

NEWS

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U.S. Baltic Foundation

U.S.-Baltic Foundation Displays Exhibit of Architectural Designs For Guggenheim Art Museum in Vilnius, Lithuania

WASHINGTON D.C. – April 11, 2008 – Vilnius, capital of Lithuania, is on its way to becoming one of the cultural centers of Europe. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, which administers a global network of museums and exhibition spaces around the world, has chosen the city as the next possible site of a Guggenheim museum of contemporary art and media.

This week the U.S.-Baltic Foundation, which has been central to the development of cultural cooperation and growth in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania since 1990, is set to receive and display picture frames of the three runner-up and the winning architectural models at its annual fund-raising Awards Gala and Silent Auction. The Gala will be held at Washington’s Mayflower Hotel on April 19.

“The pictures,” said Foundation Director Maria Kivisild Ogrydziak, an architect herself, “will offer the American public the first glimpse of what could become Vilnius’ cultural emergence from the shadow of the Soviet Union, which occupied Lithuania and the other Baltic States from 1940 to 1991.”

Since 1990, the U.S. – Baltic Foundation has served as an education resource for policy makers in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the United States. It has developed and implemented programs to strengthen democracy and free markets in those nations, and introduced Baltic leaders to new American audiences with a series of public affairs programs.

On April 8 in Vilnius, a jury of six members today announced that Zaha Hadid, London, had won the architectural competition to develop the design for the proposed museum. In addition to Hadid, Daniel Libeskind, New York, and Massimiliano Fuksas, Rome, submitted designs for the proposed project. All three of their models will come to Washington for the Foundation Gala.

Zaha Hadid was born in Baghdad in 1950 and studied architecture at the Architectural Association in London. Following her graduation in 1977, she became a partner in the avant-garde Office for Metropolitan Architecture in London and two years later she opened an independent practice, Zaha Hadid Architects. Through this London-based firm, Hadid’s artistic vision is being transformed into architectural masterpieces worldwide.

The architectural competition was part of a feasibility study undertaken by the Guggenheim and The State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. The directors of both institutions participated in the

jury selection process. The jury included Mikhail Piotrovsky, Director of the State Hermitage Museum, Thomas Krens, Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Peter Schmal, Director of the Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Gediminas Kirkilas, Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania, Juozas Imbrasas, Mayor of the City of Vilnius, and Gintaras Caikauskas, Vice-Chairman of the Architects' Association of Lithuania.

"The creation of the new center of contemporary and media art in Vilnius would be an important phenomenon in European cultural life," said Piotrovsky. "We are honored that The State Hermitage Museum is participating in such a significant undertaking. The project in Vilnius would be an excellent complement to the program we have recently developed exhibiting contemporary art at the Hermitage".

Said Prime Minister Kirkilas, "Lithuania has set its sights on becoming a premier international center of art. We can think of no better institutions -- The State Hermitage and the Guggenheim Foundation -- to help guide us in this project."

An exhibition organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, entitled "Imagining the Future: Design Proposals for a New Museum in Vilnius" will open to the public on April 10th at the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center in Vilnius and will allow visitors to view the works of all three architects who competed for the project. The models will be on loan to the U.S. Baltic Foundation for next weekend.

Lithuanian-born Jonas Mekas, an icon in American avant-garde film, for whom the Arts Center in Vilnius is named, will also attend the U.S.-Baltic Foundation Gala to accept the Baltic Cultural Achievement Award.

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