

Denver Art Museum: Highlight of Downtown Cultural Complex

Complex Includes Daniel Libeskind's Frederic C. Hamilton Building
and Gio Ponti's 1971 North Building

DENVER —The Denver Art Museum's enlarged campus opened to the public on October 7, 2006. The Museum nearly doubled its facilities with the addition of the Frederic C. Hamilton Building, adding more than 30,000 square feet of new galleries for its permanent collections, three temporary exhibition spaces, art storage and public amenities. The expansion is the Museum's first major addition since its North Building, designed by Italian architect Gio Ponti, was completed 35 years ago. Founded as the Denver Artists' Club in 1893, the DAM has grown to one of the largest art museums between Chicago and the West Coast with comprehensive collections numbering over 65,000 pieces from across the world.

"Our holdings reflect our city and region—and provide invaluable ways for the community to learn about cultures from around the world," said Executive Director Lewis Sharp. "The Hamilton Building created much-needed space to exhibit our extensive and diverse collection and traveling exhibitions. "The Hamilton Building created much-needed space to exhibit traveling exhibitions and our extensive and diverse collection that includes American Indian, Spanish Colonial, pre-Columbian, Asian, Oceanic, African, western American and modern and contemporary art."

The DAM is also internationally recognized for its educational programs and unique manner of interacting with visitors inside the galleries.

"It has been gratifying over the years to be recognized for our pioneering education programs," Sharp added. "We have a deep commitment to how our visitors—of all ages—see and engage in our buildings and our collection."

A Bold Tradition

In 1971 the Museum opened the 24-sided, two-towered North Building by Ponti in collaboration with James Sudler Associates of Denver. Over one million faceted, shimmering gray tiles, developed by Dow Corning, provide cladding for the radical seven-story structure. This architectural icon remains the only completed project in the United States by this important Italian master of modern design.

This bold tradition continued with the selection in 2000 of the architect Daniel Libeskind. The 146,000-square-foot Frederic C. Hamilton Building, a joint venture of Daniel Libeskind and Denver-based Davis Partnership Architects, is situated directly south of the North Building. Libeskind's design, referential to the original Ponti building, recalls not only the mountain peaks that provide a powerful backdrop for the city, but the intricate and geometric rock crystals found in the foothills of the Rockies. A sharply cantilevered

section of the Hamilton Building juts across the street towards the North Building above an enclosed steel-and-glass bridge that links the two structures. The entire Museum complex totals more than 350,000 square feet and serves as an architectural landmark for the city of Denver and the surrounding region.

The \$110 million expansion project, which includes the \$75 million Hamilton Building and related improvements to the Museum's full complex and site, was funded through a voter-approved \$62.5 million bond initiative and \$47 million in private funding. Exceeding an initial goal of \$28 million and ultimately raising \$47 million enabled the Museum to expand the scope of the project to include a 75,000-square-foot outdoor plaza and renovations to several public spaces in the North Building. Additionally, Museum trustees have pledged more than \$62.5 million towards the endowment, which matches the public bond initiative.

Located at the southern end of Denver's downtown core, directly across from the city's civic park, the Museum is adjacent to the Denver Central Library, with its 1995 expansion by Michael Graves. The Denver Art Museum's expansion has been a catalyst for larger development in the neighborhood including two residential buildings, a public parking facility and an ambitious landscape plan, also designed by Libeskind. The result is more than a block and a half of reconstruction that provides a vital link between the downtown center and the neighborhoods to the south.

Community-Supported Innovation and Growth

"The Hamilton Building is redefining architecture in Denver and has propelled renewed cultural vitality in our city," said Mayor John Hickenlooper. "The partnership between public and private entities to redevelop an entire block and a half of downtown based on the Museum expansion shows Denver's great entrepreneurial spirit."

The enthusiastic community support for the Denver Art Museum's growth reflects an exceptional civic spirit that embraces and supports innovation and creativity. The Museum's expansion followed years of record-setting attendance and membership growth, demonstrating the Rocky Mountain region's increasing appetite for more dynamic and enriching cultural experiences. The broad-based support is emblematic of the community's strong commitment to arts and culture. Another example of this commitment is the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), a sales tax created in 1988 and approved twice since. Now generating nearly \$40 million annually in direct support for the arts, SCFD helps to fund more than 300 cultural organizations in the Denver metro area.

"The amazing vitality and growth of Denver from its founding to the present inspired the form of the new Museum," Libeskind said. "The daring and forward-looking engagement of the public in forging its own cultural, urban and spirited destiny is apparent as soon as one touches down on the soil of Colorado."

The final architectural selection for the Museum expansion was a public process that included a presentation of Libeskind's work, which was attended by more than 800 community members. Studio Libeskind formed a joint venture with Denver-based Davis Partnership Architects in fall 2000 to complete the design for the Hamilton Building. The two firms were then commissioned to design a 1,000-car parking structure wrapped by a privately developed residential and retail space adjacent to the Museum and a full landscape plan for the surrounding site.

Pioneering Collection-Based Education Programs

The Denver Art Museum has been a leader in educational programming for more than two decades. The family-friendly approach is fully integrated into the galleries through a unique partnership between curators, designers and educators for each discipline. This collaboration is present in both the North and Hamilton Buildings.

A trailblazer in creating innovative opportunities that encourage children and families to interact with the collection, DAM has developed a number of initiatives based on comprehensive research of the visitor experience. An example of this is the “focus galleries,” designed by curators and educators together, which pay particular attention to a specific object of art. Found within the Museum’s collection galleries and open to all visitors, these spaces provide an intense look at the way a painting or sculpture is created with the aid of audio tracks, videos and photos of the painting process and objects used to create the work itself.

The Denver Art Museum is located on 13th Avenue between Broadway and Bannock Streets in downtown Denver. Admission for Colorado residents: \$10 adults, \$8 seniors and students, \$3 youths 6-18, free for children under 6. Admission for non-Colorado residents: \$13 for adults, \$10 for seniors and students, \$5 for visitors aged six to eighteen, free for children under 6. General Museum admission is free for first Saturday of each month thanks to Target and the citizens who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD). The Cultural Complex Garage is open; enter from 12th Avenue between Broadway and Bannock or check the DAM website for up-to-date parking information. Adaptive and interpretive services are available with one week's notice by calling 720-865-5065; TTY 720-865-5003. For information in Spanish, call 720-913-0169. For current hours and other information, call 720-865-5000 or visit www.denverartmuseum.org.

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