

## Richard Armstrong | The Guggenheims

- Evening everybody. It is my great pleasure to introduce another wonderful friend and colleague, Richard Armstrong, a director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation. Since 2008, Richard Armstrong leads the Guggenheim Foundation and its constellation of museums, in addition to serving on the Guggenheim Foundation Board of Trustees. Previously, Richard was the Henry J. Heinz II director at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh. That was from 1996 to 2008. He has also held curatorial positions at Carnegie Museum of Art from 1992 to 1996, the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1981 to 1992, and the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art in California.

That was from 1975 to '79. A native of Kansas City, Missouri, Richard graduated from Lake Forest College in Illinois with a BA in art history, having studied at the University de Dijon and in Universite de Paris Sorbonne. He serves in an advisory capacity on several foundation boards, including the Victor Pinchuk Foundation, the Artistic Council of Beyeler Foundation, Basel in Switzerland, and the Al Held Foundation in New York City. He is a director of the Fine Family Foundation Pittsburgh, and is also a member of the Association of Art Museum Directors. Tonight Richard will talk about the uniquely successful and charitable Guggenheim immigrant family and the institutions some of his progeny founded and have continued to support.

He will lead us through eight decades of evolution within the Guggenheim from its public origins in New York, public three sites in the U.S., Italy, and Spain with an early look at the impending Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. Richard, thank you very much for joining us tonight over to you in New York City.

- Thanks very much, Wendy. I might slightly violate the chronological limits by actually going back to the 19th century and we could put the first slide up.

*Photographs are shared visually*

I'm really talking to you this evening about not only the family, but also the museums and some of the other charities of this amazing group of immigrants who came in 1847 to the U.S. from eastern Switzerland, headed by the Meyer Guggenheim, who ultimately had eight sons and three daughters immigrated to Philadelphia, began as a peddler and a lace salesman door to door and wound up as one of the wealthiest people in the world after having made big discoveries in Leadville Colorado of the largest silver vein to-date.

His trajectory is kind of best summarised in saying that born in Lengnau Valley in Switzerland, dying in Palm Beach. I think it shows you tremendous progress in not only is wealth but his influence. Here, I wanted to remind you that the Guggenheim, which we know and look at with astonishment is in fact two buildings, the Frank Lloyd Wright building in the front facing the Fifth Avenue in the 1991 addition behind which was foreseen by Wright, but not realised until many years later. I often say when I'm giving this talk, don't forget that we have waterfront property.

Next slide please. Next slide.

- [Carly] Richard, we're just going to re-share the screen for a second, it seems to-

- All right.

- There we go.

- We need to go back one. Perfect, thank you. This is Robert Solomon Guggenheim born 1861 in Philadelphia, died 1949 in New York. In his later years, as you may have known, he was one of the most forceful of the eight sons of Meyer Guggenheim, important for not only their Mexican mining and smelting operation, but also for the world famous Yukon Gold Company, lived on the north shore of Long Island in a palatial house, had married into a very wealthy New York family, as did all of his brothers after they left Philadelphia in the 1880s. And he'd like other wealthy people at that moment had begun collecting.

I would say most of what he bought prior to meeting the next slide, this is Baroness Hildegard Anna Augusta Elisabeth Rebay von Ehrenwiesen, who became his early advisor in 1926 onwards. It's only from the moment that he meets this painter who had also been very friendly with Arp and other important artists in Europe, the Guggenheim gains not only focus, but great, I would say momentum in assembling an important collection based originally around many, many, many works by Wassily Kandinsky, but also, incorporating very important examples of European avant garde from 1912 onwards. So they meet in 1926.

She's an attractive, vivacious artist herself, born in Strasbourg in 1890 from a minor nobility, she'd study at the Academie Julian, she'd also been in Munich in 1910, '11, crucial years for the development of expressionism. And in 1915 she met the artist Jean Arp. And it was through him and their friendship in Zurich that she met a large coterie of what would become the dominant artist of that era, particularly Kandinsky. So she came to New York in the twenties and made her living not only as an artist, but also as a portrait painter, and it's Mrs. Guggenheim who'd introduced her to her husband with the idea that a portrait would come of it as it did. And in those sittings, Mr. Guggenheim discovered a different universe, very different from the 19th century Corot's and Barbizon School pictures that he'd been collecting previously. Instead, a big leap into the present and ultimately the future.

