

Friday, July 30, 2021

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Guggenheim Museum Staff Are Unionizing**

NEW YORK, NY—Technical, Office and Professional Union Local 2110 UAW petitioned the National Labor Relations Board on Friday, July 30, 2021, for a union election among professional and non-professional staff of the Guggenheim Museum. The unit includes conservators, curators, educators, digital marketing, visitor service and other administrative staff. Staff members cite job insecurity, wage inequities and the need for more transparent employee policies as among the reasons for organizing a union. The employees are unionizing with the Local 2110 UAW, which represents cultural and educational workers across New York and New England.

Citing the pandemic closure, the Guggenheim announced an 11 percent reduction of its staff last year in advance of the institution's September 2020 reopening. The economic fallout caused by the global Covid-19 pandemic further exposed the insecurities of non-unionized workplaces and galvanized workers to organize.

“Through the organizing process, I’ve learned about the working conditions of my colleagues. With a union, we can bargain for a contract that respects seniority, which will lead to more longevity and sustainability in our workforce,” said Julie K. Smitka, Associate Producer, Digital Experience. “Our efforts to unionize come from our continued care for the Guggenheim Museum. The Guggenheim Museum Union allows for collective representation of staff voices and translates real workplace issues into practice,” She adds, “We can memorialize what we love about working at the Guggenheim into a union contract, so that our future colleagues are able to benefit too.”

The last few years have seen thousands of workers in cultural institutions decide to unionize. Employees at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Hispanic Society of America, Anthology Film Archives, MASS MoCA, Studio in a School, the Portland Museum of Art, and the MFA Boston voted to unionize with Local 2110 between November 2020 and July 2021. Many have cited similar issues of low pay, lack of job security, and little or no transparency about institutional plans.

“I am excited to join in the wave of organizing at museums and bringing arts workers together to improve our workplaces. As a Youth Educator at the Guggenheim Museum for over nine years, I care about making the museum an equitable place to work and forming a union is the best and only way to do so,” says Seth Caplan.

“As staff members, we recognize how important unionizing is for the future of the Guggenheim Museum and the arts generally,” said Rosemary Taylor, who has worked as an educator and teaching artist at the museum for over four years.

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