

# GUGGENHEIM

**Search for the Director**  
**The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation**  
**New York, New York**

Committed to innovation, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation collects, preserves, and interprets modern and contemporary art, and explores ideas across cultures through dynamic curatorial and educational initiatives and collaborations.

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation (SRGF) pioneered the unique model of a globe-spanning constellation of excellent, distinct institutions that optimize geography, culture, architecture, collections, exhibitions, publications, and programs to redefine purpose, prioritize innovation, and inspire local and global audiences. Decades later, what makes it unique seems prescient for this transformational moment in culture and how we connect. SRGF wholly owns the landmarked and historic Frank Lloyd Wright site on Fifth Avenue, as well as the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Museum are collaborators of, but not controlled or owned by the Foundation and their fiscal activities separate. The Foundation provides guidance with respect to the development of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Museum permanent collection, its formation and operation, and art, public, education, and exhibition programming. The SRGF operating budget is approximately \$75M, the preponderance of which is raised from private sources, a staff of 470, and an endowment of \$133.8MM (*as of 12/31/2021*), of which \$112MM is donor restricted. The Board has 28 trustees and is growing, with the opportunity to seat 40 total. Likewise, certain key senior positions intentionally remain open to enable the incoming director to fill as preferred upon arrival.

## **THE GUGGENHEIM'S VISION, OFFER, PURPOSE, AND VALUES**

**Vision:** Aligned with artists since inception, adventurous, inquisitive, and courageous, the Guggenheim creates connections to the future with transformative experiences that amplify the power of many imaginations.

**Offer:** The Guggenheim invites the world to wonder, learn, and enjoy art together in exceptional physical and digital spaces that celebrate the diversity of human creativity.

**Purpose:** The Guggenheim activates the vital conversations that art provokes, championing different perspectives to inspire joy, connectivity, and understanding across cultures.

**Values:**

- Collaborative - Working together we recognize every role and achieve our goals with respect and generosity.

- Accountable - We listen actively, empowering our teams and taking responsibility for our actions.
- Experimental - We are progressive, inquisitive, and bold, supporting and learning from the risks we take.
- Open - We are inclusive, open-minded, and welcoming, seeking new ways to engage and inspire curiosity.

## **THE POSITION**

Reporting to the Foundation's Board of Trustees, the Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation will set the strategic direction for and lead the Museum and Foundation towards the realization and re-energizing of its vision, offer, and purpose. The Director will lead the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the flagship institution of the Foundation, and will be head steward of the Foundation's seminal assets, its collections, buildings, relationships, and reputation in New York and beyond.

Specifically, in partnership with an Executive Team in New York, the Director will:

- build on the passion and commitment of the predecessor to ensure the Guggenheim leads with art and programmatic excellence and a deft diplomatic touch. Optimize now-standard innovations in public programming, education, digital engagement, and audience feedback loops to assert relevance beyond exhibitions. From this core, the Director will develop a compelling vision for this singular institution derived from what it and no other institution can represent or accomplish. They will honor its history of bold innovation, reach, and impact with an eye to how such distinction can help drive fiscal and programmatic success
- in close partnership with the board, improve the financial position of the Museum and Foundation; pursue an unwavering focus to build the endowment; reinvigorate and expand engagement of benefactors and supporters around the United States; attract and develop new board members globally that appreciate its unique position internationally; help recruit trustees who embrace their load-bearing responsibility for this mission-critical objective
- develop a fair, centralized and streamlined system of benchmarks for internal performance, programmatic, and strategic growth, financial stability and efficiencies, and corporate development opportunities; once set, enforce accountability
- after decades of organic growth, assess and establish a sound structural model in New York to create a more transparent and equitable operation. Mitigate inefficiencies and hierarchical roadblocks, reduce protectionist behavior, improve communication and collaboration further challenged by a global pandemic, foster a sense of joy, and overall encourage a culture of trust and unified purpose across the Foundation regardless of seniority, tenure, or position
- with a view to ensuring that the Museum reaches its full potential, clearly articulate priorities for staff engagement and development, exhibitions, scholarship, public engagement, and programs, and

building and caring for the collection within the framework of a commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, inclusion, and sustainability

- oversee and participate in developing, operating, and marketing the Museum and its collection and programs to increase on-site attendance and digital participation; maintain or improve relations with peers and their institutions; enhance the Museum's reputation as an extraordinary cultural resource in New York City and abroad
- address the pressing need to increase, enhance and devise a successful strategy for storage
- oversee the wholly owned Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice
- be responsible for the Foundation's contractual relationships with the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, participating in its management, exhibition development, and acquisition efforts, and the Department of Culture and Tourism–Abu Dhabi to prepare for the successful opening of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi; on an ongoing basis, oversee art programming, acquisitions, and commissions at the Museum in Abu Dhabi
- bring the global constellation together towards a shared purpose, fostering relationships towards closer connection, while enabling each institution to thrive in its own environment
- ensure that Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the museums in the constellation are operated as outstanding, professionally rigorous, highly ethical, and imaginative cultural institutions.

