

Blanchette Rockefeller, Engaged Leadership, and MoMA, 1949-1987

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Introduction

As the 1920s drew to a close, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Lillie P. Bliss, and Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan institutionalized avant-garde expression of all genres in the Museum of Modern Art (cited hereafter as “MoMA”). Just as the structure of the museum underwent renovation and expansion during ensuing decades, so did its management and artistic direction. By the early 1970s, MoMA had achieved renown as the premiere institution for modern art, yet its future mission remained unclear. Would it focus exclusively on the canon of modern art (i.e. from post-impressionism through abstract expressionism) or would it continue to catalog ever-emerging genres better known as contemporary movements? With these considerations in mind, the president and associate director of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) – a key source of funding for the institution – systematically reviewed MoMA’s recent past in 1975 and weighed alternatives for its future, including the following:

It has been suggested, with varying degrees of intensity, that MoMA close its doors and sell off or disperse its collections to other museums in cities less richly blessed than New York; that the museum be moved, lock, stock, and barrel to the Metropolitan or the Smithsonian; that MOMA, the Whitney, and the Guggenheim merge their assets to form a single museum of modern art in New York City; and even that parts of the MoMA collection be sold to help pay the museum’s operating expenses.¹

So ran the most extreme alternative imagined by William Dietel, president of the RBF, and Barbara Newsom, RBF associate director, on the eve of a fiftieth anniversary fund-raising campaign. The museum’s annual losses and shrinking endowment greatly concerned MoMA’s board – particularly considering the vital role it played in the life of American art. There was also growing concern that the RBF would not always bail out the museum.

It was into such a crisis that MoMA’s trustees turned to one of its most trusted administrators—a former program builder, trustee, and even president—in tandem with its director, Richard Oldenburg, to steady and strengthen the

iconic 53rd Street institution. This person, Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller, would serve a second term as president of MoMA, from 1972 to 1985. Through her (1) advocacy of artistic appreciation, (2) collaborative leadership, and (3) formal institution building, she would rally the museum's trustees, American corporations, and artistic patrons to expand MoMA and renew its purpose at the vanguard of modern art in the United States.

Blanchette Rockefeller and Engaged Leadership

Blanchette Rockefeller's role at MoMA has been acknowledged in recent histories of the museum, but little has been written about her unique leadership style and the ways she went about broadening participation among its key patrons. She is present in the photographic record of the museum's mid-twentieth century florescence in Harriet Schoenholz Bee and Michelle Elligott's *Art in Our Time: A Chronicle of the Museum of Modern Art*, while *Modern Art, New York: The History and the Collection* mentions Blanchette in passing as president during the 50th anniversary expansion drive.²

As mentioned in the introduction, this essay aims to highlight Blanchette Rockefeller's leadership style, which emphasized artistic appreciation, collaborative leadership, and institution building. As both a prominent donor to the museum as well as a fixture in leadership during the mid-twentieth century, Mrs. Rockefeller's leadership style falls somewhere between what we would think of as philanthropy and management. Not coincidentally, her husband, John D. Rockefeller 3rd, was engaged with public institutions in the sphere of Asia-US cultural and social relations and pioneered a type of philanthropy denominated "venture philanthropy," which entailed an intellectual and social commitment to favored causes that complemented financial support.³ In some sense, Blanchette's approach to leadership drew on three key areas: an intellectual emphasis, evident in her passion for promoting artistic appreciation; a social component, manifest in her use of collaborative efforts to advance the mission of MoMA; and, finally, an investment of time, which arguably, in addition to financial support, represented a scarce resource

she lavished on the various programs and institutions that she was called to pioneer within MoMA.

From a purely leadership perspective, a paradigm devised by researchers Ken Oehler, Lorraine Stomski, and Magdalena Kustra-Olszewska overlaps in some important ways with stock definitions of “engaged philanthropy.” In one sense, it is based on more than financial support. Oehler’s team found that the most engaged leaders have early experiences that familiarize them with an organization, something Blanchette Rockefeller would encounter as president of two grass-roots organizations at MoMA, the Junior Council and the International Council. Second, Oehler’s group found that engaged leaders led through “guiding principles.” For Blanchette, these values included making art accessible to a broader base, familiarizing her subordinates with all aspects of museum operations, and sacrificing significant amounts of time and resources on her part. Finally, engaged leaders exhibited “engaging behaviors,” which in Mrs. Rockefeller’s case meant promoting artistic appreciation, working through collaborative consensus to solve problems, and keeping the well-being of the museum foremost at each step along the way.⁴

Development of an Arts Advocate

Before turning to Blanchette Rockefeller’s role in fortifying the museum in the 1970s, it is important to understand how her background prepared her to manage an institution such as MoMA. As a young woman, Blanchette’s mother encouraged artistic expression in the home. Sister Adelaide aspired to a career in operatic performance and the other three sisters, including Blanchette, trained as pianists. Blanchette believed, as would her mother-in-law, Abby Aldrich, that a love of one art form led to a love of others over the course of a life. Blanchette earned a degree in piano performance at Vassar College but did not pursue a professional career in music after graduation. Regardless, she valued “the history and appreciation of music.” Her family also emphasized learning through travel. Prior to and during college, Blanchette had numerous

opportunities to travel to Europe, and Germany in particular, where her sister Adelaide studied German opera.

After her marriage to John D. Rockefeller 3rd in 1932, Blanchette's training in the world of modern art was part of her initiation into the Rockefeller family. Synchronously, she embraced the Rockefeller commitment to public service. As Blanchette noted in her MoMA oral history⁵ in the 1980s:

[It] was quite an experience to suddenly marry into a family like this and I was just really devoted to both the mother and father and they were wonderful to me and I just lapped everything up and I had been brought up in a cultured family but not the responsibilities and the breadth of interests that they had and it was really wonderful and I just, I just hit it off with [Abby] immediately and I just really loved her.⁶

Blanchette also expressed her admiration to Abby early on in her marriage to John D. Rockefeller 3rd.⁷ Abby drew her into the family by counseling that a wife should have interests apart from, as well as those in tandem with, her spouse's. It was at this point that Abby introduced her love of modern art to her new daughter-in-law. While Blanchette's initial response to modern art was cautious, Abby shared a philosophy that tended to resonate with her own sensibilities about artistic appreciation. Blanchette later reflected,

I think that the more you like one kind of art, you find that you get interested in another period and the more periods of art and areas of art, that you begin to learn about the more you find are able to like things that are totally different and she said it builds up so that the more you know the more you want to know to see what is good in it.⁸

Blanchette also acknowledged the important role that museum directors played in her development as a connoisseur of modern art. "She loved learning from Alfred Barr and Rene [d'Harnoncourt] when she was young, and then helping," recalled Beth Straus, fellow trustee, and president of the International Council from 1966 through 1971.⁹ With help from Barr and d'Harnoncourt, respective directors of MoMA, Mrs. Rockefeller began collecting modern art pieces from the emerging New York School: works by Mark Rothko, Jasper Johns, and

Jackson Pollock. She especially credited Barr's guidance in that endeavor. "He has always been a gifted teacher and able to impart his sense of special understanding of new art forms even to an ignorant beginner."¹⁰ Always self-deprecating, Blanchette aspired to deeper understanding: "There were many [other artists] that I did not fully understand, but *how* I wish that I could have known enough to appreciate them as I do now!"¹¹ Ultimately, she never claimed to be a modern art expert but was recognized for her appreciation of the genre. Richard Zeisler, noted art collector and MoMA Board member, spoke admiringly of Blanchette's reliance on the directors in her administration of the museum and her taste in art. "She is one example of a trustee who relied very heavily on the curators and what they thought," he later reflected.¹²

Developing Collaborative Leadership

Blanchette Rockefeller's knack for achieving program success depended on mutually satisfying collaboration, both with the many women with whom she came in contact as president of the Junior Council, International Council, and then the museum itself, as well as her brothers-in-law, with whom she worked closely to advance institution building at MoMA. In the realm of the rich relationships she forged while in the Junior Council and International Council, Beth Straus remembered that "[Blanchette Rockefeller] and Eliza [Cobb] were a great team and went everywhere as a team for many years [while working on the International Council]."¹³ While engaged in that work, Eliza Cobb recalled, "[Blanchette] was a perfectly marvelous president [of the International Council . . . She and I saw eye to eye about everything]."¹⁴ Blanchette's experiences with almost every one of MoMA's staff members and trustees bear out these observations about cooperation and consensus.

