

Exhibition: *Frank Gehry*

On View: September 13, 2015–March 20, 2016

Location: Resnick Pavilion



(Image captions on page 7)

(Los Angeles, June 9, 2015)—The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents the United States premiere of *Frank Gehry*, a major retrospective examining the prolific body of work of one of the world's most celebrated and innovative architects. Canadian-born, Los Angeles–based architect Frank O. Gehry has revolutionized architecture's aesthetics, social and cultural roles, and its relationship to the city. His understanding of a city's heterogeneous and fluid nature has distinguished him as a revolutionary urbanist. Gehry's works—from his residence in Santa Monica (1977–78) to Walt Disney Concert Hall (1989–2003) in downtown Los Angeles and Fondation Louis Vuitton (2005–14) in Paris—question a building's means of expression, a process that has originated new methods of design and technology as well as an innovative approach to architectural materials.

Tracing the arc of Gehry's career from the early 1960s to the present, the exhibition focuses on two overarching themes: urbanism and the development of digital design and fabrication, specifically his use of CATIA Digital Project, a software tool that Gehry developed, which allows the digital manipulation of three-dimensional information. Organized by the Centre Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, *Frank Gehry* examines a total of over 60 projects through more than 200 drawings, many of which will be on view for the first time, as well as 66 models that illuminate the evolution of his architectural process. In addition, the LACMA presentation will include new models not previously seen in the Centre Pompidou's exhibition, representing buildings currently being designed or in the process of construction. These projects include Facebook's new campus, the Philadelphia Museum of Art's renovation, and Gehry's most recent residential designs—both private residences and large-scale developments.

"Frank Gehry is one of Los Angeles's cultural icons, whose influence on international architecture and urbanism cannot be understated," said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. "It is a great pleasure to bring this retrospective to Frank's hometown and present it to a Los Angeles audience."

Frédéric Migayrou, deputy director of the Centre Pompidou and exhibition curator, commented, “Gehry’s work has been based on the interrogation of architecture’s means of expression, a process that has brought with it new methods of design and a new approach to materials. No other exhibition has ever assembled so many projects to offer a reading of this highly distinctive architectural language.”

Frank Gehry is originally curated by Frédéric Migayrou and Aurélien Lemonier in Paris and curated in Los Angeles by Stephanie Barron, Senior Curator and Department Head of Modern Art, with Lauren Bergman, Assistant Curator of Modern Art. The exhibition is designed by Gehry Partners, LLP. Since 1965, Gehry Partners, LLP, has designed 11 LACMA exhibitions, including *Art Treasures from Japan* (1965); *Billy Al Bengston* (1968); *The Avant-Garde in Russia, 1910–1930: New Perspectives* (1980); *Seventeen Artists in the Sixties* (1981); *German Expressionist Sculpture* (1983); *“Degenerate Art”: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (1991); *Exiles + Emigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler* (1997); *Ken Price Sculpture: A Retrospective* (2012); and *Calder and Abstraction: From Avant-Garde to Iconic* (2013). The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated scholarly catalogue edited by Aurélien Lemonier and Frédéric Migayrou and published by Prestel.

Stephanie Barron, with whom Gehry has designed six exhibitions, adds, “Constantly redefining the boundaries of contemporary architecture, Frank Gehry has transformed the domestic and international architectural landscape and represents the apex of contemporary architecture. By presenting sketches and models of built and unbuilt projects, together with documentation of completed buildings, this retrospective reveals the evolution of Gehry’s thinking as well as the processes of one of the great architectural minds of our time.”

