WOODMERE ART MUSEUM

Location: Philadelphia, PA
Client: Woodmere Art Museum
Area: 26,000 gsf (addition)
Construction Cost: $11,000,000 (estimated)
Scheduled Completion: 2006

The Woodmere Art Museum is located in the Chestnut Hill Victorian home of its founder, Charles Knox Smith, and includes a series of additions and renovations to the original house. The Museum hired VSBA to create a concept design for a new addition that would better accommodate increased attendance while meeting the social and technical needs of a 21st century museum.

The Museum’s new identity will derive from the interplay of three major elements in the landscape: Smith’s highly articulated original building; a low, rhythmic arcade addition, deferential in massing to the existing museum but more civic in scale; and a large-scale iconic art object -- to be acquired or commissioned -- pronouncing the Museum’s enhanced civic presence to Germantown Avenue.

A new wing will serve the public with a lobby/gallery, large flexible gallery, and multi-purpose room -- while providing necessary “back of house” support and mechanical facilities. The main entry, located beyond a limestone and brick arcade, will lead visitors to a welcoming lobby that provides a setting for some of the permanent collection’s most important works. The Violet Oakley lunettes, originally commissioned for a residence in Center City Philadelphia, will be prominently displayed, and the generous open stair to the lower level will display the pendants and octogonals completing the Oakley ensemble. Executive and administrative offices, a new conference room for the Board of Trustees, and an enlarged museum store will be located on the entry and second levels. The lower level will house a multi-purpose room, archival storage area, art preparation facility, loading dock, and storage spaces. The terrace adjacent to the multi-purpose room can be tented to increase capacity and for special events.

State-of-the-art environmental conditioning in the flexible gallery and archival storage area, as well as carefully controlled light levels throughout the Museum, will help preserve the artworks.
Our design works with the flowing topography of the site. Parking will be relocated to follow the existing site contours, and will include a porous pavement system to manage the site’s stormwater runoff. New plantings and trees will provide a landscape buffer to adjacent properties.