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Overview

Renovation of Historic Home for Two Smithsonian Museums

The National Historic Landmark building that houses the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery is completing an extensive renovation. On July 1, thousands of artworks will return to public view in the nation's capital, including the famous "Lansdowne" portrait of George Washington, portraits of notable Americans such as Marilyn Monroe and Shaquille O'Neal, large-scale video installations by Nam June Paik, and paintings by Edward Hopper and Georgia O'Keeffe. The museums, located between Seventh and Ninth streets and between F and G streets N.W., will be the cultural centerpiece of a revitalized downtown Washington.

Collectively, the two museums and their activities are known as the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture.

New Features and Enhancements to the Building

A visitor's experience in the renovated building will be different in several ways. Both museums will share a main entrance on F Street (south side of the building); the G Street (north) entrance will serve tour groups and provide access to the shared museums' store as well as to exhibitions. Full circulation on all three floors for the public—one of the goals of the renovation—will be restored. Previously, parts of the building were blocked off for staff offices, which are now located nearby in the Victor Building at 750 Ninth St. N.W.

The most significant new spaces are four major facilities that were made possible through generous private donations—the Lunder Conservation Center, the Luce Foundation Center for American Art, the Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium, and the Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard.

Lunder Conservation Center

The Lunder Conservation Center is the first art conservation facility that allows the public permanent behind-the-scenes views of the museums' preservation work. Conservation staff from both museums are visible to the public through floor-to-ceiling glass walls that allow visitors to see

firsthand all the techniques that conservators use to examine, treat and preserve artworks. The Lunder Center has five state-of-the-art laboratories and studios equipped to treat paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, sculptures, folk art objects, contemporary crafts, decorative arts and frames. In addition to providing expanded space for conservation projects, the center is a destination for learning about conservation science and techniques through educational kiosks, videos, public programs and outreach initiatives.

Luce Foundation Center for American Art

The Smithsonian American Art Museum's Luce Foundation Center for American Art is the first visible art storage and study center in Washington. It presents more than 3,300 objects in 64 secure glass cases which quadruples the number of artworks from the permanent collection on public view. The Luce Foundation Center features paintings densely hung on screens, sculptures, crafts and folk art objects arranged on shelves, and miniatures and medals in drawers that open. Large-scale sculptures are installed on the first floor. Interactive computer kiosks provide the public with information about every object on display, including a discussion of each artwork, artist biographies, audio interviews, video clips and still images.

Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium

The two museums share the Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium, a new 346-seat facility located on the building's lower level. The museums are developing an ambitious plan for public programs that includes lectures and films as well as music, theater and dance performances. The auditorium is equipped with a state-of-the-art sound system, video and film projection capabilities, flexible lighting, a sprung stage and a concert grand piano. It is fully accessible from the lobby of the G Street entrance for after-hours events and performances.

Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard

The new enclosed Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard, designed by renowned British architect Norman Foster of Foster and Partners, will provide a dynamic year-round public gathering space that will accommodate a variety of functions. Internationally acclaimed landscape designer Kathryn Gustafson of Seattle-based Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd. was selected to create the interior design. Construction of the enclosed courtyard is expected to be complete in late 2007. Limited food service will be available in the building until the café in the courtyard opens.

About the Renovation

In the 1990s, the Smithsonian decided to restore the building. It was clear the aging infrastructure of the building needed replacement along with other structural repairs. The intention also was to reveal for the first time the full magnificence of the building's exceptional architectural features, such as the porticos, a curving double staircase, colonnades, vaulted galleries, large windows and skylights as long as a city block.

The Smithsonian's Office of Historic Preservation was consulted at all phases of the project. Extraordinary effort was made to use new preservation technologies to restore the historic fabric of the building and reuse historic materials, for example:

- More than 550 windows were replaced with a laminated glass that contains an energy shield and is coated with a UV/UB filter to protect the artworks and allows natural light to illuminate the interior. Each window also includes a hand-blown exterior glass panel that creates the look of historic glass. For the first time, natural light will be the primary light source in both museums' exhibition galleries.
- The new roof restores the original copper roofing material and reopens two city-block-long skylights and four circular skylights that flood the upper floors with natural light.
- Original marble floor pavers were restored and reinstalled throughout the building; matching new marble pavers were installed in historically appropriate areas and white oak wood floors were installed in the remainder of the building consistent with the 19th-century design.
- The worn encaustic tiles in the Great Hall were replaced with historically accurate, multicolored replicas produced in England. Four of the original patterned tile squares were retained.
- All stone facades and interior stone columns were cleaned with noninvasive steam techniques and repaired.

The renovated building's infrastructure was fully replaced with entirely new building systems and services, such as:

- Electrical systems (wiring, transformers, panel boards, and new lighting in gallery and nonpublic areas)
- Plumbing systems and an increased number of public restrooms
- Fire protection and security systems
- New passenger elevators
- An accessible entrance via a ramp at G Street

Funding for the Renovation

The Smithsonian undertook a public-private partnership to restore the building and create innovative new public facilities and public programs. Public funds—\$166 million from the federal government—support improved infrastructure and the careful historic preservation of the building.

