



STEAM Festival Presentation

# Architectural Art in NYC

Exploring the  
Guggenheim Museum

PRESENTED BY

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Arts in New  
York City

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/69184488@N06/11876635545>  
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# Guggenheim Museum

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- Guggenheim is one of NYC's most iconic museums
  - Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright from 1943–1959
  - Famous for its spiral form and innovative layout
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Wright's spiral design inside the museum shaped how people view art in NYC, turning the museum itself into a tool for viewers to interact and experience the art.



**Who organized the creation  
of this Museum?**

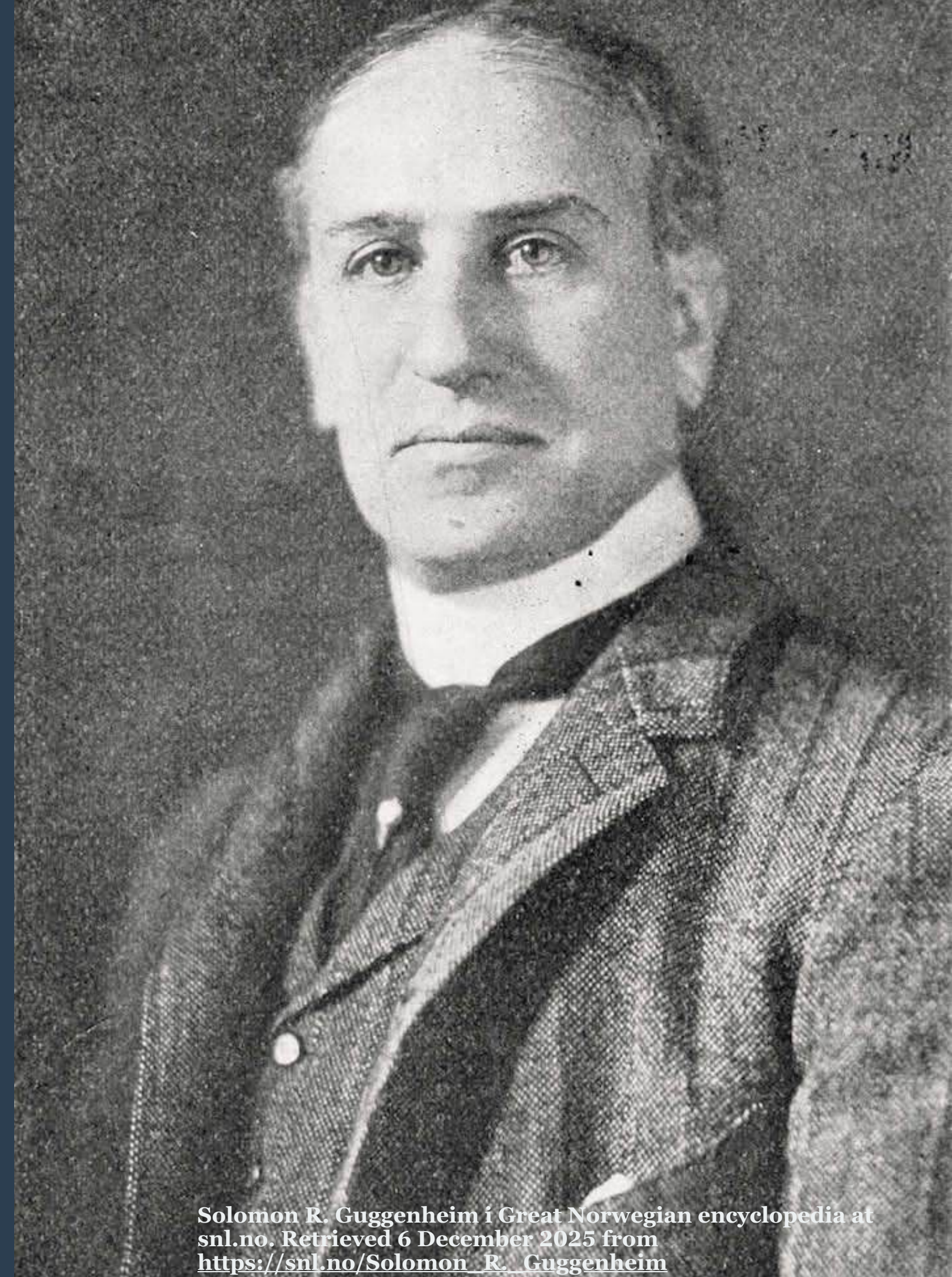


# Solomon R. Guggenheim

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## American Businessman and Art Collector

