

**THE LIFE**  
*of a* **TITAN**  
and the city  
he helped build

Honoring  
the impact of  
Robert P. Kogod





By Tom Heath, former Washington Post business reporter

## Robert Kogod's remarkable life has followed one guiding principle.

Robert Kogod's remarkable life has followed one guiding principle.

"What people do for the public good," Mr. Kogod says, "enables others' success."

That ethic animates the seismic career of a builder, risk-taker, visionary and philanthropist who reshaped Washington's skyline—and who, with his wife Arlene, funded advancement in education, the arts, architecture, healthcare and community organizations.

The Kogods' philanthropy ignited a chain reaction of good works that reaches across the globe through hundreds of institutions such as the Kogod School of Business at American University, the Smithsonian Institution, the Kogod Cradle at the Arena Stage, the Shalom Hartman Institute

in Israel, the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and Sidwell Friends School in Northwest D.C.

**"I want to be remembered as someone who was fortunate, as someone who did not forget his good fortune and tried to provide opportunity to others," Kogod says, summing up an epic life.**

High-impact philanthropic investments such as American University's Kogod School of Business and the Smithsonian's Kogod Courtyard in downtown Washington fused Kogod's passions for art and architecture into community cornerstones that will endure for generations.

"Bob Kogod changed this university—and this region—in ways that will resonate for generations," said American University President Sylvia Burwell. "Bob and Arlene's dedication to the AU community is simply unmatched—as is their commitment to this region, from the creation of Crystal City to the arts."

As signatories to the "Giving Pledge," created by Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, Bob and Arlene Kogod have pledged to give away a majority of their wealth during their lifetimes.

The Charles E. Smith Companies were the economic engine that fueled the Kogods' philanthropy. After taking over the companies in 1967, Kogod and brother-in-law Robert H. Smith grew a successful family construction company founded in 1946 by Smith's father into Washington's largest, single owner of commercial office space and apartment buildings.

"They were not afraid to be adventurous and be pioneers," says Steven Roth, founder and chairman of Vornado Realty Trust, which purchased the Charles E. Smith Cos. commercial side in 2001. "They would go to where nobody else would go. Eventually they went across the river and built Crystal City."

Crystal City remains the defining real estate project of the Smith Companies and of a generation of Washington developers. The 12-block, self-contained urban complex adjacent to National Airport is where tens of thousands of people work, live and shop. When the Smith Companies acquired the land in the 1960s, it was a junkyard—with railyards, abandoned brickworks, and a dilapidated drive-in movie theater—and the embodiment of risk taking. Today, with more office space than the Pentagon and its own Metro stop, Crystal City is one of the world's largest private real estate projects and home to Amazon's HQ2.

**"We opened a whole new world in Virginia," Kogod says.**

"A coup," says Stuart Bernstein, chairman of the Bernstein Companies and a former AU trustee.

Kogod's calm countenance and plain-spoken nature belie a kinetic, visually driven mind that spreads creative achievement and benevolence. Kogod's attention to detail in pursuit of beauty dovetails with the business of building and managing real estate and spaces.

"My father is extremely meticulous when it comes to visual things," says daughter Lauren, an architect who teaches at Cooper Union in New York. "Every detail: the lighting, the size and location of HVAC





vents, the depth and height of benches, the match and joint lines of stone, the planting composition—and how each of these elements will be cleaned, maintained and kept pristine.”

Around 2000, the Smithsonian Institution reached out as it embarked on a project to refurbish several aging historical museum buildings, including The Old Patent Office Building—the city’s third oldest building after the White House and Capitol, a Greek Revivalist “Temple of Invention” dedicated to America’s entrepreneurial spirit, and the location of Abraham Lincoln’s Inaugural Ball. What happened next transformed the Smithsonian.

Kogod and a world-class design team spent years engaged in a historical preservation process, ultimately creating the Kogod Courtyard, a glass canopy covered oasis of repose enveloped within the Old Patent Office Building which is home to the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery and the American Art Museum.

