

SUBMARINE
DELUXE

PEGGY GUGGENHEIM: ART ADDICT

Directed by Lisa Immordino Vreeland
Produced by Stanley Buchthal, David Koh and Dan Braun



****2015 TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL – Official Selection****
****2015 AFI DOCS FESTIVAL – Official Selection****
****2015 TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL – Official Selection****

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SYNOPSIS

Lisa Immordino Vreeland follows up her acclaimed debut "Diana Vreeland: The Eye has to Travel" with PEGGY GUGGENHEIM: ART ADDICT. A colorful character who was not only ahead of her time but helped to define it, Peggy Guggenheim was an heiress to her family fortune who became a central figure in the modern art movement. As she moved through the cultural upheaval of the 20th century, she collected not only art, but artists. Her colorful personal history included such figures as Samuel Beckett, Max Ernst, Jackson Pollock, Alexander Calder, Marcel Duchamp as well as countless others. While fighting through personal tragedy, she maintained her vision to build one of the most important collections of modern art, now enshrined in her Venetian palazzo.

A CONVERSATION WITH LISA IMMORDINO VREELAND, DIRECTOR, PEGGY GUGGENHEIM: ART ADDICT

What is your personal connection to Peggy Guggenheim?

Lisa Immordino Vreeland: As an art history major I was always interested in Peggy. I'd read her autobiography, *Out of This Century*, when I was at school and found her to be this very courageous woman who decided she really wanted to do something with her life at the late age of 40. At a young age she wasn't happy within the confines of her own traditional family and wanted to step out from that, so her desire for transformation was very interesting to me. There was a lot of sadness in her life but she was able to find real definition by throwing herself into the avant-garde circles of artists and finding a real purpose for her life, which I found very inspiring.

The movie is framed around a lost interview with Peggy conducted late in her life. How did you acquire these tapes?

LIV: We optioned Jacqueline Bogard Weld's book, *Peggy : The Wayward Guggenheim*, the only authorized biography of Peggy, which was published after she died. Jackie had spent two summers interviewing Peggy but at a certain point lost the tapes somewhere in her Park Avenue apartment. Jackie had so much access to Peggy, which was incredible, but it was also the access that she had to other people who had known Peggy — she interviewed over 200 people for her book. Jackie was incredibly generous, letting me go through all her original research except for the lost tapes. We'd walk into different rooms in her apartment and I'd suggestively open a closet door and ask "Where do you think those tapes might be?" Then one day I asked if she had a basement, and she did. So I went through all these boxes down there, organizing her affairs. Then bingo, the tapes showed up in this shoebox. It was the longest interview Peggy had ever done and it became the framework for our movie. There's nothing more powerful than when you have someone's real voice telling the story, and Jackie was especially good at asking provoking questions. You can tell it was hard for Peggy to answer a lot of them, because she wasn't someone who was especially expressive; she didn't have a lot of emotion. And this comes across in the movie, in the tone of her voice.

Had you never found the tapes, what would your documentary have consisted of?

LIV: So many different things have been written about Peggy — there were hundreds of articles written about her during her lifetime. She also kept beautiful scrapbooks of articles written about her, which are now in the archives of the Guggenheim Museum. She also wrote her own autobiography and there have been several biographies written on her. So the film was always going to be an accumulation of all these different resources.

What are some of Peggy Guggenheim's qualities that made you feel she was a worthy subject of a documentary feature?

LIV: Her courageousness above all; if you look at her historically, she was in the middle of World War II living in Paris and collecting art until the very last minute. I also love stories about people who are trying to reinvent themselves in order to find a deeper purpose in their lives. Peggy grew up in a very traditional family of German Bavarian Jews who had moved to New York City in the 19th century. They lived very much like the Rockefellers.

Already at a young age Peggy felt like there were too many rules around her and she wanted to break out. That alone was something attractive to me — the notion that she knew that she didn't fit in to her family or her times. She also came of age during a period of history that is a particular favorite of mine. She was in Paris of the '20s, the most exciting place to be, culturally, among the Dadaists and the Surrealists. The art historian John Richardson, who is a subject in the film, uses the word pollinator to describe Peggy, and that's precisely what she was, finding herself in these extraordinary circumstances and helping all these artists that she meets, which was a very unique position to be in. For me, Peggy was all about thinking one step ahead in everything she endeavored. And in the end it was also all about the art — the fact that art became her motivating factor in life.

