

# Eli Broad breaks new ground at LACMA

Construction starts next month on the collector's \$50 million Modern art gallery at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

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## Los Angeles

In 2004, collector Eli Broad, 72, pledged \$50 million to build a three-storey showcase of contemporary art on the campus of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). The building, designed by architect Renzo Piano, will be named the Broad Contemporary Art Museum or BCAM. Construction starts next month.

Mr Broad has promised to lend a rotating selection of works of art from his private collection to the new gallery, and has pledged \$10 million for the museum to purchase contemporary art with advice from him and his personal curator. But his unwillingness to disclose whether or not he will eventually donate any or all of his substantial collection to LACMA raises questions about the long term future of the project.

In the past, LACMA has fumbled relationships with powerful collectors: Norton Simon and Armand Hammer left to build their own museums, and Sir Arthur Gilbert withdrew his collection and sent it to Somerset House in London. This time the museum is bending over backwards to play by the patron's rules, and some critics have wondered whether LACMA has relinquished too much control to a private benefactor.

The Art Newspaper: What is your vision for BCAM?

Eli Broad: The new LACMA includes a new entrance pavilion, underground parking, a new Wilshire Boulevard facade, new sculpture garden and a new pedestrian mall from one end of the campus to the other, plus BCAM—all designed by Renzo Piano. BCAM will have 60,000 square-feet of gallery space—more than the Whitney or the Guggenheim. With BCAM, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA), and the Hammer we could really make Los Angeles the contemporary arts capital of the world. If you look at all the new artists in the Whitney Biennial, a very high percentage are from southern California. We've got four great art schools here—UCLA, USC, CalArts and Art Center College. And we've got people in various industries, including the entertainment industry, that are becoming bigger collectors of contemporary art.

TAN: Is the budget for the building still \$50 million, and are you covering all of it?

It's still \$50 million. It may go modestly over, but we've agreed to give \$50 million. The museum is going to pay for the operation of the building and its maintenance. They get all the revenue from attendance, membership, admission, and store sales.

TAN: And the building will belong to LACMA?

EB: It will belong to LACMA. It will not belong to the County of Los Angeles like the main campus. It will belong to Museum Associates [the private non-profit organisation that runs the museum].

TAN: How do you see BCAM altering the current mix in Los Angeles, and what is its relationship to MoCA and the Hammer?

EB: Both MoCA and the Hammer have great exhibitions, but the Hammer doesn't have a contemporary collection and MoCA does not exhibit a large part of theirs. I support MoCA—I gave them \$250,000 for their Basquiat show, and a large amount for Warhol. They're clearly part of what I'd call the contemporary fabric of the city. But they've got the Panza Collection and some other good collections, and I wish they'd spend more time showing

them. So we need a place that's going to show contemporary work, in a chronological or thematic manner, of the highest quality.

TAN: So BCAM will offer Los Angeles a chronicle of contemporary art like MoMA in New York and the Walker in Minneapolis?

EB: Correct. And having BCAM as part of a major encyclopedic museum that can show contemporary art and compare it with art of other periods and other types of art makes for a very interesting situation. And we'll also have temporary exhibition space.

TAN: What will the BCAM installation be like?

EB: For the opening exhibition the entire building will show the permanent collection, including the things that we and others are going to loan or give. So it's going to be drawn from the LACMA collection, other collectors, and we've agreed to loan up to 200 works. I think it's going to be chronological and thematic, beginning on the top floor and moving down.

TAN: What kind of temporary exhibitions would you like to see there?

EB: Clearly we want to originate shows in Los Angeles and bring important exhibitions of contemporary art to the city. But there is no firm exhibition programme other than that right now.

TAN: Some people are questioning the degree of independence BCAM will have. Will you have undue influence as the patron responsible for its creation?

EB: It's going to be run by LACMA. I'm on the search committee for the general director. Nancy Riordan, the new chair of the board, is also chairing a search committee of about eight or nine trustees. But we also expect to have a deputy director who will be responsible for Contemporary art, Photography, Film and New Media who would also be the acting director of BCAM. The general director will be involved in working with me and others in selecting the deputy director and director of BCAM.

TAN: How is BCAM going to be governed? Is there some degree of independence?

EB: There are two models. One is to have it as just another department as at the Metropolitan, which really doesn't work. The other end of the spectrum is Tate Modern, whose director reports to Nick Serota, the general director of the Tate. So that's being sorted out. It may be closer to the Tate Modern model than the Metropolitan model.

TAN: Is it going to have a separate board of trustees?

EB: No. It may have an advisory board of those LACMA trustees who are especially interested in contemporary art, such as Bill Bell, Peter Norton, Jane Nathanson, myself and several others.

TAN: Is there a separate advisory board or governing board managing the \$10 million acquisition fund you created for BCAM?

EB: Yes, there is. I appoint during my lifetime three of the members, and LACMA appoints two. And after that it's reversed.

TAN: Who is selecting the 200 works you are putting on loan?

EB: It's a joint decision. We are not curating the show, but we are involved in it. The selection of works will probably change—remember, between the personal collection and the Broad Art Foundation there are about 1,200 works of art.

TAN: Are you going to donate your collection to BCAM, and, if so, under what circumstances?

EB: Well, we are going to continue to collect and we are not going to make any decisions on where the collections are going to end up. Obviously, I wouldn't be giving \$50 million to LACMA if I didn't think well of it. I'm also a regent of the Smithsonian Institution. There is no single place that could accommodate 1,200 works of art in any event. We don't want to have art in storage. We want to share it with the broad public. And I think you will find Los Angeles is going to be viewed as one of the four major cultural capitals of the world, together with New York, London and Paris.

Eli Broad's personal and Foundation Collections complement LACMA's holdings of contemporary art. LACMA has strengths in Abstract

Expressionism of the 1950s, California art of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as international art of the 1990s. The Broad Collections are strong in the 1960s and 1970s, including Pop art, as well as the 1980s. LACMA curators envisage the combined collections laid out in multi-artist galleries punctuated by monographic rooms devoted to artists such as Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelly, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Cindy Sherman, Jeff Koons (left, Balloon dog, 1996), Ed Kienholz, John McLaughlin, Ed Ruscha, and John Baldessari

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