As he does in all his endeavors, Kogod went all

in. Lauren recalls, “about six months after the courtyard had opened, my dad wasn’t quite satisfied with some of the lighting settings for evening events. Coincidentally, I was there with my kids that day and saw a tech guy with a 12-shelf rolling cart with all sorts of electronic equipment setting up, which I knew was in preparation for a meeting with my dad later that evening. I knew that guy wasn’t going home until my dad was happy with at least eight variations for event types and weather conditions. I wished him ‘Good luck tonight’ on my way out.”

Upon the completion of the courtyard, Kogod then joined the Smithsonian Board of Regents, established and chaired the Facilities Committee, and served for the next twelve years guiding three Secretaries through almost two dozen major capital projects, and the revitalization, construction and restoration of 15 museum facilities. In June 2023, the Smithsonian awarded Kogod the Order of James Smithson Medal for his extraordinary contributions to the Institution. Kogod was only the 11th recipient of the honor.

Kogod trained the same exacting eye on AU’s Kogod School of Business, which was named for the Kogods in 1979 and underwent a rebirth in 1999 due to their generosity. The school became an internationally recognized business school with a world-class faculty and the top sustainability curriculum in the country. A Kogod-funded annex with a shock-and-awe entrance, which was added in 2009, includes more than 200 pieces of Kogod-selected and gifted art hanging on its walls.

“He sent his own, personal curator to go to New York and select the art,” says Bill Delone, a professor emeritus in information technology and a former acting dean of the Kogod School from 2004 through 2005.

Former Goldman Sachs President Gary Cohn,

former Merck & Co. Chairman Richard Clark, former T-Rowe Price Chairman George Collins, Green Bay Packers CEO Mark Murphy, entrepreneur Gary Veloric and investment banker Baroness Dambisa Moyo are just a few of the tens of thousands of former students who have climbed the Kogod Business School ladder to success that Bob and Arlene helped plant on Massachusetts Avenue.

“He has a deep, personal interest in the school,” Delone says. “He lets it be known that he cares deeply and wants to be kept apprised.”

“I report to him once a month, in person or in writing, on Kogod school developments,” says David Marchick, dean of the Kogod School of Business. “He remains intensely focused on the school’s success.”

### The Whole Person

“In the Jewish religion there is something called Tikkun Olam, and it means ‘repair the world,’” said Kogod’s nephew David Bruce Smith, son of Robert Smith, and a former executive in the Smith Companies. “That’s what my uncle has done. The way in which you treat others is how you are regarded. That’s the metaphor for his life.” It has shaped Bob Kogod into a man who lives comfortably within his own skin.

Bob Kogod is a lifetime learner, someone with deep intellectual curiosity, someone who believed it is important to develop one’s “whole person.”

In 1981, an Israeli teacher, David Hartman, presented Kogod with an invitation to come study in Israel. Kogod accepted and then began twice a year trips along with his family. The experience would have such a profound influence that Kogod helped

purchase the land for and build the Shalom Hartman Institute in 1995. “[T]he Hartman Institute, with its vision of tolerance and pluralism, its message of making room for the other, built solidly on the foundation of [Jewish theological] scholarship, providing a path of well-being for all the people for the world. What more noble a cause could one be a part of?” said Kogod in his 2013 speech at the naming of the Shalom Hartman Institute Robert Kogod Campus. In pursuit of self-knowledge, continuous growth, balance, enrichment, wisdom, however you define it—growing your whole person, a complete human being—Kogod has been living out his belief that one should not need to sacrifice integrity for success.

“I identify myself as an American, a Washingtonian and a Jew, and David [Hartman] helped me to put those pieces together in a very meaningful way. I dwell on these pieces of my identity, because two of the most important lessons I’ve learned in life are figuring out my identity, and then actualizing it by doing things that affirm that identity,” Kogod explained to a multigenerational Jewish retreat in 2006.

Bob Kogod is a man who projects a palpable seriousness.

“He has a presence,” says Alan Meltzer, an AU trustee and business leader. “I call him Mr. Kogod. It shows great respect.”

