

ELI BROAD AND HIS WORK: THE BROAD MUSEUM IN LOS ANGELES

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A financial tycoon and a famous collector of modern art, Eli Broad began his career in a typical American way earning his money as a door-to-door salesman when at college. With time, he became one of the wealthiest individuals in the world valued at 7 billion dollars. His collecting passion climaxed in The Broad Museum of modern art opened in September 2015 in Downtown Los Angeles. Just like today's Cosimo de' Medici, Eli Broad continues the tradition of great American collectors allocating their fortunes to building private collections which in due course become public property. Not only has Eli Broad funded the museum bearing his own name and numerous other buildings designed by the most outstanding modern architects, but many other museum institutions are indebted to this charity.

An entrepreneur, collector, and philanthropist

Eli Broad was born in New York in 1933 to a family of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania, with his father working as a decorator and his mother as a dress-maker. When he was six, the family moved to Detroit. In 1954, he graduated with distinction from the State University of Michigan, specializing in accountancy and economy. That very year he married 18-year-old Edythe (Edye) Lawson with whom he shared his life and collector's passion. Having initially worked as an accountant for a small construction company of Donald Bruce Kaufman, he soon became his partner. Enjoying the post-WW II prosperity their reasonably-priced mass-produced houses with no basement and carport instead of a garage sold really well. In due course, the building business developed into KB Homes, one of the largest developers in the American

market. In 1971, having paid 52 million dollars, Broad purchased a family-owned Sun Life Insurance Fund which he eventually developed into the SunAmerica insurance giant, whose President he remained for the next 28 years. In 1999, SunAmerica was sold to AIG insurance for 18 billion dollars. At that point Eli Broad retired, dedicating himself to collecting and philanthropy. In 2010, he and his wife joined The Giving Pledge, an organization whose members commit themselves to dedicating at least half of their wealth to philanthropy. 2012 marked the publication of Eli Broad's bestseller *The Art of Being Unreasonable: Lessons in Unconventional Thinking*.¹ Eli and Edythe Broad's charity has covered many spheres of life: they supported medical research, education, and a number of institutions focused on culture and art. The four billion dollars of their assets allocated to public activity account for the major segment of their accumulated wealth.

It was in the 1970s that Eli and Edythe Broad took interest in art. The beginning of their collection was relatively conventional: their first purchase was Van Gogh's drawing dated from 1888; following which they acquired pieces by Matisse and Modigliani. The breakthrough came in 1974 when they bought Joan Miró's oil called *Painting*. This very canvas focused the collectors' attention on modern art, and also formed the attitude characteristic of Eli Broad: prior to purchasing their next collection item, he would study all the relevant literature dedicated to the artist who was of interest to him at the given moment. Soon, the Broads turned their interest to American art, purchasing works by Mark Rothko, Morris Louis, and Helen Frankenthaler. The drawing by Van Gogh was sold in order to finance the purchase of a 1954 painting by Robert Rauschenberg called *Untitled*, currently one of the centrepieces in their collection. In 1978, from the local art



1. Eli and Edye Broad in the hall of their Brentwood residence, with Robert Rauschenberg's painting *Untitled* (1954) in the background, <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/edythe-eli-broad-brentwood-home-article>

dealer James Corcoran they purchased the painting *Untitled* executed three years earlier by Jasper Johns, followed by the artist's other works acquired subsequently.²

In the 1980s, the Broads were already well-rounded collectors focused on the art created 'here and now'. They collected all the works they could acquire by selected contemporary American artists, such as: Jasper Johns, Cindy Sherman, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Jeff Koons. The Broad Art Foundation they established in 1984 was a uniquely profiled collection of modern art, forming a kind of a 'library of art works',³ whose items are temporarily lent to other museums and institutions. The Collection is divided chronologically. The earlier works from the 1960s and 70s form part of the Broads' private collection, and are in their majority displayed in their residences, while later pieces are included in the Foundation's collection.⁴ Furthermore, Eli Broad has created two corporate collections: Kaufman and Broad Collection (currently KB Home) and SunAmerica Collection (currently AIG), both specializing in the art of southern California.