Next slide please. So under Rebay's inspiration, Guggenheim began ferociously collecting and ultimately putting these pictures on view at the Plaza Hotel in New York, where on Thursday afternoon, you or I as an interested party could be invited into the family suite to look at, next slide please, important paintings by a variety of artists, Leger, lots of Kandinsky. Previously we were looking at images of Rudolph Bauer, the point being that this sort of bolt hole for the family since Long Island was really their home in effect became a two or three-room salon that launched the idea of a Foundation in 1937. And in 1939, led Rebay and Guggenheim into the goal of making a museum. Next slide please. Here we're seeing the museum. This is at 24 East

54th Street. If you're confused about what it is, please look at the neon sign on the right. It says museum. This had been a previously a car showroom remodelled, next slide please, in a very curious and interesting way, velvet walls, very low and very seductive seating where you're in fact invited to lie down if you care to, overscaled frames and this unusual presentation of pictures at a very, very low angle.

I must say that I think the combination probably shocked a lot of New Yorkers. I know the great art historian Robert Rosenblum told me he visited and this was one of the oddest experiences he'd ever had looking at art. And nevertheless, it was a very powerful counterweight in essence, to the Whitney Museum founded at about the same time by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, with its deep connection to American art only downtown on West Eighth Street, and the Museum of Modern Art, founded by Mrs. Rockefeller almost at the same moment with its early and very deep attraction to French modernism.

These three ladies, and there were others, particularly at the MoMA who were so involved, formed an interesting triangular nexus of information for New York. American art at the Whitney Museum, really German art principally and Eastern European art at the Guggenheim Foundation. And this place was now called the Museum of Non-Objective Painting, and thirdly, French art at the Museum of Modern Art. So here we are, and this goes on for 10 years at this site. Next slide please. In 1943, Hilla wrote to Frank Lloyd Wright, who by that moment was already quite mature, having been born in 1867, saying that she wanted him to build a temple for the spirit with lots of other hyperbolic aspirations.

So beginning in 1943, Wright would've made a whole series of drawings for museums that ultimately would become the Guggenheim. Initially his idea was that the museum would be located near Van Cortlandt Park up in the Bronx as he was obsessed, as you may know with automobiles, also felt that buildings that he felt strongly about should always be on the crest of a hill. This would've obliged people driving to the museum, which he thought was a very worthwhile activity. But in the end, the family scotched that idea, found this apartment building between 88th and 89th Street on Fifth Avenue, began assembling property to the north of it. Next slide please.

Here is the sort of penultimate idea of Wright, you can see that tower behind, which wasn't realised 'til 1991, but I'm showing you this, because what's interesting is at its opening you were able to drive through the museum from Fifth Avenue to 89th Street. And this drawing shows cars in a nice prominent place down there on the bottom. It was a very elegant porte-cochere which was abandoned within the first year. Next slide please. So in the assembling of this property, you can see that places were demolished. Eventually that building on the right would be taken down as with the one next to it.

And in fact, the institution grew and this obliged Wright redefining and revising his drawings over a very long period all the way up until the middle of 1950s as he decided how best to compose this very curious sort of circular building that looked like nothing else in New York. Next slide

please. Here we see it's construction, which began in 1956 using wooden forms, very sort of experimental way of putting together, building at that moment. Next slide please. And then finally at its opening in 1959, where many architectural critics likened it to a flying saucer, a washing machine, and other derogatory analyses. I must say though, next slide. And here it is at night. And there you can see the porte-cochere towards the centre. Next slide please.

It was immensely popular with people from its very first day in mid-October 1959, and we've been able to retain that popularity in many ways last year, attracting almost 1.2 million people to this relatively small building. We say, in fact it has about 44,000 square feet of public space. Next slide please. I wanted you to see, and you know these ramps well, I wanted you to see some of the triumphant usages that staff prior to the one that I worked with have made. Here's Ellsworth Kelly's great retrospective from about 15 years ago. Next slide please.

Or more recently, this new idea that we have of inviting artists to in essence, explode in the space. This is the show some years ago by Maurizio Cattelan the Italian artist called "All". We're seeing everything that he would ever have made hanging from this beautiful oculus in the middle of the building. And this took a tremendous amount of engineering experimentation on the part of our staff. We had a full-scale mock-up of the building at a warehouse outside Manhattan, only to discover that we were within a few hundred pounds of really pulling the building down, which would've been catastrophic.

But nevertheless, the skillful team was able with Maurizio to make this very astonishing piece that really utilised the ramps as a way of passing by this provocative, important and iconic artist throughout his entire 25-year long career. Next slide. Similarly, we invited the light and space artist James Turrell to take over the Rotunda for about a 4 1/2-month period. And he devised this computer-controlled, light-emitting descending sort of ceiling that really was anchored into the oculus. We encouraged people staying in the Rotunda the museum was essentially empty and we put down padded pillows on the floor so that one could lie down, look up.

This was really one of the most powerful exhibitions in the museum's history, and I think it proved deeply how important it is. And we're learning this again now today, how important it is that museums be available for contemplation as well as what we might call historical stimulation. So that's the great Turrell experiment, which was hugely successful. Next please. And then more recently, I think some of you may have seen or heard about this exciting exhibition by the Swedish artist, Hilma af Klint, active at the end of the 19th century and into the early years of the 20th century at her studio in relative isolation in Stockholm.

