

New Building, New Art, New Era Seattle Art Museum Opens May 5

*Inaugural exhibition, SAM at 75, to feature highlights from the
largest gift of works in the museum's history*

SEATTLE, April 26, 2007 – The opening of the new Seattle Art Museum on May 5, 2007 marks the completion of two major capital projects and the beginning of a dynamic new era for the museum. SAM opened the award-winning Olympic Sculpture Park in January and now the striking new building designed by Brad Cloepfil of Allied Works Architecture more than doubles the museum's public and exhibition space on its prominent site in the heart of downtown Seattle.

“Seattle is a city of innovation, and this creativity fuels everything from the arts to industry,” said Mimi Gates, director of the Seattle Art Museum. “We have harnessed this pioneering spirit, transforming SAM into a bold new institution in the form of a dramatically expanded downtown museum, a glorious waterfront sculpture park and the renovation of our jewel-like Asian art museum.”

In conjunction with the opening of the new building and SAM's 75th anniversary in 2008, the museum has also received an unprecedented series of gifts from prominent museum patrons and collectors. The gifts—nearly 1,000 works from more than 40 collections—significantly enhance SAM's holdings and reinforce the museum's dedication to artistic excellence. In a remarkable show of support, entire collections by some of the Northwest's leading collectors have been committed over time, creating the largest gift in the museum's history. The inaugural exhibition, *SAM at 75: Building a Collection for Seattle* (May 5-September 9, 2007), will feature approximately 100 of these extraordinary works in the special exhibition galleries and 125 works integrated throughout the permanent collection galleries.

Cloepfil's design seamlessly connects to SAM's existing downtown facility which was designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates and opened in 1991. The new expansion is designed to highlight the art within and create a center of creative expression and energy in downtown Seattle. Its elegant stainless steel façade responds to its urban surroundings, the light and the landscape of the Pacific Northwest, while spacious interiors provide an inviting environment for the experience of art.

The innovative design will allow SAM to grow upward in phases, ultimately adding 300,000 square feet that will support the museum's fast-growing collections, exhibitions and programs. During this first phase of expansion, the museum's gallery and public space more than doubles in size and two entire floors will be free to visitors. The free space includes the Brotman Forum, an airy, light-filled lobby in which visitors will be welcomed by Cai Guo-Qiang's powerful installation of nine cars tumbling across the two-story space. Below the Forum, at street level, are a spacious new museum shop and TASTE restaurant. The free space also includes the lobby and Grand Staircase of the South Building designed by Venturi, Scott Brown and has been transformed into an education space called the "Art Ladder," where visitors can participate in artist-created experiences, hands-on arts activities and public programming for all ages.

SAM developed its new building through an innovative collaboration with Washington Mutual (WaMu), which built its new world headquarters, a 42-story tower known as WaMu Center, on the same downtown block. Through this partnership, SAM has built over 300,000 square feet of additional space which it will occupy in phases in correlation with the growth in audience, collections and financial resources. At the May 2007 opening, SAM will occupy the first four floors of its new building, increasing the museum's size from 150,000 to 268,000 square feet. Washington Mutual is leasing the remaining eight floors of museum space until SAM is ready to expand into them.

"Brad Cloepfil has created a new model for museum design. His passion for art is evident in his brilliant, timeless spaces that give priority to the collection, creating a timeless, welcoming environment for our collection and the people who come to see it," said Mimi Gates. "In coming years, future generations will expand SAM upward and inherit the great legacy of a 450,000-square-foot art museum."

SAM's unprecedented growth has been supported by a highly successful fundraising effort that is fast approaching its goal, having secured more than \$200 million from 8,000 gifts. To date, more than \$178.6 million has been raised toward the \$180 million goal for the capital campaign to build SAM Downtown and the Olympic Sculpture Park and renovate the Seattle Asian Art Museum. An additional \$24 million has been raised for art acquisitions and other enhancements.

