

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

XX

ANNIVERSARY

ART CHANGES EVERYTHING

LONDON, APRIL 4, 2017

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO 20TH ANNIVERSARY:  
ART CHANGES EVERYTHING**

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## I - 20 YEARS OF FULFILLED EXPECTATIONS

This year, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao celebrates its 20th Anniversary, two decades after it first opened its doors to the public on October 19, 1997. This event was the fulfillment of one part of an ambitious plan for urban and economic regeneration that had been conceived six years earlier, thanks to the vision of the Basque Administrations that saw in the expansion plans of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation the best means of articulating their project.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has been, from its inception, an exceptional project for its singularity, international scope, and artistic and educational ambition.

### **A Unique Project**

There are many reasons why the Museum is indeed a unique project. First, it is one of the members of an international constellation of museums under the prestigious Guggenheim brand. Within the Constellation, members can share resources and projects, strengthen relationships, and collaborate in the organization and presentation of large exhibitions with the most world's most important museums, such as the Royal Academy of Arts, the Tate Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Centre Pompidou, the Réunion des Musées Nationaux-Grand Palais, the Beyeler Foundation, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art or the Whitney Museum of American Art, as well as, of course, the Guggenheim museums in New York and Venice.

Second, the Museum acts as a catalyst for art and culture in the city by integrating art into everyday life. One of the effects of this has been the creation of new cultural institutions such Azkuna Zentroa, BilbaoArte, and the Bilbao Maritime Museum, as well as the Tabakalera Contemporary Art Center in Donostia-San Sebastian and the Artium Museum in Vitoria-Gasteiz. This impulse has also helped strengthen the institutions that already existed in Bilbao, such as the Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Artistic Reproductions, and Sala Rekalde. All together, the Museum and these institutions have energized the cultural and museum climate in Bilbao for its citizens, artists, and visitors.

## **Artistic Ambition: The Collection**

One of the most important accomplishments the Museum has pursued from the beginning is to create its own collection with a unique identity, which would complement the collections of the Guggenheim Foundation. The Bilbao holdings currently stand at 130 works by 74 artists from the second half of the twentieth century up to the present day.

The strengths of the Museum Collection are its commitment to the most innovative artistic expressions, its open and inclusive approach free of any restrictions based on technique, medium, or style, and its special attention to the dialogue between European and American art.

The Collection has been brought together along four main guidelines or categories. The first of these is unique works and masterpieces that constitute points of reference for other artists and are considered key to the development of the history of art. They include *Maman* (1999) by Louise Bourgeois, *Untitled* (1951–52) by Mark Rothko, *Lightning with Stag in its Glare* (1958–85) by Joseph Beuys, or *Villa Borghese* (1960) by Willem de Kooning.

The second principle includes in-depth views of the artists of our time and it brings together a significant number of works by major contemporary artists such as Anselm Kiefer, Jorge Oteiza, or Eduardo Chillida.

Thirdly, the Museum's Collection is committed to including important pieces by Basque and Spanish artists, including well-established figures such as Antonio Saura, Pablo Palazuelo, or Cristina Iglesias, as well as a broad representation of emerging Basque artists.

Lastly, the Collection includes site-specific works made for the Museum's singular spaces, such as Richard Serra's *The Matter of Time* (2004), Jenny Holzer's *Installation for Bilbao* (1997) or Daniel Buren's *Arcos Rojos*, the latter conceived specifically for the Salve Bridge that Frank Gehry integrated into the building's architectural design.

## **Dynamic and Quality Programming**

Twenty years after its inauguration, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao's ability to consistently attract year upon year a number of visitors equivalent to three times the population of Bilbao is the result of the ambition and dynamism of its arts program. Over these last two decades, the Museum has seen its spaces completely transformed in order to offer visitors unique, memorable experiences thanks to exhibitions and international artists, as part of a high quality programming, free of geographical limitations, in search of a distinct identity in the presentation of artworks and avoiding repetition.

