

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ISABELLA
STEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM**

**Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Presents Final Design for
Extension to Its Historic Building and Gardens**

Plans by Pritzker Prize-Winning Architect Renzo Piano Unveiled January 21, 2010

*New wing will relieve pressure on the historic building and collection,
improve the visitor experience, and preserve Isabella Gardner's legacy*

Boston, MA, January 21, 2010 • The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston today revealed the final, detailed plans for an extension to its historic Museum building, which was designed by Gardner herself with assistance from architect Willard Sears and constructed in 1902. The new wing, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Renzo Piano and the Renzo Piano Building Workshop in collaboration with Burt Hill, is expected to open in early 2012. The 70,000-square-foot extension will relocate programs and functions that have unduly crowded the historic building, putting pressure on the landmark structure and its magnificent collections and diminishing the visitor experience.

“The Gardner Museum differs from other museums in that it is a work of art in totality—designed by its founder to be a home of the muses, to embrace all the arts using its immense collection as inspiration,” said Anne Hawley, *Norma Jean Calderwood Director*. “Renzo Piano has responded to the Museum’s need for functional spaces by creating a conversation with Isabella Gardner’s Museum. His answer is the working home for the arts.”

The use of glass, natural light, and transparency in the new entrance and first floor will afford visitors a sense of a museum-at-work as they enter the building. The design has created, for the first time, opportunities to walk through the Museum’s greenhouses, to interact with Artists-in-Residence living on site, and to observe educational classes and workshops from the lobby. The openness of the space has been conceived to encourage lounging, gathering with others, meetings, and conversation. Surrounding the first floor and visible from most areas, newly landscaped gardens are meant to encourage inquiry and exploration. All of this activity will center on preparation and anticipation for entering and experiencing the historic buildings, galleries, courtyard, and architecture.

“We are not trying to compete with the beauty of the palace, but we have to provide some magic,” says architect Renzo Piano. “The new building may actually be the tool, the instrument, to save the Palace without changing it too much. That this is a fragile creation that cannot survive with its current level of use is one of the conversations we’re having every day. We are talking about an intimate museum that wants to remain intimate.”

The Gardner Museum does not label objects or artwork and has relied upon audio tours, educators, and staff to help orient the visitor. In the new wing, visitors will have additional options for orientation in a new space, named the Living Room in deference to the domestic nature of the historic building. In the Living Room, visitors will learn about Isabella Stewart Gardner and the history of the museum she founded, the collection, and its unique installation and will browse material about the Gardner Museum’s renowned Artists-in-Residence program, past and present. Isabella Gardner also had choreographed a particular experience upon entering into her Museum courtyard. Piano’s design achieves that moment of surprise and awe by guiding visitors through a transparent connector into the cloisters alongside the courtyard.

The Gardner Museum enjoys attendance numbers today that Gardner could not have imagined. In Isabella Gardner’s day, the Museum welcomed around 2,000 visitors per year to the historic Museum building, known as Fenway Court. Today, annual attendance is around 200,000, with about 10,000 attending the musical performances in the Tapestry Room. To complement and respect the historic Fenway Court, Piano has designed the new wing to stand 50 feet behind the existing Museum building and to rise no higher. A first floor with transparent glass walls will afford direct views of the historic building and the surrounding garden landscapes of the Museum property and Frederick Law Olmsted’s adjacent Emerald Necklace park system.

The new wing will feature four volumes clad in patinated green copper panels that will “float” above the transparent first floor and echo the green of the gardens. These volumes will accommodate a 300 seat, in-the-round performance hall and a 2,000-square-foot, naturally lit special exhibition gallery. Visitors will circulate through the public spaces via an open central stairway and an elevator located at the building’s core. An adjacent greenhouse structure will feature a landscape classroom, as well as two artist apartments.

The largest of these new spaces, the performance hall, is designed in collaboration with acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota of Nagata Acoustics. With seats configured in three balcony levels surrounding the central performing area, the hall will offer sophisticated acoustics while preserving the intimate experience that has long characterized the Gardner Museum’s music program.

Current and enhanced programs and functions that will now be housed in the extension, in purpose-built spaces, include the Museum’s renowned music program; special exhibitions; visitor services such as ticketing, coat check, retail and a café; education and family programs; and state-of-the-art conservation labs, exhibition preparation space, and expanded archival and collection storage.