About Frank Gehry

After moving from Toronto to Los Angeles in 1947, Gehry graduated with a degree in architecture from the University of Southern California in 1954 and studied city planning at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. In 1962, Gehry established his Los Angeles office in Santa Monica, California. As his reputation grew, Gehry received more prominent, high-budget commissions that allowed him to realize complicated and ambitious designs for which he was awarded the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1989. Frustrated that the forms he wanted to build could not be translated properly into two-dimensional plans, Gehry adapted CATIA—a software tool used in the aeronautics and automobile industries that allows the digital manipulation of three-dimensional representations—to facilitate the construction and engineering of his radical designs. Equipped with this new software, Gehry entered a prolific period of architecture design that has continued to this day with projects all over the globe, including Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Panama, and Spain. On September 28, 2015, the J. Paul Getty Trust will award Frank Gehry with its third annual J. Paul Getty

Medal, an award recognizing living individuals from all over the world for their leadership in the visual arts.

Exhibition Overview

Urbanism is the conceptual thread that has continued throughout Gehry's oeuvre. Gehry produced numerous urban projects since opening his office in 1962, including housing projects, studies for urban renewal, shopping centers, large industrial sites, and the restructuring of city centers throughout North America and Europe. Each structure reveals—through his focus on mixed-use programs, development of public space, and the building's materiality—Gehry's precise awareness of context and his ability to sensitively construct a dynamic relationship, or "conversation" as he often calls it, between a building and its surrounding environment, thus allowing him to create heterogeneous urban landscapes. At the same time, commissions for houses and artist studios allowed Gehry to experiment more liberally with an architectural vernacular rooted in a building's relationship with its environment, such as the use of economical, industrial materials (galvanized chain-link fencing, corrugated metal sheeting, cardboard, and asphalt) and a new approach to wood construction.

In the late 1980s, two-dimensional construction plans became inadequate because of the increasing complexity of the forms he wanted to create. Gehry worked with Dassault Systèmes to adapt to his needs their software CATIA (Computer Aided Three-Dimensional Interactive Application), which was created for the aeronautics and automotive industries. The result of that collaboration was CATIA Digital Project which is now used by architects all over the world. This digital approach was initially applied on the fish sculpture for the Olympic Village in Barcelona (1989–92), Nationale-Nederlanden Building (1992–96), then on the unrealized Lewis Residence project (1989–95), and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (1991–97).

In 2002, the architect founded Gehry Technologies, which was dedicated to the research and development of digital technologies. The use of CATIA became a bridge between architects and the building contractors, who could now estimate costs more accurately and produce increasingly complex forms. Without this major advance in the field, some of Gehry's most iconic buildings, such as Walt Disney Concert Hall (1989–2003) and Fondation Louis Vuitton (2005–14), could not have been constructed.

To trace the development of Frank Gehry's architectural achievements, the exhibition is divided into six conceptual themes that are organized chronologically, with urbanism at the core.

De-composition | Segmentation [1965–80]: Using so-called cheap materials and new construction methods, Gehry segmented the individual elements of a building's geometrical

structure based on its program and functionality, creating dynamic tensions and instilling in his buildings a dynamic sense of immediacy and expression.

Composition | Assemblage [1980–90]: Gehry, influenced by architect and theorist Philip Johnson’s concept of a “one-room building,” invented an architectural style that separated functional elements into discrete, heterogeneous structures. He arranged singular buildings based on his approach to urbanism, focusing equally on the relationships among these constructions and the interstitial, or in-between, spaces they create.

Interaction | Fusion [1990–2000]: Conscious of the limitations of an aesthetic of assembly, Gehry sought to revive the principle of continuity among his previously separated structures. The third theme focuses on a genuine architecture of continuity where walls and roofs became an envelope that fuses the isolated volumes of a formerly fragmented project.

Conflict | Tension [1990–2000]: Gehry’s focus on interstitial spaces led to a fascination with tension and attraction. Through his projects, the architect created contradictions, clashes, abrupt changes, and conflict that referenced the heterogeneous nature of the urban city. Elasticity, compression, and interaction among disparate elements were ultimately designed to mimic the complex urban fabric that surrounded each project.

Flux | Continuity [2000–2010]: In the early 2000s, Gehry began exploring continuous, metallic envelopes that dominate, overlay, and redefine the façade, roof, and all other traditional points of reference.