Former AU President Neil Kerwin has seen firsthand Kogod’s calming effect on a room crowded with irrepressible academics.

“He is very low key, quiet and reserved,” Kerwin says. “The minute he opens his mouth, he is on point. He commands a room in a way that doesn’t draw pushback. I left one meeting thinking,





Photo: The Smith and Kogod families in the 1970s.

“I’ve got to spend as much time with this guy as I can.”

### Growing Up, Building a Family

A big part of who he is traces back to the advice his father-in-law and mentor Charles E. Smith, founder of the Smith Companies, imparted to him: to be successful, “just be a plain, good human being.”

The contours defining Bob and his wife Arlene’s flourishing, 67-year-marriage and the family’s generational achievements that follow to this day were established early.

Both of Bob’s parents were Polish immigrants escaping antisemitism and poverty. His father Fred arrived as a teenager with his younger brother in 1905; they never saw their parents again. Fred met Ida Bisker in Baltimore, they settled in Washington, and he launched a

business that was able to provide middle-class comfort to their children Silvia (Seidel), Marvin, “Bobby” and twin-sister Harriett (Bobb) on Buchanan Street in Northwest Washington. Fred was a small-business broker, finding buyers for sellers of small local businesses such as grocery stores, liquor stores, shops, and vice versa. Fred signed and personally guaranteed many bank loans for buyers—many immigrants like himself—and so, in fact, was also a community builder. “I can’t find anything more meaningful than what he’d done and I’m very proud of it,” Kogod says of his father’s profound consideration for others. Like many immigrants, family and neighborhood networks helped pull a whole community towards stability, hoping for even greater success. It would instill in Bobby the lifelong dedication to giving back. “We are all a product of our environment,” Kogod says. “It contributes to how we act out our lives.”

Quietly tenacious, Kogod started college at the

University of Michigan but left after his first year. He returned to Washington to work and jumped into the real estate business with a friend. In his 20s, he decided to finish his degree. Kogod worked during the day while studying business accounting at night at AU. While working non-stop building his business, Kogod stuck to his night school regimen and earned a bachelor’s degree in business accounting at age 30 in 1962. His AU studies laid the foundation for a seven-decade career.

Marvin Kogod found his younger brother a job with a local homebuilder named Dan Pollin—uncle of Abe Pollin, who would become a successful builder and owner of the Washington Wizards and Capitals.

The job turned out to be an apprenticeship. “The organization consisted of me, the secretary and the janitor,” Kogod says. From the very beginning, he learned the importance of mentoring, which plays an integral part in his life to this day.

The Kogods embraced American pluralism and the ethic that with hard work comes reward. There are no short cuts in the Kogod universe. There are no cut corners.

“My father lives the American Dream,” says Lauren, “meaning he was lucky to get opportunities where his talents, perseverance and intelligence led to success. He’s extremely disciplined. He played tennis, he and my mom traveled, we took family vacations. But he brought work home every day. He worked practically every single day, including weekends.”

Charles E. Smith was an immigrant, like Fred. He had arrived in America from Russia as a child in 1911. By the 1950s, through many challenges, the resourceful Charles E. had become one of the most successful homebuilders in Washington.

Charles E. and Bob’s brother, Marvin, who worked in the electrical supply and lighting business, met on the golf course one day and over the course of an afternoon decided to arrange a date between Bob and Smith’s daughter, Arlene. Arlene graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in June of 1956 with a degree in economics and married 25-year-old Bob Kogod in August. They would have three children: Leslie, Lauren and Stuart. Arlene later earned a master’s degree in counseling from Trinity University and worked at the renowned Reginald Lourie Center for Infants and Young Children at the National Institutes of Health for several years. Subsequently, she and her partner, Lois Adelson, created a program mentoring a group of at-risk girls from fourth grade through high school graduation, ensuring each one could continue on to college with the resources to thrive. The program had helped over a hundred girls complete high school and sent numerous girls to college when it ended in 2010.