The Museum's enterprising spirit is reflected in the 163 exhibitions it has offered between 1997 and today—93 temporary exhibitions and 70 presentations from the Permanent Collections—, which translates into a new exhibition approximately every six weeks. Variety is essential to attracting diverse audiences, and to that end, the Museum has offered major thematic exhibitions such as *China: 5,000 Years*, and equally important monographic exhibitions of such renowned artists as Jean-Michel Basquiat, David Hockney, Georges Braque, Andy Warhol, or Jeff Koons, as well as shows that complement these by taking an in-depth look at fundamental aspects of the history of art, as for example the presentations *Moving Pictures*, *Changing Perceptions: the Panza Collection at the Guggenheim Museum*, or *The Luminous Interval*. The reward for this sustained effort has been the large number of visitors that have come to see the Museum exhibitions, with one third of them seen by more than 500,000 visitors.

## **The Challenge to Contribute to Education in the Arts**

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao's educational orientation is another one of its fundamental values from its inception, and over the years, its aspiration to become a means of bringing audiences closer to modern and contemporary art has only strengthened.

In these twenty years, more than nine million people have participated in the educational programs the Museum organizes to help students, teachers, families, and the public at large understand and enjoy the exhibitions and the architecture of the building.

## **Global Audience, Local Roots**

From the start, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao aspired to become a benchmark among international museums, and over its twenty-year history, through its exhibitions it has addressed a public that knows no geographical borders. Of the million visitors it welcomes every year (1,169,404 in 2016) two thirds are foreigners and nine out of ten come from outside the Basque Country. These numbers underscore the genuine appeal of the art program to a broad and diverse audience. The largest percentage of foreign visitors to the Museum come from France (18%), followed by Great Britain (7%), Germany (6%), the United States (6%), and Italy (4%).

While most visitors are from foreign countries, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao also enjoys great appeal at home and is among the museums most visited by the local public. In addition, individual membership stands at over 16,000 Friends, most of whom are local, placing it as one of the highest in Europe. With a renewal rate at around 85%, Guggenheim Bilbao Members are highly involved and committed to the activities of the Museum.

In addition to the support of individual members, the Museum's Corporate Members Program currently has 120 businesses and corporations at different membership levels, which together constitute an essential financial support. Overall, through revenues from visitors, corporate support, and individual membership the Museum is able to generate around 70% of its financing, a figure that not only ensures the sustainability of the institution, but also makes it a reference at the European level for its management model.

## **A Symbol of Transformation**

The enormous, and many say, extraordinary contribution of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao to the local economic, cultural, urban, and architectural development has become known internationally as the "Bilbao effect" or the "Guggenheim effect." The Museum has played a tremendous role in its environs in generating wealth, and in propelling the shift from industrial city to service hub, to the extent that it now stands as a model for other cities around the world.

The success of the urban regeneration led by the Museum owes much to the fact that it had always been part of a much larger strategy and action plan. As such, the iconic building designed by Frank Gehry paved the way to important projects in the city by some of the most renowned international architects, including Norman Foster, Arata Isozaki, Rafael Moneo, Cesar Pelli, and Santiago Calatrava, creating a new Bilbao—a twenty-first-century Bilbao which, without losing its essence, has recovered for public enjoyment an extensive and formerly rundown area around the river that is now the main axis of the city and a wonderful attraction for tourists and locals alike. This urban restyling, and the “new reality” of having secured its place on the international map and every day welcoming thousands of visitors from around the globe, has led its personality to evolve into a contemporary, cosmopolitan city and has bolstered the self-esteem and confidence of its people.

## **Economic Revitalization**

The reshaping of a city once engulfed in unemployment and a weak economy due to the industrial crisis of the 1980s into a services center has contributed greatly to the diversification of its economic structure and generated new, value-added business opportunities, with an emphasis on the creative industries.

In quantitative terms, the Museum’s impact on the economy of the Basque Country in 2016 generated a total demand of 485.3 million euros (equal to six times the initial investment in the Museum), 424.6 million euros of GNP, additional tax income of 65.8 million (or seven times the amount of government funds the Museum receives annually), and contributed to maintain 9,086 jobs. These figures reveal the fundamental influence the Museum has on the local and regional economy.