The Guardian described your previous feature, *Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has To Travel* as "a fascinating glimpse into the life of an unconventional woman as well as a brief canter through the history of the 20th century" — indeed, Vreeland and Guggenheim were born and died within ten years of each other. Did you see an immediate comparison in these two women?

LIV: Their personalities are very different. They were both rebels, and I like the idea of being a rebel. Both women were from traditional families and decided they wanted to make their own rules. Mrs. Vreeland was a happy person while Peggy was more subdued. I think Mrs. Vreeland was totally visionary — she would say ordinary things that had so many different meanings, and that's the reason why she's so influential today, especially in the world of fashion. Peggy was also visionary but emotionally she was not as alive. Like its predecessor, the 20th century is a main character in the film but it's shown very differently here. This film is rich with the lives of the most important artists of the time — and Peggy is in the center of the action.

"She was a feminist without realizing it" is how you described Diana Vreeland in the same Guardian interview. Would you say the same thing about Peggy Guggenheim?

LIV: Definitely — but Peggy wouldn't have defined herself as a feminist. Both she and Mrs. Vreeland were very traditional in the way they were brought up. In Peggy's case, once she decided she needed a purpose in life, she created a certain trajectory for herself and eventually she was doing exactly what she wanted to do. But it was never with the idea of I want to be a feminist, or this is what I stand for — it was more out of this desire to help the artists and to find a real purpose in her own life. She always had in mind the idea of creating a collection that people could see, and this was her idea of being able to give back to others. She wanted to share this collection, and when she finally got to Venice and made a home for herself and her collection, that was in her way a victory.

This is your second film. Can you talk about the process of putting this one together and how it differed from its predecessor?

LIV: The most challenging thing about this one was the vast amount of material we had at our disposal. We had a lot of media to go through — instead of fashion spreads, which informed *The Eye Has To Travel*, we had art, which was fantastic. I was spoiled by the access we had to these incredible archives and footage. I'm still new to this, but it's the storytelling aspect that I loved in both projects. One thing about Peggy that Mrs. Vreeland didn't have was a very tragic personal life. There was so much that happened in Peggy's life before you even got to what she actually accomplished. And so we had to tell a very dense story about

her childhood, her father dying on the Titanic, her beloved sister dying — the tragic events that fundamentally shaped her in a way. It was about making sure we had enough of the personal story to go along with her later accomplishments. World War II alone was such a huge part of her story, opening an important art gallery in London, where she showed Kandinsky and other important artists for the first time. The amount of material to distill was a tremendous challenge and I hope we made the right choices.

Your sources in the movie are an eclectic group hailing from all over the world and spanning multiple fields, eras and disciplines. How did you go about building your list of sources?

LIV: It was a real team effort. There were certain obvious people, like those within the Guggenheim Museum and Philip Rylands, the Director of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, and of course Jackie Weld who wrote the only “authorized” biography on Peggy. They are the ones who helped us validate the story. We focused on trying to rely on her friends to tell more personal aspects of her story and then art historians, gallery owners and museum directors to talk about her legacy. John Richardson, the definitive Picasso biographer, plays a very prominent role in the film — he's telling us a great deal of Peggy's story, second only to Peggy herself. Finally, we wanted to speak with current art world figures, like Marina Abramovic and Larry Gagosian, because it's important for people of today to find a point of connection with Peggy. So many people from across the spectrum have been influenced and inspired by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. It was great to hear what they had to say about it.

Peggy had a gift for being in the right place at the right time, culturally, and her art collection benefited from her astute radar. What do you think made her so prescient and attuned?

LIV: I wonder if it was being prescient or attuned or simply being at the right place at the right time — this is something I've questioned. In 1938, when Peggy opened Guggenheim Jeune in London, she was the first person to show certain artists in a certain way. There were of course other galleries but they weren't being run in the same fashion. She was smart enough to ask Marcel Duchamp to be her advisor — so she was in tune, and very well connected. She was on the cutting edge of what was going on and I think a lot of this had to do with Peggy being open to the idea of what was new and outrageous. You have to have a certain personality for this; what her childhood had dictated was totally opposite from what she became in life, and being in the right place at the right time helped her maintain a cutting edge throughout her life.

Your documentary is refreshingly frank in its depiction of Peggy's unapologetic sexuality — she's described by sources as a nymphomaniac, someone for whom sex and art went hand in hand...