Blanchette Rockefeller's collaborative efforts extended to her brothers-in-law David and Nelson, with whom she worked to advance the modern art movement in private salons and MoMA. Blanchette carried on an exuberant working relationship with Nelson. "Dear Hookie," ran one note from Nelson in 1958, "This is a delayed note concerning the beautiful Haniwa lady¹⁵ . . . I am really

thrilled about it for two reasons, first because it is such a superb piece but even more importantly, because you thought of getting it for the Museum! It means a lot to me.”¹⁶ Two years later, Blanchette returned the sentiment. When tallying results from a recent benefit auction, she wrote, “Your gift of the ‘Composition: The Violin’ by Georges Braque was an important contribution towards making this unusual occasion a successful one,” with a handwritten note to the side, “Understatement of the year! A thousand thanks and forgive the formal letter.”¹⁷

They could carry on their reciprocal affection for the museum in more formal tones, which also conveys a sense of Mrs. Rockefeller’s social acumen. “First of all, I want to tell you how very much it meant to all your friends from MoMA to stay at the house on Foxhall Road during the International Council meetings two weeks, ago,” she wrote to Nelson in March 1960, “Rene [d’Harnoncourt], Porter [McCray], Augie and Claude Heckscher, Eliza Parkinson and myself, as well as a new convert, Brooke Astor, all felt in sympathetic and congenial surroundings and adored being among your intriguing . . . contemporary pictures and furnishings.” As to their productivity, she noted, “We were able to plan the proceedings carefully and with unanimous agreement because we were there together, and as a result, what could have been a crisis in the Council’s history, turned out to be a strong and positive step forward.”¹⁸

Interactions with brother-in-law David were more formal across-the-board, but perhaps only so because they worked so closely in leadership at MoMA from the inception of the Junior Council (1949) through Blanchette’s retirement from the chairmanship of the board of directors in 1987. During Blanchette’s first presidency (1959-1962), she and David regularly conferred on staff appointments. When the office of treasurer came open, Blanchette and David huddled together on a choice. “Blanchette suggests that you talk with Mr. Butcher to see whether he would be willing to be treasurer,” an internal memo between the two ran.¹⁹

On museum fund-raising, they were never far apart. After a high-level meeting with the Henry Luce family, David Rockefeller’s assistant noted, “Blanchette wanted you to know the result of her lunch with Claire Boothe Luce yesterday.

They had a very friendly talk and discussed the museum at great length.” Mrs. Luce offered to donate a few paintings to an upcoming auction. Blanchette nudged David to “see Harry Luce to propose a contribution from him for them both.”²⁰ Finally, some of their joint efforts included meeting together with potential donors, even among family members. David proposed a visit to his Aunt Alta (Mrs. E. Parmalee Prentice), to “bring [her] up to date on plans for the expansion and development of your neighbor, the Museum of Modern Art.”²¹ Blanchette, he promised, would join him to explain “what is going on and particularly about the proposals for the new wing which will be added to the present building.”²²

Even after her stepping down as president for the first time in 1962, Blanchette continued to make recommend key museum appointments to David. In 1964, she contacted David’s assistant, hoping “you will agree to two immediate moves.”²³ She had promised a prominent patron that he would be named to the board of trustees. Blanchette made the matter plain, “Mr. Bareiss . . . is a collector and knows modern art.” Not one to wait, Blanchette pointedly queried David: “Would you like to write Mr. Bareiss now, inviting him to join the Board?”²⁴

Similarly, Blanchette displayed discretion in working with David to deal with sensitive issues and individuals. Mindful of one member of the board without a committee assignment, Blanchette noted that “On the whole . . . I have observed that he is less trouble if he feels a part of things and is given a feeling of responsibility.” She advised David to give him “a call on the phone . . . before the matter comes to the board.” Experience made her the wiser: “Hope you don’t mind this bit of advice,” she wrote to David, “I have learned about the way to cope with these people by warnings from the past.”²⁵

Investing Time and Knowledge to Build Institutions

When a gallery of the museum was dedicated in Blanchette Rockefeller’s honor in 1987, it was not solely her financial gifts that justified it. As her friend and art

collector Marilyn Alsdorf observed in a note of congratulations on the occasion, “your position was a ‘labor of love’; nonetheless, you did it with style and enthusiasm all the while keeping your goal of excellence as the main criteria.”²⁶ Likewise, Clara Diament Sujo, international art collector and critic, remarked, “It is wonderful to see that due is given where due. You have given work, time, devotion to the MOMA that has given us so much. A gallery with your name is a humble way for us all to say *thank you*.”²⁷ Staff acquaintance Lucy Kreisberg recalled that Blanchette, “was the hardest working woman in New York City. She worked every single day. She took the responsibilities she had to the institutions that the family had prioritized very seriously.”²⁸ Finally, in speaking of the time dedicated to MoMA, brother-in-law David offered the following:

During the period I was chairman, I was still very active at the Chase [Manhattan Bank], and I really didn't have the time to give the Museum, the way Blanchette [Rockefeller] or others who had been president had done. I was greatly interested, presided at meetings, and would meet at other times when it appeared appropriate, but I was certainly not involved in anything like the degree to which Nelson had been at one time, or Blanchette.”²⁹

Likewise, cultivating talents was as valuable as soliciting money from her fellow patrons at MoMA. In starting the Junior Council, for example, Blanchette emphasized not only attracting wealthy members, but also others “who didn’t have means to contribute financially but who would work.”³⁰ The Council needed an array of talents to undertake ambitious programs to highlight new modern artists, stimulate the sale of their works, and develop lecture series of wide appeal. Instead of simply making recommendations to the staff, the Junior Council “did them all by themselves” with some staff assistance.³¹ Similarly, the International Council, which she was later asked to lead, went beyond its mandate of raising money to support international art exchanges, as well as sponsoring exclusive shows for its members.

