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The Rubells return to D.C. with long-awaited art museum  
[Chelsea Cirruzzo](#)



Courtesy of the Rubell Museum

The long-awaited Rubell Museum just named D.C. arts veteran Caitlin Berry as its director, bringing it one step closer to opening this fall.

**Why it matters:** The contemporary art museum — funded by art world power couple Don and Mera Rubell and housed in the former Randall Junior High School building in Southwest — has been 10 years in the making.

**The Rubells**, who made their fortune thanks to Don’s brother Steve who ran the Studio 54 business, first took their legacy to Miami where they opened a museum “housed in a former Drug Enforcement Agency warehouse where the cocaine, cash, and Kalashnikovs that spelled Miami Vice were once stored,” according to the [Washington Post](#).

- Their move into the Wynwood neighborhood of Miami has since spawned more art galleries, murals, and eateries.

**This isn’t their first venture** into D.C. In the early 2000s, they bought and redeveloped the Capitol Skyline Hotel, making it a popular destination for [pool parties](#).

**Their latest project:** Transforming the old Randall Junior High School, which they bought [more than ten years ago](#) to house their extensive contemporary art collection.

- The school had been sitting untouched since 2006 when the Corcoran College of Art + Design bought it and then sold it to the Rubells amid an [economic downturn](#). Since then, delays and changes in partnership have postponed an opening.



Don and Mera Rubell. Photo: Sean Zanni/Patrick McMullan via Getty Images

**Berry joins the museum** from the Cody Gallery at Marymount University in Arlington.

- Berry is on the board of the Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art in Reston and D.C.'s ArtTable chapter. She was also the director at Hemphill Fine Arts, a leading D.C. art gallery that often includes emerging artists.

**The Rubell Museum**, which will be free to D.C. residents, will open on October 29.

- "Part of the vision for preserving the historic Randall Junior High School building, a beloved local landmark, is to weave it back into the neighborhood and make it accessible to the entire community after many years of being closed," Berry told Axios over email.

**Berry will work alongside** the director of the Rubell Museum in Miami.

- In addition to contemporary art, Berry's focus includes the Washington Color School, the 1950s-1970s abstract expressionist art movement that started in D.C., and mid-century African American art.