- Made a fortune from mining and later used it for the arts
- In the 1920s and 30s, he became interested in art that did not focus on real-life objects (abstract, modern, etc.)
- Founded the Guggenheim Foundation in 1937 to support and make this form of art more accessible.
- The museum was originally called the **Museum of Non-Objective Painting**





# Hilla Rebay

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## German Abstract Artist and Art Advisor

- Became Guggenheim Museum's art advisor and decided which art pieces it should buy
  - Introduced Guggenheim to artists like Kandinsky and suggested him to focus on non-objective art
  - Picked Frank Lloyd Wright to be the architect
  - She believed Wright's organic and fluid designs would match the type of art present in the museum
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**Who is Frank Lloyd Wright?**



# Frank Lloyd Wright

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## One of America's Most Influential Architects

- He designed over 1,000 structures
  - Some of his famous works include Fallingwater from 1935 and Johnson Wax HQ in 1939
  - He advocated for harmony between architecture in the city and the human experience
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# Why was he Chosen?

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- Primarily due to his “organic” architectural design
  - He believed that buildings should be natural and feel flowing
  - Rebay wanted a museum that matched the art it displayed, which Wright was capable of making
  - Wright’s concept of the museum was completely original
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**How was it Made?**



# Design Process and Construction



- Wright hired in 1943
- 16 years of revisions + debates
- NYC zoning issues slowed approval
- Many artists and critics disliked his unusual design
- Construction didn't begin until 1956

- Built from reinforced concrete
- Opened in 1959
- Wright died six months before opening
- Early reactions were mixed, even hostile



# Wright's Intentions

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- He wanted a museum that guided visitors through art
  - He hated “box-like” galleries that other museums have
  - He designed a continuous ramp for a better circulation and flow inside the museum
  - He wanted viewers to move with the art, not stand still
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**What is the Design Like?**



# Interior and Exterior



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Solomon\\_R\\_Guggenheim\\_Museum,\\_designed\\_by\\_Frank\\_Lloyd\\_Wright\\_%286998985818%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Solomon_R_Guggenheim_Museum,_designed_by_Frank_Lloyd_Wright_%286998985818%29.jpg)