We actually devised a way of showing these very overscaled pictures, some of them 10 feet high in the high gallery. And I think people discover that these paintings dating from 1905 and 1906 in many ways could arguably seem as the first or certainly among the first abstract art, and we went up the ramps and saw almost a hundred other examples of her very highly spiritual imagery and great painting skill. This again, turned out to be one of the most popular shows in the museum's history, I think for a variety of reasons. One was it showed this phenomenal

fusion of belief in nature. She was trained as a botanic illustrator. It also showed a woman at the forefront of experimentation in the 20th century.

And thirdly, in totality, I think it showed the possibilities for art to really literally and metaphorically take us to a higher place. Next slide please. Another view, you can see that in this triptych Hilma af Klint is really devising a bunch of symbols that would be very comparable to a religious triptych in a typical sort of worship environment. Next slide please. So that's the museum in New York. After Mr. Guggenheim died in 1959, he didn't see the building finished and neither did Wright, because he died shortly thereafter.

The museum was renamed from the Museum of Non-Objective Painting to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and later, Museum and Foundation. This is Peggy Guggenheim, born in 1898. She's Solomon R. Guggenheim's niece. Her father was Benjamin Guggenheim killed on the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, and therefore she wasn't quite as financially capable as some of her cousins as the family's rules were. If your father wasn't active in the corporation, you weren't entitled to the yearly payout. Nevertheless, she was very secure in her financial future. This is Peggy late in her life, highly vivacious, I think you might say strong will. She began her affiliation with the avant garde by working at a bookshop called Sunrise Turn in Grand Central Station in New York. And her early ambition actually was to be part of the literary world.

And in 1920 she moved to Paris, fell in with a very advanced group of artists, particularly Marcel Duchamp, the great French painter and conceptualist, who really became her mentor and guide through the rest of his life and hers as she began to ferociously collect pictures as a symbol of support for her new friends. And then in 1938, opened a gallery Guggenheim Jeune on Cork Street in London, again with the assistance of Herbert Read whom you in London will know well, always with the idea that eventually she might have a museum of abstract art for the things from her collection located in London. Well, 1938 was not a perfect year to begin this kind of enterprise in London. But in typical Peggy Guggenheim style, she moved to Paris in 1939, which would've been even less secure for someone of Jewish descent as she was.

And there she opened a gallery, which she called Guggenheim Jeune also and very shortly with the Nazi occupation, was obliged to leave France, put the paintings and all her collection and storage in the south of the country, take away her children and her new amour, the great artist Max Ernst, flee to Portugal, and from there charter a plane where she flew to New York. So Peggy lives in New York, arriving there in 1941, and I must say she had a cold relationship at best with her uncle Solomon, not so keen on Hilla Rebay either. Opens a gallery called Art of the Century in Midtown in 1942.

And it's from that base that really she becomes, I would say, one of the two or three most important spotters of talent, centres of thinking, iconic class, catalytic iconic class with her support of particularly Jackson Pollock, whom she gave a yearly stipend to, but also a wide variety of European and American artists. I think you could say that that gallery really was the crossroads of European and American creativity during the war years. The gallery closed in

1946 and Peggy moved to Venice and we're seeing her later in life. Next slide please. After she had taken over this amazing, but unfinished palazzo on the grand canal, living here until her death in 1979 and gradually opening up this house museum as it became in a way that recalls Mr. Guggenheim's early use of the Plaza Hotel as a kind of house museum. She was invited in 1948 to exhibit the collection at that year's biennale in the Greek Pavilion, because of the Greek Civil War. There was not a Greek artist available at that moment.

That 1948 presentation was hugely successful, reiterating to people that this was a unique collection, not only for its strength in abstract expressionism, but also for her great precedent in having bought Italian futurism, Mondrian, Picasso, of course, a number of important sculptors, and citing this work in a very empathetic way in this lovely small palazzo with the garden behind it. Next slide please. And here is the entryway into the palazzo as we see it today, a very important corridor, that great Picasso studio picture on the far wall. And then if you look to the left beyond that, her dining room with the great Brancusi that she owned to the left and an important Cubist picture has an oval behind that.

So we've tried to to the greatest extent possible to reinforce the sense of this being a home. The garden, of course, is still open. We've made great investments in trying to enlarge it in a way that would be complimentary to Peggy's ideas. As you may recall, there's a new building called the barchessa that comes off of the palazzo where she principally sited her collection, all through the 1950s. We've been able to lease a building behind where we have temporary exhibitions, and more recently we purchased a property that allowed us to have food service and a small terrace in the back so that people could relax and we're this museum, which is really one of the great jewels of Venice, which itself is a jewel bedecked city, is attracting around 450,000 people annually.

