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National Building Museum Announces Mabel O. Wilson As 2021 Vincent Scully Prize Recipient

Architect, Scholar, and Author -- whose work focuses on the intersection of Design and Black History and Culture -- is Annual Prize's 23rd Awardee

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today the National Building Museum announced that Mabel O. Wilson, the Nancy and George E. Rupp Professor of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University, is the 23rd recipient of the Museum's annual Vincent Scully Prize. Established in 1999, the Scully Prize recognizes excellence in practice, scholarship, or criticism in architecture, historic preservation, and urban design. The award will be presented to Wilson on October 19 at an in-person event at the Museum. She joins esteemed past recipients, including Elizabeth Meyer, Robert Campbell and Inga Saffron.



Mabel O. Wilson / Photo: Dario Calmese

Wilson is an architect, scholar, researcher, artist, writer, and curator whose work focuses on Black culture and history and the ways they intersect with the built environment. She also is a professor in African American and African Diaspora Studies at Columbia, in addition to serving as the director of the Institute for Research in African American Studies and co-director of Global Africa Lab. With her private practice, Studio &, she is part of the architectural team that completed the Memorial to Enslaved African American Laborers (2020) at the University of Virginia. Her work has been exhibited around the world, including the Venice Architecture Biennale, the Architekturmuseum der TU München, the Istanbul Design Biennale, and numerous galleries throughout the U.S. Wilson's books include *Begin with the Past: Building the National*

Museum of African American History and Culture (2017), *Negro Building: African Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (2012), and *Race and Modern Architecture: From the Enlightenment to Today* (2020), co-edited with Irene Cheng and Charles Davis. She was also co-curator of the 2021 Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America*.

"I am deeply humbled and honored that my contributions to the field of architecture have been recognized by this year's jury for the National Building Museum's Vincent Scully Prize. The arrival of a global pandemic, rampant houselessness, climate catastrophe, and a profound racial reckoning has

made more urgent not only how we build more ethically but also for whom do we build more equitably in a twenty first century world,” Wilson stated upon learning of the Prize.

“With her transdisciplinary approach to identifying, understanding, and revealing how racism and architecture have combined to impact generations of Black Americans, Mabel Wilson has long been a crucial voice and a vital force -- not just in the design world, but across U.S. culture,” said Aileen Fuchs, President and Executive Director of the National Building Museum. “She exemplifies the values of the Scully Prize in everything she does, and we are pleased to recognize her achievements and impact.”

A public program celebrating the award will be held on Tuesday, October 19 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at the National Building Museum. In a conversation with Steven Nelson, Dean of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art, Wilson will discuss her career and ongoing work to expand the narrative of African American contributions to the built environment.

The Vincent Scully Prize is named for the esteemed professor, and the award’s first recipient, who inspired generations across the building disciplines. The Sterling Professor Emeritus of the History of Art at Yale University and Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of Miami, Scully’s teaching and scholarship profoundly influenced prominent architects, urban planners, and others for more than four decades. The nomination and selection process for each year’s recipient resides within the Scully Prize jury. The Museum is honored to have the guidance of current jury members:

- Chair: Ellen Dunham-Jones, Professor, Director, Urban Design Program, Georgia Tech School of Architecture
- James Corner, FASLA, Founder and CEO, James Corner Field Operations
- Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Partner, DPZ/CoDesign
- Paul Goldberger, Architecture Critic, Contributing Editor, *Vanity Fair*
- Walter Hood, ASLA, Creative Director and Founder, Hood Design Studio

In its statement naming Wilson as the 2021 recipient, the jury wrote, “Mabel O. Wilson has built up a reputation over many years as the leading researcher, historian, and designer on space, politics, and cultural memory in Black America. And her recent contributions have culminated in both co-editing *Race and Modern Architecture* and co-organizing *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America*. ... Both her lifelong work and these two recent, high-profile contributions more than justify her selection as someone in the vein of Vincent Scully, opening the eyes of both professionals and the broader public to deeper understandings of the built environment.”

PREVIOUS VINCENT SCULLY PRIZE RECIPIENTS

2019: Elizabeth Meyer, FASLA	2010: Adele Chatfield-Taylor
2018: Robert Campbell and Inga Saffron	2009: Christopher Alexander
2017: Laurie Olin, FASLA	2008: Robert A. M. Stern
2013: Joshua David and Robert Hammond	2007: Richard Moe
2012: Paul Goldberger	2007: Witold Rybczynski
2011: William K. Reilly	2006: Phyllis Lambert

2005: His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales 2001: Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Andres Duany
2005: His Highness the Aga Kahn 2000: Jane Jacobs
2002: Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown 1999: Vincent Scully

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM

The National Building Museum inspires curiosity about the world we design and build. We believe that understanding the impact of architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, construction, planning, and design is important for everyone. Through exhibitions, educational programs, and special events, we welcome visitors of all ages to experience stories about the built world and their power to shape our lives, our communities, and our futures. Public inquiries: 202.272.2448, info@nbm.org, or visit www.nbm.org. Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).