These hands-on experiences further stimulated Council interest in learning, not simply giving. Blanchette exemplified the model patron of institutions of fine art, not to mention the participatory ethos that she felt should motivate MoMA trustees. As she was all too happy to emphasize, “All the Trustees have to pull

their weight in one way or another. We're all on two or three committees and you get pretty involved in certain phases that interest you.”³² In her estimation, “the Museum of Modern Art perhaps has a more working Board of Trustees than certainly any museum that I know about.”³³ Of her own time as president between 1959 and 1962, she recalled, “I had never thought I would go into anything quite so challenging but it was a very, very exciting experience.”³⁴

Philosophy of Engaged Leadership

In her MoMA oral history, Blanchette Rockefeller credited family, teachers, and innate drive as sources for dedicated public service. First, she noted that her parents “were very interested in helping local hospitals and things like that and we were four girls and we were all brought up to have a sense of responsibility.”³⁵ Her father’s distinguished record of aspirations for public service – including an unsuccessful 1920 New York gubernatorial campaign— as well as his progressive labor policies, suggest that. Second, Blanchette remembered that “[she and her fellow classmates] were trained at college that they were lucky to have a good education and when they get out they should use it for public purposes and not just be housewives.”³⁶ Finally, in reflecting on her own marriage, she singled out her and JDR 3rd’s training in public service as something that brought them together, noting that such an outlook, “made a wonderful common interest between my husband and me because we both had had this training and I think it was probably what made him to be interested in me that I was more serious; a workaholic type than maybe some of the beautiful girls.”³⁷

Blanchette Rockefeller’s papers reflect her commitment to those causes she embraced but speak little to her actual philosophy of public service. The one exception is a speech she gave shortly after her marriage to John. Blanchette spoke of one’s intent, the nature of one’s contribution, and relative competence in addressing social problems. The general public, she opined, would do best to work together with professionals to solve the ills confronting society. To this end, she observed:

There is much committee[-]forming and arranging of benefits and along with these a large amount of publicity. . . All this leads the conscientious person to wonder whether these things are not done for reasons far removed from the cause at stake. It is a fine thing to be known as a public-spirited citizen, and it is pleasant to read of one's activities in the paper. It is also much easier for some people to lend their names and subscribe a few dollars for tickets than to have to contribute time or thought. . . First and foremost, the volunteer and board member must be thoroughly sincere in their interest. They must analyze their reasons for entering the field and must be so convinced of its usefulness that that, and that alone, impels them to contribute what they can. If this sincerity is back of everything, the layman will not seek to compete with the professional, nor feel inferior because he is not as well trained. He will realize that these two people together can do more than either one alone. He will also realize that there are ways in which he alone can help.³⁸

Throughout the rest of her life, Blanche Rockefeller cited the joint approach of collaborating with professionals – in the case of MoMA with knowledgeable curators and directors – in addressing formidable challenges. Ultimately, this humility put her in good stead with all those with whom she worked at MoMA. She never presented herself as an expert in the field but expended all the time and effort that she could to magnify the efforts of MoMA's staff and board of trustees to promote the institution locally, nationally, and globally.

Chair, Junior Council (1949-1953)

In 1949, Nelson Rockefeller invited Blanche to establish “The Junior Council,” –a new organization to cultivate younger art patrons who could contribute materially to MoMA's growth. Nelson remembered how he and his college friends from Harvard, including Eddie Warburg and Lincoln Kirstein, brashly influenced the early MoMA and wanted just such a group brought together as the third generation of Rockefellers became more involved in the museum.³⁹ Blanche outlined the purpose of the new group in their first meeting on February 8, 1949. “Specifically,” she noted, “the group will study the

broad range of activities undertaken in various fields by the Museum of Modern Art, will help to further these activities, and will apply its knowledge and understanding of them toward the constructive criticism of the Museum's work and the friendly interpretation of that work to the public and to the art world."⁴⁰

Blanchette expected the fifty or so members of the Council to participate wholeheartedly in its work. This began with educating members about the museum's collection. She enlisted former MoMA director Alfred Barr to do this at their second meeting on March 8, 1949. Mrs. Rockefeller then encouraged members to explore the collection themselves. The staff, she noted, "will be glad to arrange for members of the Council to see painting and sculpture from the collection which may not be currently on display."⁴¹ Special showings of collection pieces were also part of each meeting. In April 1949, for example, Junior Council members took "a brief tour of the fourth floor private projection room, the print room, and the second floor storage room," after which they 'walked out into the garden to look more closely' at Maillol's statue, *The River*.⁴² Four weeks later, Philip Johnson gave an overview the architecture and design department, followed by an introduction to the Breuer House, located also in the Garden."⁴³

In the spirit of total engagement, Blanchette encouraged members to sign up for committee work. In this fashion, members could contribute to museum programming "in close conjunction with members of the staff."⁴⁴ Committee work was available for all members in those areas they enjoyed working the most. She believed in self-directed volunteerism. Blanchette observed that "there was enough variation in the nature of the work to find a niche for almost everyone."⁴⁵

The Poetry and Lecture Series committees were two of the more successful programs under Blanchette Rockefeller's guidance. In 1950, committee leadership reported favorably on a series of readings by an enviable slate of poets, including "W.H. Auden, Marianne Moore, E.E. Cummings, William Carlos Williams, Robert Frost, and Dylan Thomas."⁴⁶ The following year, the Poetry Committee recommended another slate of five speakers. Presenters

included Carl Sandburg, Katherine Ann Porter, Padraic and Mary Colum, Wallace Stevens, and E.E. Cummings. At the same meeting, the Poetry Committee went forward with arrangements for evening lectures by Thornton Wilder and Dylan Thomas.⁴⁷

The Lecture Series Committee envisioned a broad scope of promising speakers. In 1950, Committee leaders reported on a successful series, including a symposium on Paul Klee's work. In April of the same year, Philip Johnson directed a series of talks on automobile design, which included discussions with Raymond Loewy, "design consultant for the post-war Studebaker."⁴⁸ Not only were the two sets of speakers engaging. The symposia were profitable, as well. Income outpaced expenses by eleven hundred dollars and attendance averaged about 350 patrons for each series.⁴⁹ MoMA Director Rene d'Harnoncourt hailed the lecture series "as a means of communicating to the public a knowledge, interest, and enjoyment of the arts."⁵⁰ Monroe Wheeler, director of exhibitions and publications, mentioned that he had been approached by Salvador Dali "on the subject of giving a lecture at the Museum."⁵¹ The Committee registered its support for this engagement. Similarly, d'Harnoncourt informed the Committee that Frank Lloyd Wright expressed interest in giving a lecture following his return from a trip to Italy.⁵²

Later lecture series tackled practical problems, as well. The renamed "Auditorium Committee," organized talks on city planning with Lewis Mumford and Robert Moses as potential speakers, as well as a series on affordable housing, featuring "Mr. Levitt of Levittown."⁵³ Blanchette Rockefeller spoke approvingly of the wider vision of the committee and encouraged "a whole season [to be organized] in advance so that the publicity could be done for the entire series at a time and so that all arrangements could be made well ahead of time and tickets sold in blocks as well as singly."⁵⁴ At the following meeting, Blanchette enjoined Council members to promote the series either by buying tickets or selling them to acquaintances.⁵⁵

Support for the museum went beyond financial gifts and fund raising. Blanchette remembered approvingly the almost evangelical devotion of the

museum's early staff to the cause of the museum and encouraged similar commitment from the Junior Council. When the Rental Library Committee requested seven thousand dollars to jumpstart their programming, Blanchette asked the Council to consider underwriting the initiative. "She emphasized that she was not asking for contributions from the Council," the minutes record, "She said that she felt that it was such a worthwhile and fine undertaking that every effort must be made to make it a reality."⁵⁶ Money was not the only resource solicited. Blanchette also asked members to contribute time to the Lending Service, inviting any members who had not committed to setting aside afternoons to assist to sign up post haste.⁵⁷

Out of necessity, Blanchette Rockefeller encouraged female leadership development in staffing the Junior Council. Most of the members were women who sometimes brought their husbands along as guests or joined themselves. During the first year, Helen Resor served as secretary of the committee and a Miss Ruml (possibly Lois Treadwell Ruml) agreed to fill the treasurer position. The following year, advisory committees, staffed equally by men and women, members of the staff and Council, oversaw Council programming initiatives.⁵⁸ Mrs. Rockefeller frequently highlighted extraordinary service on the part of Council members, including a Mrs. Mellon who "had given a great deal of time and effort to the task [of selling lecture series tickets], including frequent trips to the city during the summer." Such an example should be followed, Blanchette remarked, "and she asked the other members to give [Mellon] their support and backing by coming to the events and selling as many tickets as possible."⁵⁹ She also knew when to delegate. To find an assignment for every member, she asked Vice Chairwoman Beth Straus to reach out to all members, "since [she] knows most of the members and is very familiar with all the Council's activities."⁶⁰