It's become one of those places where you're obliged to go, you want to go. And I think every backpacking traveller from the UK, Europe, and America has been one time or another. Another great aspect of it is that it's basically guarded and to some degree administered by college-age interns, many of whom have gone on to become museum directors and curators themselves. And it lends a kind of welcoming and informal and quite youthful air to a visit to the institution. We're very proud of it. Despite the great travails that Venice has gone through over the last 5 1/2 months, the museum reopened last week. Its director Karole Vail, who happens to be Peggy Guggenheim's granddaughter, done a tremendous job in readjusting the institution so that we can attract about 350 people a day.

And we know that it will go on being more and more powerful. As Venice opens up to tourism, we only hope it becomes slightly more rational than it had been previously. Next slide please. Then late in the 1980s, the Basque government regional and city government came to the Guggenheim with the idea of renovating a wine warehouse in Bilbao. This is a city that I'd say previously wasn't particularly on the itinerary of most art lovers and would've attracted people who had business interest in steel industry in particular, which was the city's great product.

My predecessor Tom Krens and Juan Ignacio Vidarte, the current director, were eventually able to expand that ambition to be given this riverside site next to a newly clean river, which had previously been very, very polluted and invited Frank Gehry to design this museum where I reckoned many of you would've gone. We're in year number 23 or four, I think at present, attracting about 1.2 million people annually. And it's been a symbol, I think, of a tremendous revival of a city that was somewhat down on its heels after the collapse of the steel industry. It was especially poignant to me as Wendy mentioned, I live for a long time in Pittsburgh and I went to see the museum prior to its opening, looking at the foundation digging, et cetera, because I happened to be in San Sebastian seeing an artist.

The mayor in Pittsburgh said, "Go take a look at this place," as I did, I came back and said to him, "Well, it's very hard to get to and I'm sure no one will ever go there," and how wrong I was. This is probably the greatest symbol of the late 20th century's belief in art, not only as a revival fire of a city, but also as a demonstration of great civic involvement. Next slide please. And of course, the museum offers these tremendously capacious exhibition spaces. It's really, I think probably the first computer-assisted design building, and Gehry therefore was able to do things that hadn't been done previously in construction.

You'll probably recall if you've been there, this amazing giant, I think, thousand-long conglomeration of pieces by Richard Serra called "A Matter of Time" commissioned for this site. It's one of the great monuments to my mind, inside contemporary museums anywhere in the world with a special poignancy in that steel would've been the employer and the centrepiece of economic reality in Bilbao and to some degree the entire Basque region from the late 19th century until the 1970s and eighties. In any case, this is one of the most populated contemporary art museums in Spain. It's run with great elan and elegance by Juan Ignacio and the staff there.

I'm very proud that our name is associated with their phenomenal ambitions. We've been assembling an historic and important collection, and it's a place that offers constant not only stimulation, but great inspiration and also allows you this big view inside a city that's part of a region governed by people who have tremendous vision for the welfare and the eventual sort of evolution of its people. And everywhere you look in Bilbao, they've been important and very substantial investments by government that allow its citizens to enjoy, I'd say an unusually high quality of life. And of course, we like to think that the Guggenheim Bilbao is at the centre of that great success.

Next slide please. I came to the museum in 2008 and a few years prior to that, my predecessor Tom Krens, had been approached by the government of Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the United Arab Emirates, to help conceive a cultural district on an island, quite a sizable island, very next to the traditional downtown of Abu Dhabi, which dates from the 1970s. Tom and the team put together a phenomenally elegant, very ambitious plan, which has been realised in part now with the opening of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, designed by Jean Nouvel, the opening within another year or so of a national history museum, the Sheikh Zayed Museum designed by Norman

Foster. And then this great and phenomenal museum put on landfill out into the Persian Gulf, designed by Frank Gehry again, which will be the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

It's considerably larger than Bilbao, many, many times bigger than New York of course. It's distinguishing feature might be these remarkable cones that you see as a compositional element scattered throughout what are in essence very discreet zones. I think it'll offer a new experience for looking at art and we've built together with our friends there, a great collection from the mid-1960s until today, that really can be said to be a thoroughly global collection with a great concentration of Middle East achievement after the 1950s as well.

I think both by scale and by ambition, by content, and by presentation, this should be and will be, I think the most compelling art museum over the next 30, 50 or 100 years. I have great hopes for this institution. We've had tremendous support in our, I would say, ambition to have this amazing collection. And from it we've learned a great deal about what it means to be global, which was something that we insisted the Guggenheim in New York was previously, I think we had an incomplete idea of how large and how productive and how inventive the world is.

