



Michelle Obama Helps Dedicate the Whitney Museum

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by Hamptons Art Hub Staff

First Lady of the United States of America Michelle Obama joined New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio to officially open the new Whitney Museum of American Art today in New York City. The museum is now housed in a 220,000-square-foot building set beside the Hudson River at the foot of the High Line elevated park in the Meatpacking District. The museum opens to the public tomorrow, Friday, May 1, 2015.



The Wooster Group. Photograph by Filip Wolak.

First Lady Michelle Obama said, "I fell in love with the building. It is an amazing space...One visit, one performance, one touch, and who knows how you could spark a child's imagination....Maybe you can discover the next Carmen Herrera, or Archibald Motley, or Edward Hopper, or maybe even the next Barack Obama. That is the power of institutions like the Whitney. They open their doors as wide as possible both to the artists they embrace and to the young people they seek to uplift. That's what happens. And today I am so proud to be here as we open these doors...I truly cannot wait to see the impact this extraordinary museum will have in the years ahead."



Michelle Obama. Photograph by Filip Wolak.

Also speaking at the dedication ceremony were Adam D. Weinberg, the Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney; architect Renzo Piano; and leaders of the Whitney's Board of Trustees: Co-Chairmen Robert J. Hurst and Brooke Garber Neidich, President Neil G. Bluhm, and Honorary Chairman Flora Miller Biddle, granddaughter of artist and Museum founder Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney.

Mayor de Blasio said, "We already knew we were the mecca of the art world but just in case we needed to make it clearer, this museum does it. As New Yorkers, we are extraordinarily proud.

We're proud that people from around the world come to experience our cultural life."

The Museum's director, Adam D. Weinberg, stated, "The Whitney has always believed in the importance of the present—the capacity for artists to act in and effect the life of our times, to alter perceptions in such ways that might enable one to change the course of history...We are here for those artists as they are here for us. Our new home was designed for and is now re-consecrated in this belief. This is our gift to our city, our nation, and the world as it was Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's in her time."

The dedication ceremony began with the performance of *Incantation*, an improvisatory musical work composed and performed by renowned Chicago-born saxophonist Matana Roberts. The ribbon-cutting was carried out by The Wooster Group, the experimental New York theater company, joined by teens from the Whitney's Youth Insights Program.

Architect Renzo Piano said, "I love making buildings. I especially love making buildings for public use. Public buildings are the essence of cities because they are places where people share values. They stay together and enjoy the city. Especially among public buildings I love to make buildings for art and beauty. The reason is very simple—because art and beauty make people better people...I'm pretty sure that beauty will save the world. It will save one person at a time. It will do it."



Renzo Piano. Photograph by Filip Wolak.

Robert J. Hurst, co-chairman of the Whitney's Board of Trustees, said, "Rarely does one have the opportunity to build a museum from the ground up in the cultural capital of the world. Thanks to an extraordinary partnership with the City of New York and an early leadership gift from the State of New York, we launched a capital campaign for \$760 million for the building and a strengthened endowment, and we are so pleased that that goal has been achieved due to unprecedented public and private generosity."

Flora Miller Biddle, Honorary Chairman and granddaughter of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, quoting Goethe, said, "'A museum should be never finished, but boundless and ever in motion.'...Now, the physical construction of this extraordinary new building is complete and the Museum is ready to receive visitors, but it is the artists who will keep it ever in motion—that is what artists do and why their work is so precious and necessary: they carry us forward into the unknown, into mystery, into wisdom, into truth."

Artists in attendance included Lawrence Weiner, Glenn Ligon, Alex Katz, Carol Bove and Fred Wilson.

The Museum opens to the public tomorrow, Friday, May 1, 2015.

Inaugurating the Whitney's new galleries is the exhibition "America Is Hard to See", an ambitious

re-examination of the history of American art from 1900 to today, drawn entirely from the Museum's holdings. The show presents over 600 works by some 400 artists. It is the most extensive display to date of the Whitney's collection.

BASIC FACTS: The Whitney opens to the public on May 1, 2015 at 99 Gansevoort Street, New York, NY 10014. www.whitney.org.

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