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A John Bock work from 2007 is part of a planned show at Guggenheim Bilbao of works from the collection of Dimitris Daskalopoulos.

## Guggenheim Defends Show of Trustee's Art

When the New Museum presented an exhibition of artwork belonging to one of its trustees, "Skin Fruit: Selections From the Dakis Joannou Collection," outraged critics questioned the decision, saying such a show represented, among other things, too much curatorial power for a serious benefactor.

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Now history appears to be quickly repeating itself. From April 12 through Sept. 11 the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao will present "The Luminous Interval," a show of artwork belonging to another Greek businessman who is also a museum trustee.

He is Dimitris Daskalopoulos, a passionate contemporary-art collector who transformed his family's

dairy business into the Greek food empire Vivartia. (Mr. Daskalopoulos sold his stake in the company in 2007 for about \$560 million.)

Richard Armstrong, director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, which oversees all the Guggenheim museums, defended the show. "There's a history in New York at least since the 1860s of private collections' being shared with the public," he said. He noted that Mr. Daskalopoulos had been involved with the Guggenheim for the last 10 years — for instance, helping the museum buy work, like Matthew Barney's "Chrysler Imperial" (2002) — and that the possibility of this exhibition had been discussed for more than five years.

Still, Mr. Armstrong added, al-

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though this show will be presented "with huge integrity, I'm not sure we can ever convince everybody."

Earlier this week Mr. Daskalopoulos was sitting in the lobby of the Four Seasons Hotel in New York, having flown from his home in Athens to attend a Guggenheim board meeting and take in a few museum exhibitions.

"I've been collecting art since I was a teenager," he said. "I don't know why; I guess it's an archetypal inner urge." Over 20 years Mr. Daskalopoulos, 53, has amassed a collection of more than 400 works by almost 200 artists, including international names like Damien Hirst, Kiki Smith, Marina Abramovic, Robert Gober, David Hammons and John Bock. Much of the collection, however, consists of overscale work, not the kind of thing that's easy to display at home.

As a result, "most of my collection has been in the darkness of crates," he said. In his Athens home he lives with almost no art except a "worthless carved statuette I bought in Thailand when I was 17," as well as a painting by Rebecca Horn that he bought in 1992, his first contemporary-artwork purchase.

Recently he has been spending time scouring Athens for a space to house his collection where the public can see it. In the meantime some of his works are on view in a four-part series of exhibitions at the Whitechapel Gallery in London.

Now he is looking forward to showing about 60 more works — by a mix of well-known artists like Mr. Barney, Louise Bourgeois and Martin Kippenberger, and newer names like Nate Lowman, Paul Chan and Wangechi Mutu — at the Guggenheim Bilbao, despite the controversy the show might cause. "The art market is a financial market and an unregulated market," he said on Tuesday morning. "I'm sure there are questionable practices. But if I was to make a list of them, this would be at the very bottom of it, if at all. Everything here is transparent. Everyone knows this is a trustee exhibition."

When "Skin Fruit" opened at the New Museum, critics questioned the institution's integrity and said it was giving too much power to one board member. Fueling attacks further was the choice of curator: the artist Jeff Koons. Not only is every period of Mr. Koons's work represented in Mr. Joannou's collection, but the two men are also close friends. Those objecting noted that giving the art the imprimatur of a museum exhibition would automatically inflate the price of the collection, were he to sell pieces in the future.

Addressing that issue, Mr. Daskalopoulos has signed an agreement with both the Guggenheim and the Whitechapel, stating that he has no intention of selling any works in their shows during their run and for at least three years following.