For 40 years the Broads collected pieces of contemporary art with the strong belief that the most outstanding collections have been created with the pieces executed while a given collection was being formed. Joanne Heyler, currently the Director of The Broad Museum, has served as their artistic adviser for the last 25 years. The Museum collection totals now over 2.000 pieces, showcasing works by over 200 artists, including some of the most illustrious American ones, e.g. Jasper Johns, Cindy Sherman, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jeff Koons. Operating since 1984, The Broad Art Foundation, also referred to as a lending library of art, has already on more than 8.000 occasions lent free of charge art works to almost 500 institutions: libraries, universities, and museums.⁵

Collecting isn't about buying objects. It's about learning, meeting the artists, seeing different perspectives on culture than the ones you get from investment bankers, says Eli Broad.⁶ Life is richer if you live it among daydreamers, adds Edye Broad.⁷

Eli Broad is a trustee and regent of a number of highly-estimated museum institutions, e.g. Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, Museum of Modern Art in New York, Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. He is a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour and has been awarded the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy. On the other hand, however, there is something fascinatingly confusing in the contrast between his public image: of a caustic immaculately-dressed traditionalist, a tough entrepreneur thinking twice before spending every single dollar, and his crazy, colourful, incoherent collection of Avant-garde art as well as extravagant buildings raised with his money.

Patron of modern architecture

In 1963, Mr and Mrs Broad moved from Detroit to Los Angeles, where they found home in Brentwood, a neighbourhood located in the hilly area between Santa Monica and Beverly Hills. In the early 1990s, they purchased a large estate there intending to raise a residence which was meant to be able to house their art collection. They commissioned its design from Frank Gehry, a Californian architect who was just launching his big international career. However, having worked the initial concept of the design, Gehry, frustrated, decided to give up the commission complaining about continuous controversy with the client who, wishing to control the project's costs, interfered in every design detail. As recommended by Gehry, the project was completed by the local firm Langdon Wilson. Despite this change, the building's



2. Joan Miró, *Painting* (1933), The Broad Collection, <https://www.thebroad.org/art/joan-miró/painting-march-13-1933>



3. Jasper Johns, *Untitled* (1975), <https://www.thebroad.org/art/jasper-johns/untitled-8>

architecture bears many hallmarks of Gehry's signature style: sculptural bravado of the volumes scattered on the hillside, an expressive interior, as well as sinuous metal roof forms. The living quarters are filled with the collection of contemporary American artists, including canvases by Jasper Johns, Cy Twombly, Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein, as well as sculptures by Alberto Giacometti, Alexander Calder, and Jeff Koons. The gardens feature works by Picasso and David Smith. Next to the residence there is a 60-ton monumental work by Richard Serra. When asked how the work was going to be transported and mounted, the famous art dealer Larry Gagosian said, *No problem. Richard does it all the time*, and that is why the artist and the owners decided to call the work *No Problem*.

In 1979, Eli Broad chaired the fund-raising committee for the construction of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles. Five years later, he negotiated the purchase of 80 pieces from the collection of the Italian banker Giuseppe Panza; with that acquisition, MOCA gained grounds

on the world map of museums. The author of the architectural design of this downtown museum in Grand Avenue was the world-famous Japanese architect Arata Isozaki. The Museum was opened in 1986.

In 1999–2006, the Broads financed the reconstruction of an UCLA wing destroyed during an earthquake. The facility of some dozen thousand sq metres, reconstructed and extended according to Richard Meier's design, now houses artistic departments, bearing the name UCLA Eli & Edythe Broad Art Center to honour the reconstruction's founders.

Eli Broad and Frank Gehry coincided again several years later when designs for the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the largest millennium project in Downtown Los Angeles, were under way. On that occasion Eli Broad contributed to raising 220



4. Brentwood residence built after Frank Gehry's concept, finalized by Langdon Wilson Company architects, <http://www.usmodernist.org/gehry.htm>



5. Living room with expressively shaped metal roof featuring paintings on the walls: *Flag* (1967) by Jasper Johns, printed silk with John F. Kennedy's likeness by Robert Rauschenberg (1963); on the right, *The S-Shaped Vine* by Alexander Calder (1946); in the middle, the sculpture *Helmet Head No. 3* by Henry Moore (1960), <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/edythe-eli-broad-brentwood-home-article>

million dollars, thanks to which the building was opened in 2003. Neither was that cooperation controversy-free, and the intensifying conflicts between Broad and Gehry had to be mediated by the Disney Corporation. Classified as an architectural masterpiece, the edifice is now home to the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

