

AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME

MCKIM MEDAL GALA 2026

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Hosted by the American Academy in Rome, the McKim Medal Gala 2026
was held on May 27 at Villa Aurelia in Rome

Ludovico Einaudi was awarded the McKim Medal

An international gathering convened by Gala Chair Eugenia D'Aurelio.

*The annual event fundraised one million euros in support of the artists and scholars
in residence at the Academy in Rome.*

The American Academy in Rome honored the talent of the renowned artist and composer **Ludovico Einaudi** during the **twenty-first edition of the McKim Medal Gala**, held on **May 27** in the gardens of Villa Aurelia in Rome.

Five hundred distinguished guests from the worlds of culture, entertainment, institutions, and business attended the special evening, which aims to **support the Academy's fellowship programs**, including the Italian Fellowships, the only program among the foreign academies in Rome dedicated to Italian artists and scholars. The Gala raised a total of **one million euros**. The Rome Prize and the Italian Fellowships of the American Academy in Rome, the oldest independent American cultural institution abroad, advance the arts and humanities by selecting artists and scholars to come to Rome and pursue their visionary work, both individually and collaboratively. This year's Gala was chaired by **Eugenia d'Aurelio**.

"The American Academy in Rome is a meeting place where disciplines, sensibilities, and talents come together. For generations, it has offered scholars, artists, architects, writers, musicians, and researchers the invaluable opportunity to live and work in Rome, supporting their growth and development. Rome teaches the layered nature of beauty, the dialogue between past and future, the value of time, of memory, and the act of creation. Those of us who have the privilege of supporting this institution understand how important it is that these young talents return to the world as ambassadors not only of culture, but also of the sensitivity, humanity, and beauty of this unique city. Over the course of the evening, we also have the privilege of paying tribute to an extraordinary artist, Ludovico Einaudi. His music speaks to the world with rare depth and delicacy; it builds bridges between emotion and thought, between silence and memory. Tonight, therefore, we celebrate much more than a Gala. We celebrate an international community united by the conviction that art, research, music, thought, and beauty are essential tools for understanding our time and for imagining the future," said Gala Chair **Eugenia d'Aurelio**.

Each year, the Gala honors exceptional individuals who, like Einaudi, embody the importance of cultural exchange between Italy and the United States with the **McKim Medal**. Designed by renowned artist Cy Twombly and crafted by BVLGARI, the medal symbolizes excellence and the role, now more necessary than ever, of the leading figures of our time who dedicate themselves to scholarship, to research, and to creative and cultural expression.

The artist and composer **Ludovico Einaudi**, who gave a special performance during the evening, said: "I would like to thank the American Academy and Eugenia d'Aurelio. This evening is especially meaningful to me because it provides tangible support for the work of young artists and scholars. For young people, having a place like this is incredibly important. Especially in the early years, it is essential to have the time to experiment, try, make mistakes, try again, and engage with others, to have the time to develop one's ideas without everything needing to become immediately useful. Many of the things I consider important in my work were born precisely during moments when I had the time to explore my intuitions without any pressure to achieve a result. Receiving an award like this reminds me how important it is to continue nurturing that spirit of freedom, inquiry with the sole purpose of pursuing different thoughts, beauty, and imagination."

"The McKim Medal pays tribute to those who embody the Academy's deepest conviction: that art and culture, beauty and civic engagement are not separate pursuits but manifestations of a single calling.

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Ludovico Einaudi fully embodies this belief. As a composer, he has achieved something unique: he has created a body of work that is both critically acclaimed and universally resonant. Einaudi's work extends far beyond the concert stage. He is a researcher and a thinker, a student of the relationship between sound, memory, and place. He is a public artist in the fullest sense of the term, someone who understands that a gift of such power carries with it a responsibility. He performed on a melting glacier for Greenpeace. He has used his platform to speak clearly about climate change, human dignity, and our obligations to one another and to this planet. He does so because he believes in these causes. The man whom the Academy honors today is someone who has made beauty an argument for justice, attentiveness, and care," said **Peter N. Miller**, President and CEO of the American Academy in Rome.

