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Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Unveils Designs for Campus Redevelopment, with more than 70 Percent of Funding Goal Secured

**Steven Holl Architects' visionary master plan encompasses 14-acre walkable campus, new gallery building for 20th- and 21st-century art, and new home for the Glassell School of Art**

**Lake|Flato Architects to design state-of-the-art conservation center**

**More than \$330 million of \$450-million capital and endowment fundraising goal achieved to date, primarily from Houston-based philanthropists**

*HOUSTON—January 15, 2015—*The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, has revealed designs for a dramatic redevelopment of its 14-acre campus, including a unifying master plan; a 164,000-square-foot building for 20th- and 21st-century art; and a new, 80,000-square-foot home for the Glassell School of Art, all by Steven Holl Architects, as well as the preliminary concepts for a state-of-the-art conservation center by Lake|Flato Architects. A landscape architect will also be selected. The project, beginning later this year and slated for completion in 2019, will transform not only the MFAH, but also its surrounding neighborhood, by making a major contribution to Houston's overall efforts to improve the pedestrian experience of the city.

Building upon the Museum's rich architectural legacy, the bold master plan will integrate the new structures into the campus, one already marked by a century's worth of earlier buildings by William Ward Watkin, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Rafael Moneo, and a sculpture garden by Isamu Noguchi. Overarching landscape plans will unify these distinctive architectural elements and create new public spaces, establishing a pedestrian-friendly urban campus that knits together the existing Modernist steel and glass, and Neoclassical limestone, with the translucent forms of Steven Holl Architects' architecture, and the regional Modernism of Lake|Flato Architects.

The Museum also has announced that \$330 million—more than 73 percent of its \$450-million capital and endowment campaign goal—has been raised to date, as fundraising enters a more public phase. The principal gifts have been provided by Fayez S. Sarofim (\$70 million) and the Kinder Foundation (\$50 million). Additional lead gifts of \$10 million or more have been provided by the Glassell Family; Comelia and Meredith Long; The Brown Foundation, Inc.; the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation; the Duncan Fund; The Cullen Foundation; The Wortham Foundation, Inc.; and Lynn and Oscar Wyatt. Overall, the Museum has received 86 gifts, nearly half in the amount of \$1 million or more. Leading corporate support has been provided by BBVA Compass in the amount of \$5 million. The sponsorship is part of the bank's longstanding commitment to the arts and its partnership with the MFAH.

"The Museum of Fine Arts has become a great museum, befitting Houston as a great city. I am very proud to embark on our largest transformation yet, adding to our distinguished existing architectural heritage," said MFAH Director Gary Tinterow. "The development of a dedicated building to house our largely unseen collection of 20th- and 21st-century masterworks, a reimagined Glassell School of Art, and a state-of-the-art conservation center will position us to reshape and reinvigorate the museum experience and the future of Houston's civic life."

"This is the most exciting single project in the history of the Museum, not only marking the completion of the campus but also the Museum for years to come," said Richard D. Kinder, Chairman of the Museum's board of trustees and of its long-range planning committee. "The redevelopment not only completes the Museum but makes the MFAH a center point of the Museum District and, in fact, the cultural hub of Houston."

#### **The Fayez S. Sarofim Campus**

Encompassing 14 acres in the heart of Houston's Museum District, the Fayez S. Sarofim Campus of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, will be a major contribution to the city's efforts to improve the pedestrian experience of Houston. With an array of public plazas, reflecting pools, and gardens, as well as improved sidewalks, street lighting, and way finding, the campus will provide an active setting for three significant new structures—a school, a gallery building, and a conservation center—that complete a suite of notable architectural features by Watkin, Mies, Moneo, and Noguchi from the previous century.

#### **The Nancy and Rich Kinder Building, Glassell School of Art, and Brown Foundation, Inc., Plaza**

The two exceptional new structures at the heart of the Fayez S. Sarofim Campus—the Nancy and Rich Kinder Building for 20th- and 21st-century art and the Glassell School of Art, both designed by Steven Holl Architects—will be sited next to the new Brown Foundation, Inc., Plaza and the existing Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden, designed by Noguchi and completed in 1986.