"One of the most rewarding aspects of SAM's transformation has been the community's recognition of these projects as a great civic effort, with national as well as regional significance," said Susan Brotman, president of SAM's Board of Trustees. "We are thrilled by the outpouring of support from every part of the community."

Architectural Design

The Seattle Art Museum's expansion and renovation on a prominent site in downtown Seattle was driven by goals to create a cultural institution comprised of galleries and public spaces of diverse scale, proportion and lighting; to develop a flexible framework that allows SAM to expand over decades and to support a vibrant public institution that contributes significantly to urban life.

“The design for the SAM expansion manifests change,” said Brad Cloepfil, principal, Allied Works Architecture. “The building itself will transform over time, as SAM fulfills the master plan. It will change day by day with the light and the atmosphere. And the building will transform the museum experience, creating a beautiful, rich interplay among the art, the city and the landscape of the Pacific Northwest.”

The innovative design of the museum unfolds like a continuous ribbon of space that flows vertically through the building. Overlooks offer views of art-filled galleries above and below, orienting visitors within the museum and to the city beyond. A soaring double-height gallery is proportioned to complement large-scale works, enabling the art to breathe, while vistas out to the Olympic Mountains and Elliott Bay connect visitor, art and landscape. The museum’s new main entrance at First Avenue and Union Street, as well as a significantly larger restaurant and store, connect the building to the life of downtown Seattle.

The museum exterior is composed of ribbed panels of stainless steel and glass, designed to capture Seattle’s ever-changing weather and daylight through a manually operated *brise-soleil*, or “sun break,” system. These sliding stainless steel shutters can moderate the amount of light admitted into the galleries, so curators can choose to bathe the space in natural light or block it out to protect light-sensitive works of art.

Galleries and public spaces are appropriately scaled for a variety of art. While intimate spaces display smaller paintings and decorative arts, the double-height gallery with a soaring 29-foot ceiling highlights monumental works. One of the most remarkable spaces is the Brotman Forum, where Cai Guo-Qiang’s monumental sculptural installation of nine cars, entitled *Inopportune: Stage One* (2004), tumbles across the 38-foot ceiling. The diversity of spatial dimensions and possibilities for exhibition will serve SAM’s broad collection and accommodate a wide range of future installations.

Artistic Program

SAM’s global collection represents work from cultures around the world including African, Australian Aboriginal, 18th and 19th century American, South East Asian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Northwest Coast Native American, Meso-American, Modern and Contemporary, European, Ancient Mediterranean and Islamic, and Decorative Arts. In addition to providing considerably more space for exhibitions, the expansion enables SAM to install an entirely new presentation of its collection.

SAM’s rich and diverse holdings are tied together through the presentation of art in large cultural groupings that stress the works’ original function and the artists’ intent. At the same time, the curators have created bridges between cultures and eras whenever possible through strategic adjacencies that highlight points of commonality or counterpoints among works of art that arise from a complex and rich history of cultural interaction. Approximately 2,400 objects are featured in the inaugural installation, which nearly triples the number of works previously on display.

The installation will also celebrate highlights from the unprecedented gift to the collection of nearly 1,000 works from more than 40 collections. The inaugural exhibition, *SAM at 75: Building a Collection for Seattle*, will feature approximately 100 highlights such as Alberto Giacometti's *The Dog* (1951), Marsden Hartley's *Portrait of a German Officer, Berlin Abstraction* (1914-1915), Ellsworth Kelly's *Blue, Green, Red II* (1965) and Constantin Brancusi's, *Bird in Space* (1926). There are also 125 gifted works integrated throughout the new installation of the permanent collection and new gifts to the collection are included at the Olympic Sculpture Park and the Seattle Asian Art Museum.

The new Simonyi Special Exhibition Galleries on the fourth floor can accommodate large-scale special exhibitions or two special exhibitions at a time. The upcoming exhibition program will feature extraordinary exhibitions from the Musée du Louvre, the Kobe City Museum in Japan and shows organized by SAM including a major exhibition of West Coast Salish Art.

