the downturn that it became more important than ever to think about how culture needs to be protected, because it’s always the first thing to go when budgets get cut,” she says. Above: Elizabeth Diller (left) and David Rockwell at the Bloomberg Building.

REQUIEM
Jonas Mekas, the pioneer of experimental cinema, was working on a commission for The Shed at the time of his death in January at age 96. Mekas’s new work will premiere this fall, accompanying Greek-Russian conductor Teodor Currentzis and his orchestra and chorus, MusicAeterna, which will perform Giuseppe Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem* as part of the group’s North American debut. “Poignantly, *Requiem* was [Jonas’s] final work,” says Poots. “He and his Anthology Film Archives [in New York] will continue to enrich our world.” Right: Jonas Mekas at his Brooklyn home.



“WE WANTED IT TO BE FLEXIBLE WITHOUT BEING INDECIPHERABLE, A MEMORY MACHINE OF A SPACE THAT OFFERS A WHOLE RANGE OF EXPERIENCES.”
—DAVID ROCKWELL

DRAGON SPRING PHOENIX RISE
 Combining aerial choreography, martial arts and dance, the so-called kung fu musical *Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise* will burst onto the stage June 22 to July 27. The over-the-top, genre-defying production was co-conceived by Chinese-born, New York-based theater, opera and film director Chen Shi-Zheng—best known for his multidisciplinary approach to commissions for the likes of London’s Royal Opera House—and the screenwriters Jonathan Aibel and Glenn Berger, of *Kung Fu Panda 1–3* acclaim. The show will also feature remixed versions of songs by the Australian pop sensation Sia and production and costume design by Tim Yip, who worked on *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. *Below: Chen Shi-Zheng at scenic designer Meredith Ries’s Brooklyn studio, with an early model from Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise.*

MANUAL OVERRIDE
 As The Shed’s first guest curator, the writer and critic Nora N. Khan is the driving force behind *Manual Override*, a group exhibition opening in the fall that highlights the work of artist and filmmaker Lynn Hershman Leeson. The show will debut the final installment of Hershman Leeson’s *The Complete Electronic Diaries* (1984–2018)—a series that foreshadowed the interplay of personal history and digital identity—and showcase research from her collaborations with scientists and engineers. “I like to work out on the edge, with projects and interfaces that have yet to be developed,” says Hershman Leeson. “In a way, working with The Shed was a bit like that.” Taking inspiration from Hershman Leeson’s cross-disciplinary approach, the exhibition will also feature other artists who have been paired with programmers, artificial-intelligence experts and geneticists to create new work. *Right, from left: The Shed’s senior curator, Emma Enderby, Lynn Hershman Leeson and Nora N. Khan at New York’s Bridget Donahue gallery.*



“I LIKE TO WORK OUT ON THE EDGE, WITH PROJECTS AND INTERFACES THAT HAVE YET TO BE DEVELOPED.”
 —LYNN HERSHMAN LEESON

REICH RICHTER PÄRT
 The American minimalist composer Steve Reich has collaborated with German artist Gerhard Richter in one of two immersive performances running April 6 through June 2. Reich’s original score will be played by a live ensemble in one of The Shed’s gallery spaces displaying works by Richter, including a film the artist made with director Corinna Belz. “When you work on something like this it forces you to think of new ways of composing,” says Reich. “I’m not a movie-music composer. I haven’t done this kind of thing before. But then again, working with Richter is not your usual kind of movie, either.” The other half of the series pairs Richter’s work with the music of the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. *Right: Steve Reich at The Shed’s offices, in front of wallpaper he created in collaboration with Gerhard Richter.*