In 2006–2008, Eli Broad allocated 50 million dollars to raise the Broad Contemporary Art Museum, now forming a part of the extensive Los Angeles County Museum of Art complex (BCAM at LACMA). The architect selected to implement the project was Renzo Piano. In this case, too, Eli Broad's difficult character was revealed: following the motto of his book, he acted 'unreasonably', and demanded the world to adjust to his requirements, and not himself to the reality. The inevitable controversies and conflicts related to the building's form and budget arose. The new LACMA wing bearing its founder's name was launched in February 2008. The facility resembles a huge silo covered with a saw-tooth roof of intricate structure (Piano's hallmark). The entrance located on Level 3 can be reached on an outdoor escalator. Lit from above, the top gallery of about 6.000 sq. metres, is the largest free span museum space in the US, fit to showcase large-format pieces of contemporary art.⁹ Richard Serra's monumental work *The Band* (2006) is featured before the facility's front.

2012 witnessed the inauguration of the Broad Art Museum at the Michigan State University (Broad MSU), Eli Broad's gift for his alma mater. Designed by Zaha Hadid, the expressive mass of the building covered with glass and stainless steel panels, strongly contrasts with the brick architecture of the surrounding campus raised in Gothic Revival. The facility of

over 4.000 sq metre-surface comprises: display space, an educational wing, a printing workshop, a café, and a sculpture garden. The project's budget amounted to 40 million dollars, of which 28 million were a donation of Eli and Edytha Broad.¹⁰

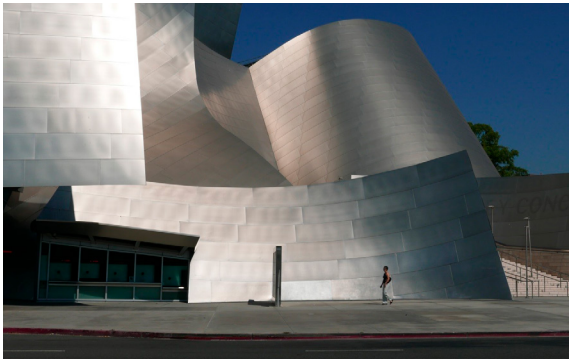
The Broad: architecture and collections

In 2009, when the collection tightly filled three houses of the Broads and five storerooms, Eli and Edytha realized that the time had come for them to raise an adequate museum to house it. Following the suggestion of Antonio Villagoros, Mayor of Los Angeles at the time, the location selected was in the Downtown Grand Avenue between the iconic Wall Disney Concert Hall and across the street from the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). By this token Eli Broad who participated in the raising of those three facilities that currently form the downtown cultural neighbourhood,¹¹ contributed to revitalizing Bunker Hill, office centre of Los Angeles, suffering from the well-known syndrome of American Downtowns which became deserted at weekends. Until recently, Bunker Hill's streets and parking lots had been then swept by howling wind, while tendered lawns around the office block provided camping grounds for the homeless.

An international architectural competition held in 2010 invited only the superstars to participate: the Japanese SANAA studio, London-based Foreign Office Architects (FOA), the 'Flying Dutchman': Rem Koolhaas and his OMA Studio, the Swiss duo Herzog & De Meuron, and Christian de Portzamparc of France. The competition was won by the American studio



6. Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), design Arata Isozaki (1986)



7. Walt Disney Concert Hall, design Frank Gehry (2003)

Diller Scofidio + Renfro who had won fame thanks to the High Line Project: an air-borne park landscaped on the Western Side of Manhattan on an old rail viaduct. The essential competition requirement was the emphasis on the rotation role of the storage space: a quality that has always characterized the Broad collection. In traditional museums, storage spaces are hidden away from visitors, most often located in a basement or in back rooms. Meanwhile, the Diller Scofidio + Renfro architects located the storage space on the first prime storey of the museum: *piano nobile*, and each and very visitor to The Broad can glimpse into it while ascending in the lift from the Ground Floor to the Second, where the permanent exhibition is on display. Also the staircase that leads visitors upstairs offers landings and window openings allowing to view items placed on shelves. This has turned the storage room into the heart of the building, while the upper display level has been given large column-free space exquisitely lit with diffused daylight from above. It is this detail of openwork cover made of concrete prefab elements that defines the characteristic matter and form of the edifice which has already been dubbed a 'sea sponge', 'coral', 'veil', 'curtain', or a 'cheese grater'.