Unity | Singularity [2000–15]: Gehry’s more recent body of work simplified the more chaotic forms in favor of unified, singular buildings. These urban projects not only reimagine traditional architectural structures but also reveal the fragile relationships and tensions between a building and its environment.

The exhibition will also feature Sydney Pollack’s 2006 film *Sketches of Frank Gehry* as well as a new interview between Gehry and Centre Pompidou curators Frédéric Migayrou and Aurélien Lemonier.

Exhibition Highlights

Gehry Residence (1977–78, 1991–94, Santa Monica, California): Gehry’s design for his own home, which he called a “laboratory on a budget,” was essentially a renovation and extension of the existing typical 1930s two-story gambrel-roofed bungalow; it consisted of a new envelope wrapping around three sides of intact, now entrapped, original structure. The house’s quintessential suburban-ness inspired Gehry to introduce common materials in uncommon ways: corrugated metal adorns the façade, the chain-link fencing creates intricate

terraces, and rough plywood is used throughout. A genuine autobiographical statement, the house became an icon, marking the beginning of Gehry's international recognition.

Nationale-Nederlanden Building (1992–96, Prague, Czech Republic): Dutch insurance company ING commissioned this Prague office building from Gehry and local architect Vlado Milunic. From the earliest sketches, Gehry envisaged a building at whose corner he would place two towers: one oriented toward the Jirásek Square, the other toward the Rašín Quay, thereby connecting the building with its surroundings. Initially square in shape, the towers evolved from one model to the next, twisting, sloping, and ending up with two very distinctive structures: one in glass and the other in concrete, representing, according to Gehry, the image of a dancing couple, as exemplified by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers—the building has been nicknamed “Fred and Ginger.” While the surrounding buildings were six floors high, the client's program called for a seven-story structure; in order to create a smooth, almost imperceptible transition, Gehry slightly shifted the ensemble of openings upward and downward, then added a network of a few undulating lines in relief, extending the existing edges onto the neighboring façade.

Lewis Residence (1989–95, unbuilt, Lyndhurst, Ohio): Client Peter B. Lewis initially commissioned Gehry to design an indoor pool in his newly bought house. A continuously fluctuating program and an undefined budget meant that, with the encouragement of the client, the original house was quickly discarded as an entirely new project developed, gradually increasing both in surface and cost, until it reached over 21,000 square feet and a price tag that rivaled the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, at which time the project was abandoned. Early ideas proposed an assemblage of architectural objects recalling the stylistic vocabulary of Gehry's projects in the 1980s, before evolving toward an interpenetration of more fluid forms coupled with a surprising use of materials. The project was subject to intermittent modifications over a six-year period of intense reflection and artistic collaboration that would greatly nourish many later projects.

Walt Disney Concert Hall (1989–2003 (competition 1988), Los Angeles, California): The Walt Disney Concert Hall has become an iconic image for Los Angeles. Placed diagonally on the 162,000-square-foot site, the project breaks the orthogonality of the block, allowing a greater variety of viewpoints and providing a striking entrance plaza. The volume of the concert hall was dictated by the quest for outstanding acoustics as well as the client's requirement that the orchestra be surrounded by the public. Over a hundred models were made from the project's start to finish, because in Gehry's approach, technical choices are inseparable from the creation and assembly of the forms.

Fondation Louis Vuitton (2005–14, Paris, France): This recently opened contemporary art museum for the Fondation Louis Vuitton stands in the Bois de Boulogne in western Paris. For this project, Gehry envisaged a predominantly glass structure would create the image of a

great vessel. He distributed the elements of the program (which calls for 11 exhibition galleries) into an assembly of blocks. The building alternates solid volumes and interstitial spaces, which blur the lines between the interior and exterior spaces, and is covered by an envelope of 3,600 unique panels that form the 12 glass sails. Every glass panel is curved slightly differently in order to animate the light reflecting off the building. The Fondation Louis Vuitton is a striking example of nonstandard architecture developed with contemporary technology.