At the northeast edge of the campus, across from the glass-and-steel structure of the Mies-designed Caroline Wiess Law Building (1958/74) and stone facade of Moneo's Audrey Jones Beck Building (2000), Steven Holl Architects' largely translucent and transparent exhibition building will stand in complementary contrast to these structures. Punctuated by seven vertical gardens with reflecting pools at ground level, the new gallery building dedicated to 20th- and 21st- century art will be porous to the landscape on all sides. The interior spaces are naturally lit under a "luminous canopy" roof, its concave curves in deliberate response to the billowing clouds that fill the "big sky" of Texas. The building's curved, etched glass exterior provides natural light to the galleries and emits a soft glow at night.

Two floors of galleries will circle a three-level atrium, with the distinctive roof allowing natural light to flood the central spaces. The building will feature 54,000 square feet of galleries placed around that central rotunda, increasing the Museum's existing gallery space by 30 percent, as well as a 202-seat theater, a restaurant, a café, and meeting rooms.

The L-shaped Glassell School of Art building, constructed from a series of sandblasted, precast concrete panels in a rhythm of verticals and slight angles, will replace the school's existing, 35-year-old building, and will describe two edges of the new Brown Foundation, Inc., Plaza. Here, a stepped amphitheater leads up to a walkable, trellised roof garden that provides dramatic views of the campus. The building will connect to the plaza and provide ample outdoor space for programs and performances, preserving the contemplative nature of Noguchi's sculpture garden.

Natural light in all of the studios; an open, broad-stepped central staircase; and a street-level café/art-supply store for students and the public are integral interior features of the school, which is the only museum school in the country with programs that serve students of all ages, from three-year-olds, to adults, to the prestigious Core Residency Program for artists and critics.

A key element of Steven Holl Architects' master plan was the concept of moving all parking below ground, with 190,000 square feet in two underground garages, freeing up space on the campus not only for the new buildings, but also for outdoor public gathering places that allow the campus as a whole to become more pedestrian-friendly. A new, dedicated tunnel will guide school groups and the public between the Nancy and Rich Kinder Building and the Mies building. With the existing Wilson Tunnel—housing artist James Turrell's installation *The Light Inside*—between the Mies and Moneo buildings, the campus will be fully connected below ground.

"We envision the expansions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, as an integrated campus," commented Steven Holl. "Our L-shaped Glassell School of Art building is a key part of our overall space-shaping strategy. At the campus, all buildings are in conversation with each other, and the lush nature of the Houston landscape serves as connecting syntax. Our new Museum pavilion, in soft-etched, translucent glass tubes, will provide natural light to the galleries, offer a glowing presence at night, and form a 'cool jacket' around the new building, reducing solar gain and creating cooling energy. Punctuated by seven gardens, the new gallery building, with its transparent ground level, will have spectacular views into Noguchi's sculpture garden. Likewise, the views offered from the rooftop gardens on the Glassell School building will give the public an overview of the entire, newly unified campus."

#### **The Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation Center for Conservation**

Anchoring the eastern perimeter of the campus, across the street from the Moneo building, will be the Blaffer Foundation Center for Conservation, designed by Lake|Flato Architects and still in the concept phase. Constructed on top of the parking garage that opened with the Audrey Jones Beck Building in 2000, the glass rooftop structure will house state-of-the-art conservation labs and studios. Looking up from the north sidewalk, passersby will be able to glimpse the activity inside. A café will be installed on the ground level.

The center will bring the conservation team together under one roof and in close proximity to the Museum for the first time, allowing them to work more closely with their curator colleagues and to carry out ongoing research and care of the Museum's more than 65,000 objects.

"Characterized by a day-lit design, the building for the conservation center will seek to gracefully balance the art and science of conservation while taking into account the natural environment of the Houston landscape," commented David Lake. "Lake|Flato is honored to collaborate with the staff of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, to design a sustainable and flexible building where the Museum's collections can be brought for care and research."

#### **Civic Impact of the Campus Redevelopment Plan**

The redesign of the campus will take as its core focus the role the MFAH plays in the daily life of Houston—not only as a cultural institution, but also as an urban oasis that is open to all, invigorating the surrounding area and providing much-needed green space in the neighborhood. The redesigned campus is projected to have a significant impact on the city in the near term through job creation, and in the long term, over 20 years, the new campus is expected to generate nearly \$334 million in economic activity, with more than \$2.5 million in direct, indirect, and induced city tax revenues.

"Houston has experienced incredible growth over the last 20 years, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, has grown rapidly with the city," commented Houston Mayor Annise Parker. "The Museum has embraced other parts of the world, in its collections and its programs, and so it has become more and more a reflection of the breadth of this city. The redevelopment of the campus and the resulting increase in public access to art and programming will further enhance the Museum's service to the city."