### The Smith Company Grows

In the late 1950s, what would become the Charles E. Smith Companies remained a family firm of a dozen employees with big ambitions, and Charles E. Smith wanted his son-in-law to join. At first, Bob Kogod demurred, still committed to his business building homes with his childhood friend and partner, Melvin Berman. After several more requests, Kogod finally agreed and started on January 2, 1959.

Washington was riding on the cusp of a decades-long growth boom and the Smith Companies were in launch mode. They had expanded from apartments and homebuilding into commercial office space, completing their flagship office building at 1717 Pennsylvania Avenue in 1960.





The business dream team:  
Bob Kogod (right) with father-in-law Charles E. Smith (center) and brother-in-law Robert Smith (left).

They followed 1717 with several office buildings, stretching into K Street and Connecticut Avenue and redefining the downtown Washington business district. The young Bobs learned well from their experienced executive mentors, Charles E. Smith, J.C. Blake, C. Fred O'Connor and Mel Haney.

“Their timing was amazing,” says Stuart Bernstein.

The ‘two Bobs’—Kogod and Smith—would make history while scaling the Smith Companies into a real estate juggernaut employing thousands and building large developments and apartment houses across the Washington market, from Connecticut Avenue to Bailey’s Crossroads in Virginia to Dulles International Airport. Many second-generation family businesses fail or sputter in the wake of a visionary founder like Charles E. Smith. But under Bob Kogod and Bob Smith, the company skyrocketed. Three times a week—Monday, Wednesday, Friday—the two Bobs and patriarch Charles E.

Smith would walk the short distance to Duke Zeibert’s restaurant, where the brothers-in-law and business partners cemented a lifelong bond.

“They fit well together,” says Bob Smith’s son David Bruce Smith. “They were seamless. They were very fair, moral businessmen who wanted to add something of value to Washington.” Their complementary strengths made them a formidable team.

Bob Smith handled the land, construction and financing. Bob Kogod’s remit was management and leasing.

“He is the perfect property manager,” says Lauren. “Nothing breaks down. Everything is kept up. He is on top of it. He is always anticipating.”

One staffer remembers a recent meeting where Kogod sat quietly as an architect team delivered a long and thorough presentation with blueprints, schematics and photos on one big

project. When it was all over, Kogod pointed to the proposed layout with a simple question: “Where are people going to hang their coats?”

They had forgotten the closets.

Those traits learned from his father, father-in-law and brother—fairness, discipline, attention to detail, and consideration toward others—would surface as Kogod hit his stride in business.

“He is a connoisseur of transactions,” Roth says. “Going through a complicated business deal, he will analyze, peel away the different parts of the skin and get to the essence of it quickly and methodically. That’s a real talent.”

His gravitas became more apparent as he aged, aiding him further.

“He is wise and knows when to press and when to ease off,” Roth says. “Bob knows what the right outcome should be and how to get there. Whether buying or selling or whatever, he is unbelievably kind, generous and likeable. He goes into a negotiation not as a villain or a tough guy. He goes into a negotiation as a prince of men.”

Bob Smith had an idea to invent a city on land across the Potomac River in Northern Virginia. It was 10 minutes from the White House and the downtown Washington businesses. The Pentagon and National Airport were next-door neighbors. Bob Smith reached out to Arthur Birney of the Washington Brick Companies—which owned much of the land since 1892, when tugboats brought clay up the Potomac River to the brick kilns near National Airport. The brickworks burned down in 1939. “It was a wasteland,” Kogod said. “Just terrible.”

Charles E. Smith tried to dissuade the two Bobs from moving forward, advising them at one point to leave the deposit and walk away. But the young dreamers saw great potential and moved ahead.

The first apartment building they named Crystal House. There was a crystal chandelier in the lobby and a one-bedroom apartment rented for \$145 a month, including utilities.

The first Crystal City office building went up in 1964 at a bargain lease rate of \$4.09 a foot. Crystal Plaza, Crystal Mall, Crystal Square, Crystal Gateway and Crystal Park followed. A constellation of office, retail and apartments including Marriott Hot Shoppes cafeteria, Marriott Hotels, a Safeway and athletic clubs rose on the 180 acres. Climate-controlled underground walkways connected buildings to an underground shopping center. The grounds featured leafy, landscaped parks, plazas and extensive public art.

