



Smithsonian
***Donald W. Reynolds Center for
American Art and Portraiture***

***National Portrait Gallery
Smithsonian American Art Museum***

News

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Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard Fact Sheet

The Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard, a signature element of the National Historic Landmark building shared by the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery, opened to the public Nov. 18, 2007. The courtyard is named for Robert and Arlene Kogod, Washington philanthropists and art collectors.

The enclosed courtyard with its elegant glass canopy, designed by world-renowned architects at Foster + Partners in London, provides a distinctive, contemporary accent to the museums' Greek Revival building. The wavy glass-and-steel roof that appears to float over the 28,000-square-foot courtyard lets in natural light but protects visitors from the elements. The double-glazed glass panels are set in a grid completely supported by eight anodized aluminum-clad columns located around the perimeter of the courtyard so that the weight of the roof does not affect the historic building. The steel grid was brought into the space in 120 pieces that were put together like a jigsaw puzzle. Each coffer in the ceiling is lined with aluminum rods backed with acoustic insulation, which is made from recycled denim and acts as a cushion to reduce echo in the space. There are 864 glass panels and no two are alike.

Foster + Partners was assisted by internationally acclaimed landscape designer Kathryn Gustafson of Seattle-based Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd. in the creation of the courtyard's interior design, which includes temperate plantings in white marble containers on a black granite floor. The landscaping includes ficus and black olive trees and a variety of shrubs and ferns. Gustafson's original design also featured four water scirms, each one-quarter-inch deep. The four shallow pools are currently turned off for maintenance.

The museums offer a variety of free public programs in the Kogod Courtyard, including family days and musical performances. Free public wireless Internet access (Wi-Fi) is available in the courtyard, and casual dining is offered in the Courtyard Café from 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. daily.

Construction of the Kogod Courtyard was part of a recent \$283 million major renovation of the museums' historic building. Federal funds—\$166 million—paid for the infrastructure work and historic preservation of the building. Private support totaled \$117 million, which included \$63 million for the courtyard enclosure and its interior design (\$25 million from Robert and Arlene Kogod and \$38 million from private donors).

Plans for enclosing the courtyard began in 2002. In August 2003, the Smithsonian received approval from Congress for the privately funded enhancement of the building. Proposals were sought for a design that would not affect the structure or integrity of the historic building. In 2004, following an international competition, Foster + Partners was selected by a panel of jurors, and approvals from the National Capital Planning Commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts were obtained.

The museums, located at Eighth and F streets N.W., are open from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY).

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