Beyond the high attendance numbers and economic impact, the Museum’s fascination and appeal also give it enormous and sustained international attention. Twenty years after its inauguration, the Museum maintains a media presence that has been calculated annually at close to 30 million euros. Every year, over 20,000 news items on the Museum

and its arts programs appear in newspapers and on the radio, television, and internet, reaching a potential audience of 4 billion people around the world—a stage that undoubtedly has the power to attract new visitors.

## II - REINVENTION AS A GUARANTEE FOR THE FUTURE

The Museum looks forward to the next twenty years with optimism and the confidence that it will maintain these strong results in the future, by building on the solid base that it currently enjoys. Located in a city that has been transformed and a country with a renovated and much more balanced economy than twenty years ago, the Guggenheim Bilbao also benefits from the maturity and stability it has won through the successful experience of these last two decades. Nevertheless, an optimistic view to the future does not relieve the Museum of an awareness of the challenges of the current context.

As society evolves, people are broadening their definition of culture and how they view the role played by museums, which are increasingly expected to take on a larger role and to become more inclusive, not only in terms of visitors, but also towards society at large.

Museums are becoming social spaces where ideas are generated, and where knowledge is shared not only between professionals and the public, but also within the public itself. With this very much in mind, the Museum is preparing for the challenges it will face in the next twenty years.

### **A New Direction for Art**

After two decades of history, the Museum decided to renovate its approach to the art program with a new focus that will allow it to present exhibitions in a more structured and measured manner. For this purpose, the galleries' characteristics and suitability for different types of displays were analyzed in order to offer visitors the best experience possible. The resulting concept is a chronological display that winds its way down the floors of the building.

The Museum's third floor presents The Foundations of Contemporary Art, including a permanent installation of the most important pieces from the Bilbao Collection, which after twenty years includes significant examples of contemporary art that the public has expressed a desire to see; and temporary exhibitions of a more traditional nature, such as *Paris, fin de siècle: Signac, Redon, Toulouse-Lautrec and Their Contemporaries*, which will open in May and will focus on the art scene in Paris through the most important figures of the avant-garde in France at the end of the nineteenth century.

The second floor of the Museum is devoted for important temporary exhibitions in terms of curatorial relevance and international scope, as for example the current *Abstract Expressionism*, organized by the Royal Academy of Arts in collaboration with the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. This show runs through June 4 and features works by Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, David Smith, or Clyfford Still, among others, from public and private collections around the world. The following exhibition to be presented in the galleries of the second floor will be an ambitious retrospective devoted to Bill Viola, one of today's most important video artists, which will open on June 30.

Lastly, the Museum's first floor presents Views of Contemporary Art. These include site-specific works such as Richard Serra's *The Matter of Time* and Jenny Holzer's *Installation for Bilbao*; the works shown in the Film & Video gallery, a space specifically designed for the presentation of video art and video installations, where Pierre Huyghe's 2014 *(Untitled) Human Mask* has just premiered, to be followed in July by *The Guests* by Ken Jacobs; and the exhibitions in gallery 105 which focus on contemporary creation and this year will feature the exhibitions *Georg Baselitz. The Heroes*, starting in July, and *David Hockney. Portraits*, scheduled to open in November.

In short, this is a new, carefully-conceived presentation of quality programming to attract a steadily increasing number of visitors (thanks to exhibitions devoted to Andy Warhol, Louise Bourgeois, and Francis Bacon, in 2016 the Museum received its largest number of visitors since its inaugural year) and strengthen the Museum's position and identity.

## **Digital Transformation**

In view of the technological revolution the world is currently undergoing, with new work and leisure habits, and immediate, general and practically unlimited access to information through mobile devices, museum institutions are bound to follow this trend, especially when one considers that Millennials, the generation born into highly relational digital media, are the public of the future.

This transformation affects museums, in that they are transitioning from a locus of contemplation to hybrid spaces where digital technology is brought into the visitors' experience and encourages their participation. With this in mind, and considering that it generates a vast amount of content for different formats, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is in the midst of a digital transformation that seeks not only to generate knowledge, but also to share it. With the comprehension that beyond the physical experience there is an interesting space to create the virtual experience, the Museum is finalizing the launch of a Community where it hopes to share content and conversation beyond the physical walls of the building. The project Community will emerge in May with its very own graphic identity as a new way of interrelating with a different profile of users, tailoring communication to their needs and interests, and hoping that this interest will also lead to a visit in person to the Museum.