The openwork screens forming the building's walls and roof have been formed in such a way so as to let daylight inside, however to effectively block the sunshine. Thanks to computer programs analysing the position of the sun at different hours in

different seasons, precise defining of the geometry of spherical openings to let the light in was possible. The porous layers are attractively shaded in the blazing Californian sunshine, while on the corner of the building the concrete 'curtain' raises invitingly. The entrance hall is covered with dark shell-formed ceiling of porous texture resembling a cave. There is an opening in the ceiling allowing the passage of the escalator strip. The monochromatic whole is somewhat mysterious, therefore pleasantly contrasting with the bright sunlight and vibrantly colourful streets of Los Angeles. Here visitors can vividly sense the basic spatial concept of the Museum, namely the massive volume of the storeroom placed in it like a vault, while the openwork surface of the building wraps it like a veil.¹² Ascending into upper display spaces resembles moving along a tunnel eventually leading visitors into lit galleries. This passage from darkness into brightness is obviously of symbolic undertone: a kind of purification, preparation for reception of art and illumination expected to descend upon the beholder. Indeed, the sensual experiencing of lightness is overwhelming.

The ground floor features several rooms for temporary exhibitions. The main top display storey covering ca 3.500 sq m houses the permanent display, comprising almost 200 pieces, these including works by Jeff Koons (35 pieces), Jasper Johns (42), Cindy Sherman (124), Andy Warhol (28), Cy Twombly (19), Damian Hirst (14), Robert Rauschenberg (13), and 33 by Roy Lichtenstein. The central space in the gallery is dedicated to Jeff Koons's monumental structures: the famous *Tulips* and the *Balloon Dog*. The exhibition is alive, since the works on display rotate, while the collection keeps growing with new acquisitions.

The Broad defines its mission as *making its collection of contemporary art from the 1950s to the present accessible to the widest possible audience by presenting exhibitions and operating a lending programme to art museums and galleries worldwide. By actively building a dynamic collection that features in-depth representations of influential contemporary artists and by advancing education and engagement through exhibitions and diverse public programming, the museum enriches, provokes, inspires, and fosters appreciation of art of our time.*¹³

Contrary to many contemporary, large, and multifunctional museum buildings, The Broad is relatively small, thus



8. Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University, design Zaha Hadid (2012), <https://www.inexhibit.com/case-studies/eli-edythe-broad-art-museum-michigan-state-university-zaha-hadid/>



9. The Broad Museum in the foreground, design Diller Scofidio + Renfro (2015), Walt Disney Concert Hall in the background to the right

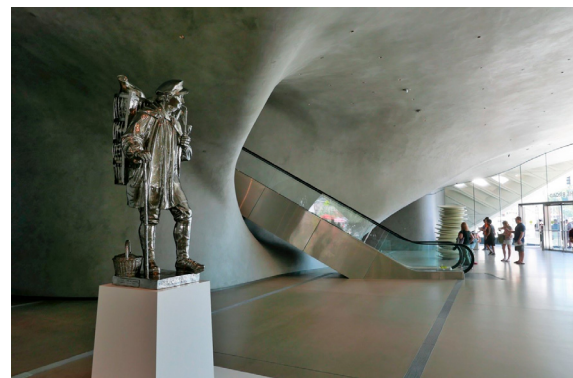
intimate. It features no additional functions: auditoria, restaurants,¹⁴ viewing terraces, or an educational centre. The only concession made to visitors is a several-storey underground parking (this is Los Angeles after all!) and a small museum shop on the ground floor. All this consolidates the Museum's ideological message: what matters here is only the art displayed and artworks in the rotatory storage. Nothing else distracts visitors. Admission to The Broad is free, and over 1.5 million people visited it in the first year.

