



Villa Aurora • Thomas Mann House

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Reopening of the Thomas Mann House after the Fires in Los Angeles – Fellowship Program starts in June**

*Berlin/Los Angeles, May 26, 2025* – **Six months after the devastating fires in Los Angeles, the Thomas Mann House will resume its regular activities on June 6, 2025. The reopening will be marked by a special concert program and readings on the occasion of Thomas Mann's 150th birthday – the first in-person event since the fires.**

Located in Pacific Palisades, the Thomas Mann House was threatened by nearby fires in January but remained largely intact. In the last few months, the house has undergone a comprehensive series of professional tests as well as clean-up, repair, and maintenance work. The safety of our local team and our fellows was our highest priority.

Starting in June, the fellowship program will return to the house. Among the first fellows to move back into the Thomas Mann House are Steven Walter, curator and artistic director of the Beethovenfest Bonn; the stage director and dramaturge Johannes Müller; and Robert Riener, Professor for Health Sciences and Technology at ETH Zurich. Due to the fires, several of the fellowships scheduled for the first half of 2025 had to be postponed and will take place at a later date in the coming year.

Oliver Hartmann, Director of the Thomas Mann House:

*"We are excited to finally be able to welcome our fellows in LA and to fill the house with new life and transatlantic ideas. In addition, we would like to thank everybody who has supported us in these months of crisis."*

The reopening will take place on June 6 on the occasion of Thomas Mann's 150th birthday with an event in the family's former living room. Together with Monday Evening Concerts and the Los Angeles Poverty Department, the Thomas Mann House will host a varied program of music and dramatic readings titled "Faustus Revisited." The focus will be on musical presentations on the historical Faustus grand piano and on excerpts from Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus*, which he wrote during his exile in the United States. The event is primarily aimed at our affected neighbors and institutional partners by offering them a space of community and welcome after the fires.

Villa Aurora is currently undergoing comprehensive fire damage restoration, which is expected to take several more months. A reopening date cannot be provided at this time. We are working with Villa Aurora grant recipients whose residency cannot take place because of the current situation to find alternative solutions and ways to take up the fellowship at a later date.

Jakob Scherer, Executive Director of Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House e. V.:

*"Both houses are structurally sound. Given the enormous destruction wrought by the fires, especially in the immediate vicinity of Villa Aurora, this is nothing short of a miracle. At VATMH, we see this as a responsibility to even more strongly uphold the spirit of cosmopolitanism, artistic and scientific freedom, and transatlantic exchange."*

The damage caused by the fires continues to be tangible. Countless friends, neighbors, and partners of both residency houses are affected or have lost everything. Our thoughts and most heartfelt sympathies are with all affected individuals and communities in and around Los Angeles.

Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House e. V. thanks its partners – especially the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media, the Goethe-Institut, and the German Consulate General in Los Angeles – for their valuable support and close cooperation during the crisis.

**Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House e. V.** is an independent and nonpartisan intermediary organization of the Federal Republic of Germany and promotes the intellectual and cultural exchange between Germany and the United States of America. The nonprofit association awards grants and fellowships at its two residencies Villa Aurora and the Thomas Mann House in Pacific Palisades, a neighborhood of Los Angeles in the U.S. state of California, and organizes cultural programs in the United States and in Germany. It keeps alive the memory of European exile history in California, conveys a contemporary and diverse image of Germany, and facilitates joint reflection on social, cultural, and political challenges.

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