Success in all these endeavors, locally in New York and internationally, will also depend on establishing a strong working relationship with the Trustees to set priorities and parameters. Communicating regularly with the Chair and the President of the Board, the Director must motivate and energize the Board to inspire its active engagement and full financial support. The Director will work with the Deputy Director, General Counsel, and Secretary to observe good governance and best practices with regular communication with and among Trustees and Board committee chairs.

## **IDEAL EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS**

The ideal candidate should have the following experience and qualifications:

- a passion for and deep knowledge of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup> century art, art history, the art world, and its key players; an ability to translate this into a vision, collaborations, exhibitions, and acquisitions, with a strong commitment to education and public engagement
- a demonstrated track record identifying institutional needs and priorities; managing and inspiring people and overseeing operations and budgets in a complex organization
- experience handling multiple locations, revenue streams and budgets adeptly and effectively
- a history of initiating and developing innovative approaches to challenges, partnerships, and goals that enhance opportunities and results for an institution
- notable experience working internationally; having lived outside the United States a plus
- ease and success in cultivating and soliciting gifts from varied sources and at the highest levels as well as identifying income-generating opportunities

- a proven ability to build and sustain relationships with diverse constituents, including elected officials, artists, trustees, donors, collectors, staff, and museum, and civic leadership
- respected among peers, well-connected and conversant in national and international arts circles; and,
- a demonstrated ability to serve as a visible, charismatic ambassador for an institution, internally and externally, with outstanding verbal and written communication skills to raise support on its behalf.

## PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate will be:

- first and foremost, a visionary, strategic, and inspirational leader with the empathy, compassion, talent, and wisdom to lead the institution and staff into a rapidly evolving future at a dynamic moment in the field and across society
- an accomplished advocate for the arts, and this institution, with a deep understanding of curatorial and educational programming; one who champions intellectual, artistic rigor
- a track record supporting and advancing diversity, equity, access, and inclusion
- an individual with high integrity who models excellence and accountability; one who listens exceedingly well, can bend when appropriate yet is notably firm when necessary
- diplomatic and effective in diverse circles, able to connect with a broad spectrum of people in a meaningful way; tenacious, astute, appropriately opportunistic, internationally conversant and connected
- results-oriented; adept at planning, prioritizing, and ensuring follow through
- committed to a future-focused, comprehensive, and adaptive approach to sustainability
- ideally, imaginative, unflappable, risk-tolerant, and good company.

## TO APPLY

Confidential inquiries, nominations/referrals, and résumés/curriculum vitae can be sent electronically and in confidence to:

Sarah James, Partner  
Ryan Leichenauer, Managing Associate  
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/solomon-r-guggenheim-museum-and-foundation/director>

*The Guggenheim is dedicating itself to creating paths that lead to a more inclusive and diverse institution. We encourage inquiries from applicants who will reflect the plurality of our culture and our global audience. The Guggenheim does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, creed, color, religion, marital status, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, veteran status, national origin or disability status.*

## APPENDIX

### CONTEXT

American industrialist Solomon R. Guggenheim began collecting important works by artists Kandinsky, Klee, and Chagall in 1927 and soon after started offering small exhibitions of newly-acquired works intermittently for the public in his private apartment at New York's Plaza Hotel. That collection became the basis for The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation (the "Foundation") in 1937, formed by a charter of the Regents of the University of the State of New York and endowed to operate one or more museums for the "promotion and encouragement of art and education in art and the enlightenment of the public."

The Foundation's Museum of Non-Objective Painting opened in 1939 and Hilla Rebay was named its first Director. The Foundation began to build its collection by acquiring the largely German Expressionist works of New York art dealer Karl Nierendorf in 1948. Reflecting a broader mandate, the Museum changed its institutional name in the early 1950s to The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum as a memorial to its founder, who died in 1949, and to signify a shift beyond solely non-objective modern and contemporary painting. Hilla Rebay resigned in 1952 and the role of Director was assumed by James Johnson Sweeney. October 1959 heralded the opening of the Museum's signature Frank Lloyd Wright building on Fifth Avenue's Museum Mile to considerable fanfare.

In 1961, Thomas M. Messer became the Museum's third Director, a position he held for a remarkable 27 years. The collection greatly expanded during his tenure. Most notable were the acquisition of the Thannhauser collection, with major works by Picasso, van Gogh, Gauguin, Manet, and Pissarro, among others, and of the more than 300 abstract and surrealist works collected by Peggy Guggenheim, which continue to be housed in her palazzo on the Grand Canal in Venice. With the addition of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Messer expanded the reach of the Foundation to outside of the United States and was named to be the Director of the Museum and Foundation.

