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National Gallery of Art to Remove and Reinstall East Building Façade Veneer through 2014; East Building Will Remain Open to the Public



National Gallery of Art, East Building, west facade, 2008. Photo by Rob Shelley © 2008 National Gallery of Art, Washington

Washington, DC—The planned removal and reinstallation of the marble veneer of the 33-year-old East Building of the National Gallery of Art will begin in early March 2011; the project is expected to be completed by spring 2014. While the East Building will remain open to the public during the entire period, the project will necessitate the following developments:

1. The north parking lane of Madison Drive between 3rd and 4th Streets NW will be closed to all vehicles, effective January 28, 2011.
2. The sidewalks along Madison Drive and Pennsylvania Avenue NW between 3rd and 4th Streets will be closed to all pedestrians, effective immediately. The sidewalks along 3rd and 4th Streets between Pennsylvania Avenue and Madison Drive will remain open.
3. Some of the Yoshino cherry (*Prunus x yedoensis*) and willow oak (*Quercus phellos*)

trees on the east and south sides of the East Building are being moved to an off-site nursery for the duration of the project. Others will be replaced with trees of the same size and quality upon completion of the project.

Instead of using conventional or fixed scaffolding over the entire building, a more open, vertical-access system will be employed for the removal and reinstallation of some 16,200 Tennessee pink marble panels with new supports. Each three-inch-thick panel weighs approximately 450 pounds and typically measures five feet wide by two feet high. When the repair project is complete, the East Building and its landscaping will be restored to their original appearance.

The East Building of the National Gallery of Art has received some 68 million visitors since it opened to the public in 1978. The edifice designed by architect I. M. Pei has won numerous awards and in 1991 was voted one of the top ten buildings in the United States by the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects. The East Building was designed and built according to the highest standards of the late 1970s. Over the past three decades, however, displacement has occurred in the stone cladding because of thermal movement and systemic structural distress of the anchors that support the marble veneer panels.

East Building Background

Designed for the Gallery's 20th-century art collection and its Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, the East Building is known for its triangular shapes and dramatic skylit atrium, a sculptural space framing a 16,000-square-foot interior court.

Constructed of the same Tennessee marble used in John Russell Pope's 1941 neoclassical West Building, the modernist East Building has been recognized not only for its path-breaking design, but for its technical innovations and—with 23 craft awards—exquisite craftsmanship.

Foreseeing the need for the museum's eventual expansion, National Gallery of Art founder Andrew W. Mellon requested that Congress set aside a plot of land adjacent to the original 1941 neoclassical building. In 1967, Mellon's children, Paul Mellon and Ailsa Mellon Bruce, along with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, offered to fund an

extension of the museum, in keeping with their father's vision. Under the leadership of Paul Mellon and former Gallery directors John Walker and J. Carter Brown, planning moved forward, and in July 1968 architect I. M. Pei was selected. He devised a radical design solution for the trapezoidal site by drawing a diagonal line through it, creating two triangles—one to house the museum's public functions; the other, the Gallery's study center and library. Construction began in 1971. On June 1, 1978, President Jimmy Carter and Paul Mellon dedicated the new building to the people of the United States.

Pei's innovative use of geometric shapes as a space for the public display of art attracted wide public attention and critical acclaim, with attendance at the East Building reaching one million less than two months after the building opened. Deemed "the elder statesman of American architecture" by *New York Times* critic Herbert Muschamp, Pei, now 93, is the recipient of the Smithsonian Institution 2003 National Design Award for lifetime achievement.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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