

PRESS RELEASE

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SAM'S ASIAN ART MUSEUM REVEALS PLANS FOR RENOVATION AND EXPANSION OF ITS HISTORIC BUILDING

Museum partners with Seattle-based LMN Architects in first substantial renovation to historic building since 1933

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Left: The Art Deco façade on the west side will be preserved. Right: Current concept rendering showing view from the east lawn including glass-enclosed lobby.

SEATTLE, WA - The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) presented today initial design renderings for the upcoming renovation and expansion of the Asian Art Museum, set to begin fall 2017. The renovation will preserve the museum's historic Art Deco façade and provide necessary improvements to modernize the historic building, which hasn't been substantially restored or renovated since its inception in 1933. The museum's landmark building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in July 2016, joining Volunteer Park, which was previously listed in 1976.

In addition to bringing the museum up to 21st-century standards and further protecting its world-class collection through climate control, fire safety, and seismic system upgrades, the renovation project will create much-needed space for education programming and art conservation. A modest expansion will improve the museum's connection to Volunteer Park, adding a new gallery and a meeting/event space while enhancing the beauty of the park beyond. Upon completion of the project, the Asian Art Museum will be a more dynamic and vital resource for the city, better reflecting the community that it serves.

"This renovation and expansion project is crucial for the future of the Asian Art Museum," says Kimerly Rorschach, SAM's Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO. "The museum's exhibitions and programming connects to the many cultural traditions and contemporary issues of Asia, helping us better understand our region and our rapidly evolving world; our goal is to ensure that we can continue to serve our community and visitors for years to come."

The Asian Art Museum is the original home of SAM. In recent years, the museum has seen its largest attendance numbers since becoming the Asian Art Museum in 1994. A significant cultural resource, the museum houses one of the most important Asian art collections outside of Asia and offers a wide range of installations featuring the permanent collection, as well as special exhibitions and programming, including popular public programs presented by the Gardner Center for Asian Art and Ideas.



Following the conclusion of its fall/winter exhibition, *Tabaimo: Utsutsushi Utsushi* (November 11, 2016–February 26, 2017), the museum will temporarily close for renovation and expansion, with an anticipated 2019 reopening. The museum is currently making plans to relocate staff and artworks during the two-year renovation process. Gardner Center and other education programming will continue at locations throughout Seattle, including Seattle University.

Renovation and expansion plans continue to evolve as part of the museum's comprehensive collaborative process involving museum leadership and trustees, the City of Seattle, park groups, members of the community, and designers. The project design team includes Seattle-based project architect LMN Architects (2016 AIA National Architecture Firm of the Year Award recipient), landscape architect Walker Macy, general contractor/construction manager BNBuilders, Inc., and OAC Services, Inc., providing construction and project management services.

Community meetings to discuss the project began earlier this summer and will continue. Upcoming Saturday meetings, all to be held at the Asian Art Museum, are scheduled for October 15, November 19, and December 10.

RENOVATION HIGHLIGHTS

The Asian Art Museum renovation project addresses three critical needs: modernizing and preserving the historic building, expanding exhibition and education/programming space as the museum serves a greater role in the community, and establishing a better connection to Volunteer Park while enhancing the park's beauty.

Critical Modernization & Preservation

Improvements to the 1933 building are critical for the continued safe use of the building and the preservation of the collections housed there. Upgrades include:

- Preservation of the museum's historic Art Deco façade
- Implementation of essential seismic structural upgrades
- Replacement of the building's mechanical and environmental systems, including the addition of air conditioning and humidity control
- Introduction of a new art elevator and new receiving/loading dock
- Improvement of ADA accessibility

Expanded Exhibition and Programming Space

The Asian Art Museum is not just a building—it's a place for the community to connect with the cultures of Asia. Upgrades include:

- A modest expansion on the east side of the building adding a 2650-square-foot art gallery, as well as a community meeting room and relocated office space within the building
- A new dedicated space for the museum's extensive education activities serving K-12 students throughout the region
- Potential for a new Asian art conservation studio in the existing building that can be viewed by visitors

Enhanced Connection to the Park

The Asian Art Museum is the centerpiece of a rich, multifaceted Volunteer Park experience. Upgrades include:

- Significant use of glass and windows in expansion, establishing a compelling visual link between museum and park
- A glass-enclosed lobby looking into the park, accessible via two new openings in the building's Fuller Garden Court lobby space
- New landscaping on the east side of building to enhance the beauty of the east meadow of the park

PROJECT FUNDING

The renovation and expansion of the Asian Art Museum will be funded by a mixture of public and private funds. At this time, the project budget is approximately \$49 million, which will continue to be refined as designs are finalized. In addition to funds committed from the City of Seattle and King County, the museum has received a significant number of gifts and pledges from individuals and foundations. The majority of the funds for the project are being raised privately, and the fundraising campaign continues with an active campaign committee and dedicated team.

ASIAN ART MUSEUM - HISTORY

The Asian Art Museum is the original home of SAM. Set in the bucolic surroundings of the Olmsted-designed Volunteer Park in Capitol Hill, the Art Deco building was designed by Charles Bebb and Paris-trained architect Carl Gould in 1933. In the same year, museum founder Dr. Richard E. Fuller donated the building to the city. It opened its doors on June 23, 1933, presenting its founding collection of Asian art to the citizens of Seattle.

Following the opening of the Seattle Art Museum in downtown Seattle in 1991, the museum reopened as SAM's center for Asian art and cultural activities in 1994. Its collection now features Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Himalayan, and Southeast Asian art. Its offerings include popular public programming by the Gardner Center for Asian Art and Ideas, the McCaw Foundation Library, and the Ann P. Wyckoff Teacher Resource Center (TRC).

The museum's landmark building is included in the Washington Heritage Register of Historic Places. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in July 2016, joining Volunteer Park which was previously listed in 1976.

For more information on the Asian Art Museum renovation and expansion campaign, please visit seattleartmuseum.org/inspire.

Image credits: Benjamin Benschneider, LMN Architects

ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and reopened as the Asian Art Museum in 1994. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture-designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.