LIV: Her autobiography was scandalous when it came out — and she didn't even use real names, she used pseudonyms for her numerous partners. Only after publication did she reveal the names of the men she slept with. The fact that she spoke about her sexual life at all was the most outrageous aspect. She was opening herself up to ridicule, but she didn't care. Peggy was her own person and she felt good in her own skin. But it was definitely unconventional behavior. I think her sexual appetites revealed a lot about finding her own identity. A lot of it was tied to the loss of her father, I think, in addition to her wanting to feel

accepted. She was also very adventurous — look at the men she slept with. I mean, come on, they are amazing! Samuel Beckett, Yves Tanguy, Marcel Duchamp, and she married Max Ernst. I think it was really ballsy of her to have been so open about her sexuality; this was not something people did back then. So many people are bound by conventional rules but Peggy said no. She grabbed hold of life and she lived it on her own terms.

The title *Art Addict* underscores Peggy's voracious appetite, which extended well beyond her sexuality. What do you think drove her or guided her eclectic, international taste for art and culture, which led to her world-class collection?

LIV: Families like Peggy's had this innate sense of internationalism because they traveled a lot — she had already traveled the world at a young age. She was never attached to New York, and found herself very much at home in Europe, where she found so much freedom in her life. When she had the hunger and drive to move to Paris she set about building a list of artists with the help of Herbert Read. And she later met and cultivated many of those artists. She had her own eye that she developed, which was another very modern thing about her. She was traveling back and forth between so many countries and had homes in different places, which is not something too many women were doing alone during this time. Of course the money gave her the freedom to do this — we have to remember that she inherited \$450,000 after her father's death, even today that's a huge sum. This helped in ensuring that there were few boundaries in her world, and the world was her oyster. Once she left New York, she developed a kind of drive that became a passion and in the end she really succeeded. But her story is also about loneliness, which also drove her. She had this fundamental sadness, and there was a lot of tragedy in her life. Going to Europe in the '20s was a way of escaping all the tragedy. She found a new lease on life by identifying with these outlandish artists; it was truly modern in the way she approached life and built her collection.

You go fairly deep into Peggy's childhood — we learn that she was a depressive child and a worrier who was also mired in tragedy. Art became a way for her to find herself emotionally....

LIV: Art was planted early on in her life and she was passionate about it — but it was Renaissance art that initially inspired her, not the avant-garde works that became such a defining force in her life. During her family trips as a child she traveled all over the world looking at various kinds of art. When she first moved over to Europe she would journey through all these towns in search of one perfect Renaissance painting that had enchanted her as a child. She had a lot of sadness in her life, even after her father's death. Her husband would beat her, and her sister died in her 20's and then her daughter died. At the end of her life, I don't think her sense of loneliness and loss had left her — it was still very much a part of her. But what happened was that art came to fill this huge void in her.

One of her greatest achievements was her gallery space in New York City, Art of This Century, which was unlike anything the art world has seen before or since in the way that it shattered the boundaries of the gallery space that we've come to know today — the sterile white cube. She came to be a genius at displaying her collections...

LIV: She was smart with Art of the Century because she hired Frederick Kiesler as a designer of the gallery and once again surrounded herself with the right people, including Howard Putzler, who was already involved with her at Guggenheim Jeune in London. And

she was hanging out with all the exiled Surrealists who were living in New York at the time, including her future husband, Max Ernst, who was the real star of that group of artists. With the help of these people, she started showing art in a completely different way that was both informal and approachable. In conventional museums and galleries, art was untouchable on the wall and inside frames. In Peggy's gallery, art stuck out from the walls; works weren't confined to frames. Kiesler designed special chairs you could sit in and browse canvases as you would texts in a library. Nothing like this had ever existed in New York before — even today there is nothing like it. She made the gallery into an exciting place where the whole concept of space was transformed. In Venice, the gallery space was also her home. Today, for a variety of reasons, the home aspect of the collection is less emphasized, though you still get a strong sense of Peggy's home life there. She was bringing art to the public in a bold new way, which I think is a great idea. It's art for everybody, which is very much a part of today's dialogue except that fewer people can afford the outlandish museum entry fees.

Larry Gagosian has one of the best descriptions of Peggy in the movie — "she was her own creation." Would you agree, and if so why?