Tens of thousands of employees commuted to Fortune 500 companies, to the Navy offices, the U.S. Patent Office, the Environmental Protection Agency, and USAirways—underpinned by more than 17,000 parking spaces.

“It was in the boondocks where no one was willing to go,” Roth says. “They turned it into the single biggest development project in the Washington region.”

The Smith company’s financing strategy was its own work of art.

“Our modus operandi was instead of having to put money into something, we found someone who owned the land, and we came



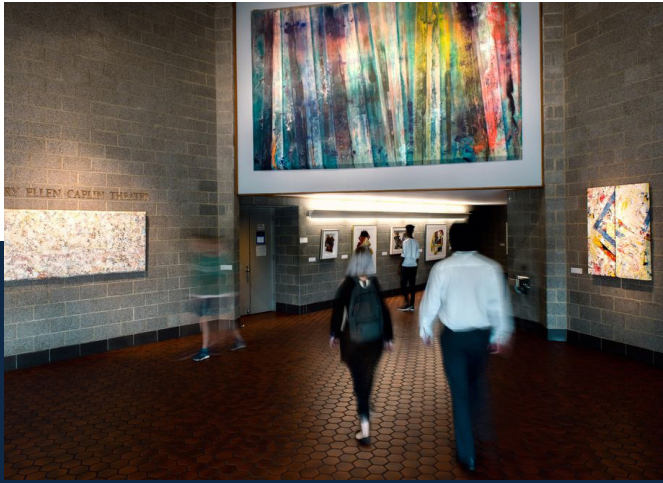


Photo: Some of the Kogod art collection on display at the Arlene and Robert Kogod Center for the Arts at Sidwell Friends school.

in and said, “We will develop it for you and become partners,” Kogod says proudly. “Which we did.”

## Philanthropy

They made a fortune. And the Smith and Kogod families expanded their philanthropy throughout the community, enabling others’ success.

Philanthropy knits Arlene and Bob’s various interests into a common purpose of serving the public. Arlene prioritized the illumination, joy and repair of the human condition. She supports mental health, education and dramatic theater such as the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle at the Arena Stage, the Arlene and Robert Kogod Lobby at the Shakespeare Theatre, the Kogod House for artists at the Studio Theatre, the ARK Theatre and Kogod Lobby at Signature Theater, the Robert and Arlene Kogod Theatre at the University of Maryland’s Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, and the Arlene and Robert Kogod Center for the Arts, an art department classroom building with a 465-seat theater at Sidwell Friends School.

Bob Kogod describes his and Arlene’s charitable portfolio as,

**“a reflection of what opportunities you have, where you’ve been and what organizations or institutions you are part of. I’m an American, a Washingtonian and Jewish. These are the things I should be giving back to.”**

Attorney Ronald Abramson says Kogod is a mentor and model.

“What I learned from Bob in trying to be a philanthropist, is the need to get robustly involved in the organizations you truly want to help,” says Abramson, who is chairman of the National Symphony board and a member of one of Washington’s top real estate families. “Bob calls them the majors versus the minors. If you have a passion for a particular organization and you admire professional leadership, you can make a difference by being on the board and being active, which is what Bob has done. I’ve tried to follow that.”

When Kogod takes a seat on a board, he brings interest in the institution’s mission, budgets, attention to financial planning, strategies for growth and the state of the facilities. He has sat on numerous boards, including the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, American University, Shalom Hartman Institute, Children’s Hospital National Medical Center, Economic Club, Federal City Council, Progressive Policy Institute, Sidwell Friends School, Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, Sixth & I Historic Synagogue, District of Columbia College Access Program, Hillel International, the Mount Desert Land and Garden Preserve and Vornado Realty Trust.

Kogod’s philanthropy extends to his vacation home community in Maine, where he has teamed with the Rockefeller family on projects.

