



GILCREASE MUSEUM

Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art

Gilcrease Museum Unveils Concept Design for New Building

State-of-the-Art Facility Will Draw Upon Unparalleled Collections to Explore the Diverse Histories of America and Their Relevance to Today



*Gilcrease Museum Entry - View from the East showing the visitors' approach to the museum.
Courtesy of SmithGroup and Gilcrease Museum.*

Tulsa, OK, June 24, 2021— Today, Gilcrease Museum unveiled its concept design for an entirely new facility, reimagining the museum from the ground up. The 83,500-square-foot building will create new opportunities for Gilcrease to explore broad, complex stories of American history, art, and culture. The re-envisioned museum will present a much-improved visitor experience and state-of-the-art exhibition space meeting today's standards for care of the collection and touring exhibitions. The current Gilcrease Museum facility will close to the public on July 5, 2021 for de-installation of the collection in preparation for groundbreaking of the new building in winter 2022.

Gilcrease Museum houses more than 350 years of American painting and sculpture, including the world's largest public holding of art of the American West, a comprehensive collection of Indigenous works from 12,000 BCE to the 21st century, and more than 100,000 manuscripts, photographs, maps, rare books, and other material related to the history of the Americas from the 15th–20th centuries as part of the Helmerich Center for American Research.

"Gilcrease Museum has an unrivaled collection of objects that tells the stories of the Americas, but we need a space that provides a visitor experience to match the strength of the collection," said Susan Neal, Executive Director, Gilcrease Museum. "Gilcrease and its collection are deeply rooted in the history of Tulsa, and also reveal national and international narratives that continue to touch our daily lives. Perhaps now more than ever, it is vitally important that we share these stories with as broad an audience as possible to help us better understand ourselves and one another, as well as introduce a new generation of visitors to the museum. The new Gilcrease will allow us to do just that."

"As we rebuild Gilcrease Museum, we seek to build a facility that reflects the Tulsa community and is worthy of one of the greatest collections of American art and history anywhere in the world," Mayor G.T. Bynum said. "Thanks to Tulsa voters, the new design for Gilcrease Museum will put Tulsa's city-owned museum

facility among the best in the nation while creating both indoor and outdoor experiences that were never possible before.”

Designed by integrated design firm SmithGroup, the building is conceptually centered on reconnecting humankind to nature. Located within the Osage Nation reservation boundaries, the new building design contains subtle references to Osage culture. The museum is conceived to align cardinal directions with natural elements and experiences: north/sky; south/earth; west/night; and east/day. The color and material palettes for the building reflect the art deco styles found throughout Tulsa, including the use of stone and gilded metals in concert with natural tones of the land and sky. The lower level of the building is comprised of earth tones, creating a connection to the ground, while the upper level utilizes sky tones, blurring the line between architecture and the sky. A three-story atrium helps orient visitors while other spaces throughout the building frame views of Downtown and North Tulsa and panoramic views of the Osage Hills that will create experiential moments between visitors and the “Great American Landscape” that surrounds the museum and grounds.

“It is important that the new Gilcrease Museum is of the spirit, history, and people of its place. We are therefore weaving the naturally breathtaking landscapes with the phenomenal collection of art and the multitude of rich cultures present in this area of the country,” said Ivan O’Garro, lead designer for SmithGroup.

With improved gallery space, Gilcrease will be able to utilize its collections to tell a richer, more nuanced story of American history and culture, offering multiple perspectives and exploring the relevance of the past to today. New exhibitions and galleries designed by Gallagher & Associates in collaboration with the Gilcrease curatorial team, will be drawn from the permanent collection and organized around the themes of landscape and place; identities and communities; and healing and conflict. Visitors will be able to engage with each of these themes through three different lenses: making (art); meaning (historical context); and relevance (current community perspectives). An introductory space will orient visitors to the new exhibitions, allowing them to move through the galleries at their own pace, using a variety of interpretive tools, including state-of-the-art technologies. Through a mix of art, history, and anthropology representing America’s diverse populations, the new Gilcrease aims to inspire conversation and learning, challenge preconceived ideas, and become a bridge to deeper connections within the community.

“We embrace this unique opportunity to re-interpret and exhibit the remarkable Gilcrease collection. Our approach combines input from the museum team and the Tulsa community to ensure an inclusive visitor experience, with an emphasis on contemporary relevance of the Gilcrease collection,” said Clare Brown, creative director for Gallagher & Associates.

Plans for the new Gilcrease began to take shape in September 2019, when a citizen-led task force appointed by the Mayor reviewed proposals from 30 firms before selecting SmithGroup to develop a new masterplan for the campus. The design team studied the existing facility, which originally was built in 1913 and expanded numerous times, most recently in 1987, each time with different codes and standards for the care of the collection. When it became apparent that an entirely new building would be necessary, it opened opportunities to vastly improve the visitor experience with larger galleries and more intuitive wayfinding throughout the museum. Critically, a new building allows Gilcrease to greatly enhance the long-term care of the collection through improved storage and modern temperature and humidity controls.

