

FRIENDS of the BARNES FOUNDATION

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ARCHITECTURE GIANT ROBERT VENTURI SPEAKS OUT AGAINST REMOVAL OF BARNES ART COLLECTION FROM MERION

(MERION STATION, PA -- October 1, 2009) Robert Venturi, world-renowned architect and Philadelphia native, has spoken out against the move of the Barnes Foundation art collection to Philadelphia. In a letter to Friends of the Barnes Foundation, Mr. Venturi emphasized the inter-relationship of the art collection, building, and site, saying that "Separating them vastly diminishes the value and purpose of both."

Mr. Venturi described the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars for the move as "indiscrete and ridiculous." He stated that in this economic climate, the funds could be put toward much better use in support of existing cultural institutions.

In speaking out, Mr. Venturi joins a chorus of writers, artists, curators, and art lovers around the world opposed to the dismantling of the Barnes Merion site. The full text of Mr. Venturi's letter follows below.

Friends of the Barnes Foundation spokesman Aram K. Jerrehian spoke about the support from Robert Venturi, noting, "We are extremely grateful for this expression of support from Mr. Venturi for maintaining the Barnes Foundation as an intact cultural site. We will continue to defend this vulnerable institution from those whose short-sighted goals would needlessly destroy it. Obviously, such destruction would be an immoral act, but it would also be an unconscionable waste of taxpayers'

money. The time is ripe for promoting a plan that embraces the entire Merion Barnes complex as the life's work of a unique American visionary. This should include acceptance by the Barnes Board of Trustees of the United States Department of the Interior invitation to apply for National Historic Landmark status." The landmark designation would only be available if the Barnes art collection remains at the Merion site. A Philadelphia site, even with the art collection, would not meet the requirements for National Historic Landmark status.

Friends of the Barnes Foundation is an organization of citizen advocates for the permanent preservation of the Barnes Foundation in Merion as a site of national cultural and historical significance. Further information is available on the website of Friends of the Barnes Foundation at <http://www.barnesfriends.org>

September 23, 2009

Dear Friends of the Barnes,

I am writing in support of your efforts to stop the plans currently in motion to remove the Barnes Collection to a new facility yet to be designed or built in Philadelphia.

The current building in Merion was designed specifically for the Barnes collection by Paul Cret in collaboration with Dr. Barnes as owner/curator. The building and site design are an integral part of the collection, and vice versa. Separating them vastly diminishes the value and purpose of both.

In our current economic and financial climate, particularly here in Pennsylvania, the expenditure of \$200 - \$300 million for a new site and building seems an indiscrete and ridiculous waste of money when existing museums and libraries are undergoing major budget cuts, when the original Barnes Museum building and site work perfectly well for the collection.

Even a portion of these exorbitant funds might be better directed toward developing plans, for instance, to solve any perceived access problems, such as a shuttle bus serving the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Rodin Museum, the Please Touch Museum, and the Barnes Foundation.

This is not the time to waste money, but to spend wisely, investing in the great institutions we already have that need the help so desperately.

Sincerely,

Robert Venturi

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