“Bob is disarmingly witty and exceedingly generous,” said David Rockefeller, Jr., who lives near the Kogods on Mount Desert Island, Maine. “He is humble and understated, but very clear in his philosophy of life, which emphasizes doing good without asking for recognition. My parents had a very high regard for Bob and Arlene.”

David Rockefeller Jr.’s late father, David Rockefeller, Sr., teamed up with Kogod more than two decades ago to build affordable homes—and thereby shorten the commutes and reduce the cost—for middle-class year-round residents who had been displaced from Mount Desert Island by rising real estate values. Kogod and David, Sr., put together a site for 15 homes on which year-round families could build residences. The project had restrictions on the price and the timing of the resale of those homes to discourage “flipping.”

And occasionally, the Rockefellers have followed Kogod’s example. David Jr. said he and his wife, Susan, prioritized their charitable support of Mount Desert Island Hospital in Bar Harbor after Kogod took the lead.

“My wife and I have really become very close to them and see them frequently in both D.C. and Maine,” said David Rockefeller, Jr.

Kogod’s support for the community has also been inspired and guided by Steve and Karen Pinkham, bedrock citizens who stay close to their native Mount Desert community, and who have managed the Kogods’ and Rockefellers’ summer properties. The

Kogods’ local support spans from the fire and rescue, nursing, and drug treatment services, to area artisans, organizations preserving the majestic Acadia peninsula, the College of the Atlantic and their gift of the Kogod Center for Medical Education at Mt. Desert Island Hospital for housing medical students and patients.

Bob and Arlene Kogod have received numerous awards and recognitions for their public service and philanthropy, including the American Architectural Foundation’s Keystone Award for outstanding support of architecture, American Institute of Architects’ Glenn Brown Award for community enhancement through architecture, the Jewish Federation’s Inaugural Community Builder Award, the John R. Chandler Award for exemplary support of independent schools, the Arena Stage Beth Newburger Schwartz Award for outstanding community enrichment, and the Order of James Smithson Medal—the Smithsonian Institution’s highest award for transformative public service.

## Momentum for American University and the Kogod School of Business

American University’s Kogod School of Business is a shining monument to Kogod’s generosity.

A modest check of \$100 more than half a century ago in 1971 launched a four-decade philanthropic hitting streak that has left an indelible imprint on AU, Washington, D.C. and international business education.

“They were very good to me,” Kogod says of AU. “I wanted to give back to them to give others the same opportunity which I had.”

In 2023, the Kogod school received the





Photo: Bob Kogod speaking at American University in the 1970s.



Photo: Bob Kogod interacting with current students during one of his many visits to campus.

award for the top sustainability curriculum in the country and was featured among Billboard's top business and entertainment schools. It consistently ranks in the top ten for international business and has a newly minted Veloric Center for Entrepreneurship.

Kogod alumnus Gary Veloric, a hyperkinetic entrepreneur, was inspired by Bob Kogod's generosity to provide his family's gift, the largest to Kogod from any individual not named Kogod.

**“Robert Kogod’s philanthropy has been a catalyst for others, including me, to support the school. I am proud to be affiliated with anything Bob does.”**

The Kogod school excels in both research and teaching. Marketing professor Ron Hill's writings are among the top 2 percent cited in the world for someone in his field.

Another marketing specialist, Professor Sonya Grier, formerly of Stanford University, is a

five-time winner of the American Marketing Association's Thomas C. Kinnear Award for the most influential paper in marketing and policy. Grier, like Hill, is in the top 2 percent for citations of her work and is widely recognized for her work covering race in the marketplace. She was recently named the Arlene R. and Robert P. Kogod Eminent Scholar Chair in Marketing.

Kogod professors are prolific authors: Kent Baker recently published his 43rd book and has contracts for two more. Valentina Bruno's scholarship influences policymaking at the Federal Reserve and the World Bank. Management professor Jennifer Oetzel received two awards from the American Management Association for her groundbreaking book on business and the climate crisis.