The interconnection of the curators for this project with the curators in New York have been phenomenally important in this cross-pollination, in a renewed intellectual interest in works from outside North America and Europe, which would've been our concentration previously. And I'm very happy to say now that the Guggenheim in New York and all of its affiliates in fact really live up to their responsibility and the challenges of being great, great art centres for the entire world. I think we'll see this building begin construction shortly, and open some years after that.

I can certainly attest to the quality and the breadth of its collection and I would welcome you there. I want to say before we go into questions that the trustees have been tremendously supportive in the idea that we will go on being a globalised institution, that we will recognise achievement from outside New York and America, that we will ally ourselves with artists from around the world and that will change and adapt as the world changes and adapts. But that will be really very much a beacon of the biggest possible universe. And with that, I'm happy to take questions.

- Hi Richard.

- [Richard] Hi.

Q&A and Comments:

Q: How are you? So I wanted to start with a question in the current situation that we're in. So obviously, New York has been struck particularly hard by COVID-19 and unfortunately the museum had to close its doors several months ago. You and I know that you and the team have been working hard to see what the future might look like. Where do you see the role for the Guggenheim in helping to kind of heal New York in the months ahead?



A: Good question, we'll demonstrate I think our Countryside the exhibition that was put together with Rem Koolhaas, the Dutch architect, has particular precedent given what we've gone through over the last 14 weeks beyond which we see a long period next springtime when we'll have a series of one at a time video installations in the Rotunda essentially allow you to see the building almost empty. And we're hopeful that people will take that opportunity to reconnect with the inspirational aspect of the building.

Then we imagine after a widespread vaccination comes around next summer, let's say, that we'll be able to go full tilt in a variety of exhibitions that are typical of our ambition. Between now and then, I think our role is to say congregate, congregate safely, let yourself be inspired and allow us to show you some of our treasures in a way you may not have been able to see lately, because there were so many other people in the building with you. I think shortly we'll be having time tickets and fewer than 500 people a day in the building. Previously, we were having 3,500, so it'll be a very different quality of visit.

Q: So the Hilma show that was at the Guggenheim last year really struck a chord, perhaps with a different audience to the one you would normally have. And not only did you get a record number of visitors, but it started a conversation and a dialogue and you really, Hilma became part of the kind of heartbeat of New York for several months. What was it about that exhibition do you think that really spoke to people?

A: Two things. Of course, most importantly the quality of what she'd made and her ambition. And this was an artist who I think was largely unknown prior to, at least in North America, prior to this exhibition. Her work had been included in a show in the 1980s at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, it's called The Spiritual In Art. And in fact, that's the first time that I saw it and it remained in my mind as a kind of outlier. So when the opportunity came up for us to look into the subject more carefully, thanks to our friends at the Modernity, set in Stockholm, I asked Tracey Bashkoff, one of our great curators to take over the project, and she's the one who really formed and made it so legible.

So I'm drifting away from your question slightly, but there were two things in fact, the work and how legibly it was presented. And secondarily to my mind, it's the first time that Instagram was used so ferociously by visitors. And it also meant that we had an audience that was probably younger and considerably more female than typically. So we saw a very different cohort of people come to the exhibition and then remarkably we saw them come back second and third time. And at the end of the exhibition we saw them ask repeatedly, "Could it not stay?"

Q: And then in terms of social media, you just touched on the role of social media with Hilma, how do you feel that that's changed the way the Guggenheim engages with its community? But also do you feel for a museum which you've just touched on the history and the depth of the rooting of the Guggenheim, is that a struggle for the Guggenheim to adapt to engaging on social media?

A: Well, we've done very nicely and I think we're considered to be possibly in the top 10 among art museums in the world. Remember, we're really quite physically small and the collection is also tremendously small, about 9,000 objects. That said, I think we have a number of very good stories, many of which have now been put forward. And we are adapting in that we imagine new ambitions in not only sharing what we know, but also helping to appeal to people to come into the museum, not only in New York, but also in Venice, in Bilbao, and eventually in Abu Dhabi, recognising a kind of global constellation of Guggenheims. The answer though is the closure of the institution so accelerated the recognition of the importance of social media that we'll never be able to turn back and not want to either.

Q: So a couple of years ago, Jon Rafman, did the first artwork on the Oculus. Has art pivoted more now to the necessity of technology or is painting and sculpture still important for you?

A: There's room for everyone and I think one of the charms of working in that building is in a strange way, it accommodates almost everything that can happen. So we found ways through our very gifted curators, I think to not only feature video and projections and sound pieces, but also painting, sculpture, drawing, photography in ways that really I think are quite respectful of all media. Painting and sculpture will be with us forever and as they should be.

Q: So you touched obviously on the Guggenheim's global footprint and I know that you have international councils around the world that allow you to connect with a lot of patrons. I was hoping you could take our audience on a bit more of a journey about that.