During the evening, remarks were also delivered by **Calvin Tsao**, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the American Academy, and **Aliza Wong**, Director of the American Academy in Rome, who stated: "In every era of upheaval, when the world has trembled under the weight of war, violence, and darkness, human beings have turned not only to arms but also to the arts and humanities. In the pursuit of beauty, in the written word and the sculpted form, in the painted canvas and the sweep of an arch, in the questions of philosophy, the patient excavation of archaeology, and the memory of history, we have fought another kind of battle: for justice, for peace, for liberation, and for the dignity of the human spirit. The arts and the humanities are not a refuge from the struggle. They are the struggle. To gather together at the McKim Medal Gala of the American Academy in Rome is to join a tradition that stretches back more than a century of artists, writers, architects, scholars, and philosophers who understood that the pursuit of beauty and the search for meaning are in themselves acts of resistance and hope. In a world of uncertainty, we remember that civilization is not something we inherit. It is something we must, together, choose to protect."

The purpose of the Gala is to support the arts and humanities through the interdisciplinary community, that lives at the Academy and that includes— unique among the foreign academies in Rome— a fellowship program for Italians. Thanks to the funds raised, the American Academy in Rome will continue to support not only the life of its community but also its ongoing creative exchange with the city of Rome. Since 1894, the Academy has hosted distinguished figures, including recipients of the Pulitzer Prize, Grammy Award, Pritzker Prize, Poet Laureate, and Nobel Prizes. Today, the Academy places increasing emphasis on fostering deeper connections between artistic practices, the humanities, and scientific inquiry, an approach that further integrates the study of the past, the interpretation of the present, and imagination of the future.

The Gala's dinner was curated and prepared by **Da Vittorio**, accompanied with wines from **Castello di Ama, Tiberio** and **Bellavista Franciacorta**.

Corporate Patrons of the McKim Medal Gala 2026 were **Lottomatica Group; Fondazione La Società delle Api**.

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The McKim Medal Gala

Founded by the American Academy in Rome in 2005, the McKim Medal is an annual award that recognizes individuals whose work—particularly in Italy and the United States—has made a significant contribution to the arts, the humanities, and culture. Proceeds from the Gala support the annual fellowship programs of the American Academy in Rome, including the Italian Fellows program, which offers Italian artists and scholars the unique opportunity to live and work within the Academy's vibrant cultural community.

The award, named after the celebrated American architect and one of the founders of the American Academy, **Charles Follen McKim** (1847–1909), has been given to distinguished figures such as: **Virgilio Sacchini e Giuseppe Tornatore, Sofia Coppola, Massimo Bottura, Matteo Garrone, Cecilia Alemani, Luca Guadagnino, Paola Antonelli, Roberto Benigni, Sir Antonio Pappano, Paolo Sorrentino, Carlo Petrini, Renzo Piano, Cy Twombly, Umberto Eco, Franco Zeffirelli, Ennio Morricone, Miuccia Prada, Luigi Ontani, Riccardo Muti and Bernardo Bertolucci.**

The Gala takes place at **Villa Aurelia**, a residence surrounded by approximately 3.8 acres of magnificent gardens. Perched on the Janiculum Hill, it offers one of the most spectacular views of Rome. The villa was built around 1650 for Cardinal Girolamo Farnese. In the early nineteenth century the property was purchased by Count Alessandro Savorelli, who undertook extensive restoration work; much of the decoration from that period remains visible today. In 1849, Giuseppe Garibaldi chose Villa Aurelia as his headquarters during the defense of the Roman Republic against the French army. In 1881 the Villa was acquired by Clara Jessup Heyland, an American heiress from Philadelphia, who later bequeathed Villa Aurelia to the American Academy in Rome.

Gala Chair

Eugenia d'Aurelio

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American Academy in Rome

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Since 1894 the American Academy in Rome has functioned as a residential center for research and creativity. Its purpose has always been to enable highly motivated scholars and artists to immerse themselves in the experience of Rome, ancient and modern, and to be inspired by daily exchange with the other members of this creative community. The Academy has made an outsized impact on the intellectual and cultural life of the United States, and its Fellows and Residents have been recognized with 651 Guggenheim Fellowships, 79 Pulitzer Prizes, 63 MacArthur Fellowships, 28 Grammy Awards, 25 National Medal of Arts, 21 National Book Awards, 9 Poet Laureate appointments, 7 National Humanities Medals, 5 Nobel Prizes, 5 Pritzker Prizes, and 2 Oscars. In addition to these honors, Fellows and Residents have been awarded memberships to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (223), the American Academy of Arts and Letters (188), and the Accademia de Lincei (10). Approximately 35 Fellows are selected as winners of the Rome Prize each year by rotating juries in the different fields.

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