When in Los Angeles one cannot miss new museums and monumental public buildings whose raising was strongly contributed to by Eli Broad. Next to the Broad Museum, the list includes the Walt Disney Concert Hall by Frank Gehry, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) by Renzo Piano, the UCLA Department of Art by Richard Meier, the Plaza in front of the Transportation Department by Thom Mayne, and the Santa Monica College's Performing Arts Center. Eli Broad claims that Los Angeles has become a world centre of modern art. Next to London, New York, and Paris, it is one of the four global cultural centres.¹⁵ He has contributed significantly to this work with his personal commitment, while together with several other collectors: David Geffen (The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, 1996), Armand Hammer (Hammer Museum, 1990), and Norton Simon (Norton Simon Museum, 1974), he has contributed to creating the phenomenon defined as the 'golden age of Californian collecting'.

In October 2017, Eli Broad announced that due to poor health he was stepping down from public life and philanthropy.



10. Detail of openwork ceiling shading light onto the upper gallery interior



11. Entrance lobby and escalator leading to the upper gallery, on the left, steel sculpture *Kiepenkerl* by Jeff Koons (1987)



12. Interior of the upper gallery with permanent painting and sculpture display



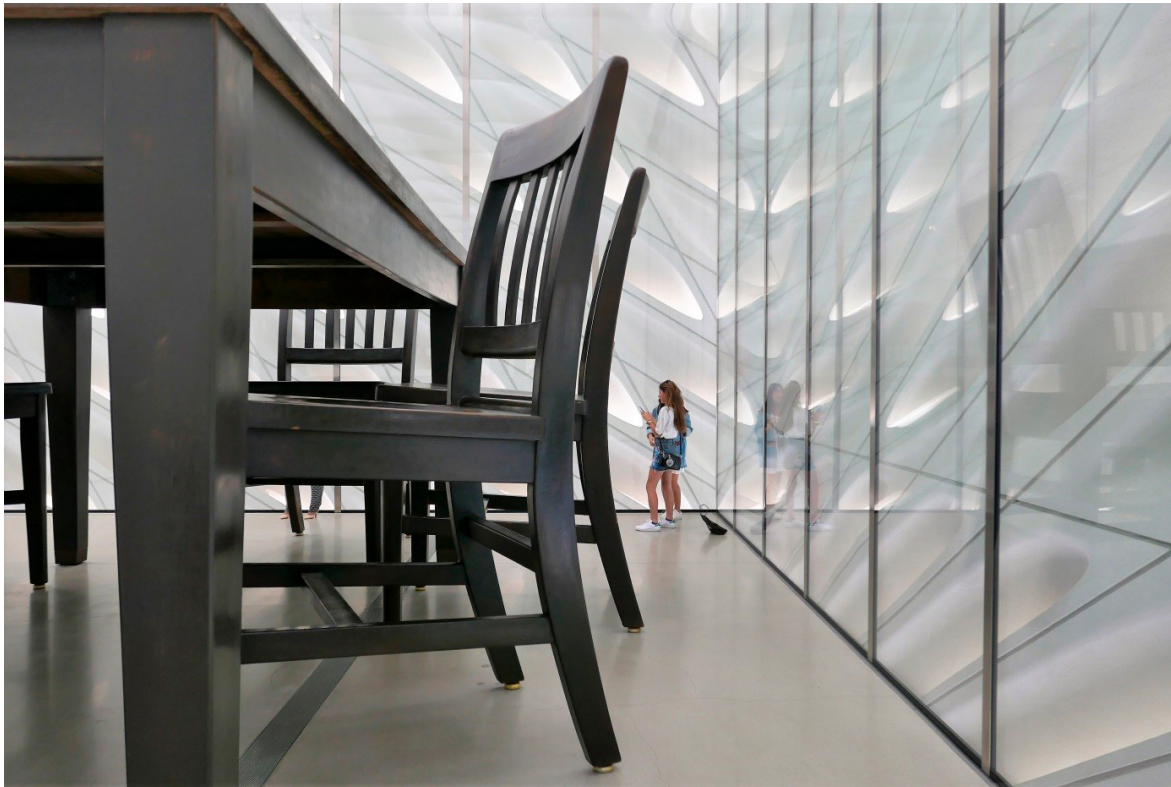
13. Cy Twombly, *Madame D'O* (1999), *By the Ionian Sea* (1988), and *United* (2000–2009)