Under Director Thomas Krens, who succeeded Messer in 1988, the Foundation transformed into a global institution. The eight-story Gwathmey Siegel annex and renovation was completed, and the collection continued to grow through the acquisition of the Panza di Biumo collection, a major gift from the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, which made the Museum the largest single holder of Mapplethorpe work, and a significant gift from the Bohlen Foundation, which significantly expanded the Museum's collection of film, video, and new media.

Agreements were signed in the early 1990s between the Basque Government and the Foundation to create a Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. These provided for the Basque Administration to fund the construction of the Museum and operations and the Foundation to provide curatorial and administrative expertise and access to the Foundation's core art collection and programming.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao opened in 1997 and is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this October. Guided by the Foundation, the Bilbao Museum continues to build an important collection of postwar painting and sculpture that complements the Foundation's holdings in New York and Venice. Programming includes public engagement initiatives and exhibitions that originate at the New York Guggenheim and at other internationally prominent museums and also are developed in-house. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao was credited with reviving the fortunes of the Basque region, creating what has been referred to as the "Bilbao Effect."

In 2007, the Foundation and officials representing the Emirate of Abu Dhabi signed agreements to collaborate to develop and operate a 450,000-square-foot Gehry-designed Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Museum on Saadiyat Island.

Richard Armstrong was appointed to be the Director of the Museum and Foundation in 2008. During his tenure, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum was officially inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as part of *The 20th-Century Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*, a group of eight major works spanning 50 years of Wright's career. The Foundation also broadened the geographical and cultural scope of its collection and programming, including through its Asian Art Initiative, the BMW Guggenheim Lab, the UBS MAP Global Art Initiative, a series of commissions made possible by the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation, and, most recently, the LG Guggenheim Art and Technology Initiative. The highest recorded attendance figure for a single exhibition in the Museum's history was recorded in 2018-2019 when more than 600,000 visitors attended *Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future*. A Poet-in-Residence program was inaugurated at the Museum in 2022.

Construction of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi began in 2021 and is expected to be completed in 2025. With Armstrong's guidance, the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi is developing a collection that will include art of all mediums produced around the world from the 1960s to the present day and will be a catalyst for scholarship in a variety of fields, chief among them the history of West Asian, North African, and South Asian art in the 20th and 21st centuries.

In 2022, the Foundation and the MCA Chicago received a joint gift of close to 100 major works of contemporary art from the D.Daskalopoulos Collection, including, among others, works by Abramović, Barney, Beuys, Bourgeois, Chan, Gober, Hammons, Hatoum, Lucas, McQueen, Mendieta, Mutu, Neto, Parker, Rist, Roth, and Smith.

### **The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation**

The Foundation shares the mission of the eponymous New York City-based Museum with the added emphasis of exploring and implementing avenues for international collaboration and institutional development and identifying synergies among the institutions involved in the constellation of Guggenheim museums. The Foundation currently owns and operates two museums: the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice. The Foundation also

provides programming and management support for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and is overseeing programming and collection development for the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Museum and partnering with the Government of Abu Dhabi to lay the groundwork for opening the museum. Since [1992], the Guggenheim has produced more than [250] major exhibitions. During the past five years, Guggenheim-organized exhibitions have been presented in more than [80] museums around the world. With pre-pandemic visitation levels of approximately 2.5 million annual visitors worldwide, the Guggenheim and its network of museums are some of the most visited cultural institutions in the world.

### **The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum**

An internationally-renowned art museum and one of the most significant architectural icons of the 20th century, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York is at once a vital cultural center, an educational institution, and the heart of the international constellation of museums.

The Museum maintains a premier collection of late 19<sup>th</sup>- to early 21<sup>st</sup>-century art. The permanent collection continues to grow and evolve through the addition of major collections and individual acquisitions and commissions. In addition to gifts and bequests, ongoing Museum acquisitions are supported by affinity groups including the Asian Art Circle, Collections Council, International Director's Council, Latin American Circle, Middle Eastern Circle, Photography Council, and Young Collectors Council.

Since its opening, the Museum has mounted scores of special exhibitions including artists' retrospectives, thematic surveys, and site-specific installations. The immediate and short-term exhibition plans at the Guggenheim Museum in New York include *Alex Katz: Gathering* and *Nick Cave: Forothermore*

The Guggenheim Museum has garnered a distinguished array of awards for its exhibitions, scholarly publications, and education programs from organizations such as the [AAM, AICA, the AIGA, the Art Directors Club, and the American Center for Design]. The Museum also engages audiences and serves as a dynamic 21<sup>st</sup>-century education and public engagement hub offering innovative public programs in the visual, performing, and literary arts. The Museum has an operating budget of \$60 million and a highly dedicated internationally recognized staff of 470 working in New York City.