Fund-raising also fostered an "all in" ethos amongst committee members. In step with the lecture committee's promising work, "Mrs. Rockefeller asked all members of the Council to help in the effort to sell these series tickets."⁶¹ A year later, when series ticket sales faltered, Blanchette conferred with Council members. Overruling demands that the price of tickets be reduced, she decided

that “each member of the Council be asked to be responsible for the same of two series tickets.”⁶²

Ultimately, many of MoMA’s future trustees traced their earliest memories back to the social web created by Blanchette at the Junior Council and the later International Council. Beth Straus remembered that “one day Blanchette Rockefeller called me and said that she was forming a group called the Junior Council and that somebody suggested that I might be interested. And I joined.”⁶³ Already a member of the Junior Council, Blanchette recruited Joanne Stern for the International Council. “I remember when Mrs. (Blanchette) Rockefeller spoke to me about it, I wasn’t terribly interested because I didn’t quite think it was anything I would be doing,” she remembered, “but she spoke to Lily and me, I believe, and I think Lily and I and Robert Tobin all were asked to join at the same time.”⁶⁴ Initially noncommittal to the new group, she remembered a subsequent International Council trip to London as “dazzling, and it brought home to me what a role this troupe played and could play, and the chance to see collectors from other places – it was amazing.”⁶⁵ “It was terribly exciting,” Stern gushed, “and you had a great feeling of what the Modern Museum meant to other museums who were interested in the twentieth century. We were the model. It always came back to the institution.”⁶⁶

Council members especially remembered happenings at Mrs. Rockefeller’s modernist guest house on 52nd Street – which had been designed by an aspiring Philip Johnson. Straus remembered, “We had one of the most wonderful times in my whole life during that period. We used to go over to Blanchette’s guest house over in the East 50s and sit on the floor and listen to them practice their [Indian] music, and stay up practically the whole night.”⁶⁷ She returned to those memories later in her oral history, recalling: “I told you those wonderful days we used to go to Blanchette’s guesthouse and feel that we were in touch with everything exciting in the world.”⁶⁸ In addition to the music and the art, she observed, “That was a rare privilege, so you hate giving up the friends you made in those days.”⁶⁹ Likewise, Walter Bareiss recalled after having joined the Junior Council, “I went to Mrs. Rockefeller’s house, a lovely house built by Philip Johnson on East 52nd Street. I enjoyed the meeting, they asked me to join,

and then they asked me to be chairman after Mrs. Rockefeller, who obviously had other things to do, gave up the job.”⁷⁰

Chair, International Council (1953-1957)

Following on the success of her leadership of the Junior Council, Blanchette Rockefeller accepted responsibility for launching MoMA’s international initiative. On January 19, 1953, she attended an informal gathering related to a new “National Council” – later the “International Council” – whose purpose was to attract a broad domestic membership to support exhibitions abroad, as well as host exclusive art shows for its own members. Rene d’Harnoncourt and Monroe Wheeler, as well as Mrs. Bliss Parkinson, Mr. Andrew Ritchie, and Mrs. Henry A. Woodruff joined the first gathering. At that meeting, d’Harnoncourt proposed that Blanchette serve as president of the Council.

Three months later, on April 9, 1953, Blanchette Rockefeller made a formal presentation to the newly formed committee. She proposed that the Council include one hundred members who would contribute \$1,000 per year in membership dues. A nominating committee would make the initial selection of prospective members, as well as choose twenty-five honorary members, including “important representatives from foreign countries.”⁷¹ Blanchette personally extended these invitations in advance of the Council’s first meeting, to be held in conjunction with MoMA’s “Anniversary Year” celebration. The first meeting outlined many of the activities developed by the Council, including the introduction of patrons to exhibiting artists, visits to private collections around the world, and lectures by “distinguished people interested in developing the aspect of cultural interchange.”⁷²

As the Council’s chair, Blanchette supervised an intellectually charged environment at its annual meetings. One prominent member and donor, Kay Hochschild, penned a brief note to Blanchette following a council meeting in early 1955. “The council meeting was really stimulating,” Hochschild commented, “I felt a little guilt that perhaps I ‘sounded off’ a bit too much but

everyone seemed to have definite feelings about the whole thing.” Blanchette Rockefeller led the meetings at the museum with ample play in her leadership style. “You handled us *admirably!*” Hochschild concluded in her letter. Following another meeting in early December of 1955, Hochschild wrote Blanchette a longer letter, looking for ways that she might contribute her time to the Council’s upcoming activities at the Tate Gallery in London. “The International Council scored again with that fine meeting last week,” she noted with enthusiasm. “There is something vital and stimulating about these gatherings. We all want to roar about opinions and ideas to the point where I would think that you would feel rather shattered by it, but it speaks well for your leadership and the provocative problems that the Executive Committee presents. We all feel very much involved.”⁷³

Although the early projects of the International Council were staged in England, Blanchette Rockefeller’s affection for Asia was never far from the surface. On September 21, 1956, for example, she wrote to philanthropist John de Menil to invite him to serve on the Council’s executive committee. In the same letter she remarked, “I hope you have had a wonderful trip and am anxious to have a leisurely visit about Japan which is my favorite place in all the world.” De Menil accepted Blanchette’s invitation, and at the end of the letter wrote that there was, “[n]othing I would like more than to exchange impressions with you on Japan . . . next Wednesday, perhaps, or at some later date.”⁷⁶

A year later, Blanchette asked the board of trustees to allow her to step down as chair. Tending to family matters and other commitments took priority at the time. She would be invited back to service two years later when MoMA’s president took his own leave of absence.

First Presidency (1959-1962)

Based on her success in founding the Junior Council and the International Council, the board of trustees asked Blanchette to assume MoMA’s presidency when sitting President Bill Burden was appointed ambassador to Belgium in

1959. Fundraising for the 30th Anniversary Capital Campaign, which would underwrite a new east wing of the museum, dominated her efforts for the next three years. Working under the direction of David Rockefeller, who served as campaign chairman, she collaborated with familiar faces from the Junior Council to promote fundraising. Blanchette, Adele R. Levy, Elizabeth Parkinson, and Beth Straus scheduled intimate lunches for prospective donors.⁷⁷

The campaign also solicited donations from corporate sponsors, an endeavor that would bear fruit for MoMA during the 50th Anniversary Campaign two decades later, when Blanchette served as both MoMA president and chairwoman of the capital campaign. Kersting, Brown and Company, campaign consultant for the 30th Capital Campaign, recommended that New York corporations (rather than national or multinational firms) form the core of corporate donors. “Probably most Corporate Members [of the museum] can be counted on to contribute modestly,” the consultants noted, “. . . among . . . banks, utilities and insurance companies as well as industrial companies . . . with gifts of \$50,000 to 100,000 or more.” As far as national corporations were concerned, modest efforts were made to solicit gifts from Neiman Marcus and Armstrong Cork.⁷⁸

