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PRESS RELEASE

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PEGGY GUGGENHEIM COLLECTION: 30 YEARS ON

“To live in Venice or even to visit it means that you fall in love with the city itself. There is nothing left over in your heart for anyone else.” This well-known sentiment, from an essay by Peggy Guggenheim in a 1962 book by Michelangelo Muraro (*Invitation to Venice*), expresses the American collector’s feelings about Venice, where, after a nomadic life between Europe and the United States, she decided to make her home in 1948. A year later she acquired Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, on the Grand Canal, where she both lived and exhibited her collection of modern art, opening the *palazzo* to the public each summer from 1951 to 1979. At Easter 1980, not long after Peggy Guggenheim’s death (23 December 1979), Palazzo Venier reopened to the public for the first time under the auspices of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

Over the past 30 years Palazzo Venier dei Leoni has been transformed from a private house to a public museum. The historical façade has been restored, and the museum expanded, doubling its exhibition galleries. Since 1985 it has organized more than 80 temporary exhibitions, beginning with etchings of the bullfight by Goya and Picasso, and ranging from Boccioni to Brancusi, Giacometti, Ernst, Gorky, Pollock, Medardo Rosso, and Fontana. The program has included old master drawings from the Albertina and from the Krugier-Poniatowska collections, as well as contemporary art from the Panza Collection or by Barney and Beuys. The gift in 1984 by Enrico and Fiorella Chiari of Pierre Alechinsky’s *Aztec Volcano* was the first of more than 80 works of art to be donated to the museum by as many donors since Peggy Guggenheim’s death—such as works by Pousette-Dart, Grosz, Josef and Anni Albers, Baziotes, Hunt, Holzer, and Richier, and by Italian artists such as Scialoja, Accardi, Lazzari, Fontana, Bacci, Paladino, Merz, Novelli, Mirko, Santomaso, Pizzinato, Vedova and Bonalumi, climaxing in 2008 with *The Cyclist* by Mario Sironi, a gift from Giovanni Pandini and the first painting by this major Italian painter to enter the Guggenheim Foundation’s collections. Since 1997 the presence on deposit of the Gianni Mattioli Collection has also rendered the Peggy Guggenheim Collection a destination for Italian Futurism and the early paintings of Giorgio Morandi.

The 30th anniversary sees changes to the installation of the permanent collection for the first six months of the year. This is a rare opportunity to see Marcel Duchamp’s *Boîte en-valise*, created for Peggy Guggenheim in 1941, which is shown together with the *pittura metafisica* of Giorgio de Chirico and paintings by Sironi. Less well known artists make appearances, such as Humphrey Jennings, documentary film-maker and founding member of British Surrealism, or Bice Lazzari, Venetian painter of the avant-garde. An early work by André Masson reminds us that he introduced Miró to the art of Klee in the early 1920 and another later work testifies to his considerable influence on young painters in New York in the early 1940s. Victor Brauner, the Rumanian painter and friend of Peggy Guggenheim, is represented by three works, including an allegorical self-portrait, *The Surrealist*, in which the artist appears as the Juggler of the Tarot cards, and a work influenced by the ‘pataphysics’ of Alfred Jarry titled *Téléventré*. After a long absence, Jean Arp’s *Head and Shell*, the first work to enter Peggy Guggenheim’s collection, is once more on display, together with works by British artists Henry Moore, Alan Davie and Ben Nicholson.

For the museum’s thirtieth anniversary, an important donation is on its way: twelve photographs of Peggy Guggenheim and her *palazzo*, dating from 1958 by celebrated Bolognese photographer Nino Migliori, have been donated by Giovanni and Anna Rosa Cotroneo, themselves noted photography collectors. “The house was different from anything I had ever experienced,” recalls Migliori, “...it was the perfect expression of Peggy’s own determined and volatile personality, enigmatic but predictable. The works of art were not hung for decoration; they were an integral part of a suggestive and emotive ambience.” The photographs will be on view to the public from April 7 through July 26 at the Museum Cafe.

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The Peggy Guggenheim Collection celebrates its anniversary with two other surprises for its visitors. From April onwards, through December 2010, each Friday from 4-6pm, 'Pay What You Wish' will invite visitors to the museum to enter without purchasing a ticket but by making instead a donation in an amount of their own choice, "what you wish", in support of the museum's operating expenses. This is practiced already by New York's major museums, such as MoMA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art. The novelty in Italy of 'Pay What You Wish' at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection matches Peggy Guggenheim's own spirit of generosity and enterprise, and it is supported by Distilleria Nardini. Secondly, the museum welcomes visitors who can demonstrate with ID that they are thirty years of age to a complimentary visit to the museum, to its exhibitions and to Peggy Guggenheim's collection of modern masters, from Picasso and Magritte to Kandinsky and Pollock. Thirdly, students of the video-maker course at the Istituto Europeo di Design - IED are creating a 'viral' video that captures the museum's spirit of innovation and originality.

Finally, 2010 is also the thirtieth anniversary of the Intern Program of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. Since 1980 the museum has organized a year-round education program of internships for students of art, art history, museology and related subjects, enabling them to live and learn together in Venice, and to acquire experience in a major museum of modern art. Almost 3000 young people have passed through the program over the past thirty years, growing from 6 students per month in 1980 to as many as 30 today. In 2009, 147 interns were selected from 37 countries from approximately 1200 applicants—from Iran to Turkey, Chile, Canada, Ukraine and the Arab Emirates.

Philip Rylands, Director of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, summarized the spirit of this anniversary: "The museum looks at the next thirty years with optimism, and thanks all those who have generously helped us through the first thirty, such as the Regione del Veneto, the members of our Advisory Board, the Banca del Gottardo, now BSI in Lugano, and Intrapresæ Collezione Guggenheim. Above all we are indebted to Peggy Guggenheim's genius, and to the supreme quality of her collection of great modern art."

The programs of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection are supported by members of the Advisory Board and by:

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e-mail: [info@guggenheim-venice.it](mailto:info@guggenheim-venice.it); sito web <http://www.guggenheim-venice.it>  
Opening times: 10am–6pm daily; closed Tuesdays and December 25  
Admission: 12 euro; Seniors over 65, 10 euro; Students 7 euro; 0-10 years, free.  
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