

Building a Broad Legacy

An Interview with
Eli Broad, Founder, The Broad Foundations

EDITORS' NOTE After working for two years as an accountant, Eli Broad founded a home-building company with Donald Kaufman. In 1971, the Kaufman and Broad Home Corporation acquired a small life insurance company for \$52.1 million that Broad eventually transformed into a retirement savings empire. With the merger of SunAmerica into AIG in 1999, Broad stepped down as CEO and turned his full-time attention to philanthropy. Broad is the founding Chairman and Life Trustee of The



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Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and a life trustee of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the California Institute of Technology, and The Museum of Modern Art in New York. He is also a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and, in 1994, was named Chevalier in the National Order of the Legion of Honour by the Republic of France. In 2004, he became a Regent of the Smithsonian Institution by appointment of the U.S. Congress and the President, serving until 2009. In 2007, he was awarded the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy. In 2013, Broad and his wife, Edythe, were awarded the Simon Prize for Philanthropic Leadership. Broad attended Michigan State University, graduating with a degree in accounting and becoming the youngest CPA in the state's history. He authored a book titled, *The Art of Being Unreasonable: Lessons in Unconventional Thinking*. The Broads opened a new contemporary art museum in downtown Los Angeles in September 2015. The Broad has free general admission and was designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF The Broad Foundations (broadfoundation.org), which include The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and The Broad Art Foundation, were established by entrepreneur and philanthropist Eli Broad and his wife, Edythe, to advance entrepreneurship for the public good in education, science, and the arts. The Broad Foundations invest in improving K-12 public schools, advancing major scientific and medical research to improve human health, and fostering public appreciation of contemporary art by increasing access for audiences worldwide.

Looking at the impact that The Broad Foundation has had in many areas, specifically in education, science, and the

arts, what made you decide to focus on those areas, and are they interrelated?

They are separate focuses, but there is some relationship among them.

In terms of scientific and medical research, the Broad Institute partners with Harvard and MIT, and it's our biggest investment – \$700 million and it's 14 years old; it has 2,500 people and a \$450 million annual research budget. They've done wonders there. It's number one in the world now in genomics, so we feel good about that, and that will be a great part of our legacy.

In California, we funded three stem-cell research centers at UCLA, USC, and UC San Francisco. They just celebrated their 10th anniversary and have made great strides in a number of areas, so we feel good about that as well.

For the arts, in September 2015, we opened The Broad museum in downtown Los Angeles, and the attendance has been well beyond anything we expected – 1.1 million people to date. What's most interesting is that our attendees are an average of 12 years younger than the national art museum average, and furthermore it's a very diverse audience.

In education, we feel strongly about what we've done to highlight high-quality public charter schools by creating The Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools and, more importantly, The Broad Center, which trains superintendents and also public school system leaders. They've trained 650 people who are out there making a difference in public education. The Broad Center is now accredited to give master's degrees in education leadership.

Why hasn't there been much success with public education reform?

There was something called A Nation at Risk about 34 years ago that talked about how our nation is at risk because of our education system. Progress has been very slow because we have an education bureaucracy that doesn't want change, and there are teachers' unions that don't want to see change either.

We need greater public school choice, though I don't support vouchers. We need greater competition among traditional public schools and public charter schools, magnet schools, and the like. Change has not happened fast enough.

Are charter schools the hope for that?

High-quality public charter schools have led the way, and they've been innovative and have led other traditional public schools follow their lead.

When you had the vision for the museum, could you have anticipated this type of reception?

No. The attendance is almost three times what we expected, and we have in a way reinvented the American museum.

It is very friendly. The building is by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, who did the High Line New York, re-did Lincoln Center, and are doing an addition to MOMA. It's a very innovative building.

We also don't have security guards – we have visitor service associates. These are young people who we give 50 hours of training to, and while they ensure the art is protected, they engage the public in everything from the art and artists to architecture and even the other cultural institutions along Grand Avenue. This is a different model than having guards in uniform just standing there that don't know anything about art.

We also have free general admission.

How important is it for young people to learn about art early on?

It's important and helps them become more creative and thoughtful. Artists look at the world differently than businesspeople and others and young people can learn from the artists.

How critical has it been that you've found the right scientific partners?

We've been fortunate in getting Eric Lander to be the director of the Broad Institute and of course the partnership we have with Harvard and MIT and with the board leadership we have. The Broad Institute has reinvented a way to conduct science by getting people out of labs and collaborating. We now have platforms with everything from computer scientists to engineers, physicists, biologists, and chemists all working together, and their discoveries are made freely available to all.

Was it a natural transition for you to go from business into philanthropy?

I'm an entrepreneur, so with everything we have done in philanthropy, we have come up with the ideas rather than wait for people to send us grant applications.

We have three tests for our philanthropy: will it happen without us? If it's going to happen anyway, we don't get involved. Will it make a difference 20 or 30 years from now? Are there great, talented people in an organization who can really make something happen?

We're not just in the business of writing checks; we are trying to create new things or improve existing institutions. ●