

Hollywood Reporter Online: 'Eli Broad's Museum Opens: A Billionaire's Art Stash is Set to Make a Splash in Downtown L.A.', by George Epaminondas, September 16th 2015

Eli Broad's Museum Opens: A Billionaire's Art Stash is Set to Make a Splash in Downtown L.A.



Broad chief curator Heyler and artist Israel were photographed Aug. 26 in The Broad's «vault,» a repository that can be glimpsed but not entered by the public.

Koury Angelo

The serial patron has remade culture (and courted controversy) in Los Angeles as his namesake museum, which opens Sept. 20, draws from one of the world's largest private contemporary art collections, worth \$2.2 billion.

Eli Broad, the billionaire financier, art collector and philanthropist, visited the Warner Bros. backlot in Burbank some months ago. He wasn't appearing on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* or sitting down with CEO Kevin Tsujihara. Instead, Broad, 82, was staking out blue-chip art in an improbable milieu — meeting with Alex Israel, an acclaimed 33-year-old local artist who collaborates with the studio's scenic painting team on his playful, Hollywood-themed canvases. Broad, who first admired Israel's riffs on celebrity culture at Art Basel in Switzerland and Miami Beach, was eager to view them in situ. «I was fascinated that he worked on the lot,» says Broad, who acquired five pieces for mid- to high-six-figures. «My wife, Edythe, and I collect contemporary art because it's a social commentary on the world, and Alex's work reflects today's ego-driven society.»

It takes a robust ego, deep pockets and singular vision to hatch your own namesake museum, but The Broad, which opens Sept. 20 on Grand Avenue in downtown Los Angeles, is the latest endeavor from the entrepreneur, whose estimated net worth of \$7.4 billion stems from two Fortune 500 companies, one in housing construction and the other in retirement insurance. The couple's private contemporary art collection, the Broad Art Foundation, is among the largest in the world, valued at more than \$2.2 billion. Situated across from the Museum of Contemporary Art and adjacent to the Walt Disney Concert Hall, The Broad is the West Coast's newest cultural landmark and its most unusual. With 120,000 interior square feet — 50,000 of that for art viewing — it's a public museum based on a private collection amassed over the past five decades. Up until recently, the cache of works was stored in a building in Santa Monica, accessible only to art apparatchiks.



Israel's collaborations (below, Selfie and Studio Floor) with Warner Bros. will be exhibited at a future show: «I'm interested in Hollywood's physical matter, but I'm also driven to capture its magic — the stardust it sprinkles onto people, places and things that cannot be measured.»

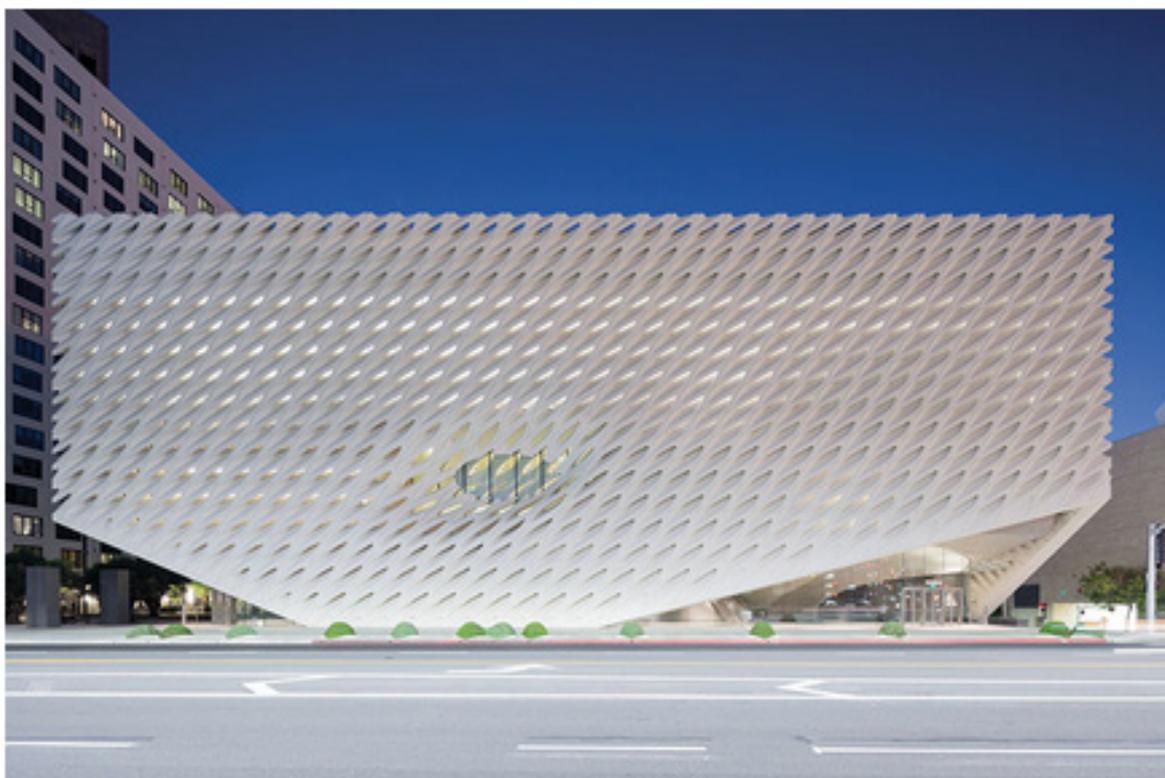
«Every single-collector museum is different,» says Broad. In this instance, it's a showcase for a personal trove of nearly 2,000 works of postwar and contemporary art by Jeff Koons, Jasper Johns, Cindy Sherman, Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Recent additions include works by Takashi Murakami, Kara Walker and Ragnar Kjartansson. «We've been adding an average of one work per week,» says Joanne Heyler, founding director and chief curator, of The Broad's voracious acquisition strategy.

