

Museum of Modern Art - Remarks
January 24, 2005

(Introduction by Ken Auletta)

Ken, thank you so much. I was thrilled to find out that the journalist called the “media Boswell” by *New York Magazine* is a graduate of our Maxwell School.

This is such a terrific gathering of the SU family – including the Chair of our Board, John Couri and his wife Elaine, and many of our trustee colleagues. After all, how often do we get to welcome everyone to the “new MoMA” – which we call “Bob Menschel’s MoMA.”

The new MoMA is so special precisely because it is both new and familiar, modern in its embrace of the future, and yet respectful of its grand past. For every New Yorker like me, it is still the MoMA of my childhood, when I’d come as a kid and do papers in the public library across the way and then go wandering into MoMA – mostly eating and running in the sculpture garden. What is special now is that this can also be the MoMA of my future, of my adulthood, and a new period of discovery comes with this expansion.

At the risk of delusions of grandeur, that special sense of a grand past in a new period of discovery is what I hope you also feel about Syracuse University, as you and I---and our extraordinary faculty and students-- point it toward the future.

As so many of you know well, Bob Menschel has not only created a new MoMA, but he has also steadfastly led Syracuse into the future, bringing his imagination to campus in the Menschel Media Center with its remarkable Lightwork Gallery and Community Darkrooms, and teaming up with his brother Richard just this fall to support our installation of *Six Curved Walls* by Sol LeWitt, another SU alum.

I am especially grateful for *Six Curved Walls*, as a celebration of my installation as Chancellor and as a symbol of SU’s legacy of accomplished alumni such as Menschel and LeWitt, and a willingness develop new spaces,

languages, and sensibilities for the path ahead. Bob, we all applaud you for your creativity and commitment to the Modern, and to our future.

Joining Bob as Honorary Trustee hosts tonight are two other extraordinary individuals, Marty Whitman and Donald Newhouse, who, along with Bob, represent the best of creative shapers of spaces and programs for Syracuse. Newhouse III, designed by Jim Polshek, will take the 40-year legacy of S.I. Newhouse into the future, while Marty Whitman has lent his name to the School of Management and is transforming its future. The Whitman School will also have a new building, designed by our alum, Bruce Fowle.

As you can see, Syracuse, like MoMA, has nurtured creativity and given it opportunities to grow.

Actually, museums and universities have a great deal in common, and when I speak, as I often do, of “the creative campus,” it is with that common bond in mind. When they work, as MoMA does, great museums nurture a vibrant, creative exchange of people, ideas, aesthetics and experience. The exchange is alive and engaging, sometimes soothing, often disconcerting, and always refreshing, even when you learn what you don’t like.

At the heart of the exchange are so many disciplines – architecture, art, communications, technology, urban sociology, entrepreneurship and business, education, global affairs, history and preservation. And when it works, the artistic exchange crackles because of these diverse voices, including multiple generations interacting via many media, coming together, speaking their own truths passionately but hearing others too.

When it works, this multi-disciplinary, multi-generational, multi-media exchange encourages not only *narratives*---in which we tell our *own* stories and thereby affirm difference---but also *conversations*---dialogues between people, cultures, periods---which have the potential to make us understand, if not always appreciate, each other, on campus and off, in the museum or in the city outside, in a world in which temporal and physical boundaries limit neither our opportunities nor our fears.

That is a recipe for the creative campus, and that is what Syracuse, like MoMA, has been and can be even more. It is what Barbara White, a composer at Princeton, calls a home for “experience-oriented imaginative space.”

And what kind of space (gorgeous in this case) is it? I've used a metaphor for universities that I think also applies well to great museums. A university should find itself positioned somewhere between the monastery and the marketplace. A university must offer time and freedom for reflection and experimentation, rare commodities in our too busy, too specialized culture. At the same time, it should be engaged with the world and the pressing concerns of the day, including the different voices pushing to be heard. It should test those ideas in the marketplace, be it in neighborhood projects, through technology commercialization, on theater row or Wall Street, at the Olympics or the United Nations.