Kogod teachers are experienced in business: Linda Bloss-Baum has 25 years of senior management experience with Warner Brothers, Universal Music and Sound Exchange. Climate finance professor Julie

Anderson managed \$55 Billion in ESG assets at BlackRock.

The momentum is clear. People are responding. Last year, Kogod donations nearly matched the amount the school received during the previous ten years. Applications are up, and Kogod remains an attractive destination for students from around the world. Kogod's commitment to making the business school first class has created a new educational standard on Washington's Massachusetts Avenue.

**“I wake up every morning dedicated to ensuring the business school lives up to the Kogods’ good name,” Dean Marchick says.**

### **Art Private and Public**

Visual sensibility is the connective tissue that Arlene and Bob wove into lifelong pursuits that delivered them personal joy and played a fundamental role in their philanthropy. Both have an acute sense of what defines beauty, whether it be theatre, paintings, furniture,

architecture, landscaping or design. That visual gift activated a decades-long interest in collecting works of art. This shared passion has led them as devoted supporters of many national cultural institutions and stewards of significant artworks. Hanging paintings was once a family affair at the Kogod home, with balancing acts, outstretched arms and careful measurements to get everything just right. There is little randomness in the placement of Kogod artwork—from abstract expressionism on the wall to the French art nouveau posters in the sun-drenched breakfast room. Every location is well thought through.

Guided by the late Allan Stone, whose New York gallery was a boiling cauldron of expressionism and creativity, Bob and Arlene assembled a collection centered around mid-century American abstract expressionism starting with a piece by photorealist painter Richard Estes in 1969.