In a city brimming with cultural institutions, what distinguishes The Broad? «We're not trying to represent absolutely everything,» adds Heyler, 50. In contrast, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art permanent collection includes nearly 130,000 objects from antiquity onward, and MOCA has a broader modern art agenda, with 6,950 works. «People will see a lot of provocative artwork that reflects important aspects of

says Heyler. Robert Longo's *Untitled* (Ferguson Police, August 13, 2014), a charcoal of police in riot gear in Ferguson, Mo., is among the most topical. Meg Cranston, department chair of fine arts at Otis College of Art and Design, sees drawbacks to a narrow focus: «LACMA and the Hammer have succeeded in a city that doesn't have enough social space; MOCA is trying to reconnect with its artist base. The Broad has a strong collection by today's standards, but contemporary art is a huge gamble. There is no telling what artists will matter in 10 years or 50 years.» Heyler notes that free general admission also sets it apart.

The same could be said of the museum's startling design. Conceived by New York-based Diller Scofidio & Renfro, the \$140 million building is predicated on a «veil and vault» concept. The veil is the porous concrete exoskeleton; the vault is the middle-floor storage repository, glimpsed by visitors as they navigate to the upper galleries. «It's a building with a beautiful choreography,» says Heyler.

The road to *The Broad*, five years in the making, was not without its missteps. The museum, intended to open in 2014, was fraught by construction delays. Earlier this year, Broad filed a \$19.8 million lawsuit against Seele, a German architectural fabricator responsible for the honeycomb facade. Critics have likened it to everything from a stereo speaker to a cheese grater. Counters Broad, «We're delighted with the museum.»



The «veil» exterior of The Broad.

And while he doesn't view his museum as competing with LACMA or MOCA, they might feel otherwise. Broad, MOCA's founding chairman who bailed it out in 2008 with a \$30 million grant, appointed art dealer Jeffrey Deitch director in 2010. Chief curator Paul Schimmel was fired during that period, after which L.A. artists Barbara Kruger, Catherine Opie, John Baldessari and Ed Ruscha resigned from the board. LACMA has its own grievances. A life trustee who granted the institution \$60 million in 2008 (for its Renzo Piano-designed addition), Broad said he would not be donating his collection, blindsiding LACMA director Michael Govan. Two years later, Broad announced he would build his own museum, paying \$7.7 million for a 99-year lease of public land that he selected to rejuvenate Grand Avenue. It appears to be working: Directly south of the museum will be *Otium*, a restaurant by Bestia's Bill Chait and French Laundry chef Timothy Hollingsworth, due to open soon.

Broad maintains that the museum's proximity to MOCA is a plus. «Together, they make L.A. one of the world's cultural capitals,» he says. «Someone who visits The Broad and MOCA will see a more comprehensive view of contemporary art than anywhere else.» Israel agrees: «They form a contemporary art nexus. It will be great for the city, its students, residents and visitors.»

For its Un-Private Collection event series, the museum already has hosted panels with artists and filmmakers, including Walker and Ava DuVernay, Eric Fischl and Steve Martin, and Jeff Koons and John Waters. Given that Heyler is helming this new destination, has she fielded any queries from Hollywood party planners? Not yet. «I am anticipating interest,» she says. «I hope Hollywood embraces it.»