



GSA Public Buildings Service



design excellence
and the arts

The Design Excellence Program is the center for GSA's advocacy of design quality and artistic expression. It seeks the finest—and most appropriate—architects and artists for GSA commissions and their best design solutions to produce facilities of outstanding quality and value. In addition to providing quality workplaces for civilian federal employees, the program aims to preserve and add to the rich legacy of public architecture and art, giving contemporary form and meaning to the nation's cherished democratic values.

Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture

The foundation of the Design Excellence Program is the "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture" issued by President Kennedy in 1962. The Principles set forth a four-point design policy:

- Produce facilities in an architectural style and form that is distinguished and which will reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor and stability of the federal government, emphasizing designs that embody the finest contemporary American architectural thought.
- Avoid an official style.
- Incorporate the work of living American artists in public buildings.
- Give special attention to the ensemble of streets and public places of which federal buildings will form a part and, where possible, locate buildings so as to permit a generous development of landscape.

Finding the "Best of the Best"

To find the best architects and provide greater opportunities for emerging design talent, the Design Excellence Program streamlined the architect/engineer selection process. Solicitations for design services are readily accessible on www.FedBizOpps.gov. A simple two-stage process consisting of a portfolio review and interview focuses on the creativity and performance of the lead designer and his or her team. Occasionally a national design competition is used to find the most appropriate architect for a project. Today, the roster of architects with Design Excellence commissions includes Richard Meier, Henry Cobb, David Childs, James Freed, Robert A. M. Stern, Charles Gwathmey and Thom Mayne.

Using Private Sector Expertise

Critical to achieving the goals of the Design Excellence Program is the use of private sector professionals. Prominent individuals in the fields of architecture, urban design, historic preservation, landscape architecture, art, art conservation, engineering and construction are appointed by the Commissioner of the Public Buildings Service to GSA's National Register of Peer Professionals. These peers serve on architect/engineer evaluation boards, art selection panels, design reviews, awards and competition juries, charrettes and other workshops and forums organized by GSA. Today, the National Register is composed of more than 600 leaders in their field.

For more information about Design Excellence, visit our website at www.gsa.gov.

Continuing an American Tradition

An important dimension of Design Excellence is the Art in Architecture Program. Incorporating art in federal buildings has been a tradition dating back almost 150 years and reflects our country's strongly held belief in the worth and value of creative expression. Such public statements of American culture contribute to the vibrancy of our democracy. GSA allocates one-half of one percent of the estimated construction cost of new or major repair and alteration projects for artwork. The Art in Architecture Program commissions American artists, working in close consultation with project design teams, to create artwork that is appropriate to the diverse uses and architectural vocabularies of federal buildings. The focus is on creating works of art that are integral with the architecture and foster a cultural dialogue between the American people and their government. The program has commissioned many of the nation's most talented and critically respected artists, including Alexander Calder, Claes Oldenburg, Ellsworth Kelly, Louise Bourgeois, Sam Gilliam, John Valadez, Sol LeWitt and Maya Lin.