Private support raised for enhancements to the building now totals \$117 million. Major donors include the following:

- The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation of Las Vegas gave \$45 million for the renovation and the museums' exhibitions
- Robert and Arlene Kogod of Washington gave \$25 million for the building's courtyard
- Nan Tucker McEvoy of San Francisco donated \$10 million to the Smithsonian American Art Museum
- The Henry Luce Foundation of New York City gave \$10 million to establish the Luce Foundation Center for American Art
- The Lunder Foundation of Maine gave \$4 million for the building's visible conservation center, matched by \$6 million given by 65 donors
- Terry and Margaret Stent of Atlanta donated \$2.5 million to the Smithsonian American Art Museum
- Barbara Fleischman endowment, \$1 million for the Archives of American Art

Renovation Architect and Contractor

The architectural firm overseeing the renovation is Hartman-Cox Architects of Washington, a firm that has won more than two dozen awards for historic preservation. Warren Cox, FAIA, and Mary Kay Lanzillotta, AIA, are the lead architects.

Hensel Phelps Construction Co. of Greeley, Colo., is the major contractor for this project. Hensel Phelps has worked on highly visible historic renovations and recently completed the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center.

Norman Foster of Foster and Partners in London is the architect for the courtyard enclosure. Foster and Partners has designed numerous innovative award-winning projects such as the enclosed Great Court at the British Museum in London and the dome at the Reichstag in Berlin. This will be the firm's first cultural project in the Washington metropolitan area.

Square Footage in the Building

There is 152,500 square feet of exhibition space in the renovated building, a 57,000-square-foot increase of available gallery and public space before the renovation. The total space in the renovated building—382,000 square feet—includes three public floors with mezzanines, the enclosed

courtyard, auditorium, lower level and service facilities. The 57,000 square feet of exhibition space for the National Portrait Gallery includes the Great Hall and the America's Presidents installation. The 95,000 square feet of exhibition space for the Smithsonian American Art Museum includes the Lincoln Gallery and the Luce Foundation Center for American Art. The Archives of American Art gallery is located on the first floor.

About the Museums

The Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery is a landmark destination for people interested in learning the fascinating stories of great Americans who have shaped our country. It is the only museum of its kind in the United States to combine the aspects of American history, biography and art. The Portrait Gallery was established by an Act of Congress in 1962 as a "free public museum ... depicting men and women who have made significant contributions to the history, development and culture of the people of the United States...." The museum's collection includes 19,400 works ranging from paintings and sculpture to photographs and drawings. For information about the National Portrait Gallery, visit www.npg.si.edu.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is the home of the largest collection of American art in the world. Its holdings—more than 41,000 artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries—tell the story of America through the visual arts and represent the most inclusive collection of American art of any museum today. It is the nation's first federal art collection, predating the 1846 founding of the Smithsonian Institution. While the renovation of the museum's historic building continues, American Art offers a full program of exhibitions at its branch museum, the Renwick Gallery (Pennsylvania Avenue at 17th Street N.W.). For information about the museum, including Renwick Gallery activities, visit www.americanart.si.edu.

Building History

The historic home for the two museums is one of the oldest public buildings constructed in early Washington, D.C., and is considered one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in the United States. Several important early American architects were involved in the original design of the building including Robert Mills (1781-1855), Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892), Thomas U. Walter (1804-1887) and William Parker Elliot (1807-1854). Its four wings are constructed of freestone and sandstone from Virginia and marble and granite from Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maryland. Praised by Walt Whitman as the "noblest of Washington buildings," it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Pierre L'Enfant's original plan for the capital included a designated site, at Eight and
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F streets N.W., for a national, nondenominational church or pantheon for the nation's heroes. On July 4, 1836, President Andrew Jackson authorized the construction of a patent office on this site. The building was designed to celebrate American invention, technical ingenuity and the scientific advancements that the patent process represents.

The south wing was completed in 1836 under the direction of Robert Mills, then the architect of public buildings. Mills, a native of South Carolina, is recognized now as one of America's architectural geniuses. He is credited with many of the building's structural innovations, such as the brick vaults and solid masonry construction, and graceful details, such as the curved double staircase and the soaring Lincoln Gallery that is filled with light.

The Patent Office moved into the south wing in 1840; it was completed in 1842. The building was always intended for public display of patent models that were submitted by inventors. In addition to patent models, the government's historical, scientific and art collections, including the Declaration of Independence and George Washington's Revolutionary War camp tent, were housed on the third floor. In 1849 construction began on the east and west wings, initially built under the supervision of Robert Mills, who was replaced in 1851 by Thomas U. Walter, architect of the capitol. In 1855 the east wing was completed. It is the only portion of the building that remains today as originally constructed. The west wing was completed in 1857 under the supervision of Thomas U. Walter and Edward Clark, his assistant. Construction of the north wing began in 1856 and was completed in 1868.

Until 1917, the building also housed various bureaus of the Department of the Interior. During the Civil War, it was used as a temporary military hospital and barracks. In March 1865, it was the site of President Abraham Lincoln's inaugural ball. A fire in 1877 badly damaged the upper floors of the north and west wings. Adolf Cluss was appointed the architect to reconstruct the damaged wings in the popular Victorian "modern Renaissance" style of the time.

After 92 years, the Patent Office moved out of the building in 1932 and the Civil Service Commission moved into the offices. In the 1950s, the building was scheduled for demolition, but the nascent historic preservation movement successfully campaigned to save it and in 1955 President Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered that it be preserved. Congress transferred the building to the Smithsonian in 1958 to house art collections and in 1965, the building was designated a National Historic Landmark. After an extensive renovation (1962-1968), the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery opened to the public.

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