14. Jeff Koons, *Tulips* (1995–2004)



15. John Baldessari, *Tips for Artists Who Want to Sell* (1966–1968) and *The Spector Is Compelled* (1967–1968)



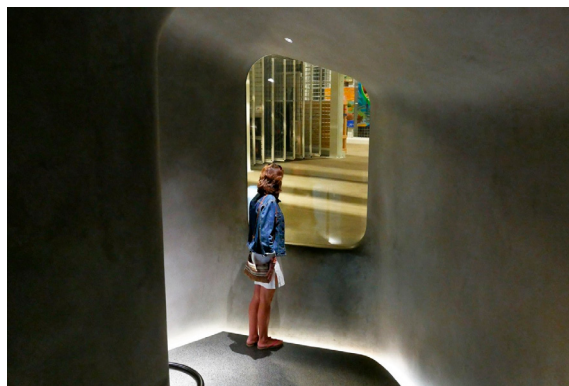
16. Robert Therrien, *Under the Table* (1994)



17. Jenny Saville, *Strategy* (1970)



18. Staircase and lift leading visitors through the storeroom



19. Glimpse into storage space from the main staircase

Photos: 6, 7, 9-19 – A. Jasiński

Abstract: In the paper the profile and activity of Eli Broad is presented; an American entrepreneur, collector, philanthropist, Broad is one of the wealthiest individuals in the world who has allocated most of his assets to charity. His collecting passion climaxed in The Broad Museum of modern art designed by the New York architects Diller Scofidio

+ Renfro, and opened in September 2015 in Downtown Los Angeles.

Not only has Eli Broad funded the museum bearing his own name and numerous other buildings designed by the most outstanding modern architects, but many other museum institutions are indebted to this charity.

Keywords: Eli Broad, collecting, charity, modern art, museum architecture.

Endnotes

- ¹ E. Broad, *The Art of Being Unreasonable: Lessons in Unconventional Thinking*, Wiley and Sons, New York 2012.
- ² J. Stourton, *Great Collectors of Our Time. Art Collecting Since 1945*, Scala, London 2007, p. 184.
- ³ J. Heyler, *Introduction*, w: *The Broad. Art Museum Designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro*, J. Heyler, E. Schad, C. Beck (ed.), DelMonico Books/Prestel, Munich-London-New York 2015, p. 63.
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- ⁷ M. Watts, R. Davis, *The Broad Way*, "Christie's Magazine" May 2016, <https://www.christies.com/features/The-Broad-Museum-Los-Angeles-Inter-view-7318-1.aspx> [Accessed: 15.02.2019].
- ⁸ R. Mayer, *A Frank Gehry...*
- ⁹ P. Jodido, *Piano. Renzo Piano Building Workshop Compete Works 1966—Today*, Taschen, Köln 2014, p. 521.
- ¹⁰ *Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University*, <https://www.inexhibit.com/mymuseum/msu-broad-museum-michigan-state-university-zaha-hadid/> [Accessed: 17 Feb 2019].
- ¹¹ Apart from the three mentioned facilities, in the neighbourhood the following can also be found: Welton Becket's Music Center (1967), Central Los Angeles High School # 9 (Coop Himmel(l)au), and the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels (Rafael Moneo, 2002).
- ¹² J. Heyler, *Introduction...*, p. 67.
- ¹³ The Broad Mission Statement, <https://www.thebroad.org/about/mission-statement>
- ¹⁴ In the direct vicinity of the Museum, The Broad Foundation raised an acclaimed 'Otium' Restaurant designed by Osvaldo Maiozzi (2015).
- ¹⁵ A. Nagourney, A. Popescu, *Eli Broad, Patron of Los Angeles, to Step Down From His Philanthropy*, "The New York Times" 12.10.2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/12/arts/eli-broad-foremost-patron-of-los-angeles-to-step-down-from-his-philanthropy.html> [Accessed: 17 Feb 2019].

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