It should do, for example, what the Newhouse Breakfast series, moderated by Ken Auletta, does in NY and what the newly named Edward Bleier Center for Media and Popular Culture does on campus— test ideas right in the midst of ongoing dilemmas facing our disciplines and our professions.

Or it should provide what Whitman students experience on Wall Street through the Stuart Frankel Scholars Program, or what Maxwell students and faculty experience when they join the alumni mentors at our High School for Leadership and Public Service in NY. That is, it should provide a dose of reality.

A great university should be agile—not arrogant. It should take a lesson from the arts, being wary of the double-edged sword of expertise, wary of believing that what we know is right.

As Pablo Picasso once observed, “We all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth.”

A great museum is full of the works of artists who took both the world and themselves with the appropriate skepticism. Right here in this gallery, Barnett Newman's sculpture “Broken Obelisk” is but one of his many pieces that rejected dogma. In the words of the late art historian Barbara Reise, Newman was “the modern Renaissance Man Old Master: accepting categories respected through human history, but always re-examining and

re-making them within and through his own contributions.”¹ Great artists like Newman manage somehow to celebrate and criticize life all at once.

And great museums let that be a two-way street, opening themselves to the public, vulnerable to both the adulation and the scorn of the marketplace. So too must a great university engage its world with honesty and humility.

That is why we are reaching out beyond our “Hill” in central NY to the corners of the world where our alumni, friends, and fellow dreamers have recognized the unbounded qualities of the creative campus.

In celebration of The Christo “Gates” project in Central Park, we held a cross disciplinary juried competition entitled “Off the Wall,” with students and faculty from VPA and Architecture.

Beginning on February 11, the winning entry, *heART* will be installed on the exterior of the Lubin House. *heART* is a celebration of our presence in the heart of Manhattan. At the same time, the work of our alumnus, documentary film maker Albert Maysles, who has chronicled Christo’s work for decades, will be on display in the Lubin House Palitz Gallery.

This is the creative campus in action: cross disciplinary, out of the boundaries of Syracuse, integrated into the life of New York, and involving students, faculty and alumni in a seamless celebration of this extraordinary work.

There are so many examples of the creative campus in NY: The “immersion experiences” provided by Allen Merkin for students in Social Work, Fine Arts, and Creative Writing, and by the Goldrings for arts journalism students from four colleges – VPA, Architecture, Newhouse and Arts and Sciences.

And now, Trustee Arielle Tepper, our pioneer of imagination, has pushed us to think expansively with a full semester’s immersion for drama students here in New York City.

¹ Barbara Reise, “The Stance of Barnett Newman,” *Studio International*, Vol 179, Number 919, 1970.[Can be found on the web at http://www.studio-international.co.uk/archive/newman_b_1970_179_919.htm }

Even as we recharge our connections here in NYC and in similar efforts underway in Los Angeles and London, we want to be a key player in the continuing revitalization of the city that is our home. With help from many of you, we are working to forge additional ties with the arts community here in the city, and I'd like to see artists coming back and forth between here and Syracuse, homesteading in Armory Square and sharing their work on and off "the hill."

In Syracuse, the announcement that we intend to create a serious downtown presence with SU artists, architects, engineers and scientists, entrepreneurs, and geographers – to name only a few of the faculty, staff, and students who will be working downtown – was greeted with surprise and delight.

"Syracuse is buzzing," the *Post-Standard* newspaper editorialized a few days later. "A new dream has been born."

Higher education is about dreams, as every student and parent knows. We are creating new ways for all of us – our students, our faculty, our community, our alumni, and our friends, to experience a creative campus that is exhilarating, inviting, inclusive, challenging, and humane. Simply put, to dream big.

So I invite you to celebrate with us tonight both the past and what we will become. I look forward to meeting you and telling you more about our plans, and I encourage you to explore the wonders of this amazing experience-oriented imaginative space, this museum, poised between the monastery and the marketplace.