As part of a two-year "Close Ups" project, SAM's curators and the education division have reinterpreted 100 iconic works from the collection. Funded by the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the project brings diverse voices to the collections, deepening visitors' understanding of the works of art. State of the art technology that is located online and in the galleries presenting considerations of objects from various points of view by art historians, artists, community members, writers and scholars. Close Ups also gives visitors access to information before, during and after their museum visits.

Education and Public Programs

The new public programs at SAM seek to address pressing issues in art. The programs, which will take place at all three of SAM's sites, will bring together the most noteworthy and compelling thinkers on a given issue. Performance programs will feature a wide range of styles, genres, and disciplines – designed to reflect SAM's commitment to exploring new trends in art in its various forms. SAM's programs will also provide a forum for contemporary artists to connect with visitors.

Contemporary artist projects, developed in collaboration with the education and public programs division, are integrated throughout the museum from TASTE restaurant to the redesigned third and fourth-floor education spaces and along the Art Ladder, which is located on the Grand Staircase.

Just to name a few of SAM's newest efforts, family programs (including *Family Affair* and *Family Fun!*) will take on a new life as they will focus on learning through play and reciprocal artistic experiences between parents/guardians and children. *ARTattack: teen night out* is one of SAM's newest programs that provides a safe space for high school aged youth to intersect with art, artists and their peers while fostering creative input and questioning.

Allied Works Architecture

Based in Portland, Oregon and New York City, Allied Works Architecture has earned significant recognition for its evocative designs of cultural buildings, residences and

innovative workplaces. Founded in 1994 by Brad Cloepfil, the firm has completed a number of important arts, educational and commercial projects throughout the United States, including the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, the Maryhill Overlook in the Columbia River Gorge, and the Wieden + Kennedy World Headquarters in Portland.

Allied Works was recently awarded the commission to design the Clyfford Still Museum in Denver, Colorado, which will house the artist's 2,400 works, many of which have never been publicly exhibited. In addition to SAM, the firm will be completing three major cultural projects within the next year: the new University of Michigan Museum of Art, the Booker T. Washington High School for Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas, and the redesign of Two Columbus Circle in New York for the Museum of Arts & Design.

The Olympic Sculpture Park and Seattle Asian Art Museum

In addition to the downtown museum, SAM is located on two others sites: the Olympic Sculpture Park and the Seattle Asian Art Museum (SAAM). Since opening in January 2007, the Olympic Sculpture Park has received national and international acclaim. It has transformed downtown Seattle's largest undeveloped waterfront property and a former industrial site into a vibrant free, open space where people can experience a variety of art and sculpture in an outdoor setting, while enjoying dramatic views of the Olympic Mountains and Puget Sound.

Weiss Manfredi Architects' design for the waterfront park integrates architecture, landscape design and urban infrastructure to unify three separate parcels of land. Central to the design is a 2,500-foot Z-shaped route that leads visitors from a steel-and-glass pavilion through a series of emblematic Northwest landscapes. The opening installation includes works by Richard Serra, Teresita Fernández, Mark Dion, Roy McMakin, Glenn Rudolph, Alexander Calder, Mark Di Suvero, Tony Smith, Ellsworth Kelly, Roxy Paine and Anthony Caro.

Located in Volunteer Park, the **Seattle Asian Art Museum** is SAM's original home and one of the city's most exquisite landmarks. Designed in 1933 by Seattle architect Carl Gould, the historic art-deco building houses one of the nation's premier Japanese, Korean and Chinese art collections. In the 1990s, the building's architectural integrity and interior were beautifully preserved. Upcoming renovations and preservation work in 2009 will allow SAAM to continue showing important Asian art exhibitions while serving as a community and cultural resource through the collection, educational programs and events.

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