LIV: She was very much her own creation. When he said that in the interview I had a huge smile on my face. In Peggy's case it stemmed from a real need to identify and understand herself. I'm not sure she achieved it but she completely recreated herself — she knew that she did not want to be what she was brought up to be. She tried being a mother, but that was not one of her strengths, so art became that place where she could find herself, and then transform herself. Nobody believed in the artists she cultivated and supported — they were outsiders and she was an outsider in the world she was brought up in. So it's in this way that she became her own great invention. I hope that her humor comes across in the film because she was extremely amusing — this aspect really comes across in her autobiography.

Finally, what do you think is Peggy Guggenheim's most lasting legacy, beyond her incredible art collection?

LIV: Her courage, and the way she used it to find herself. She had this ballsiness that not many people had, especially women. In her own way she was a feminist and it's good for women and young girls today to see women who stepped outside the confines of a very traditional family and made something of her life. Peggy's life did not seem that dreamy until she attached herself to these artists. It was her ability to redefine herself in the end that truly summed her up.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Lisa Immordino Vreeland (Director and Producer)

Lisa Immordino Vreeland has been immersed in the world of fashion and art for the past 25 years. She started her career in fashion as the Director of Public Relations for Polo Ralph Lauren in Italy and quickly moved on to launch two fashion companies, Pratico, a sportswear line for women, and Mago, a cashmere knitwear collection of her own design. Her first book was accompanied by her directorial debut of the documentary of the same name, *Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has To Travel* (2012). The film had its European premiere at the Venice Film Festival and its North American premiere at the Telluride Film Festival, going on to win the Silver Hugo at the Chicago Film Festival and the fashion category for the Design of the Year awards—otherwise known as “The Oscars” of design—at the Design Museum in London.

Stanley Buchthal (Producer)

Stanley Buchthal is a producer and entrepreneur. His movies credits include *Hairspray*, *Spanking the Monkey*, *Up at the Villa*, *Lou Reed Berlin*, *Love Marilyn*, *LennoNYC*, *Bobby Fischer Against the World*, *Herb & Dorothy*, *Marina Abramovic: The Artist is Present*, *Jean-Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child*, *Sketches of Frank Gehry*, *Black White + Gray: a Portrait of Sam Wagstaff* and *Robert Mapplethorpe*, among numerous others.

David Koh (Producer)

David Koh is an independent producer, distributor, sales agent, programmer & curator. He has been involved in the distribution, sale, production, and financing of over 200 films. He is currently a partner in the boutique label Submarine Entertainment with Josh & Dan Braun and is also partners with Stanley Buchthal and his Dakota Group Ltd where he co-manages a portfolio of over 50 projects a year (75% docs and 25% fiction). Previously he was a partner and founder of Arthouse Films a boutique distribution imprint and ran Chris Blackwell's (founder of Island Records & Island Pictures) film label, Palm Pictures. He has worked as a Producer for artist Nam June Paik and worked in the curatorial departments of Anthology Film Archives, MoMA, MFA Boston, and the Guggenheim Museum. David has recently served as a Curator for Microsoft and has curated an ongoing film series and salon with Andre Balazs Properties and serves as a Curator for the exclusive Core Club in NYC. David recently launched with his partners Submarine Deluxe, a distribution imprint; Torpedo Pictures, a low budget high concept label; and *NFP Submarine Doks*, a German distribution imprint with NFP Films. Recently and upcoming projects include *Yayoi Kusama: a Life in Polka Dots: Burden: a Portrait of Artist Chris Burden*, *Dior & I*, *20 Feet From Stardom*, *Muscle Shoals*, *Marina Abramovic the Artist is Present*, *Rats NYC*, *Nas: Time Is Illmatic*, *Blackfish*, *Love Marilyn*, *Chasing Ice*, *Searching for Sugar Man*, *Cutie & the Boxer*, *Jean-Michel Basquiat: the Radiant Child*, *Finding Vivian Maier*, *The Wolfpack*, *Meru*, and *Station to Station*.