A: All right, well, we had begun historically with a group called the International Directors Council, which gave the institution money that was missing for acquisitions of contemporary art. That was a number of years ago. From that we've been able to organise younger collectors into a group called the Young Collectors Council. They've been phenomenally helpful in our securing work by artists early in their careers, which was important to our success, I think, in that the museum sees itself as a very close ally of artists in particular, and to some extent also galleries.

Then we have a powerful and well-run and very convivial photography council, they've done a tremendous job in helping us put together a collection in the wake of our receiving a large number of works by Robert Mapplethorpe, as well as an endowment for photography from the Mapplethorpe Foundation. More recently we've organised a Middle Eastern circle, a Latin American circle, and an Asian art circle, all in an effort to, as you say, attach people in a very geographically-specific thrust towards changing the collection and demonstrating intellectual and aesthetic allegiance to what it is that we're trying to do.

Now that has programmatic aspects to it as well. We're not only buying work to add to the collection, but we're also generating new scholarship and making available to audiences that might not previously have seen certain kinds of work. Chinese artists, the great Gaitonde, the great Indian artist, work from Southeast Asia, from North Africa, all in an attempt to demonstrate

that that assertion I make of our being global has a reality behind it.

Q: So turning to the contemporary art market, obviously, the market has really continued to provide up until probably this year where everything's taken a bit of a beating. Where do you see the future of the contemporary art market and is there a ceiling to all this?

A: I think that it'll go on being robust and there's a reason for that. I think people recognise that we're in an era of tremendous creativity. There's access as a never has been before. I imagine that the market will go on being heated, possibly a little more discriminating. I'm only hopeful that galleries and magazines and artist associations that really have suffered over the last few months, can pull through and that we can look at one another with a kind of new respect always imagining that collectors are typically the enablers and we need people to keep collecting contemporary art. I can't say to what degree the market will recover, but I'm dead certain it'll be a very healthy market shortly.

Q: So turning to how you choose what exhibitions to put on. The Guggenheim has often prided itself on being a gender setting, on being at the forefront and taking risks, be it with the Rem Koolhaas exhibition that you briefly touched on or even the Robert Mapplethorpe exhibition last year. Could you say a little bit more about how you make those decisions, but also where the Guggenheim prides itself on leading from the front?

A: Well, there's a curatorial council. Ideas are put before that. I'm incorporated at a certain moment. Curators critique one another's precis and their selections of work and/or artist. We look at with Nancy Spector, the chief curator, we look at what we think are the most, I wouldn't say most valuable, but the best things to realise, because recognise that these exhibitions can be a 1 or \$2 million investment from the museum side. Then we try and as I said before, make certain that we have a universal look and that the exhibitions and therefore the collections really represent creativity from around the globe.

We're also lucky in that we have good, I would say even great art historian on staff who curatorially bring forward ideas such as Moholy-Nagy or Futurism or Gutai, the group that was so important in post-war Japan. So it's a bit of a melange with the idea that there are subjects that we can present more thoroughly and probably more convincingly than other institutions, because of the layout at the museum, beyond which we're very keen on contributing deeply to scholarship. So we want the subject to lend itself to a sustained period of thought and inquisition.

Q: So as you know, one of Wendy's passions around the Guggenheim is the education department and she feels incredibly strongly about the role of education and about making art accessible across the board. The Guggenheim has a fantastic programme and I know that even now during COVID you've looked for ways to reach into as many homes as possible. Could you tell us a bit more about the education department and some of its recent projects?

A: Well, it's interesting to remember that that's in our charter. We are essentially an educational institution governed by the Board of Regents in New York State. And I think the museums always had the notion of publications, great lectures, film series, et cetera. With social media and computers, we're able now to add another dimension to what previously might have been person-to-person transmission of the knowledge.

But our education department really starts at an early age with good kids and goes all the way up to people of unlimited ages and sometimes people with limited physical capacities. We have a great programme for people who are partially-sighted and our museum lends itself to that kind of physical exploration very nicely. But there's the full compliment of internships, of exhibition-related lectures, of independent lectures, an effort to go out into the city of course, through our learning through art programme, which takes working artists into public schools, bringing back those students to the museum more than once, and then on an annual basis presenting what it is that they've made as young artists to the world at large, ambitious and very central to the way we see our purpose.

Q: So for the first time the Guggenheim has a large box outside its front door filled with tomatoes and several people on the call may have seen the New York Times coverage of this project. I was hoping you could tell the group a little bit more about the tomato project and actually now during COVID, the relevance of it?

A: It was Rem Koolhaas' idea. Part of his message is how do we in future have a secure food supply that doesn't overtax our planet, given the population growth, and I would say also the concomitant growth in appetite? So this is a unit that's manufactured in Ohio. It's in essence, is a 24-hour photosynthesis box. Those are cherry tomatoes. I think they're producing around 50 pounds of tomatoes every five or six days and we've been giving 'em to the food bank as we will through the whole run of the exhibition to nurture people in New York City.