## **Imagining the Future**

In a context of constant change and increasing competition, the Museum can never stop thinking about new formulas for new publics, and it does so ambitiously. With the maturity it has reached in these twenty years, the Museum now feels the need to "imagine" itself in the future so that it can continue to enjoy a position of leadership and innovation among museum institutions.

To that end, the Museum invited Basque society and institutions to think about the need for a non-contiguous expansion project, a new venue away from its current location that would mean far more than additional exhibition space: it would be a different, complementary experience to that of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

Such expansion project, which as yet is not a project but a desire, could once again be an example of excellence and innovation, and a model for the new museums of the twenty-first century: a new paradigm, just as the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has been.

This potential expansion would not be merely physical, but conceptual as well: a new way to understand the role of a museum through its design and relationship to the landscape and environment; a project that would give birth to new museum experiences; a platform for inspiration, dialogue, and action; a changing space that builds and transforms itself constantly at different paces; an intervention in the landscape that is respectful of its surroundings and sustainable in its construction and operation.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao sees the future in the same way it has operated throughout the past twenty years: reinventing itself every day and finding creative ways to face the challenges that lie ahead.

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**All information about the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is available at [www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus](http://www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus) (press room)**

## **ANNEX**

### **THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO IN FIGURES**

(Please check the USB for the rest of Annexes)

## THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO IN FIGURES

### Visitors

19,244,787 visitors to date:

2,508,533 from the Basque Country (13.03%)

4,936,165 from the rest of Spain (25.65%)

11,800,089 foreign (61.32%):

3,407,024 French (17.70%)

1,448,742 UK (7.53%)

1,195,680 USA (6.21%)

### Exhibitions

93 temporary exhibitions scheduled until March 2017

70 presentations from the Permanent Collection

| Most successful exhibitions (visitors/day)                  | Year | Vis./day | Total vis. |
|---|------|----------|------------|
| <i>China: 5,000 Years</i>                                   | 1998 | 5,790    | 538,479    |
| <i>Jeff Koons: A Retrospective</i>                          | 2015 | 4,702    | 493,730    |
| <i>Jean Michel Basquiat</i>                                 | 2015 | 4,682    | 538,475    |
| <i>Louise Bourgeois. Structures of Existence: The Cells</i> | 2016 | 4,301    | 679,532    |
| <i>David Hockney: A Bigger Picture</i>                      | 2012 | 4,212    | 543,398    |
| <i>Georges Braque</i>                                       | 2014 | 4,097    | 397,364    |
| <i>Andy Warhol. Shadows</i>                                 | 2016 | 4,077    | 820,618    |
| <i>Russia!</i>  | 2006 | 4,008    | 621,188    |
| <i>Cy Twombly</i>   | 2008 | 3,989    | 223,391    |
| <i>Eduardo Chillida: 1948–1998</i>                          | 1999 | 3,979    | 501,321    |
| <i>Amazons of the Avant-Garde</i>                           | 2000 | 3,879    | 283,181    |
| <i>Yoko Ono: Retrospective</i>                              | 2014 | 3,812    | 613,754    |

25 temporary exhibitions and 32 presentations from the Permanent Collection had over half million visitors.

## **Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Collection**

130 works

74 artists

Valued at 729 million € (almost 7 times the cost of the initial investment of 110 million €)

## **Economic Impact (October 1997–end of 2016)**

4,669,844,135 euros in direct expenditure

4,266,146,116 euros contributed to GDP

Maintaining an annual average of 5,030 jobs

659,913,460 euros of additional revenue for the Basque Treasuries

## **Educational Activities**

In the past 20 years more than 9 million participants have taken part in different educational activities, in different ways.

554,396 students have visited the Museum in 22,176 school groups

15,891 educators have participated in in-person training programs

267,276 educators have used the Museum's online resources

74,394 participants in family activities

1,619,722 participants in guided tours in 88,986 groups

27,108 participants in social programs

## **Groups that Support the Museum**

16,528 Individual Members

120 Corporate Members

9,318 Erdu from 2013 to 2017