By 1961, the capital campaign still in full tilt, family obligations pulled Mrs. Rockefeller out of the museum yet again, though she vowed that “her interest in the Museum will, in no way, be diminished and that she will be delighted to work on the building program as much as may be desired.”⁷⁹ Blanchette tendered her resignation to David Rockefeller on January 3. It would be another year before a new president was found. An outpouring of gratitude followed her departure. One admirer noted, “I think you did a superb job during some of the most difficult and complicated years of the Museum’s career.”⁸⁰ Kay Hochschild, who had been active on the International Council, affirmed “You have been a splendid President; and I want to personally salute you for your unique qualities of patience, diplomacy, charm, sense of humor and keen emphasis on what is important that have always been in evidence in your leadership.”⁸¹ Woman to woman, Hochschild wrote admiringly, “For years you

have struggled and been challenged to balance outside interests with 'homework,' children, and husband."⁸²

Second Presidency (1972-1985)

After ten years away from the museum presidency and on the cusp of another major capital campaign, Blanchette Rockefeller assumed the same leadership role, a position she held until 1985. The appointment met with support from staff and trustees alike. Sarah Rubenstein, a former assistant treasurer of MoMA, for example, penned a personal note to Blanchette, observing, "Although no longer an active member of the staff, I have followed the Museum's trials and tribulations over the last few years." Blanchette's appointment gave her reason to hope. "Now – my faith is such that – under your leadership, the Museum will again achieve financial stability and resolve its inner problems."⁸³

Long-time staffer, Monroe Wheeler, added his support. He recalled that Blanchette Rockefeller and Rene d'Harnoncourt built a strong leadership team in the early 1960s. He predicted that she would be every bit as effective this time around, invoking the memory of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller:

Nothing, in my view, could be better for the Museum. You love it as your dear mother-in-law did; your devotion, perfect judgement, insight and tact have helped us surmount so many crises that you now understand it better than anyone, and I am sure it will not be difficult for you to steer a serene course into the right future.⁸⁴

As noted in the introduction to this essay, by the mid-1970s, MoMA faced a financial and existential crisis. Although its collection offered a comprehensive overview of modern art as it evolved from the late nineteenth into the twentieth century, those inside the museum, as well as its outside critics, debated whether the museum should instead be an open-ended showcase for contemporary art. More importantly, the costs of operating the museum outpaced annual giving and put a strain on MoMA's endowment. While the Rockefeller Brothers Fund

typically rescued the museum from fiscal shortfalls, repeated assistance called into question the viability of the institution.

The public role played by this almost exclusively privately funded entity was *not* in question. With an average daily attendance of nearly 2500 guests, the museum ranked second among major art institutions in the city with 29% of museumgoers, almost one-half of the total for the Metropolitan Museum of Art at 59%, but three to four times the percentage of the Guggenheim (8%) and the Frick and Whitney Museums (both at 6%). Researchers and students alike found the MoMA a place of discovery. As one observer noted, “there is no letup in the pressure from scholars, students, and practicing professionals for use of the museum’s study centers – in spite of the fact that budget cuts have made it necessary to reduce study center hours.”⁸⁵

On the existential question, MoMA staff responded in part to critiques like that of the *New York Times*’ John Canady, who wrote:

What’s new at the Modern? Not much these days. What’s new at the Met? What isn’t . . . the Metropolitan has taken over from the Modern as the city’s cultural midway while the Modern has settled into a conservative historical stance . . . [MoMA is] one of the great museums of the world, but there is no longer anything very modern about it . . . What changed the Modern during these last 17 years was that American art caught up with it and passed it.⁸⁶

Insiders agreed with Canady: much of recent programming focused on retrospectives of modern art that attracted a silver-haired audience, who while more willing to open their wallets to support the institution, lacked the energy of younger crowds who were drawn by innovative shows. MoMA Curator William Rubin argued that the museum should be *both* a repository of modern art as well as a center for contemporary art. Museum Director Richard Oldenburg summed up the consensus moving forward. The museum needed to focus on its core collection and make it more relevant by deepening public understanding of the contemporary relevance of the modern art (1860-1970) movement.

To address the questions of building the endowment and meeting normal operating costs, associates of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund hit upon an innovative solution. Using existing state and local laws, MoMA could double its exhibition space to the east of the existing building and use the expanded base as the foundation for a 48-story condominium tower, which, when completed would defray construction costs for the museum's new wing as well as offset operational costs. Local zoning laws allowed for development rights from the museum's Sculpture Garden to be transferred to the area above the new addition, while state laws provided for the sale of bonds to fund building costs for the museum's expansion as well as to finance the residential tower. Mortgages on the apartments would repay developers. Property taxes would offset museum expenditures and augment the endowment.

RBF President William Dietel emphasized that if such a bold plan were not supported, the extreme scenarios outlined earlier in his report would likely prove the undoing of the museum. He urged support for the new residential funding plan, which would essentially free the RBF from ad hoc funding of MoMA. This was seen as a solution that would sustain the museum for the next fifteen to twenty years.⁸⁷

Subsequently, MoMA contracted with Maurice G. Gurin to direct the capital campaign to raise twenty million dollars in gifts, which would be applied equally to construction costs for the new expansion and cushion for the endowment. The campaign would also pursue seven million dollars in loans to secure financing for the condominium tower construction. The Gurin firm estimated that the fund-raising campaign would last for two years with pledges to be assessed over a three-year period. Planning focused on approaching the most generous donors at opportune times to request six to seven figure donations to the project. This was not a foregone conclusion as the last major fund-raising campaign, led by David Rockefeller during the thirtieth anniversary of the museum, still had outstanding pledges (upwards of thirty percent of the total) that had not been received.

Gurin hoped that approaching a wider donor base might trigger broader support for the capital campaign, as “it is [fund raising counsel’s] recollection that the Rockefellers, the foundations with which they are associated, and their friends provided about \$21 million of the approximately \$26 million raised.”⁸⁸ Accordingly, the consulting firm proposed that those donors who might make the largest donations be approached first, after which general membership down to the visiting public might be solicited for campaign support.

The choice of a campaign chairman, then, involved more than simply choosing a good fund-raiser. There was little room for error. Gurin observed that “the Museum does not have so many prospects capable of major commitments that it can afford to gain less than the best response from each of the” most generous potential donors. If effective fund raising was one priority, as well as “one who can give the task first-class attention,” massaging backing from its fondest supporters was vital to the success of the campaign whose success was not entirely certain.⁸⁹

The board of trustees turned to the museum’s president, Blanchette Rockefeller, to carry the load as campaign chairman, in addition to her already significant presidential responsibilities. On October 13, 1976, she made a bold request to what would be termed the “nucleus fund” or the trustees of the museum, to meet both the annual goal of one million dollars to sustain the day-to-day operations of the museum, as well as to pledge fifteen million dollars to the capital campaign. Echoing the concern of Dietel and proceeding with the delicate discretion urged by Gurin, Blanchette acknowledged, “This dual responsibility may well be a hard answer to the possible problem posed by the demands of both the Annual Fund and the 50th Anniversary Campaign, but I know of no easier answer that will serve our purpose.”⁹⁰

It is not the purpose of this article to recount the almost six-year saga that was the 50th Anniversary Capital Campaign, whose goal ballooned over the course of the project to \$75 million dollars (which was successfully met), but instead to assess Blanchette Rockefeller’s leadership style where the archives allow us to see her role.