But it's meant to be a kind of public demonstration of the way that in future nature will perform somewhat differently, always with the idea that we mean to leave fewer traces of exploitation on the face of the earth. You'll see that big tractor next to it as well. And that's really meant to be candy. There's a demonstration of the necessary scale of cultivation in today's world, and that's a tractor that's essentially run by a drone.

Q: So talking of public demonstrations, obviously, in the last two weeks in New York, but also across America and now even in several cities around the globe, there has been the demonstrations in support of Black Lives Matter. The cultural world has a particular role to play. And I was hoping that as the director of the Guggenheim, you could talk more about your vision both to engage on the issues, but also to look to the future.

A: Well, I think step 1 for us was to declare the recognition of such serious racial injustice and subsequently for us to say to one another, what do we do? And step 1 I think is happening at present and that's a reexamination of how we treat one another and how decisions are made

and executed inside the museum. But finally, I think we all bear the responsibility of being active citizens and we would encourage that of our staff, because without political change, these ethical stances that we take become more and more embattled. We need to have a different view of how society can function and as well-educated and very concerned people, we need to be part of that change. So we've been having I'd say relatively intense discussions inside staff and we have made some decisions about our programming that I think will demonstrate a new recognition of how large the audience can be and should be.

Q: So over the past couple of years, it's become more difficult to get younger members of your community into physical spaces. We touched on the role of social media, but how do you think the Guggenheim can continue to be this meeting place and this opportunity for people to come together, even post-COVID where you are going to have to take into consideration at least for the next couple of years, the need for social distancing?

A: Well, we're lucky in a way, because we have a head start. I think demographically we have the youngest audience of any museum in the city. But as you say, how to make that offering remain attractive will be a challenge. And part of it I think will be in our carefully presenting exhibitions and programmes that offer people a way in. And I don't just mean that physically, I mean mentally, and I would say even spiritually. So very important I think that what comes in the immediate future have many, many entries for people of all ages to come in. But of course, we're keen on younger people finding the Guggenheim to be particularly welcoming to their ongoing education.

Q: So funding for the arts has come under threat really around the world as there's more competing priorities for government. If you were facing the decision-makers today about why it's so crucial funding the arts, what would be your pitch?

A: There are probably at least two things that need to be said. One is that without a fully self-aware citizenry, you don't have a well-functioning country and neither is a society doing the best that it can. And secondarily, I would say this is one of my private pitches to people, museums are natural havens for non-conformists, for eccentrics, for people who are unable to, in one way or another, fully be part of what's going on, they need to be encouraged.

They frequently are the people who show us the new way. Artists certainly have that role, but other thinkers have as well. And society needs very much for that dimension to be healthy and active. Our building really demonstrates that I think to a T no pun intended, in that it's unlike anything else in the world and it's very, very memorable. It's one of those few museums that you can come out of remembering what it is that you saw.

Q: In terms of other things that the Guggenheim building has been used for, one of our guests was wondering is the building ever used for musical cultural events rather than just the art component?

A: Frequently we have a great parallel programme now more than 40 years old, called Works and Process that was begun by one of our distinguished trustees, Mary Cronson, now being run by her daughter-in-law, Caroline Cronson. There's a long history of our being early commissioners of artists and presenters of artists and frequently in terms of music, the performance takes place in the Rotunda, not in the Peter B. Lewis Theatre. So the museums utilise on a very regular basis for a variety of performances, musical and otherwise.

Q: So Simone Leigh won the Hugo Boss Art Prize in 2018 and her work I feel will really speak to the South African audience. So I was hoping perhaps you could share a little bit more about her and perhaps where you see her work going for the future.

A: Well, she's a Philadelphia-based artist and Philadelphia has a long social history of tension between different audiences. But she's been, I think, unusual in presenting her work as a metaphor for not only power, but also in a way for domesticity. So we're looking frequently at sculpture that has great physical presence, but might be a realisation of so simple a thing as braided hair. Or in the case of our exhibition, she presented, heroically-scaled work that had a face on it, a black face and a black body with no eyes and looked to be to some degree like a teapot, therefore a vessel for I'd say change and evolution.

But I think Simone has been unusual in the consistency of what she's done. And you may have seen also the very large figure she had on the Highline for the last several months, which was this female figure which looked down, I think in a very magisterial way at the city beneath it. I have great hopes for her and I know that she'll develop and is already one of the most important American artists.

Q: So I know that the outside of the Guggenheim is one of the most photographed buildings in the world. To what extent do you think visitors come for your buildings rather than just the exhibits inside?