“Allan was a huge personality, totally impassioned, big appetites, absolutely



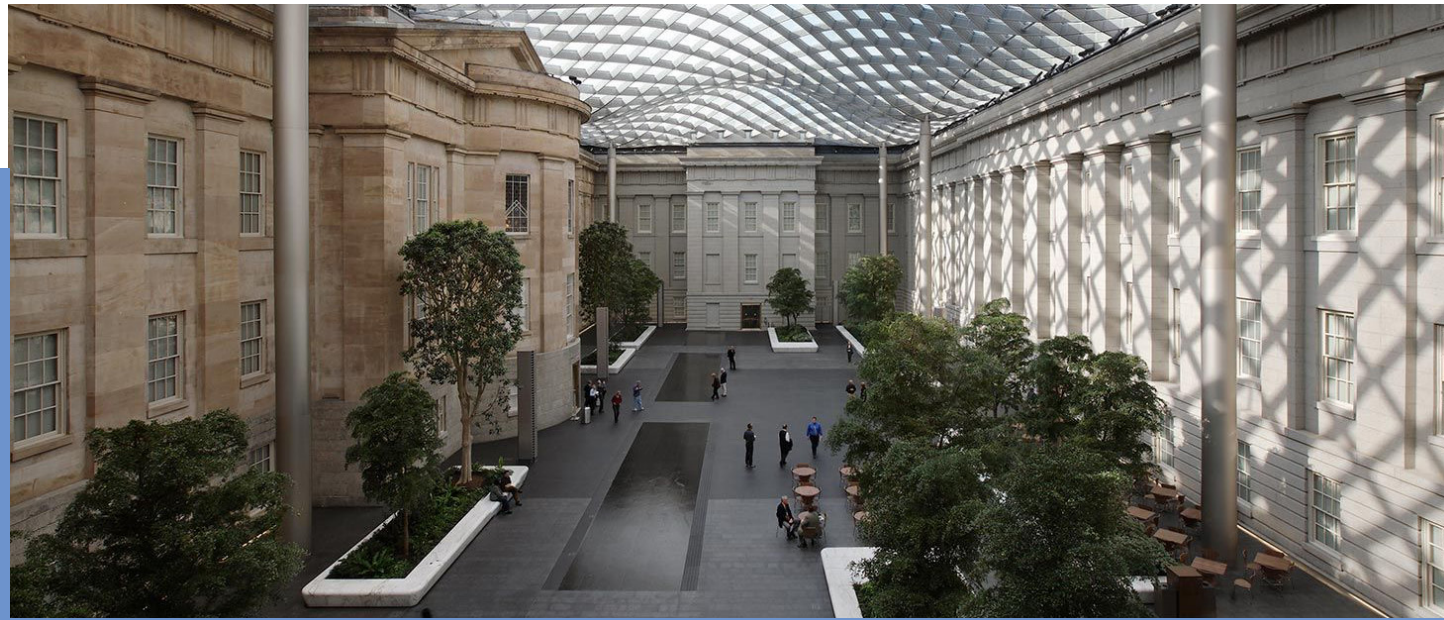


Photo: The Kogod Courtyard in downtown Washington, D.C.

nourished by amazing things, sublime and ridiculous,” says Lauren. “He’d take my parents around to galleries, to the studios of some of the artists he represented like David Beck, who became a dear friend. They fed off each other.”

To the Kogods, financial success created the opportunities to elevate aesthetic experiences—such as the fine and performing arts on a scale and quality befitting a superpower capital city. The Kogods’ generosity made these experiences available to a wider audience through hosting museum groups to view their collection, funding a theater or loaning pieces to museum exhibits. Arlene is partial to the theater as a generator of human liberation, beauty and empathy.

The ineffable, the impractical and the non-essential are in fact essential. The Kogod Courtyard, with its serene, peace-inducing aura, and the 200 original prints Kogod personally selected to line his business school’s hallways, are a testament to his and Arlene’s belief in the power of art. Robert and Arlene “believe that exposure to

fine art exerts a life-changing influence,” writes Stephanie Rachum, who was Bob’s consultant on art donated to the Kogod School and wrote a book on it. “It was natural for them to see the art collection at the business school as a means of expanding students’ horizons... to stimulate awareness of a wide world—an avenue that could open the doors to as-yet-unexplored fields of interest.” Once again, building a total work of art, a total experience, a whole person.

### Enabling Others’ Success

When patriarch Charles E. Smith retired in 1967 from the company he founded, he devoted himself to philanthropy for the next 29 years until he passed away in 1996 at the age of 94.

The company remained in family hands until 1994, when it began selling shares to the public following lessons learned from the Savings and Loan crisis of the 1980s. It merged the apartment side into Archstone-Smith, which became one of the largest apartment real estate investment trusts. The commercial and retail side was sold to Roth’s

Vornado in 2002, and in 2017, JBG Companies acquired the legacy assets from Vornado, renaming the company JBG Smith. In 2018, Amazon selected Crystal City and neighboring Pentagon City (a combined area now known as National Landing) as the site of its second national headquarters, HQ2.

“Bob Kogod was the heart and soul, the glue of Charles E. Smith,” said Mitchell Schear, former president of Vornado/Charles E. Smith 2003-2017. “He was the engineer of building a massive, vertically integrated organization. He also had a human touch. He made people feel like they had a forever home at the company. He made them feel appreciated.”

“He frequently asks me where a former employee is and has genuine caring for current and former employees,” says Menachem Gottlieb, who runs the Smith Kogod family office.

One life Bob Kogod changed was Aventino Olego’s. He started his own company that cleaned Smith Company buildings. He also managed the Kogods’ residence in Washington, D.C. Every summer, Olego would personally polish the travertine marble floors in the company’s executive offices of suite 1101. One day a few years back, Olego came for one final visit. He was retiring and wanted to call on Mr. Kogod, introduce his son and hand the great man a letter.

The letter was addressed to “Mr. and Mrs. Kogod.” It read, in part:

“You gave me the opportunity to work and that is the reason I was able to make the American dream my reality. Thank you. Thank you very much.”

Kogod closely follows the many successful lives he enabled, including Olego and others who built careers after working with the Charles E. Smith companies.

That is the essence of Bob Kogod—an intrinsic and warm optimism, giving others the opportunity to grow, contribute and shine, inspiring the next generation of leaders to transform the city, institutions and country he so loves.







KOGOD  
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