Perhaps one of the most important factors in its success was her working relationship with the museum's director, Richard Oldenburg, not to mention the director of development, William Paley. Oldenburg came aboard as director in the early 1970s and considered his introduction to Blanchette as being one of the more memorable experiences of his time at MoMA. He identified her intangible ability to size up potential allies for the museum, as well as to work together with he and Paley as a team, noting:

That was the team that I worked with through most of my years at the Museum, and it was an absolutely marvelous team because they were both so dedicated to the Museum and to backing up what the Museum wanted to do. Blanchette, of course, was such a spectacularly marvelous person. She was not only marvelously nice and approachable and friendly to everyone, all of that we know, but people underestimated the real intelligence and sensitivity that she had. She was one of the best judges of people I ever encountered, and she could case someone very, very fast as to whether she thought they were really to be trusted or to be furthered along, but she was never antagonistic to anyone. She really had a very good sense of this, whether it was in case of hiring people, or considering trustees, or of approaching donors and so forth.⁹¹

Blanchette concurred, noting that over the ten years they worked in their respective roles, "it has just happened to be a very happy, he could be my son, we just had a very good relationship, uncomplicated, and he has developed enormously, he is very much complimented, conscientious."⁹²

Others took note of their ability to work together. William Rubin noted, "I think that Dick [Oldenburg] is an unusually ethical person, and I think that he and Blanchette Rockefeller together embodied the ethos of the Museum. That's a very important thing, especially in an art world that is, on the one hand, being intensely politicized, but also one where money was looming as a more and more important factor."⁹³ June Noble Larkin remembered, "Dick was there for the last expansion. He was very, very close to Blanchette Rockefeller. Really, he was like a son to Blanchette. They were a wonderful team."⁹⁴

For others, Blanchette's interactions with Bill Paley exemplified a spirit of dedication to the MoMA's ideals. Luisa Kriesburg remembered, "Paley's passing and Blanchette Rockefeller's passing inevitably ushered a new generation of power into the place. Now it's real estate developers and a whole different crowd on the board." ⁹⁵It was also in association with Paley that Kriesburg noted Blanchette's tireless efforts, as "hardest working woman in New York City. She worked every single day."⁹⁶

In addition to working well with others, Mrs. Rockefeller used her "consummate grace and ease," in the words of one of her close associates, John Hightower, to request donations at the right moment and to smooth over difficult issues.⁹⁷ Duke Franz remembered the same level of elegant problem solving, noting:

If you remember people like Blanchette Rockefeller, the way she handled situations, even difficult situations, the way she was there and the way she could represent the Museum, and the next moment, in her modest way, do any kind of work she wanted to do or was supposed to do -- all that was a very good school. This, at least, for me, personally becomes something like a treasured memory. And it happens to me now that quite often in difficult diplomatic situations or meetings where people don't really know how to get out without breaking china. I remember something Blanchette did or said in such moments and it works.⁹⁸

David Gurin gave perhaps the most pointed insight in relation to Blanchette Rockefeller's leadership skills during the last stages of the capital campaign. Frustrated with his peripheral role as consultant, Gurin approached Blanchette about working with her on corporate donations. "I think you have a pretty sure instinct as to when to move ahead and when to hold up; and I think that your solicitations to date have been so effective precisely because you have pressed a prospect when he or she was ready to give at his or her best." In his estimation, "that is fund raising at the height of the art."⁹⁹

One of Blanchette Rockefeller's instinctual decisions was to accelerate corporate giving during early 1980. This was one aspect of fund raising that MoMA had used on a limited basis in the past. In 1975, in his report to the RBF,

William Dietel noted that the museum registered some 100 corporate memberships, which yielded upwards of \$200,000 annually, but that such efforts might be increased.¹⁰⁰ Five years later, Gurin took Blanchette's signaling as the appropriate moment to build upon that foundation. He pointed out to her that such a campaign begged a capable chairman, but that in the meantime, "There are cultivation events, large and small, for major prospects that need to be planned and conducted; your assistant and I could get those started."¹⁰¹ Given their collective efforts, "There are other aspects of the campaign ahead that we can take up when appropriate and when we can discuss them. And there are opportunities for promotion and publicity which need to be developed."¹⁰²

With capital objectives raised to upwards of \$75,000,000 during the campaign to account for escalating construction costs and endowment needs, Blanchette and Gurin launched the Corporate Campaign with the help of Trustee Walter N. Thayer. In a number of speeches to the New York Arts in Business Council, she emphasized aspects of her leadership, including lifelong education; the democratization of the art experience; New York identity; and the compatibility of skills in the corporate milieu and the arts world.

Blanchette Rockefeller approached her corporate audiences as an arts administrator deeply invested in artistic education. She challenged corporate leaders, as she had her own trustees, "to become more knowledgeable [about art] and develop a more assured taste and eye that will give you many hours of delight."¹⁰³ Committed to drawing financial doyens into the world of culture, she invited them not only to support the arts financially, but also to enjoy the benefits of cultivating taste.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, Blanchette observed that corporate hallways were ideal venue for artistic displays. On that same note, she touted the arts as the quintessential hallmark of New York's identity. Businesses that supported the arts would burnish their own aesthetic stature as well as the city's by patronizing artists and supporting museums.¹⁰⁵

Finally, Blanchette extolled the democratizing force of art in modern American society. By supporting museums, she surmised, "Business aid to the arts has helped to create pluralism in support which holds the greatest single promise

for the future of cultural organizations.”¹⁰⁶ She considered this to be among the unique practices of the private sector in the United States. While many European institutions relied heavily on government support to sustain their operations and acquisitions, MoMA illustrated a different ethos:

To depend on government entirely for support would put us at odds with the American tradition and without own pragmatic spirit. A free society is the foundation of our economic system and free artistic expression helps sustain that free society. If the arts were dependent entirely on one source of support, this freedom would necessarily be threatened. And, without the evidence of support from other influential segments of our support, government support to the arts, which now is happily increasing, *might not* remain strong.¹⁰⁷

She then highlighted the capital campaign and its ingenious method of raising funds to build a new wing and supplement the endowment – through the condominium tower – as proof of creative approaches to funding arts in the private sector. This tied back to the essence of a democratic institution. “For by building such support on its own,” Blanchette remarked, “the Museum reaffirms for *itself* the principle of pluralism – support from a variety of publics *whom* it will continue to serve well.”¹⁰⁸

Blanchette Rockefeller’s adherence to the principles that had guided her leadership during the twenty-three years leading up to her second appointment as president of MoMA set a pattern that yielded a successful campaign. As in the corporate campaign, encouraging engagement with the arts, even life-long appreciation, provided a focal point for museumgoers and donors; collaborative partnerships with Richard Oldenburg, David Gurin, and Bill Paley, surpassed initial fund-raising expectations; and, finally, a clear vision of a complex solution to expanding the museum – with a tower of condominiums to help fund a robust future – secured a firm foundation for MoMA.

Chairman of the Board of Trustees (1985-1987)

Blanchette Rockefeller served as the chairman of the board of trustees following her departure from the presidency in 1985. “It is hard to imagine MoMA without you quietly running the scene although I’m sure you carefully planned the succession,” wrote Marilyn Alsdorf towards the close of 1985.¹⁰⁹ Two years later, Trustee Jim Snyder elaborated on Blanchette’s service: “Your commitment to the Museum has been a great inspiration to many of us here and has certainly been one of the most important influences – if not *the* most important influence – on my own commitment to serve her over the last 14 years.”¹¹⁰ Brother-in-law David echoed those remarks, but on an institutional scale: “I think it is fair to say that there are not more than a handful of people who have been connected with the Museum since its founding who have played a role of comparable importance to yours.”¹¹¹