A: There's a fair number of people who, as you say, are keen to see Frank Lloyd Wright and why not? It's incredible. We've just in a few months ago, been certified as a World Heritage site, one of two in New York. It's just that building and the Statue of Liberty. And if you look back at the history of 20th century creativity, Wright is a titan. That building in the most unlikely place you can imagine, really demonstrating his unusual capacity to fuse people in art and to some degree nature, because they're on his doorstep at Central Park.

Q: So we won't ask you to be quite so prophetic on this, but if you had to speculate on the winner of this year's Hugo Boss Prize, where would you put your money? Kevin Beasley, as you know, spent some time in South Africa this year at Wendy's Foundation at A4. And in fact his interview for that prize was recorded at A4. So we got to watch it firsthand, but I was hoping you could speculate.

A: Well as usual, they're all unbelievably well-qualified, but as usual I'm not part of the jury and

I'm not told until the very last moment who won. So I'd be shy about nominating a winner, but I would say if I were an interested art viewer as I am, each of those artists deserves very, very close attention.

Q: Oh, you could be a politician Richard. And in terms of artists to watch for the future, we've got a lot of art collectors on the call. If you were sitting in their living room advising them, who are the people you would really be committed to?

A: Well, we have a big taste for the sculptor Carol Bove. But I think about advising people, it's almost always better for the viewer and then ultimately the collector to stumble forward so that I'm not adverse to people changing their collections as they evolve. And actually I feel like we learned as much from that as they do and it's better for society. So really advice about up-and-comers, I think I'd ring up my younger curators, I'm too frequently either on a plane or stuck in my office.

And the great thing about getting to know younger artists is you must be on the ground, you must be going to galleries, you must be seeing shows at museums other than the Guggenheim as well. And finally, you have to become comfortable acquainted with people through studio visits. We can arrange all that with you as we do for members of our affinity group, but it's really a challenge to the collector.

Q: And then finally, New York has become a real cultural hub, and there's a museum or a performance space, or even an emerging hub pretty much across Manhattan. How does the Guggenheim fit into that landscape, but also how does it differentiate itself from the ?

A: Well, I think we, first of all, we have a very peculiar container unlike anything else in the city. What we fill it with, we do very carefully, and I think we do it in a way that's to the benefit not only of the artist, but also of the viewer. It's a place where, as I said previously, you can really remember what you saw. And the way that we present particularly historic surveys, allows you to in effect walk through the kind of chronological development, either of an artist or of a series of artists.

I think the building, which was cursed so heavily by artists when it opened in 1959 through the early 1960s, made fun of by architectural critics from day one until now, has really offered the museum a way to be unique. And with our designers, curators and others, we've taken advantage of that in a way that makes me very happy and I know that will go on doing it. Short answer is, we're unique because of how we're literally structured and we're unique for the depth, the quality, and the legibility of what we put inside that structure.

Q: So I know that the Guggenheim has a really huge varied collection and not all of it can be on your walls all the time. So if you were going to take us on a journey through your storage, what would be the four or five things you would love to pull out?

A: Well, it's really in fact numerically quite a small collection. So that's good for us, about 9,000 objects. I think I'd start with this very heart-rendering picture by Mondrian made in 1910 when he's looking at the sand dunes on the North Sea. And I think he's just on the brink of discovering that he's about to become an abstract artist, very poignant painting. Then we go around the corner and see one of the typical sun-infused colour pictures by Pierre Bonnard of his wife at a French terrace looking out on Southern French landscape.

And from there I might go to, probably to something a Pollock, because we have to admit that he's the person who opened everything up most deeply. And I might wind up with a Christopher Wool painting, because he's an artist I have a special taste for. And to me he's the sort of the ultimate artist to come out of longstanding impulses towards abstract expressionism.

- Thank you. Well I, Richard, look forward to us being reunited in the Temple of the Spirit in New York in the hopefully not too distant future. And now I'm going to hand back over to Wendy.

- Thank you, Carly, thank you very much. So I'd like to thank you my dear partner in crime Richard, you are a wonderful person to work with. Not only are you an inspiration to all your board and staff, but to the global art community. We always share a great laugh, no matter how big the challenge, your glass is always half full and it's been an absolute pleasure working with an upbeat personality itself. You seamlessly seem to manage three museums under the Guggenheim banner with style, a perfectly honed eye, intellect and care, that only you, Richard possess. Now more than ever, the world and particularly our cultural corner, needs leaders with empathy and vision. I feel honoured to be president of this amazing museum, actually, the amazing museums. And it's a privilege, Richard, to be part of your journey. So I want to invite all of you, our viewers to come see us in New York and to participate in what really is a fantastic cultural institution. Thank you very much and goodnight. Thank you, Richard.

- Thank you, Wendy.

- Thank you, that was wonderful, thanks. Thank you Carly. Thank you everybody, good night.