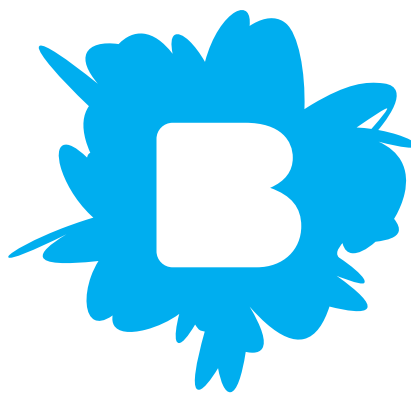


## Press Release



March, 2004

### **Brooklyn Museum to Open New Front Entrance and Plaza Designed by Polshek Partnership Architects, Saturday, April 17, and Sunday, April 18, 2004**

#### **Press Preview Wednesday April 14, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.**

The Brooklyn Museum, home to the second largest art collection in the United States, will open its dramatically redesigned and renovated front entrance and new public plaza on Saturday, April 17, and Sunday, April 18, 2004. The design concept for this multi-staged, \$63-million-dollar capital construction project was developed by Polshek Partnership Architects.

“This remarkable new entrance and plaza open up the Museum to its visitors and surrounding neighborhood in a dramatically contemporary manner, while celebrating its historic façade. Hospitable to all visitors, this project provides one of the most important and exciting new civic spaces in the City of New York. Combined with major changes to the interior public spaces in the recent past, the Brooklyn Museum has been dramatically propelled in to the twenty-first century,” comments Museum Chair Robert S. Rubin.

“This bold and embracing design is the architectural embodiment of the Museum’s mission and institutional commitment to welcome all of its visitors and to enhance their museum-going experience. For the first time in its more than century-long history on this site, the building physically opens up to its surrounding neighborhood. As part of the new plaza, the Brooklyn Museum offers the visitor Brooklyn’s newest and largest ‘front stoop,’ “states Museum Director Arnold L. Lehman.

Using the 19th-century Beaux-Arts façade as a backdrop, a multistory sheer-glass entrance pavilion provides a dramatic architectural connection between the interior of the building and the exterior surroundings. This transparency brings natural light into the formerly dark interior and permits visual access to the Grand Lobby from the front entrance, as well as from the new parking lot entrance that was completed in 2001 as the first stage of this project. Now, all visitors, whether arriving by subway, car, bus, or on foot, will have the same positive entrance experience.

The new 15,000-square-foot shingled-glass pavilion, recalling the staircase of the original McKim, Mead & White entrance, combined with the renovated lobby area of nearly 9,000 square feet, creates a new entrance facility, comprising close to 25,000 square feet. It more than doubles the size of the previous lobby area.

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Among its new amenities are a new visitor center and expanded restroom facilities. The brick support piers that once housed the five front doors have been "excavated," restored, and left permanently exposed, showing the foundations of the institution both structurally and symbolically.

Beneath the floor of the new pavilion is a new basement area, measuring nearly 16,000 square feet, which will house the mechanical systems for new and future climate control of the building. In addition to the plaza, there are two further exterior levels. An elevated promenade, above the new entrance pavilion, will provide inviting interior views as well as a sweeping overview of the plaza and the surrounding neighborhood. A staircase leads to the promenade, which is constructed in part of specially made aluminum panels. Above it, the pre-existing third floor portico has been expanded and repaved with limestone slabs that match the original façade.

The pavilion addresses aesthetic and access issues created when nearly 30 feet of steps that rose to a third-floor main entrance were removed in 1934 as a part of a Works Progress Administration project. Following that alteration, the main access to the Museum shifted to a grade-level entrance through what had originally been the backstage of an auditorium.

The initial phase of this ambitious project also succeeded in restoring the entire Eastern Parkway façade of the building, including cleaning and re-pointing of all the limestone and granite, as well as restoration of the original decorative ironwork, the Daniel Chester French allegorical statues of Brooklyn and Manhattan that flank the entrance, and the thirty 19th-century statues on the Museum's cornice. In addition to creating a new parking lot entrance, preparatory to work on the front entrance, unused space in the rear of the building was transformed into additional parking; a walkway was created, containing a stepped concrete wall where portions of the Museum's collection of architectural fragments will be displayed; and a new roadway was constructed to the west of the building that will allow special access for school and group tour buses, relieving traffic congestion on Eastern Parkway.

Work at the rear of the building began in 1999 and was completed in 2000. The front entrance closed when construction on the north side of the building began in January 2001. The front plaza area is comprised of more than 80,000 square feet, much of it reclaimed from a large, unused, fenced area, which is now entirely open to the public. The plaza area will include a "front stoop," which will provide multiple options for programming as well as various areas for informal gatherings. It will also include two water features created by WET Design, the firm that designed the famous fountains at the Los Angeles Music Center and the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas. One of the fountain features will provide a versatile array of vertical "dancing" water jets that may be programmed in a variety of ways. Another water feature, comprised of a shallow reflecting water skim over black granite beneath a spiral, outdoor ornamental stair, is on the west side of the pavilion. The entire plaza area will include cherry trees and other plantings.

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The landmarked Brooklyn Museum building, which first opened to the public in 1897, was designed by McKim, Mead & White to be the largest museum in the world. Had it been completed, at the projected size of more than 3,000,000 square feet, it would have been larger than the Louvre. However, following Brooklyn's annexation by New York City, only 562,000 square feet, representing one sixth of the original plan, was finished. As a part of the 1986 Brooklyn Museum Master Plan, substantial interior renovations were made from 1991 to 1993 to the West Wing of the building (now the Morris A. and Meyer Schapiro Wing), including the renovation of 30,000 square feet of gallery space and one floor of curatorial offices. The 460-seat Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Auditorium and 30,000 square feet of up-to-date art storage were also created out of existing space. Recently the Museum completed an \$18 million roof renovation project that included the replacement of the 5,000-square-foot skylight above the third-floor Beaux-Arts Court. The interior space was also entirely renovated and was recently installed with selections from the Museum's collection of European paintings.

The front entrance project is managed by the Brooklyn Museum's Office of Planning and Architecture in conjunction with Bovis Lend Lease, Inc.

The construction of the Brooklyn Museum's new entrance and public plaza was made possible by the City of New York through the Department of Cultural Affairs, with additional support from the Museum's Trustees and Friends.

Programs celebrating the new entrance are sponsored by Altria Group, Inc. Family programs are sponsored by Target Stores. Additional generous support has been contributed by Independence Community Foundation, Forest City Ratner Companies, inc., Piper Rudnick LLP, Tim Nye-The MAT Charitable Foundation, and Sweet 'N Low. Promotional consideration provided by Amtrak.

In tandem with the front entrance and plaza projects, the MTA has completely renovated its Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum subway station. The station entrance on the Museum side of Eastern Parkway has been reoriented so that visitors exit onto the plaza in the direction of the Museum rather than toward the street. Selected works from the BMA's collection of architectural ornaments rescued from demolished New York City buildings were donated to the MTA from the Museum's collection and have been integrated into the station design.

End

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