On December 9, 1987, a small group of friends and associates gathered in a gallery in the new wing of the museum to celebrate Blanchette’s leadership in building two wings of the museum over the course of her two presidencies. Donald Marron, a fellow chairman of the 50th Anniversary Capital Campaign praised her “tireless leadership” over the six years of the campaign. Of greatest importance, Marron noted, was the “spiritual leadership” she offered during her tenure.¹¹² Brother-in-law David judged that among the key women involved with the Museum, Blanchette’s second presidency “had a greater impact on the evolution both internally and externally than any other one individual.”¹¹³ Richard Oldenburg praised her passion for Modern art, carefully acquired with the help of Alfred Barr, in the very genre that would be installed in her eponymous gallery: abstract expressionism.¹¹⁴ This artistic sense of daring, he had noted in an earlier oral history, extended not just to the vanguard of art, but also to the innovative condominium project that brought the museum expansion into being. On a personal note, and reflective of her penchant for working well with others, Oldenburg concluded, “Without exaggeration, the greatest joy and privilege of my life have been this very close association with Blanchette over these past 15 years, and I look forward to this association continuing into the future as well.”¹¹⁵

Blanchette Rockefeller's departure from the board of trustees in 1987 and the naming of a gallery in her honor that year provide some sense of her dedication to the Museum during the previous four decades. The last two leaves in a folder dedicated to her presidency from 1972-1985 consist of a list of "President's Duties," which, when considered in their entirety (see the corresponding footnote) give some sense of the temporal, not to mention intellectual and social capital, she devoted to the museum (see Appendix 1). Her quiet fulfillment of these tasks garnered from among three hundred nominees, the Presidential Recognition Award for 1985.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

In the final analysis, what legacies did Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller leave to the MoMA and the New York world of arts? From an institutional level, some saw Blanchette Rockefeller and Richard Oldenburg's joint tenure, along with Bill Paley as director of development, as the final act of the Rockefeller family headlining museum leadership. In Luisa Kreisbert's estimation, "Blanchette Rockefeller's passing inevitably ushered a new MoMA generation of power into place. Now it's real estate developers and a whole different crowd on the board."¹¹⁷ Kirk Varnedoe, chief curator of painting and sculpture from 1988 to 1991 concurred. "It's astonishing to have gone through Abby, through Blanchette, Nelson and David," he recalled, "What an astonishing record of stewardship – custodianship – of an institution," he noted in his oral history.¹¹⁸

Monroe Wheeler thought the comparison of Blanchette and Abby Rockefeller an apt one. Wheeler had compared the two women favorably at the outset of Blanchette's second tenure as president. Abby remained devoted to the Museum during its financial and existential ups and downs. With the same missionary zeal as Alfred Barr and Rene d'Harnoncourt, Wheeler judged, Abby "never stopped thinking about the Museum and what it was doing, and what it might do." Similarly, it was Blanchette's "constant concern," not to mention her

“grace and dignity with all people around the Museum, drawing them close to the Museum” that authenticated the comparison.”¹¹⁹

For Blanchette, though, it was the push towards democratizing artistic appreciation that carried the day and constituted the legacy for which she wished to be known. While Nelson and David managed the financial health of the institution, she later recalled, “I was a little bit enough removed from [the museum] not being born a Rockefeller and the fact that all the trustees wanted to get the Museum broadened, democratic, more visible to people.” “Now you go into the lobby,” she continued, “and every kind of person comes there, with babies on their back and they really feel it’s theirs.”¹²⁰ A decade earlier, she painted a lively scene at the museum – as she wished it were and as it became:

When you visit the museum in the middle of any day, you will find it full of people of all backgrounds and ages. The art student and the occasional Sunday visitor have been joined by school children, housewives, office workers and business executives. They may have come for the morning, during their lunch hours, or between their errands. If I could cite one major difference between the museums of today and those of the late fifties, I would say that today museums are no longer simply havens for the affluent, the well educated, or the artistic. Today, museums are for everyone. . . whatever the cause, people are claiming museums as an integral and important part of their communities. And increasingly, they are making museums part of their daily lives.¹²¹

This scene of organized tumult has changed little in the three decades since Blanchette Rockefeller’s passing in 1992. A Friday night at MoMA, sponsored by a Japanese clothier to the masses, Uniglo, seems like just the sort of arrangement that Blanchette would have appreciated. Furthermore, the addition of a new condominium tower above a more recent expansion built in honor of David Rockefeller represents a healthy future for one of the most important cultural institutions in the modern world.

Blanchette’s efforts exemplified engaged philanthropy and engaging leadership. According to the guidelines for engaged philanthropy, she pursued and then promoted an intellectual commitment to the world of modern art, even though

she was not a trained expert; her social commitment to modern art took the form of collaborative leadership, as well as grassroots engagement in museum activities (as exemplified through the Junior Council); finally, her investment of time – as well as financial resources – comprised her greatest endowment to the museum. According to the Harvard Business School paradigm for engaging leadership, Blanchette also led by example. She had important formative experiences energizing the Junior Council and the International Council. Second, she led through a series of core beliefs that rarely changed whatever the leadership role entrusted to her. For example, she chose effective collaborators to carry out key assignments. Blanchette worked to involve all participants in group endeavors. She epitomized grace, kindness, and consideration in her interactions with staff, trustees, and patrons of the museum. Finally, Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller modeled authentic behaviors that reflected her own love of modern art, the satisfaction of share accomplishment, and ongoing support for MoMA.

Appendix 1: “President’s Duties, The Museum of Modern Art, Blanchette H. Rockefeller,” Rockefeller Family Archives (hereafter RFA), RG 53, Series 4: MoMA, Box 64, Folder 503: “Presidency (BHR), 1972-1987.”

“President’s Duties”

“Attend all Board meetings if possible. Review in advance with Dick Oldenburg and Dick Koch for proper procedures, etc. Plan with them President’s Report and Director’s Report. Make sure that Chairman is briefed and in accord with plan.

Attend all important Trustee Committee Meetings: Executive, Finance, Investment, Nominating, Business, Membership Development, Personnel (Chairman), Pension, Expansion, 50th Anniversary Steering Committee – for Campaign (Chairman), 50th Anniversary Steering Committee for Celebration (Chairman).

Attend if possible Ex Officio all Curatorial Committees (these 3 to 4 times a year): Painting & Sculpture, Drawings, Print & Illustrated Books, Architecture and Design, Photography, Film, Publications, Education (Note: This is greatly appreciated by Department Directors and Staff). Important: Have regular meetings with Director of MoMA to exchange information and agree on solutions of problems and make plans.

Attend and participate in International Council meetings and trips when possible . . . late October meeting in New York; Spring or early Summer Trip outside New York, possibly overseas.

Attend Junior Council Annual Meetings and occasional special events. Lunch with Chairman of International Council and Junior Council from time to time at their request.

Represent MoMA at Annual Museum President's Meetings . . . October or November 2 days and 1 night.

Member, American Association of Museums, Trustee Committee; Attend meetings occasionally in New York or Washington or other US cities.

Fund Raising for MoMA

1. Annual Fund. Write personal letters to all Trustees and follow up. Help chairman, Lily Auchincloss, to approach or write to new Patron Donors or for renewals.
2. Prepare with Jack Limpert letters (several versions) for all Contributing Members to give to Annual Fund.
3. Must be different each year and as personal as possible. I personally sign the ones to people I know.

II. Help plan with Jack Limpert promotional dinners or receptions for business men or important members, or new potential donors, trustees, collectors

III. Chairman, 50th Anniversary Drive: Approach Trustees with some help for special other Trustees (20+ million)

Still to do: Foundations, Corporations; General Major gift campaign; General Public campaign (16+ million holding and endowment)

IV. Write literally several hundreds of letters of thanks each year to donors of art, money or other forms of assistance to MoMA.

Government: Try to meet and inform influential politicians about needs of cultural institutions; go to many receptions and dinners that open such contact with both City, State and Federal.