LACMA's presentation includes an additional gallery featuring several projects currently in the process of being designed or constructed. This body of current works, which are represented by over 10 models, emphasizes Gehry's continuing ingenuity, inexhaustible productivity, and creativity. This section features the renovation of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Facebook's new West Campus building, among others. The inclusion of a collection of early residences in the exhibition's first gallery, which stands as an iconic statement of his forthcoming architectural approach, and his most recent residential designs in this additional gallery of new projects, elucidates the evolution of Gehry's unique style.

Related Programming

Frank Gehry and Paul Goldberger in Conversation

Sunday, September 13, 2015 | 2pm

LACMA, Bing Theater

Free; tickets required.

Architect Frank Gehry and architecture critic Paul Goldberger discuss Gehry's prolific and groundbreaking career to mark the opening of the special exhibition *Frank Gehry* as well as Goldberger's just-published book, *Building Art: The Life and Work of Frank Gehry* (Knopf, September 2015), the first full-fledged critical biography of the architect. Following the lecture, Goldberger signs copies of his book.

Gehry and Art: Irving Lavin and Frank Gehry in Conversation

Sunday, September 27, 2015 | 1 pm

LACMA, Bing Theater

Free; tickets required. Tickets: 323 857 6010 or [reserve online](#).

In conjunction with the special exhibition *Frank Gehry*, a three-part series of presentations will address Gehry's central areas of interest—art, science, and music—through conversations between the architect and long-standing collaborators and friends. The first of the three, *Gehry and Art*, features a conversation between Gehry and reknown scholar Irving Lavin, Art History Professor Emeritus, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton University.

Lavin has written extensively on form and meaning in the visual arts, with a range of subjects spanning from the Italian Renaissance to modern art. He has considered Gehry's work on several occasions; last year, he wrote perceptively about Foundation Louis Vuitton in Paris, one of the architect's most recently completed projects. Lavin and Gehry have appeared together before, notably in 2011, when Lavin introduced Gehry to an appreciative audience at Princeton, paying tribute to him by stating "Frank Gehry's buildings do something that no building had ever done before—they move."

Check lacma.org for the remaining events in the series, which are scheduled to take place in early 2016.

Credit

This exhibition is organized by the Centre Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Presented by:



The exhibition is sponsored by MATT Construction.

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About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography, in addition to representing Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection that includes over 120,000 objects dating from antiquity to the present, encompassing the geographic world and nearly the entire history of art. Among the museum's strengths are its holdings of Asian art; Latin American art, ranging from masterpieces from the Ancient Americas to works by leading modern and contemporary artists; and Islamic art, of which LACMA hosts one of the most significant collections in the world. A museum of international stature as well as a vital part of Southern California, LACMA shares its vast collections through exhibitions, public programs, and research facilities that attract over one million visitors annually, in addition to serving millions through digital initiatives such as online collections, scholarly catalogues, and interactive engagement. LACMA is located in Hancock Park, 30 acres situated at the center of Los Angeles which also contains the Page Museum and La Brea Tar Pits and the forthcoming Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. Situated halfway between the ocean and downtown, LACMA is at the heart of Los Angeles.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

Image captions:

Left: Frank Gehry, Gehry Residence, model, 1977–78 and 1991–94, Santa Monica, California, MAK—Austrian Museum of Applied/Contemporary Art, Vienna, © 2015 Gehry Partners, LLP, © 2015 Gerald Zubmann/MAK
Center: Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, design sketch of the riverfront elevation, Bilbao, Spain, c. 1991, Collection Frank Gehry, Los Angeles, © 2015 Gehry Partners, LLP, image courtesy Gehry Partners, LLP

Right: Frank Gehry, Fondation Louis Vuitton, final design model, 2005–14, Paris, France, Gehry Partners, LLP, Los Angeles, © 2015 Gehry Partners, LLP, image courtesy Gehry Partners, LLP

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