

•
Director, Guggenheim Foundation

Thomas Krens

Speaker
Press Kit



Royce Carlton, Inc.

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Thomas Krens

A museum as brand? An art show devoted to motorcycles? These are just a few of the groundbreaking ideas of Thomas Krens, the man who Forbes says is “rewriting the rules of how museums are run.”

With his dynamic leadership and vision, Krens has taken the Guggenheim global, creating the first truly multinational arts institution. As Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, he oversees five Guggenheim museums: in New York City, Venice, Berlin, Las Vegas and Bilbao. The Guggenheim Bilbao, designed by Frank Gehry, is regarded as one of the great architectural accomplishments of the 20th century.

“Few speakers have brought such experience, enthusiasm and personal insight to our community.”

Savannah College of Art and Design

Extending the global reach of the Guggenheim further, Krens forged a three-way partnership with the venerable State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg and Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, allowing for the exchange of exhibitions and staff.

Krens has devised unique ways to fund and support his projects, from joint ventures with corporations and foreign governments to conceiving accessible shows and merchandise associated with major exhibits. He has dramatically elevated the visibility of the Guggenheim and increased attendance from 450,000 in 1990 to almost three million currently. As *Newsweek* wrote, his “aggres-

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Syracuse University

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The acclaimed “Art of the Motorcycle” exhibit (a Krens brainchild) at New York City’s Guggenheim was the most popular exhibition in the museum’s 61-year history and was equally sensational at the Bilbao Guggenheim, where motorcycle-riding icon Dennis Hopper took part in the opening.

Krens’ “China: 5,000 Years” may have been the greatest exhibition of Chinese art ever assembled. The extraordinary alliance Krens formed with the government of China was essential to bringing national treasures of such rarity to the U.S.

From his celebrated exhibitions of such classic 20th Century artists as Rauschenberg and Beckmann to his precedent-shattering exhibit, “The Aztec Empire,” Krens has generated controversy and praise as a daring innovator in cultural management.

Mr. Krens is a member of the Association of Art Museum Directors, the Réunion des Musées, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Société Kandinsky of Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. He has received Honorary Doctorates from Williams College, the State University of New York at Albany, and Yale University. In 2000 he was awarded the Special Prize for Architectural Patronage at the Venice Architecture Biennale. 

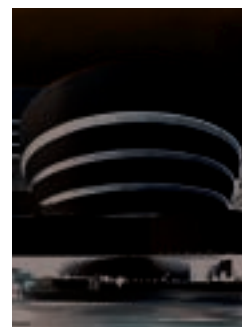
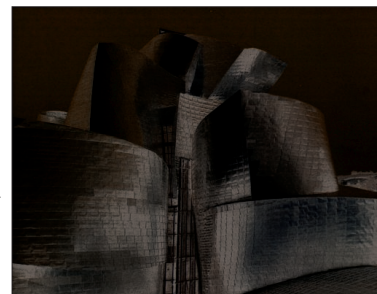
SUGGESTED TOPICS

The Art Museum in the 21st Century

Developing the Guggenheim into a Global Brand

The Museum as Cultural Center: A Parable of Our Time

The Art of Business & the Business of Art



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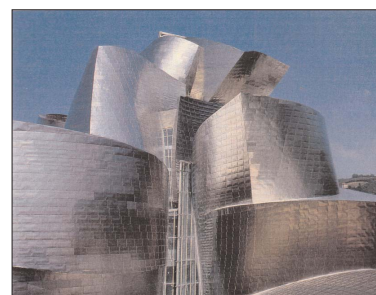
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Biography

**Director,
Guggenheim Foundation**

Thomas Krens

Thomas Krens is Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, which oversees and operates the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, Italy, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Spain, the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin in Germany, and the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum in Las Vegas. He has held this position since July 1988.

Among Mr. Krens' initial major accomplishments since joining the Guggenheim was the first phase of the restoration and expansion of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, which was completed in 1992. The principal components of the \$80 million project were the restoration of the interior of the landmark Frank Lloyd Wright building, the construction of a ten story tower gallery and office building designed by Gwathmy Siegel Associates, and the addition of a new storage and technical services facility on New York City's West Side. In 2004, the Guggenheim successfully completed a campaign to raise \$25 million for the second phase of the capital

project, to restore the exterior facade of the Wright building, upgrade the entire security and climate control systems, and provide public access to the roof terrace of the main building as Wright had originally intended.

Under Mr. Krens' leadership over the past 15 years, the Guggenheim Foundation has built an unprecedented international network of cultural facilities and alliances with major museums. Beginning in 1990, the Guggenheim Foundation has developed a series of buildings contiguous to the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, home of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, more than doubling the size of the Venice Museum. In 1991, Mr. Krens negotiated the unique partnership between the Basque Regional Government and the Guggenheim Foundation that produced the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, designed by Frank O. Gehry. The Guggenheim Bilbao opened to wide public acclaim in October 1997 and is now recognized by many critics and architectural historians as one of the greatest buildings of the 20th century.

In November 1997, the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin — a museum space and exhibition facility designed by American architect Richard Gluckman and located in the former East Berlin — was opened as the result of a joint venture between the Guggenheim Foundation and Deutsche Bank A.G. It has since presented more than 30 highly acclaimed exhibitions and single artist commissions to the Berlin public. In October 2001, the Guggenheim opened another small, but architecturally important museum, the Guggenheim-Hermitage Museum Las Vegas, designed by Rem Koolhaas.

As a result of the extraordinary success of the Guggenheim Bilbao and the general international expansion concept, the Guggenheim Foundation has been approached by more than 120 cities to develop proposals and feasibility studies for new museums. At present, the current Guggenheim projects include: Taiwan, a partnership with the City of Taichung and the Central Government to build a 290,000 s.f. museum designed by 2004 Pritzker Prize winner Zaha Hadid; Hong Kong, a partnership with Cheung Kong Holdings and Sun Hung Kai to develop a 590,000 s.f. museum designed by Norman Foster; Guadalajara, Mexico, a collaboration with the City of Guadalajara, the State of Jalisco, and the Central Government for a major new museum; Rio de Janeiro for a 280,000 s.f. Guggenheim Museum designed by Jean Nouvel; and St Peterburg, Russia with the Hermitage Museum, for conversion of the 600,000 s.f. General Staff Building of former Czarist War Admiralty as an expansion of the Hermitage.



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Audience Comments

Thomas Krens

I just wanted to let you know how spectacularly last evening went with Thomas Krens. He is really great. The auditorium holds 400. Well, it was so full that students were sitting in the aisles. He ended the formal presentation at 9 pm and then offered to stay and talk informally to any students who wanted. About 30 stayed and Krens simply sat on the edge of the stage and "held court" with the students for about 2 hours. I wish you could have seen the look on those kids' faces. They were in awe of the man. It is what these lectures are all about.

Syracuse University

I don't want to let another day pass without expressing our heartfelt appreciation and thanks for your inspiring visit to Fairfield University last Sunday. I have heard nothing but rave reviews about your insights and visionary approaches for advancing world culture. I, too, was enlightened and humbled by your remarks.

Fairfield University

...absolutely wonderful! Good attendance at all events; audiences responded well; speeches entertaining and informative -- no one fell asleep...

Carleton College

Two of my freshmen students debated in my Humanities class, something Thomas Krens had said -- 18 year olds to be so passionate -- can you believe it?

Ball State University

A major success! The audience loved him.

Kent State University

Few speakers have brought such experience, enthusiasm and personal insight to our students and the community as Thomas Krens.

Savannah College of Art and Design

04.01.03