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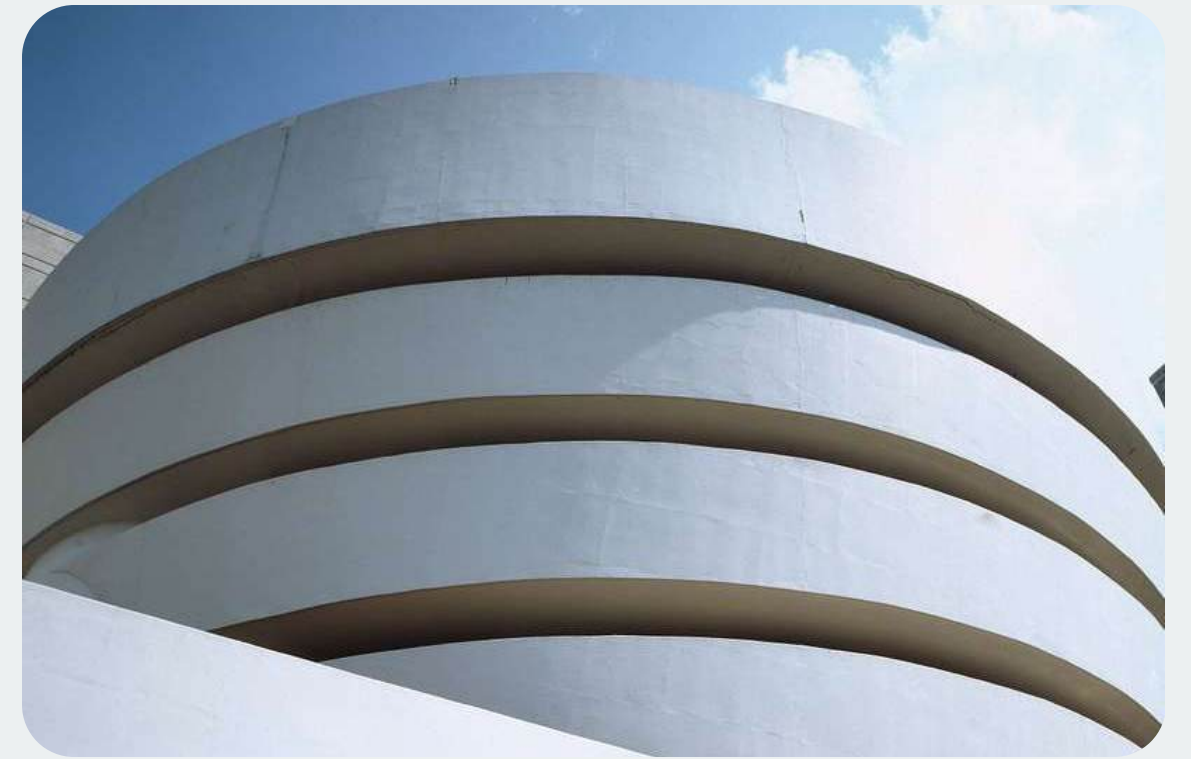
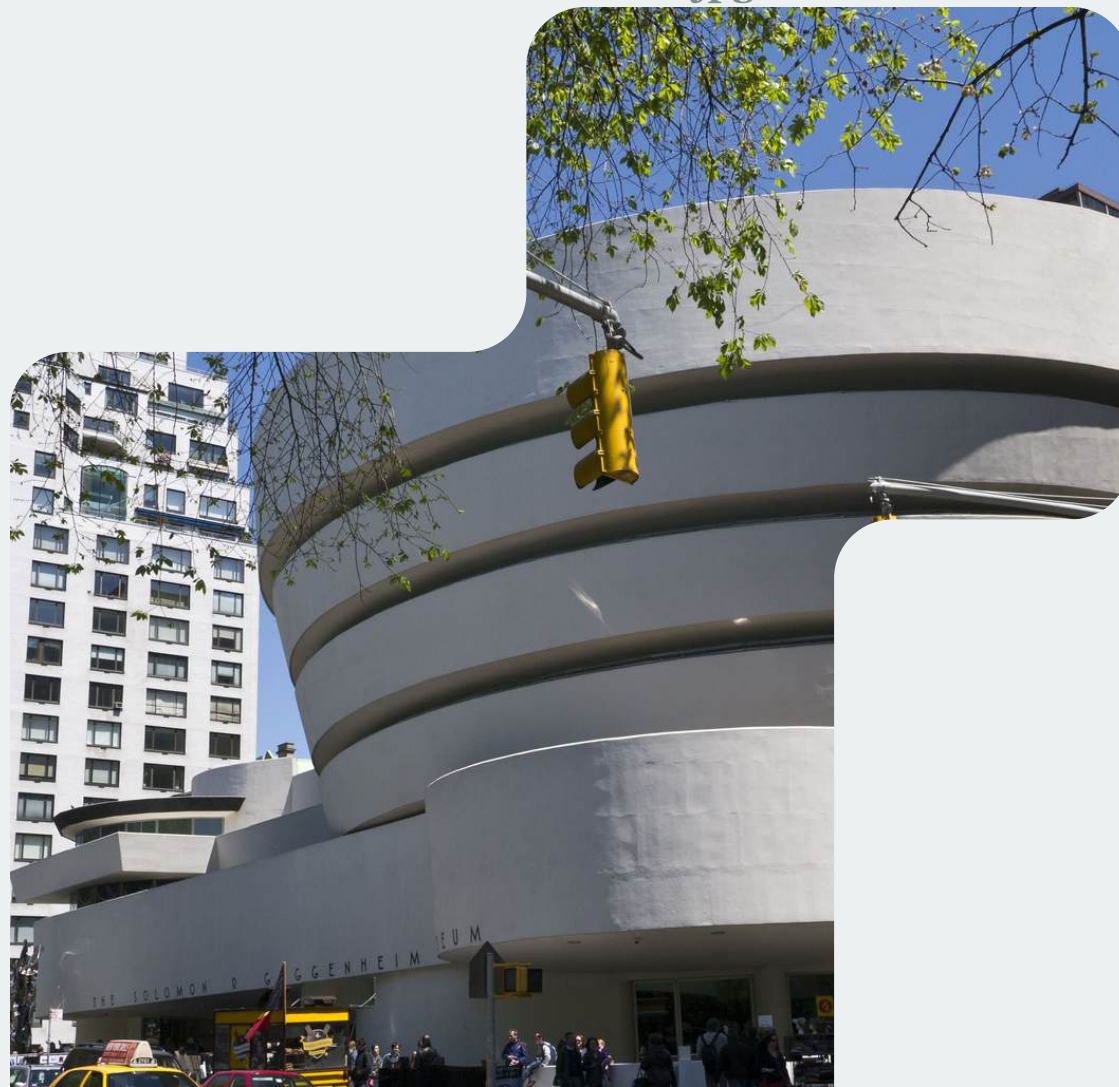
## SPIRAL RAMP

