

The name Guggenheim has always been linked to New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the masterpiece of architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

In the last two decades, however, under Thomas Kren's directorship, the Guggenheim has become a franchise; setting up branches all over America and across the world. A crucial dimension of this branding is its use of architecture. Kren commissions extreme new buildings and refits them from the world's most audacious architects. The Arata Isozaki designed Guggenheim Museum in Soho, Richard Gluckman's Deutsche Guggenheim Museum in Berlin, and Rem Koolhaas' Las Vegas Guggenheim in partnership with St. Petersburg's Hermitage Museum. The most notorious newest branch is Frank Gehry's snaky titanium-clad Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, which instantly became Spain's premier tourist destination. Tauranga Guggenheim suggests that if the brand can work for Bilbao, a Basque backwater, perhaps it could also work for the provincial New Zealand town of Tauranga. Conceptualized and presented as the Tauranga Guggenheim Museum, this 'new' brand adopts a cool transparent structure as its form, a 'generic super-modernist architecture, 'a museum for the age of transparency. The show mimics the manner and seriousness of architecture shows, presenting a collection of blueprint drawings, a video projection of the museum's interior, animated by architects Davor Popadich and Elvon Young, a 1:1 scale reconstruction of the museum's breathtaking second-story view, and an architectural model of the proposed Tauranga Guggenheim Museum itself. The work also includes a 16-minute soundtrack entitled 'Ambient Kenny G Can You Feel the Love Tonight'.

This sonic (anti-architectural) contribution is something of a key to the project. Slowing down a very popular Kenny G song, Mladen Bizumic stretches it into something that sounds more like Brian Eno's Music for Airports. The irony of the world's most commercial musician being made to sound avant-garde infects the entire show with a questioning of the current conflation of populist and avant-garde values in the marketing of modern and contemporary art.