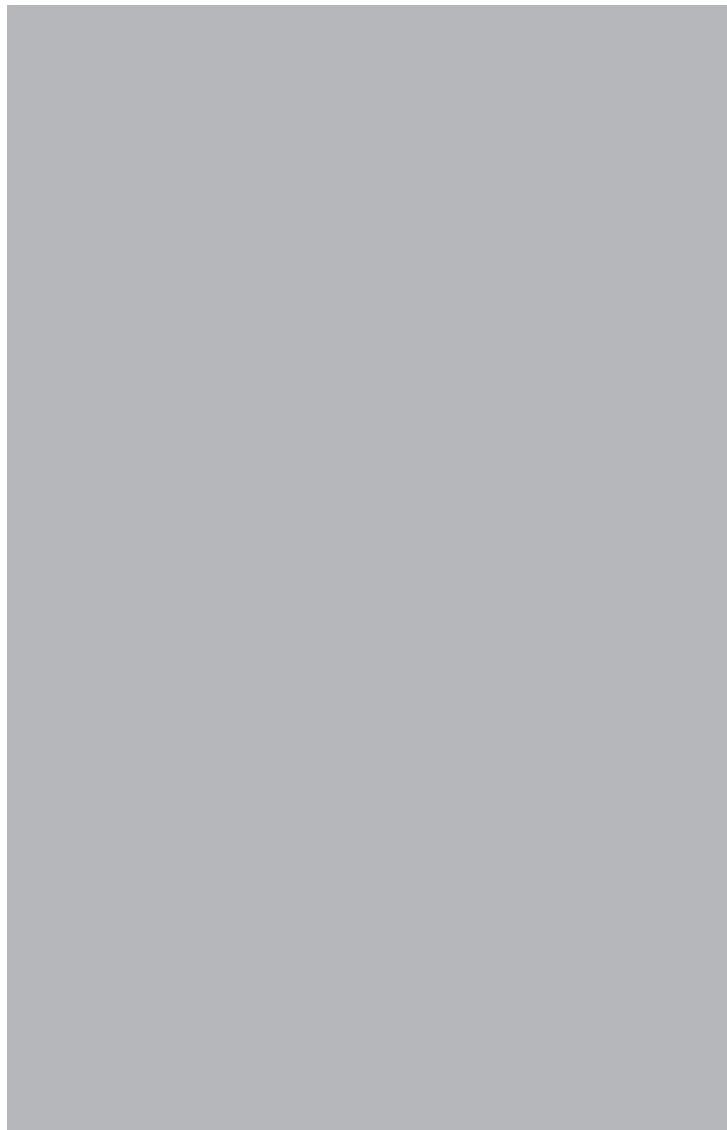
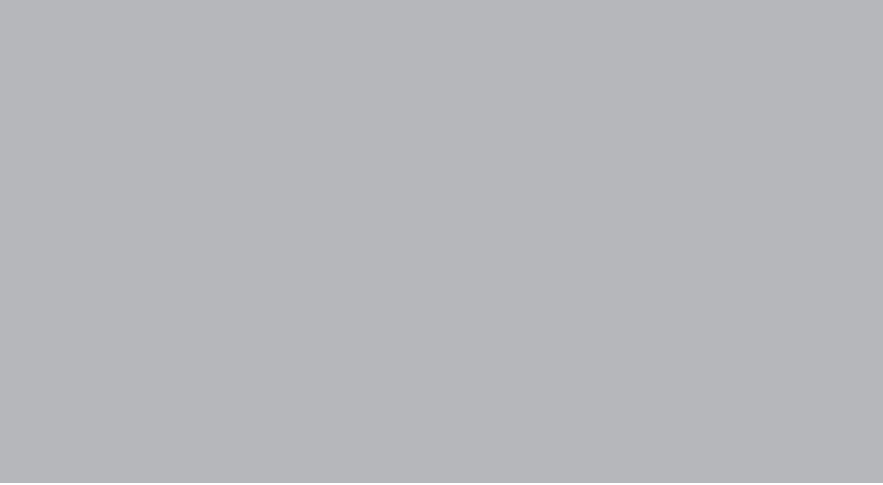




Contributing to America's architectural and artistic legacy.

Preserving a National Treasure

Preserving and maintaining GSA's Fine Arts Collection is also an important aspect of Design Excellence. The collection consists of more than 17,000 paintings, sculpture, architectural or environmental works of art, and graphics dating as far back as the 1850s that are located in federal buildings and non-federal repositories across the United States. This collection includes monumental public works of art commissioned in the Beaux-Arts style; installed and portable works of art commissioned under the federal patronage of the New Deal art projects of the 1930s and 1940s; and works of art purchased or commissioned under the Art in Architecture Program. These works of art represent the history, culture and ideals of our country. Under the stewardship of the Center for Design Excellence and the Arts, they are cataloged, conserved and maintained for future generations. Education and outreach programs including exhibits, interpretive plaques and publications insure that these important works of art are appreciated and accessible to the American people.





Smarter Solutions

Center for Design Excellence and the Arts

Office of Chief Architect

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