

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

PRESS RELEASE

Dr. Mariët Westermann appointed Director and CEO of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation

Selection concludes wide international search with the first woman in this role

(NEW YORK, NY □ Monday, November 20, 2023) The Board of Trustees announces Dr. Mariët Westermann has been appointed as Director and CEO of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, overseeing the Foundation and its flagship institution in New York, and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, and providing collaborative leadership working with the directors of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, and the future Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. Dr. Westermann, currently Vice Chancellor of NYU Abu Dhabi, joins the Guggenheim with a proven track record of successfully leading world-renowned organizations in higher education and philanthropy, dedicated to the arts and humanities. She brings deep knowledge of art history, museums, and research combined with expertise in institutional management, philanthropy, and international relations.

Dr. Westermann has led NYU Abu Dhabi, a degree-granting liberal arts and research campus of NYU, as Vice Chancellor, Chief Executive, and Professor of Arts and Humanities since 2019. She had been a founder of the institution as its Provost from 2007 to 2010. At NYU Abu Dhabi she has overseen all academic, administrative, financial, and operational affairs. An art historian by training, she is widely regarded as an innovative and empathetic leader who inspires excellence, manages complexity, and brings a profound understanding of how art, culture, and the humanities play a critical role in our globally interconnected but often polarized world.

Under Dr. Westermann's leadership, NYU Abu Dhabi reached its full undergraduate scale, recruited dozens of new faculty including Wole Soyinka, the university's first Nobel Laureate, and developed new programs including an MFA in visual art and media and an MBA to be offered with NYU's Stern School of Business. She promoted initiatives that have bolstered philanthropy and made NYU Abu Dhabi an anchor institution for innovation, culture, intellectual exchange, and community engagement in the UAE and the broader MENA region. She charged the community to develop NYU Abu Dhabi's first Climate Action Plan, a concrete and realistic roadmap to carbon neutrality by 2050.

Reporting to the Foundation's Board of Trustees, as Director and CEO of the Guggenheim, Dr. Westermann will set the strategic direction and lead the constellation towards the realization of its vision, offer, and purpose. She will oversee and direct the Foundation and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the flagship institution of the Foundation, and will be the Foundation's head steward of its seminal collections and its constellation of museums in Europe and Abu Dhabi. Dr. Westermann will officially join the Guggenheim on June 1, 2024.

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J. Tomilson Hill, Chair of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation Board of Trustees, remarks, “We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Westermann to the Guggenheim. We cast a very wide net and interviewed extensively to identify the right person for the Guggenheim at this time. For the past six months we have utilized a systemic search process, using a values-based approach, where we identified those qualities necessary in our new director for them to succeed. We evaluated each candidate based on those attributes. Dr. Westermann brings a unique set of qualities and experiences to this critical role—a wide ranging world view, experience in navigating multiple stakeholders and critical issues across geographies, all rooted in a deeply held belief in scholarship, excellence, and the power of arts and culture to inspire and connect. We are committed to broadening the scope of the collection and expanding our global initiative, as we simultaneously engage a diverse audience, and care for the culture and development of the staff. I’ve known Dr. Westermann for over twenty-five years and very much look forward to working with her as we implement our strategic plan.”

Wendy Fisher, President of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation Board of Trustees, states, “It is my great pleasure to warmly welcome Dr. Westermann as the new Director and CEO of the Guggenheim. I am confident Dr. Westermann, will ably uphold the institution’s founding vision while leading our constellation of museums to a more sustainable future, redefining the Guggenheim’s role in public discourse, and opening our doors – whether physical or virtual – to an ever-broader audience. From Frank Lloyd Wright’s iconic building on Fifth Avenue, the Guggenheim has always sought to provoke new ways of thinking about and interacting with art, and Dr. Westermann’s impressive background makes her uniquely qualified to do just that. She brings to the table myriad accomplishments in art historical scholarship, the respect of her peers, experience serving as a leader of an international organization, and a fundamental belief in transformative power of art. I look forward to working closely with her. I know we are in capable hands as we continue to think about what it means to be a truly global institution, the responsibility that comes along with that, and how we operationalize those values.”

Dr. Mariët Westermann, remarks, “It is a great honor to be joining the Guggenheim, a unique institution with a beautiful mission dedicated to modern and contemporary art in four distinctive museums on three continents. Each of the museums exists to create opportunities for anyone to engage with the transformative and connective power of art and artists, from New York to Bilbao to Venice to Abu Dhabi. I have been blessed with wonderful experiences as an art historian, global educator, curator, philanthropist, and academic leader. The kind of complexity and high aspiration that have been so motivating to me in these prior roles has prepared me to help the Guggenheim realize its full potential as a constellation of museums united in one mission and grounded fully in their local environments and communities.”

Previously, Dr. Westermann served as Executive Vice President at the Mellon Foundation and as a faculty member and Director at NYU/Institute of Fine Arts, as Associate Director of Research and Academic Programs at the Clark Art Institute and as a faculty member at Rutgers University. She is a graduate, magna cum laude, of Williams College and holds masters and PhD degrees in the History of Art from NYU’s Institute of Fine Arts. Westermann has received fellowships, honors, and grants from the National Endowment for the

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Humanities, American Philosophical Society, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, Clark Art Institute, College Art Association, and Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Dr. Westermann was the lead curator and catalogue author of the exhibition *Art and Home: Dutch Interiors in the Age of Rembrandt*, shown at the Denver Art Museum and The Newark Museum (1997-2001). She served as curatorial consultant, researcher, and essayist for the National Gallery's presentation of *Jan Steen: Painter and Storyteller* (1994-1996), in partnership with the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

A historian of art of the Netherlands, Dr. Westermann has authored numerous books, articles, and exhibition essays on Dutch art and artists, museums, and the state and future of higher education. On behalf of the Mellon Foundation, Dr. Westermann commissioned and published (with Roger Schonfeld and Liam Sweeney) two critical research studies on staff diversity in the museum sector.

In 2020, Dr. Westermann co-convened *Reframing Museums*, a major international conference on the future of museums, organized with NYU Abu Dhabi and Louvre Abu Dhabi. In 2010, on behalf of the NYU Abu Dhabi Institute, she co-hosted *Art Museums Here and Now*, a conference with Philippe de Montebello on what it means to build art museums in countries that have not had them or reinvent traditional art museums to stay connected to their changing societies.

She serves on the boards of ALIPH - The International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas, the Educational Testing Service, and the Rijksmuseum, and chairs the Scholar Rescue Fund of the Institute of International Education. In Abu Dhabi she is a board member of AmCham Abu Dhabi and the US-UAE Business Council.

About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was established in 1937 and is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of modern and contemporary art through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The international constellation of museums includes the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao; and the future Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. An architectural icon and "temple of spirit" where radical art and architecture meet, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum is now among a group of eight Frank Lloyd Wright structures in the United States recently designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. To learn more about the museum and the Guggenheim's activities around the world, visit guggenheim.org.