1,400-foot descending walkway

Smooth, continuous movement

Visitors see art from multiple angles

Creates shifting viewpoints → shifting perception



<https://picryl.com/media/the-solomon-r-guggenheim-museum-located-on-the-upper-east-side-of-manhattan>

## EXTERIOR FORM

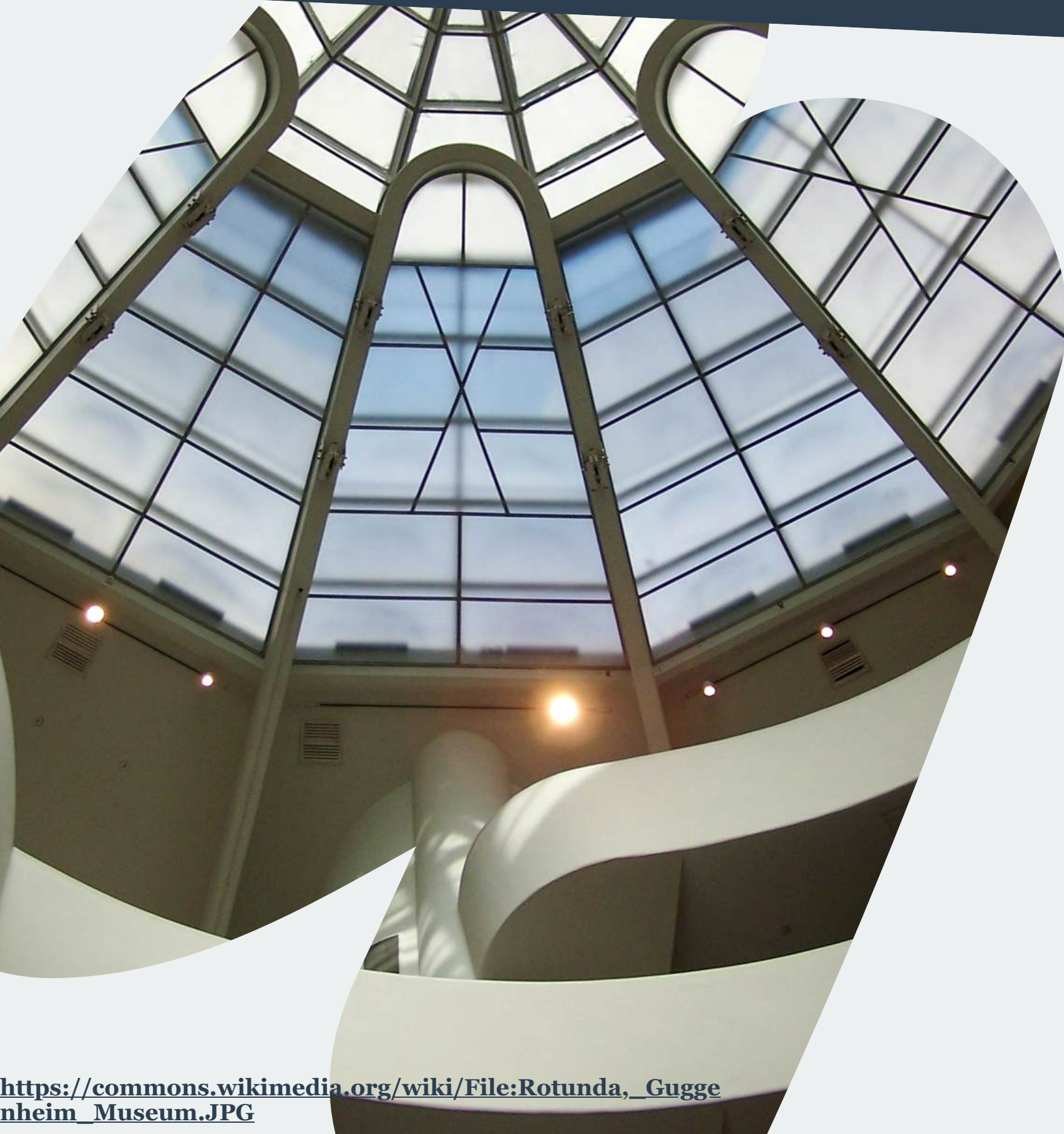
Inverted “nautilus shell” shape

