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Crocker Art Museum Breaks Ground for Major Expansion

Project Designed by Gwathmey Siegel & Associates

On July 26, the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, California will break ground for a major addition and renovation program, designed by Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects, which will triple the institution's size to 170,000 square feet while upgrading its original landmark buildings and 1980's addition. The project will give the museum world-class facilities and introduce a more public, iconic image.

According to Crocker Art Museum director Lial Jones, "The addition will dramatically increase our gallery space to display our own collection – both historic and contemporary artworks – as well as traveling exhibits. Through the years, collectors have been very generous to the museum, but currently we can only display less than four percent of what we own. We're looking forward to expanded galleries that can display the museum's rich holdings."

"We will also be able to expand our educational programs and public amenities, allowing us to plan an even more active role in the community and region. We're delighted in the way the Gwathmey Siegel design gives the museum a more contemporary face while providing a frame for our valuable historic structures."

The Crocker, long considered one of the cultural gems of the western United States, is the longest operating public art museum west of the Mississippi River. Like many American art museums, it started with a collection housed in the Victorian mansion of a 19th century millionaire, in this case Edwin Crocker.

In 1885, his widow presented the collection of California art, 700 European paintings and 1,000 master drawings by such artists as David, Durer and Rembrandt as well as a gallery building and grounds to the City of Sacramento. Since then the Crocker has acquired major concentrations in historic and contemporary American art, with an emphasis on work by California artists.

As the museum grew, it renovated the Crocker's original mansion in 1924 and added a Brutalist style building in 1969. In the last expansion during the 1980's, Edward Larrabee Barnes revamped the interior of the mansion to create a modern exhibition space and introduced a pavilion link between the two historic buildings that includes an octagonal exhibition gallery.

The Gwathmey Siegel design sets off this ensemble with a three-story addition that links to each of the existing buildings except the 1969 addition, which is being replaced as part of the project. Located on the west side of the gallery building, it stands prominently forward at the front corner of the site with a new courtyard between the old and new structures. Signaling the City of Sacramento's interest in the project, city officials gave the museum permission to move Second Street, which borders the museum's west side, 100 feet, affording the appropriate site area for both the courtyard and addition.

The new galleries triple the existing exhibition space, with new rooms for special exhibitions and contemporary art. Charles Gwathmey, FAIA, one of the firm's two principals, comments, "Like many Gwathmey Siegel additions, this plan treats the historic and new elements as a collage, with the new building acknowledging the historic precedents through quiet manipulations in scale, window placement and materials."

The new building will introduce a two-story main entrance, museum store, café and reception area which opens out onto the courtyard. Also included are a 300-seat auditorium, public meeting rooms, education galleries and classrooms, art storage space and offices for administrative, curatorial and education staff. All of the administrative, meeting, educational and retail spaces are located on the first two floors.

Galleries occupy the entire third floor in both the new and existing buildings. They include large, flexible, 18-foot-high volumes that can accommodate large-scale contemporary art. North-facing clerestory skylights extend across these spaces, giving the roofline a distinctive silhouette.

About the Crocker Art Museum

The longest continuously operating art museum in the West, the Crocker Art Museum was founded in 1885 and remains the leading art institution for the California Capital Region and Central Valley. The Museum, which is housed in one of the finest examples of Victorian Italianate architecture in the United States, offers a diverse spectrum of special exhibitions, events and programs to augment its collections of California, European and Asian artworks, and International Ceramics.

The Museum, which attracts 160,000 visitors each year, boasts one of the state's premier collections of California art, world-renowned master drawings, and significant holdings of Asian art and international ceramics. It hosts 15 changing exhibitions annually, highlighting a variety of media, time periods and cultures.

www.crockerartmuseum.org

About Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects

Founded in 1968, Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects is a New York-based architecture firm offering master planning, architectural, interior and product design services. Gwathmey Siegel has completed over four hundred projects for corporate, educational, cultural, healthcare, government and private clients throughout the United States and abroad.

One of its consistent areas of practice is the design of museums and museum additions, beginning with the design of the addition and renovation of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City. Since then, the firm has gone on to design 14 museum projects, and the Crocker Art Museum is one of the largest.

The 65-person firm has an international reputation for architectural excellence, confirmed by 100 design awards, continuing recognition in the professional and general press, and inclusion in exhibitions and histories of contemporary architecture.

In 1982 Gwathmey Siegel & Associates received the American Institute of Architects' highest honor--the Firm Award--for "approaching every project with a fresh eye, a meticulous attention to detail, a keen appreciation for environmental and economic concerns ... and a strong belief in collaborative effort."

The firm is well known for its holistic approach, that integrates interior design details and site related improvements as integral parts of the architectural solution.

www.gwathmey-siegel.com

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