General: Attend most openings of exhibitions at MoMA. Also, at other New York museums when possible.

Try to keep in touch with our own Trustees and Committee Members.

Entertain as much as possible on behalf of MoMA. This is an important part of the President's and the Chairman's duties.

Sign letters to important diplomatic or cultural VIPs for invitations or thanks on various matters."

¹ William M. Dietel and Barbara Newsom, "The Museum of Modern Art," Rockefeller Brothers Fund (cited hereafter as "RBF") Report, 1976, 3, RFA, RG 53: Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller Papers (cited hereafter as BHR), Box 58, Folder 452, "50th Anniversary Campaign, RBF," Rockefeller Archive Center (cited hereafter as "RAC").

² See Harriet Schoenholz Bee and Michelle Elligott, *Art in Our Time: A Chronicle of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: MoMA, 2004), 181; *The Museum of Modern Art, New York: The History and the Collection* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Publishing, 1997).

³ (See Rob John, *Venture Philanthropy: The Evolution of High Engagement Philanthropy in Europe* (Oxford: Said Business School, 2006). Foundations are some of the main sources for definitions and examples of "venture philanthropy" and "engaged philanthropy." SVP International, a self-described "network of engaged donors" notes that "effective engaged philanthropy neither begins nor ends with writing a check; It requires research, self-knowledge, authentic relationships, and prudent selection of the right vehicle to achieve the goal." See socialventurepartners.org/svp_resources/planning-for-effective-engaged-philanthropy, accessed November 16, 2021. The Rank Foundation includes an intellectual, social, and financial component in its definition of "engaged philanthropy." See "Engaged Philanthropy—What Does it Mean to the Rank Foundation," accessed November 16, 2021, <https://rankfoundation.com/engaged-philanthropy/> The University of St. Andrews' Centre for the Study of Philanthropy

and Public Good featured the Rank Foundation's engaged approach in "Models of Engaged and Participatory Philanthropy: The Rank Foundation's Approach," Wednesday 5 July 2017, accessed November 16, 2021, <https://csppg.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/2017/07/05/models-engaged-participatory-philanthropy-rank-foundations-approach/>. The popular press has also widened exposure to the concept. See Jean Hopfensperger, "Engaged Philanthropy: Giving Time and Talent, Along with Cash," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, June 19, 2010, accessed November 16, 2021, Ebscohost Database.

⁴ On a related note, Ken Oehler, Lorraine Stomski, and Magdalea Kustral-Olszewska identified the characteristics of active leadership in the *Harvard Business Review* essay, "What Makes Someone an Engaging Leader," November 7, 2014, accessed November 16, 2021, <https://hbr.org/2014/11/what-makes-someone-an-engaging-leader>. Oehler et al, found that engaging leaders have "formative early experiences," "guiding beliefs," and "engaging behaviors" that define their leadership model. All of these are present in BHR's experience at MoMA.

⁵ BHR gave two substantive oral histories to artistic institutions. The first took place in 1970 at the invitation of the Archives of American Art. The interview can be accessed through contacting the sponsoring institution at <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-blanchette-f-h-rockefeller-12181>, accessed November 16, 2021 (cited hereafter as Oral history interview with BHR, 30 July-19 August 1970, 9, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC). The second was a part of MoMA's internal oral history project and has not been transcribed. The author of this article transcribed selections of the interview from cassette tapes in 2017 at MoMA Archives. See BHR, MoMA History Interviews, Tape 6. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

⁶ BHR, MoMA History Interviews, Tape 6. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York

⁷ In a September 1932 letter to Abby, BHR confided: "The confidence that you have expressed in me gives me untold joy but also a very deep sense that I want that confidence to be earned and deserved. At present it is naturally a think of the future, which I hope to substantiate with reality in anything I do small or big. I am, of course, awed at the number of things I have to learn and at the many ways in which I can so easily failed to achieve this goal. But of one thing I am terribly conscious, that with the responsibilities that you have, the many people that you have to work with, what can give you a very real happiness is a sense of harmony and security, is a knowledge that the sons whom you are teaching to help bear those responsibilities with you can be absolutely relied and counted on. I know that you feel that way about John now, and

if I thought that you could feel that as his wife, I could be counted on to the same degree though not of course in the same way, it would make me happier than anything in the world.” RFA, RG 2, OMR, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Papers, Series 1, AAR Correspondence, Personal, Box 4, Folder 58: “Rockefeller, Blanchette, 1932-1934, 1938, 1940-41, 1944,” RAC.

⁸ BHR, MoMA History Interviews, Tape 6. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

⁹ Oral History Program, interview with Mrs. Donald B. Straus, March 31, 1993, p. 27. MoMA Archives, New York, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/archives/transcript_straus.pdf, accessed February 10, 2022.

¹⁰ BHR, “Amateur Collecting at Home and Abroad,” RFA, RG 53: BHR, series 3, box 49, folder 377: “Speeches, 1934, 1971-1985,” RAC.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Oral History Program, interview with Richard Zeisler, May 15, 1998, p. 20. MoMA Archives, New York, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/archives/transcript_zeisler.pdf, accessed February 11, 2022.

¹³ Oral History Program, interview with Mrs. Donald B. Straus, March 31, 1993, p. 27. MoMA Archives, New York, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/archives/transcript_straus.pdf, accessed February 10, 2022.

¹⁴ Oral History Program, interview with Eliza Bliss Parkinson Cobb, July 6, 1998, p. 124. MoMA Archives, New York, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/archives/transcript_cobb.pdf, accessed February 11, 2022.

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¹⁷ BHR to NAR, May 6, 1960, RFA. RG 4, NAR, Personal, Series H, Family and Friends, BHR, 1952-1968, Box 46, Folder 503, RAC.

¹⁸ BHR to NAR, March 25, 1960, RFA, RG 4, NAR, Personal, Series H, Family and Friends, BHR, 1952-1968, Box 46, Folder 503, RAC.

¹⁹ DD to David Rockefeller (cited hereafter as “DR”), “Meeting of the Nominating Committee, Museum of Modern Art, 9:00am, Monday, November 6, 1961, at Room 5600,” RFA, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller Collection (cited hereafter as “OMR”), RG 2: DR Papers, Box 3, Folder 105: “Cultural: MoMA, 1960-61,” RAC.

²⁰ DD to DR, September 17, 1959, Contributions to the MoMA from the Luce Family," RFA, OMR, RG 2: DR Papers, Box 3, Folder 105: "Cultural: MoMA, 1960-61," RAC.

²¹ DR to Mrs. E. Parmalee Prentice, November 11, 1959, RFA, OMR, RG 2: DR Papers, RG 2, Box 3, Folder 105: "Cultural: MoMA, 1960-61," RAC.

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²³ DD to DR, "New Trustees for MoMA," August 14, 1964, RFA, OMR, RG 2: DR Papers, Box 8, Folder 106: "Cultural: MoMA, 1962-1965," RAC.

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²⁵ BHR to DR, May 16, 1965, RFA, DR, Box 8, Folder 106: "Cultural: MoMA, 1959," RAC.

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²⁷ Clara Diamant Sujo to BHR, RFA, RG 53, BHR, Series 4: MoMA, Box 54, Folder 420: "Chairmanship (BHR)," 1985-1987, RAC.

²⁸ Oral History Program, interview with Luisa Kreisberg, March 13, 2003, p. 34. MoMA Archives, New York, https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/archives/transcript_kreisberg.pdf, accessed February 11, 2022.

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³¹ Ibid., 10.

³² Ibid., 16.

³³ Ibid., 19.

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³⁵ MoMA History Interviews, Tape 6. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

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