

American MASTERS

20
years

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WNET NEW YORK

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press information

THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK'S *AMERICAN MASTERS* EXPLORES THE CREATIVE PROCESS OF A PIONEERING ARCHITECT IN *SKETCHES OF FRANK GEHRY*, DIRECTED BY SYDNEY POLLACK, PREMIERING IN SEPTEMBER ON PBS

Pollack's First Feature-Length Documentary; Selected for Cannes Film Festival

Features Interviews With Disney CEO Michael Eisner, Musician Bob Geldof, Actor Dennis Hopper, Architect Philip Johnson, Artist Julian Schnabel, And Gehry's Psychiatrist

In 1998, acclaimed director Sydney Pollack traveled to Spain to see the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, a curvaceous, free-form structure that confirmed the world-wide reputation of its risk-taking architect, Frank O. Gehry. In Spain, at the site of his old friend's masterwork, an idea took hold for a documentary – Pollack's first. Like Gehry's buildings, Pollack's film would be different, a juxtaposition of the sophisticated and the adventurous. The resulting documentary, *AMERICAN MASTERS Sketches of Frank Gehry*, is both a testament to Gehry's greatness and a visual dialogue between two old friends – a compelling conversation about art, architecture, film, and American culture.

Sketches of Frank Gehry is directed by Sydney Pollack and produced by Mr. Pollack and Ultan Guilfoyle for *AMERICAN MASTERS*, a five-time winner of the Emmy for Outstanding Primetime Non-Fiction Series. The film premieres Wednesday, September 27 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings) and is a highlight of the 20th anniversary season of the Peabody Award-winning series. *Sketches* opened the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival in Durham, NC in April and was screened at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City in May. The film was a special presentation at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2005.

Pollack, who has known Gehry for 30 years, says he hopes to create a filmed complement to Gehry's architecture. "Frank often says that the sketch is the most fulfilling thing," says Pollack. "We

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want to preserve that, the sketch quality – in the way we tell the story, and in the way we make the film.”

Susan Lacy, creator and executive producer of *AMERICAN MASTERS*, says *Sketches* is about the creative process, about art, light, movement and form. “Frank Gehry is absolutely an American Master – he is an artist, a poet, a Picasso for our time,” says Lacy. “We are so fortunate to have Sydney Pollack directing this film. The interplay between these two great artists is wonderful to witness. Their friendship is, really, the heart of the film.”

In a nod to Gehry’s own impromptu style, Pollack used hand-held video cameras to record hours of conversations between the two men at Gehry’s studio and Santa Monica home. Always in the background are the radical design and unorthodox materials – such as chain link fence, corrugated metal and plywood – that helped propel Gehry to architecture’s forefront.

To capture the beauty and distinct nature of Gehry’s architecture, Pollack turned to film, utilizing the powerful visual style that earned him critical raves for Oscar winners like *Out of Africa*. Together, Pollack and Gehry traveled to several of Gehry’s signature buildings, such as the brand-new, \$274-million Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, which *The New York Times* called “the most gallant building you are ever likely to see.”

Gehry’s creative process often starts with an abstract sketch. From there, as Pollack shows, Gehry turns ephemeral drawings into architectural models created in his own studio. The resulting buildings – constructed of titanium and glass, concrete and steel, wood and stone – have risen in Spain, the Czech Republic, Germany, Scotland, Switzerland, and the United States.

For lifetime achievements, Gehry was awarded architecture’s highest honor, the Pritzker Prize in 1989. Calling Gehry “refreshingly original and totally American,” the Pritzker jury wrote: “In an artistic climate that too often looks backward rather than toward the future, where retrospectives are more prevalent than risk-taking, it is important to honor the architecture of Frank O. Gehry.”

But as Gehry himself says in *Sketches*, “I don’t dwell on talent or creativity. I worry that if you think about it too much, it’ll go away.”

Sketches of Frank Gehry is directed by Sydney Pollack and produced by Mr. Pollack and

Ultan Guilfoyle for *AMERICAN MASTERS*. Susan Lacy is the executive producer of *AMERICAN MASTERS*. Barry Schulman is director of cultural and arts programs for Thirteen/WNET New York.

To take *AMERICAN MASTERS* beyond the television broadcast and further explore the themes, stories, and personalities of masters past and present, the companion Web site (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters>), created by Thirteen/WNET New York, offers interviews, essays, photographs, outtakes and other resources.

AMERICAN MASTERS is produced for PBS by Thirteen/WNET New York. This acclaimed series, now celebrating its 20th season, has become a cultural legacy in its own right. The *AMERICAN MASTERS* film library is one of the most highly honored in television history with profiles of more than 140 artistic giants. In addition to seven Peabodys, an Oscar and two Grammys, *AMERICAN MASTERS* has won 16 Emmys, including Outstanding Primetime Non-Fiction Series for 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, and 2004.

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Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *AMERICAN MASTERS*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, and *Cyberchase* - as well as the work of Bill Moyers - to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as *The Ethnic Heritage Specials*, *The Thirteen Walking Tours*, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. With educational and community outreach projects that extend the impact of its television productions, Thirteen takes television "out of the box." And as broadcast and digital media converge, Thirteen is blazing trails in the creation of Web sites, enhanced television, CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs, educational software, and other cutting-edge media products. More information about Thirteen can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

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