Through a number of community engagement sessions conducted by the museum and design team over the last 18 months, incorporating the museum grounds into the visitor experience emerged as a priority. The museum’s master plan includes outdoor spaces where people can engage with one another and with nature. In addition to a new building that is responsive to nature, plans for the Gilcrease campus include more than 13 miles of new walking/bike trails that will ultimately connect with trail networks throughout the city, increasing access to Gilcrease, nature, and community. The design team will continue to refine plans through extensive consultations with many tribal nations from Oklahoma and across the country, and input from the museum’s Community Advisory Council, a group of 25 members from diverse neighborhoods throughout Tulsa. The new Gilcrease is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2024.

The new Gilcrease is funded through a combination of public and private sources. The City of Tulsa is contributing \$65 million approved by voters as part of Vision Tulsa. The A.R. and Marylouise Tandy Foundation has provided a lead gift of \$10 million for the new Gilcrease. The museum will continue to raise additional funds for the implementation of its master capital expansion plan and endowment.

Through July 4, visitors to the Gilcrease have the opportunity to experience *Enslavement to Emancipation: Toward a More Perfect Union*. The exhibition illuminates the arc of African slavery in the Western Hemisphere and United States, and its legacy today, by bringing together for the first time three foundational documents from the museum's archival collection—a letter sent in 1520 by Christopher Columbus' son to the King of Spain requesting permission to begin bringing enslaved Africans to the Western Hemisphere; a rare, certified, handwritten copy of the Declaration of Independence; and an authorized copy of the Emancipation Proclamation. The exhibition culminates in a video discussion between Tulsa historian, writer, and attorney Hannibal Johnson and Gilcrease Museum Curator of History Mark Dolph that places the three historic documents in a contemporary context.

In collaboration with other community and non-profit organizations, Gilcrease Museum will continue to develop a variety of off-site or virtual programs for the entire community during construction of the new building. More information on these programs will be announced in the coming months.

About Gilcrease Museum

The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, known as Gilcrease Museum, houses a comprehensive and interdisciplinary collection of more than 350,000 items reflecting the art, culture, and history of North America. The museum represents hundreds of Indigenous cultures from across North and South America, with works of art and material culture from 12,000 BCE to the 21st century. The collection includes more than 350 years of American paintings, sculptures, and works on paper, including the largest public holdings of art of the American West. The museum is owned by the City of Tulsa, which has partnered with The University of Tulsa to manage the museum. To learn more about Gilcrease Museum, please visit gilcrease.org.

About the Helmerich Center for American Research

The Helmerich Center for American Research at Gilcrease Museum houses the Gilcrease Library and Archive, a collection of more than 100,000 manuscripts, photographs, maps, rare books, print portfolios, and broadsides related to the history of America from the 15th–20th centuries, from the Spanish arrival in the Americas, to the New England colonies and Westward settler expansion, to the experiences of America's native peoples. Through innovative research, institutional collaborations, publications, educational programming, digital services, visiting scholars' programs, and research fellowships, the Helmerich Center for American Research is dedicated to enhancing our understanding of human society and culture. As an institute for collections-based research, the center supports and creates opportunities for research and scholarship in the humanities, and hosts visiting faculty, students, and scholars from around the world at its 25,000 square-foot-facility.

SmithGroup (www.smithgroup.com) is one of the world's preeminent integrated design firms. Working across a network of 15 offices in the U.S. and China, a team of 1,200 experts is committed to excellence in strategy, design, and delivery. The scale of the firm's thinking and organization produces partnerships with forward-looking clients that maximize opportunities, minimize risk, and solve their most complex problems. SmithGroup creates exceptional design solutions for healthcare, science and technology organizations, higher education and cultural institutions, urban environments, diverse workplaces, mixed-use and waterfront developments, and parks and open spaces.

Gallagher & Associates (www.gallagherdesign.com) is an internationally recognized museum and cultural institution planning and design firm. With interdisciplinary studios in Washington, D.C., New York City, Portland, and Asia, G&A brings a highly regarded collaborative style, design excellence, and unparalleled service to clients around the world. Our projects have been recognized repeatedly for their ingenuity, creativity, and immersive storytelling. G&A's 20+ year collective portfolio ranges in subjects from

social and natural sciences to cultural history and the arts, sports, and music. We have delivered over 700 projects—including transformations and renovations, additions, and exhibit refresh projects, as well as ground-up new experiences. Our team takes pride in the long-lasting partnerships we have cultivated with our clients, developing plans and visions that allow for their long-term success and sustainability. By integrating industry-leading media and experience designers with world-class exhibit and storytelling experts, G&A can use all the “tools” in the toolbox to push the boundaries of what is expected.

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