#### **About Steven Holl Architects**

Based in New York City and Beijing, Steven Holl Architects has realized architectural works internationally, with extensive experience in the arts (including museum, gallery, and exhibition design), campus and educational facilities, residential work, and master planning. In 2014, Steven Holl was named a *Præmium Imperiale* Laureate, one of the highest honors in the arts, by the Japan Art Association. Steven Holl Architects has been recognized worldwide with architecture's most prestigious awards for quality and excellence in design, including the Alvar Aalto Medal in 1998, the Grande Médaille d'Or in 2001, the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in 2009, and the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Gold Medal in 2012. Steven Holl leads the office with partners Chris McVoy and Noah Yaffe. *Time* magazine named Holl as America's Best Architect in 2001, citing his designs for "buildings that satisfy the spirit as well as the eye." Completed museums include the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki; HEART, the Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, in Denmark; the Cité de l'océan et du surf in Biarritz, France; and Kansas City's Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, which in 2007 was called "one of the best museums of the last generation" by the *New Yorker* and named No. 1 on the list of Best Architectural Marvels by *Time* magazine. [www.stevenholl.com](http://www.stevenholl.com)(<http://www.stevenholl.com>)

#### **About Lake|Flato Architects**

Established in 1984, San Antonio-based Lake|Flato Architects has gained national recognition by striving for architecture that is rooted to its place, responds to the natural environment, and merges seamlessly with the landscape. Lake|Flato Architects received the AIA's Firm of the Year Award in 2004; earned a Texas Medal of Arts Award in 2009; and was named a finalist for a National Design Award by the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in 2010. In 2013, *Fast Company* magazine named Lake|Flato one of the World's Top 10 Most Innovative Companies in Architecture. Lake|Flato received the Locus Foundation's Global Award for Sustainable Architecture that same year, and in 2014 Ted Flato and David Lake, the firm's founders, were inducted into the Interior Design magazine Hall of Fame. Eight Lake|Flato projects have received the national Top Ten Green Projects Award from the AIA Committee on the Environment, the highest recognition for sustainable design. In all, Lake|Flato's work has been recognized with more than 150 international, national, and state awards. [www.lakeflato.com](http://www.lakeflato.com)(<http://www.lakeflato.com>)

## About the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Tracing its origins to 1900, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is one of the largest cultural institutions in the country. Its main campus is located in the heart of Houston's Museum District and comprises the Audrey Jones Beck Building, the Caroline Wiess Law Building, the Glassell School of Art, and the Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden. The Beck and Law buildings are connected underground by the Wilson Tunnel, which features James Turrell's iconic installation *The Light Inside*. Additional resources include a repertory cinema, two significant libraries, and public archives. Nearby, two house museums—Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, and Rienzi—present collections of American and European decorative arts. The encyclopedic collections of the MFAH are especially strong in Pre-Columbian and African gold; Renaissance and Baroque painting and sculpture; 19th- and 20th-century art; photography; and Latin American art. The MFAH is also home to the International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICAA), a leading research institute for 20th-century Latin American and Latino art. [www.mfah.org](http://www.mfah.org) (<http://www.mfah.org>)

Follow the future of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston #FutureMFAH [@mfah](https://twitter.com/mfah) (<http://twitter.com/mfah>)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**15 Jan**

Thu / 2015

### PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

[Happy Hour Thursdays \(/calendar/happy-hour-thursdays/10533/\)](/calendar/happy-hour-thursdays/10533/)

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### LECTURE

[Artful Thursday "Still, Rothko, Newman, and the Triumph of American Painting" \(/calendar/artful-thursday-still-rothko-newman-and-triumph-am/10644/\)](/calendar/artful-thursday-still-rothko-newman-and-the-triumph-of-american-painting/)

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### GALLERY TALKS/TOURS

[Art Bite Tour "Wild Beasts" \(/calendar/art-bite-tour-wild-beasts/10742/\)](/calendar/art-bite-tour-wild-beasts/10742/)

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### GALLERY TALKS/TOURS

[Art Bite Tour "Spirit of America" \(/calendar/art-bite-tour-spirit-america/10724/\)](/calendar/art-bite-tour-spirit-america/10724/)

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[See all events > \(/calendar/\)](/calendar/)

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