The new wing will provide outdoor seating for the café and expanded garden spaces, for which Piano has designed new working greenhouses. A series of brick walls extending into the gardens will delineate the space and create a visual connection between the new and historic building.

The Gardner’s extension will be constructed entirely on Museum property, which encompasses most of the block bordered by The Fenway, Evans Way Park, Palace Road, and Tetlow Street in the Fenway Cultural District along Frederick Law Olmsted’s Emerald Necklace park system.

The new building at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum aims to be LEED certified by the United States Green Building Council. Main components of the sustainable design are a geothermal well system, daylight harvesting, water-efficient landscaping techniques and the use of local and regional materials, which reduces the environmental impact associated with transport.

Strategic planning for the new wing began a decade ago. The regulatory approval process began in fall 2006 and was completed in May 2009. Site preparation and excavation work and the installation of energy-conserving geothermal wells began in summer and fall 2009.

Since 1989, the Gardner has carried out significant restoration work on Fenway Court to stabilize its structure and help accommodate increased programming and attendance. Projects have included replacing the skylight over the courtyard with thermal pane glass and installing a climate-control system: important improvements that are virtually invisible to the public. Construction of the extension will complement preservation work that is ongoing within the historic building, including a lighting project that will protect sensitive artwork and improve the visitor experience.

FUNDING ▪ The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Extension and Preservation Project is being funded through a variety of sources including private gifts, foundation and corporate support, and tax-exempt bonds. The total hard- and soft- costs for the design and construction of the new wing is \$114 million. In addition, the Museum will raise funds for the endowment and for preservation work on the collection and galleries, in addition to the restoration of historic galleries and areas in the Museum palace. More than \$100 million has been raised to support the project.

RENZO PIANO BUILDING WORKSHOP ▪ www.rpbw.com ▪ Renzo Piano was born in Genoa, Italy, in 1937 to a family of builders. He graduated from Milan Polytechnic in 1964 and began to work with experimental light-weight structures and basic shelters. In 1971, he founded the Piano & Rogers studio and, together with Richard Rogers, won the competition for the Centre Pompidou in Paris. From the early 1970s to the 1990s, Piano collaborated with engineer Peter Rice, founding Atelier Piano & Rice in 1977. In 1981, he established the Renzo Piano Building Workshop, with offices today in Genoa, Paris and New York. Renzo Piano has been awarded the highest honors in architecture, including: the Pritzker Prize; RIBA Royal Gold Medal; Medaille d’Or, UIA; Erasmus Prize; and, recently, the Gold Medal of the AIA.

Additional project partners include: Burt Hill, architect of record; Buro Happold, structural and mechanical engineers; Paratus Group, owner’s representative; and Shawmut Design and Construction, construction management.

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM ▪ www.gardnermuseum.org ▪ The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is itself a work of art, a highly personal installation of Isabella Gardner's collection intended to fire the imagination of all who visit. The collection features 5,000 objects spanning 30 centuries and many cultures—including works by Botticelli, Titian, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Degas, and Sargent, in addition to sculpture, furniture, tapestries, and manuscripts. The Gardner was the first museum of its kind in America to display a major art collection in an intimate atmosphere. It is the only museum in which the collection, building, and installation are entirely the creation of one woman. The historic building was designed by architect Willard T. Sears. ▪ 280 The Fenway Boston MA 02115 • Tue.-Sun., 11 am-5 pm • Admission: Adults \$12; Seniors \$10; Students \$5; Free for members, children under 18, everyone on his/her birthday, and all named Isabella • \$2 off admission with same-day Museum of Fine Arts ticket stub • Info: 617.566.1401 • Box Office: 617 278 5156.

PROJECT WEBSITE ▪ WWW.BUILDINGPROJECT.GARDERMUSEUM.ORG ▪ A new website dedicated to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's Extension and Preservation Project and Renzo Piano extension and related work in the historic galleries will go live on January 21, 2010. Visitors to the site can hear architect Renzo Piano, Director Anne Hawley, and others talk about the new building project and the Museum and can view updates and images from the construction site. The site will be updated regularly.

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EDITORS' NOTES

Press Release ▪ A PDF copy of this press release—and full press kit, including images, a project fact sheet, museum fact sheet, architect bio, and other information—is available online at: http://www.gardnermuseum.org/press_buildingproject.asp. Images and access to the Museum's and project leadership is available by request.