Rounded, organic, sculptural form

Contrasts NYC’s straight vertical buildings

Makes the museum itself feel like a piece of art

# Rotunda and Skylight



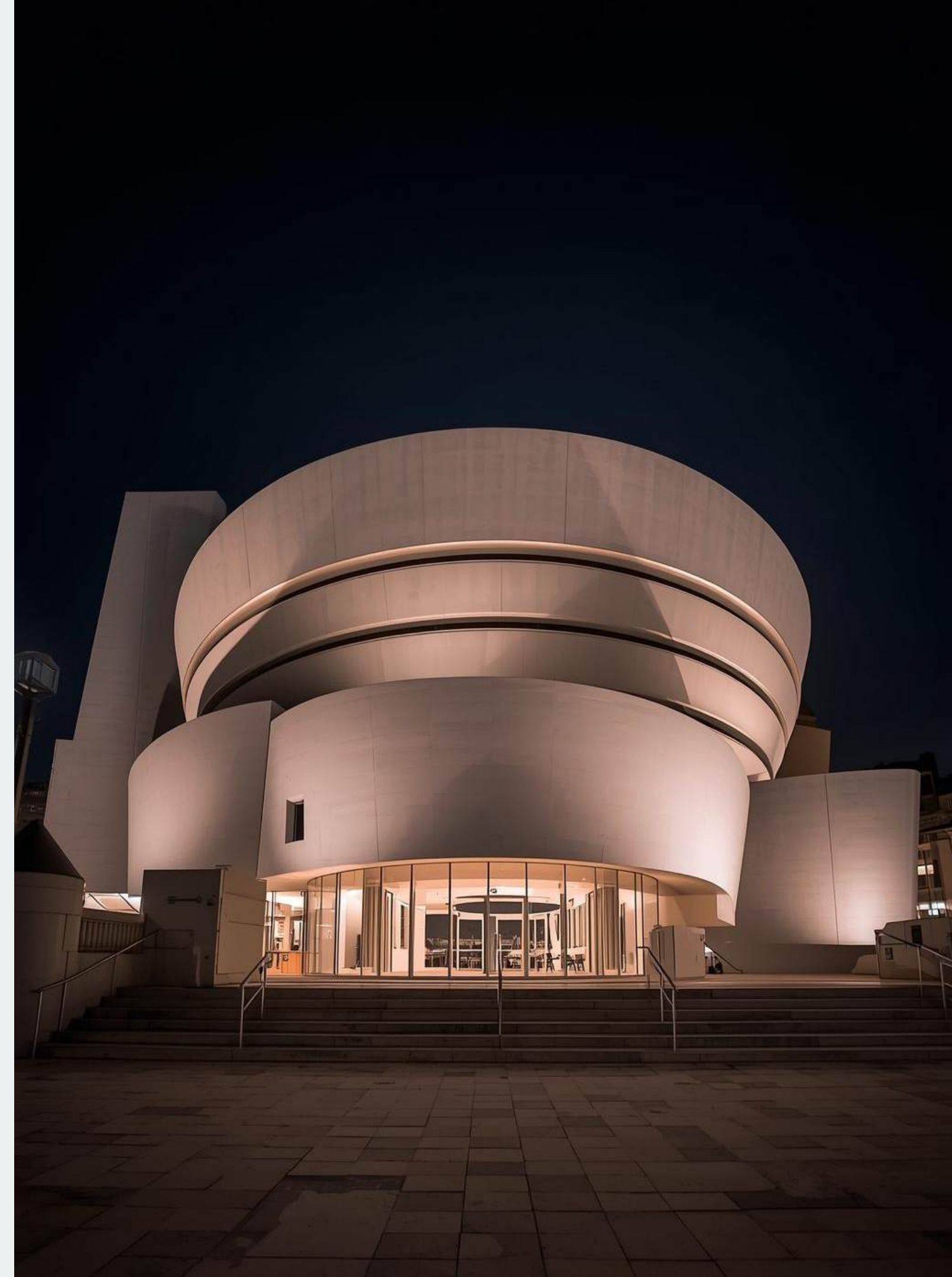
- Large central atrium
- Glass oculus at the top brings natural light
- Creates openness and calm atmosphere
- Helps visitors see the building as part of the art experience

