



Master Plan

## PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART

*Architects: Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, Inc.*

*Location: Philadelphia, PA*

*Client: Philadelphia Museum of Art*

*Completion: 1997*

VSBA maintains a long association with the Philadelphia Museum of Art. From 1976 to 1997, VSBA's projects at the Museum included a master plan, a new West Foyer renovation, expansion and renovation of galleries, and exhibit design.



Conservation Lab

### *COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN, 1981*

The material gathered for analysis included a thorough survey of the building with a detailed report on the renovation and restoration problems involved with the exterior fabric of the building, with particular emphasis on roof tiles and exterior marble. We also carried out a literature search, a survey of comparable public museums, and sixty interviews with Museum curators, staff, and trustees. Meetings and reviews of work in progress were conducted with the Director, Board of Trustees, and the Executive, Building, and Women's Committees.



Prints Gallery

### *CONSERVATION LABORATORY, 1978*

This project involved the interior renovation of 6,000 sf of unimproved space on the Museum's first service level. It encompassed existing environmental system upgrades, the design of highly specific laboratory casework and equipment stands, a spray booth, x-ray room, and specialized storage systems. The laboratory was created and primarily equipped for the conservation of the Museum's painting, print, and object collections, and for some furniture restoration.



Art Sales and Rental

### *GALLERY RENOVATIONS, 1984*

*The Prints, Drawings and Photography Galleries:* Approximately 3,000 sf of galleries were renovated and expanded to accommodate the Muriel and Phillip Berman Prints and Drawings Gallery and The Stieglitz Center for photographs. The two sets of adjacent galleries can be subdivided or joined together to contain special exhibits as well as exhibitions from the Museum's expanded collections.

*Art Sales and Rental Gallery:* The expansion of the photography galleries necessitated relocation of this shop area to the end of a corridor originally designed for an additional set of public elevators and their lobby. The store is framed and separated from the corridor by a wooden gateway that harmonizes with other nearby design details.



WEST FOYER RENOVATIONS, 1989

West foyer information desk

The West Foyer was originally intended to be the park-side “back door” to the Museum, but gradually became the main entrance owing to its accessibility by car and the availability of nearby parking. The project has adapted the West Foyer so that it can function as the main entrance to the Museum, including a new information and admissions desk, new graphic systems, improved circulation patterns, motorized coat checking equipment, a members’ lounge, additional furnishings, and donor recognition.

We replaced existing desks for admissions, membership, and information with a single central desk surrounding a tall kiosk. The desk and kiosk are made of wood, with a combination of natural and brightly colored enamel finishes. The kiosk incorporates signage on the front that provides membership and admissions prices and a large electronic sign on the back that gives changing information on tours and events. The top of kiosk conceals uplighting for the room’s high ceiling, which was repainted with colors accenting the decorative moldings of the coffers. The kiosk is topped by three blue neon griffins, derived from the methodically-suggestive bronze griffins adorning the Museum’s roof (serving as stylized lightning rods).

**Projects for  
The Philadelphia Museum of Art**



Foyer, donation bin, and bench detail



New leather-cushioned benches of similar material and finish incorporate Greek motifs and provide much needed seating at the perimeter of the room. Lighting improvements include ceiling and perimeter lighting to light the desk and floor from above, as well as specially designed pendant fixtures in the adjacent vestibule that include Greek motifs and bright colors. Wood and enamel-finished “hope chests” to hold donations are located near the building exits. A series of large painted and natural finish wood plaques were also designed and added to the walls to acknowledge donors to the Museum’s successful fund-raising initiatives.



**“PHILADELPHIA: THREE CENTURIES OF AMERICAN ART,” EXHIBITION DESIGN, 1976**

VSBA was responsible for the exhibition design and construction supervision of “Philadelphia: Three Centuries of American Art,” the keynote Bicentennial exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The exhibit was arranged to display the over 300-year evolution of art and crafts in Philadelphia and to accommodate large crowds of viewers. It included a selection of American painting, drawings, furniture, and architecture costumes and decorative



*"Three Centuries of American Art"*



*"Japanese Objects"*

arts of each period grouped in chronological stages, using subtle changes of color to differentiate each era. The exhibit was one of the most popular features of the Bicentennial year.

**"SKILL, CARE AND WIT: MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS FROM JAPANESE MARKETS," TRAVELING EXHIBITION OF JAPANESE OBJECTS, 1994-1995; 1995; 1997**

Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown have written of their initial responses as American architects to Japanese art and culture, historical and contemporary. This exhibit presented a selection of objects Mr. Venturi and Ms. Scott Brown came upon during their travels in Japan.

Many of the objects in the collection illustrated here are manifestations of the celebrated Japanese custom of giving gifts and most of them derive from what a Japanese friend of Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi calls "Venturi shops." They were culled from Japanese markets, typically situated adjacent to Kyoto shrines, which teem with objects of complex and contradictory varieties, simultaneously juxtaposing and embracing dimensions sensuous and lyrical in terms of color, pattern, and scale. These objects fascinate because they exhibit at once skill, pride, and wit -- which represent rare and precious elements in our time.

The exhibition itself combines very diverse objects haphazardly to express their variety and their range: on the walls are graphic inscriptions that describe sources and express fascination.

**300 Years of American Art Exhibition  
Japanese Objects Exhibition  
Philadelphia Museum of Art**