



THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sunday, June 1, 2025

**MOCA GALA 2025, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BVLGARI, HONORS MOCA LEGENDS
THEASTER GATES, FRANK GEHRY, AND WENDY SCHMIDT**

*Over 600 Attendees Gathered to Raise Over \$3.1M for the Museum
with Special Performance by Tierra Whack and Viewing of Olafur Eliasson: OPEN*



Captions, upper left clockwise: Ava DuVernay, Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, MOCA Director Johanna Burton, Theaster Gates, Frank Gehry, Wendy Schmidt, MOCA Board of Trustees Chair Maria Seferian; performer Tierra Whack; Sarah Paulson, Jane Fonda, Wendy Schmidt; MOCA Advancement Committee Co-Chair Terri Smooke, MOCA Board of Trustees Chair Maria Seferian, MOCA Board President Carolyn Clark Powers, MOCA Director Johanna Burton

LOS ANGELES, CA – The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) celebrated its 2025 Gala, in partnership with **BVLGARI**, at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA in the Little Tokyo neighborhood on the evening of Saturday, May 31, 2025. This year's Gala marked the debut of the new **MOCA Legends** format, inaugurated with tributes to three visionaries who have impactfully shaped the museum's legacy: artist **Theaster Gates**, architect **Frank Gehry**, and

philanthropist **Wendy Schmidt**. Over 600 patrons, artists, and leading cultural figures from Los Angeles and beyond came together to celebrate, raising over \$3.1 million in support of the museum's exhibitions, programming, and overall operations.

GRAMMY-nominated artist **Tierra Whack** delivered a dynamic performance during the seated dinner, following a series of special introductions to each of the honorees. Filmmaker **Ava DuVernay** introduced Theaster Gates, reflecting on his expansive work across visual art and community-building; actor and activist **Jane Fonda** honored philanthropist Wendy Schmidt, discussing her pioneering commitment to environmental stewardship. Finally, Speaker Emerita **Nancy Pelosi** remarked upon Frank Gehry's renowned legacy and his transformation of the urban landscape through architecture, noting his renovation of The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA over four decades ago.

Upon arrival, guests were welcomed to the Aileen Getty Plaza for a cocktail reception and private viewing of the special exhibition **Olafur Eliasson: OPEN**. Following drinks, guests were led in a ceremonial process to the bespoke dining area by the TAIKOPROJECT Japanese drum ensemble. During the dinner portion of the gala, initial remarks were delivered by MOCA Board Chair Maria Seferian and Maurice Marciano Director Johanna Burton.

"What a joy it is to be together tonight at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA—a space that not only houses some of the most inspiring contemporary art of our time but also holds decades of memory, collaboration, and transformation," said **Johanna Burton**, the Maurice Marciano Director of MOCA. "As we celebrate our annual gala, we are not just honoring individual achievements, but reaffirming our collective belief in the power of art to connect and challenge; uplift and endure. This evening, I want to speak to that power—and to the resilience, generosity, and creativity that sustain it."

"Art is about living a life where you take your talents, and you multiply them," said **Theaster Gates**, who spoke about uplifting, celebrating, and honoring everyday artistic voices and emerging talent. "Is it possible that we could take a moment to imagine the talent around us has the capacity to do greater than it does?"

"I see art and science as two sides of the same coin," said **Wendy Schmidt**, speaking on the crucial links between the two disciplines. "Each of them rests upon a single, necessary foundation: freedom of thought. The freedom to imagine and create is part of human nature."

"MOCA means a lot to me," remarked **Frank Gehry**, speaking on the impact of artists and the art world on his personal life and architectural practice early on in his career. "Artists brought me into their club – it's where I wanted to be, and they opened my eyes to another world."

Following the program, GRAMMY-nominated rapper **Tierra Whack** performed selections from her critically acclaimed records *World Wide Whack* and *Whack World* including, "MOOVIES," "SHOWER SONG," and "Hungry Hippo." Her performance was followed by a set by acclaimed L.A.-based DJ **Linafornia**, who entertained guests during dessert, capping off a celebratory evening that united art and design, music, activism, and philanthropy in support of MOCA's continued impact and enduring legacy.