# **What is Interesting About the Guggenheim Museum?**



# What I Like

- ★ I really admire the spiral design inside the museum, as I feel it is a great way to both establish circulation and a unique way to experience the art around the building.
- ★ The space inside is immersive, particularly due to the walking and journey required to view everything inside.
- ★ Its unique exterior shape (the shell-looking design) adds contrast to the museum against the tall buildings in NYC.





# Why did I pick the Guggenheim?

- ★ Our class went on a field trip to the museum, but I was unfortunately not able to attend. So, researching the museum felt like my own little “virtual visit.”
- ★ Even though the architecture of the museum looks contemporary, the museum was opened in 1959. Because of this, I felt like it was one of the largest stepping stones to abstract architecture in the city.
- ★ Not only does the Guggenheim museum present architecture in the city as a form of art, but it also contains art forms inside of it. This not only livens the atmosphere of the city but also the public’s knowledge on contemporary artworks and artists.

# Early Reactions to the Museum



- A lot of artists did not like the curved walls as it was difficult to put up work
- Many critics mentioned how the museum was taking away spotlight from the work itself
- Since the museum lacks a lot of definition, some call it the “parking lot” for artworks
- However, some praised the museum for revolutionizing both art museums and architecture

**Why does the Museum  
matter to NYC?**



# Impact on NYC

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- The museum challenges the traditional museum layout with its spiral design that guides viewers through most of the artwork seamlessly
  - It helped NYC embrace modern architectural expression and developed new styles of museums where they are treated as immersive and interactive spaces
  - It became a landmark of NYC because of these reasons
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# Influence on Future Museums

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- It changed how people view architecture, specifically how the space of a museum transforms the viewing experience of its artwork
  - The Guggenheim was precedent for other museums, such as the Whitney and the MoMA expansions
  - The museum even influenced global designs, such as the Guggenheim Bilbao in 1997
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# The Guggenheim Experience



- Visitors experience art as a flowing sequence
- The architecture of the museum shapes how each piece is seen
- The building encourages movement, exploration, and perspective shifts
- Wright achieved his goal, which was making the building a piece of art too

**What does this *All* mean?**



# Conclusion



The Guggenheim museum redefined museum architecture through its unique spiral design that allows for visitors and viewers of art to flow through each work



This spiral form of the museum has remained influential with architects and artists throughout the world. Wright's design changed how people see and interact with art.



The Guggenheim museum ultimately stands as a symbol for innovation in architectural art in New York City.



# Thank You!

“A building is alive, like a man, and its spirit is the spirit of its maker.”

– FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT



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