Dan Braun (Producer)

Dan Braun is a producer, writer, art director and musician/composer based in NYC. He is the Co- President of and Co-founder of Submarine, a NYC film sales and production company specializing in independent feature and documentary films. Titles include *Blackfish*, *Finding Vivian Maier*, *Muscle Shoals*, *The Case Against 8*, *Keep On Keepin' On*,

Winter's Bone, *NAS: Time is Illmatic*, *Dior and I* and Oscar winning docs *Man on Wire*, *Searching for Sugarman*, *20 Ft From Stardom* and *Citizenfour*. He was Executive Producer on documentaries *Kill Your Idols*, (which won Best NY Documentary at the Tribeca Film Festival 2004), *Blank City*, *Sunshine Superman*, the upcoming feature adaptations of *Batkid Begins* and *The Battered Bastards of Baseball* and the upcoming horror TV anthology *Creepy* to be directed by Chris Columbus. He is a producer of the free jazz documentary *Fire Music*, and the upcoming documentaries, *Burden* on artist Chris Burden and *Kusama: a Life in Polka Dots* on artist Yayoi Kusama. He is also a writer and consulting editor on Dark Horse Comic's *Creepy* and *Eerie* comic book and archival series for which he won an Eisner Award for best archival comic book series in 2009. He is a musician/composer whose compositions were featured in the films *I Melt With You* and Jean-Michel Basquiat, *The Radiant Child* and is an award winning art director/creative director when he worked at TBWA/Chiat/Day on the famous Absolut Vodka campaign.

John Northrup (Co-Producer)

John Northrup began his career in documentaries as a French translator for *National Geographic: Explorer*. He quickly moved into editing and producing, serving as the Associate Producer on *Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has To Travel* (2012), and editing and co-producing *Wilson In Situ* (2014), which tells the story of theatre legend Robert Wilson and his Watermill Center. Most recently, he oversaw the post-production of Jim Chambers' *Onward Christian Soldier*, a documentary about Olympic- Bomber Eric Rudolph, and is shooting on Susanne Rostock's *Another Night in the Free World*, the follow-up to her award-winning *Sing Your Song* (2011).

Submarine Entertainment (Production Company)

Submarine Entertainment is a hybrid sales, production, and distribution company based in NY. Recent and upcoming titles include *Citizenfour*, *Finding Vivian Maier*, *The Dog*, *Visitors*, *20 Feet from Stardom*, *Searching for Sugar Man*, *Muscle Shoals*, *Blackfish*, *Cutie & the Boxer*, *The Summit*, *The Unknown Known*, *Love Marilyn*, *Marina Abramovic the Artist is Present*, *Chasing Ice*, *Downtown 81 30th Anniversary Remastered*, *Wild Style 30th Anniversary Remastered*, *Good Ol Freda*, *Some Velvet Morning*, among numerous others. Submarine principals also represent *Creepy & Eerie* comic book library and are developing properties across film & TV platforms. Submarine has also recently launched a domestic distribution imprint & label called *Submarine Deluxe*; a genre label called *Torpedo Pictures*; and a German imprint & label called *NFP Submarine Doks*.

Bernadine Colish (Editor)

Bernadine Colish has edited a number of award-winning documentaries. *Herb and Dorothy* (2008), won Audience Awards at Silverdocs, Philadelphia and Hamptons Film Festivals, and *Body of War* (2007), was named Best Documentary by the National Board of Review. *A Touch of Greatness* (2004) aired on PBS Independent Lens and was nominated for an Emmy Award. Her career began at Maysles Films, where she worked with Charlotte Zwerin on such projects as *Thelonious Monk: Straight No Chaser*, *Toru Takemitsu: Music for the Movies* and the PBS American Masters documentary, *Ella Fitzgerald: Something To Live For*. Additional credits include *Bringing Tibet Home*, *Band of Sisters*, *Rise and Dream*, *The Tiger Next Door*, *The Buffalo War* and *Absolute Wilson*.

Jed Parker (Editor)

Jed Parker began his career in feature films before moving into documentaries through his work with the award-winning *American Masters* series. Credits include *Lou Reed: Rock and Roll Heart*, *Annie Liebovitz: Life Through a Lens*, and most recently *Jeff Bridges: The Dude Abides*. Other work includes two episodes of the PBS series *Make 'Em Laugh*, hosted by Billy Crystal, as well as a documentary on Met Curator Henry Geldzahler entitled *Who Gets to Call it Art?*

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FEATURING ARTISTS

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Constantin Brâncuși
Alexander Calder
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Salvador Dalí
Willem de Kooning
Marcel Duchamp
Max Ernst
Alberto Giacometti
Vasily Kandinsky
Fernand Léger
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Robert Motherwell
Jackson Pollock
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