The 2025 Gala featured notable attendees and guests from the fields of art, entertainment, film, philanthropy, politics, and fashion. In attendance was Speaker Emerita **Nancy Pelosi**, performer **Tierra Whack**, MOCA's Maurice Marciano Director **Johanna Burton**, and notable figures including **Edythe Broad**, **Jeffrey Deitch**, **Ava DuVernay**, **Lisa Edelstein**, **Anne Ellegood**, **Fred Fisher**, **Jane Fonda**, **Theaster Gates**, **Michael Govan**, **David Alan Grier**, **Alexandra Hedison**, **Karen Hillenburg**, **Josh Hutcherson**, **Michael Maltzan**, **Leo Marmol**, **Jarl Mohn**, **Sarah Paulson**, **Ann Philbin**, **Ron Radziner**, **Zoë Ryan**, **Wendy and Eric Schmidt**, **Marc Selwyn**, **Candy Spelling**, **Hamza Walker**, and **Sonya Yu**; MOCA Trustees and Life Trustees Mayor **Karen Bass**, Board President **Carolyn Clark Powers**, **Kathi B. Cypres**, **Tim Disney**, **Jennifer Hawks Djawadi**, **Clifford J. Einstein**, **Susan Gersh**, **Deborah Irmas**, **Blake Johnson**, **Karyn Kohl**, **Barbara Kruger**, Board Vice-Chair **Eugenio López Alonso**, **Tala Madani**, **Mary Klaus Martin**, **Rodney McMillian**, **Dallas Price-Van Breda**, **Christina Quarles**, **Steven Rice**, **Pete Scantland**, Board Chair **Maria Seferian**, **Terri Smooke**, **Jeffrey Soros**, **Berry Stein**, **Carlo Traglio**, **Christopher V. Walker**, **Julie Wainwright**, **Orna Amir Wolens**, and **Vida Yaghmai**; and artists **Doug Aitken**, **Kelly Akashi**, **Marcel Alcalá**, **Refik Anadol**, **Kathryn Andrews**, **Mario Ayala**, **Walead Beshty**, **Andrea Bowers**, **Louise Bonnet**, **Kenturah Davis**, **Olafur Eliasson**, **Sharif Farrag**, **Christina Forrer**, **Charles Gaines**, **Piero Golia**, **Sayre Gomez**, **Liz Glynn**, **Todd Gray**, **Jennifer Guidi**, **Channing Hansen**, **Elliott Hundley**, **Alex Israel**, **Arthur Jafa**, **Zhu Jia**, **Larry Johnson**, **Shio Kusaka**, **Laurie Lipton**, **Emma Tony Marsh**, **McIntyre**, **Nathaniel Mellors**, **Rebecca Morris**, **Rubi Neri**, **Kent O'Connor**, **Catherine Opie**, **Eamon Ore-Giron**, **Hilary Pecis**, **Thomas J Price**, **Stephen Prina**, **Robert Russell**, **Analia Saban**, **Max Hooper Schneider**, **Ana Segovia**, **Paul Sietsema**, **Adam Silverman**, **Cauleen Smith**, **Brooklin Soumahoro**, **Cole Sternberg**, **April Street**, **Ricky Swallow**, **Henry Taylor**, **Nadya Tolokonnikova**, **Mary Weatherford**, **Emma Webster**, **Jonas Wood**, **Julia Yerger**, and **Iris Yirei Hu**.

Image credits: Photos by Jojo Korsh, BFA.com / Marc Patrick, BFA.com / Stefanie Keenan, Getty Images / Presley Ann, Getty Images

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART (MOCA)

Founded in 1979, MOCA is the defining museum of contemporary art. In a relatively short time, MOCA has achieved astonishing growth: a world-class collection of nearly 8,000 objects, international in scope with deep holdings in Los Angeles art; hallmark education programs that are widely emulated; award-winning publications that present original scholarship; groundbreaking monographic, touring, and thematic exhibitions of international repute that survey the art of our time; and cutting-edge engagement with new modes of media production. MOCA is a not-for-profit institution that relies on a variety of funding sources for its activities.

ABOUT BVLGARI

[Bvlgari](#) was founded in the heart of Rome in 1884. Over the decades, the Brand has established a worldwide reputation as a magnificent Roman High Jeweler and icon of Italian art of living. Through a pioneering vision, the company's international success has evolved into a global and diversified luxury purveyor of products and services, ranging from fine jewels and

high-end watches to accessories and perfumes, and featuring an extended network of boutiques and hotels. Demonstrated through its numerous philanthropic partnerships, Bvlgari deeply believes in innovating the present for a sustainable future through its commitment to Social & Environmental Responsibility and giving back – to nature and to the community. In 2024 the Maison announced the creation of Fondazione Bvlgari, reinforcing its devotion to building a meaningful tomorrow through care, generosity and long-term dedication.

ABOUT THEASTER GATES

[Theaster Gates](#) is an artist whose practice finds roots in conceptual formalism, sculpture, space theory, land art, and performance. Trained in urban planning and within the tradition of Japanese ceramics, Gates's artistic philosophy is guided by the concepts of Shintoism, Buddhism and Animism - most notably honoring the "spirit within things." Foundational to Gates's practice is his custodianship and critical redeployment of culturally significant Black objects, archives, and spaces. Through the expansiveness of his approach as a thinker, maker, and builder, Gates extends the life of disappearing and bygone histories, places, traditions, and loved ones.

ABOUT FRANK GEHRY

Raised in Toronto, Canada, [Frank Gehry](#) moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1947. Gehry received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Southern California in 1954, and he studied City Planning at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. In subsequent years, Gehry has built an architectural career that has spanned over six decades and produced public and private buildings in America, Europe and Asia. His work has earned Gehry several of the most significant awards in the architectural field, including the Pritzker Prize.

ABOUT WENDY SCHMIDT

[Wendy Schmidt](#) is a philanthropist and investor who has spent nearly two decades creating innovative non-profit organizations to work with communities around the world for clean, renewable energy, resilient food systems, healthy oceans and the protection of human rights. The critical interconnections between human activity, the land we live on and the ocean we depend upon are the central drivers of Wendy's philanthropic work. Through their philanthropy, Wendy and her husband Eric are working toward a healthy, resilient, secure world for all.

###

MEDIA CONTACTS

Danielle Bias
MOCA, Chief Communications Officer
communications@moca.org

MOCA GALA 2025 IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BVLGARI, POST-EVENT

Page 5 of 5

Darius Sabbaghzadeh
Third Eye
darius@hellothirdeye.com

Kyle Hinton
Third Eye
kyle@hellothirdeye.com