

WHITNEY

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Press Release

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WHITNEY MUSEUM UNVEILS DESIGN BY RENZO PIANO FOR NEW DOWNTOWN BUILDING

Programming Will Engage and Enhance Arts District Near the High Line

*Building Will Include More Than 50,000 Square Feet of Galleries
and Approximately 15,000 Square Feet of Outdoor Exhibition Space*

NEW YORK, NY (May 1, 2008) – The Whitney Museum of American Art today released detailed plans to add a second Whitney Museum site to the cultural and civic landscape of New York City with the construction of a new, six-floor, 185,000-square-foot building in downtown Manhattan. Located in the Meatpacking District on Gansevoort Street, between West Street and the redeveloped High Line park, the new building, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Renzo Piano, will place the Whitney in the heart of New York’s most active neighborhood for the visual arts and education.

The downtown Whitney will include approximately 50,000 square feet of galleries, providing long-awaited opportunities to show more of its unsurpassed collection of 20th and 21st century American art in tandem with cutting-edge temporary exhibitions. (The galleries in the Whitney’s 1966 Madison Avenue building by Marcel Breuer total 32,000 square feet.) Approximately 15,000 square feet of rooftop galleries will be situated on various levels of the building, allowing for dynamic outdoor exhibitions. A dramatically cantilevered entrance along Gansevoort Street will shelter a public plaza that is destined to become a popular outdoor gathering space, created only steps away from the southern entrance to the High Line. The new building will engage the Whitney directly with the bustling community of artists, gallerists, students, educators, entrepreneurs, and residents

in Chelsea and Greenwich Village, where the Museum was founded by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1930.

“The Whitney has always pushed boundaries by supporting risk-taking artists in the United States and helping them engage with a global community,” said Adam D. Weinberg, Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum. “On this spectacular site adjacent to the High Line, and with Renzo Piano’s brilliant design, the new downtown Whitney will put us right where we want to be: poised to reshape the museum experience for the audiences of today and tomorrow.”

The centerpiece of the design is its indoor and outdoor exhibition spaces. The expansive third-floor special exhibition gallery will be approximately 17,500 square feet, one of the largest free-span exhibition spaces in New York. Galleries for the permanent collection on the fourth and fifth floors, and for long-term projects on the top floor, will total approximately 30,000 square feet. The building also will offer dedicated space for a state-of-the-art education facility; a research library; a conservation area; a multi-use space for film, video and the performing arts; a 175-seat theater; and a study center (the theater and study center both being firsts for the Whitney). Other amenities include a restaurant; a café; a bookstore; a lobby; and a ground-floor exhibition gallery, accessible to the public free of charge, that will contribute to the vibrant street life of the area.

Mr. Piano’s design takes a strong and strikingly asymmetrical form—one that responds to the industrial character of the neighboring loft buildings and railway while asserting a contemporary, sculptural presence. The upper stories of the building will spread freely beyond the base, stretching toward the Hudson River on the west side and stepping back gracefully from the elevated park of the High Line on the east side.

“The first big gesture of the design is its cantilevered entrance, which transforms the area outside the building into a large, sheltered public space,” said Mr. Piano. “In this way, beneath the second-story level of the High Line park, the Whitney adds a street-level gathering place of its own. From this public space, visitors will be able to see through the

building entrance and a series of large windows on the west side of the building to the Hudson River and beyond. This is one of several ways in which we respond to this remarkable site, drawing on its vitality and trying to enhance it at the same time.”

Robert J. Hurst, President of the Whitney Board of Trustees, said, “The design that Renzo Piano has given us is elegant, bold, and inviting. It strikes the balance we have long desired between celebrating our permanent collection and venturing into exciting new territory with today’s artists. We are going forward with confidence, as the defining museum of 20th and 21st century American art.”

In November 2006 the Whitney signed a Conditional Designation Letter with the New York City Economic Development Corporation to acquire the site at Gansevoort and Washington Streets and is in contract negotiations to formalize the land transfer. The Museum held a public information session yesterday in association with Community Board 2 and is entering the City’s Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) process as part of the Museum’s ongoing commitment to community outreach and involvement.

"Renzo Piano's dramatic new design for the downtown Whitney will not only create a new forum for an extraordinary cultural institution, but also enhance the appeal of the High Line for all of the area's residents and visitors," said New York City Commissioner of Cultural Affairs Kate D. Levin.

"New York City's premier cultural and arts institutions are a major part of what makes the City so attractive for people to live, work and visit," said New York City Economic Development Corporation President Seth W. Pinsky. "The Whitney Museum of American Art, with its spectacular collection of 20th- and 21st-century American art, will bring its tradition of exhibiting influential and promising American artists to one of our most dynamic neighborhoods. I am pleased that NYCEDC is playing a role in this important project."

The Whitney has announced a fundraising campaign of \$680 million to cover the construction of the new downtown building and to bolster the Museum's endowment. Construction is projected to begin in Spring 2009 with an anticipated opening in late 2012.

Renzo Piano Building Workshop, with offices in New York, Paris, and Genoa, is collaborating on the project with Cooper, Robertson & Partners, an architecture firm based in New York.

About Renzo Piano

Renzo Piano was born in Genoa, Italy, in 1937, into a family of builders. In his home city he has strong roots, sentimental and cultural, with its historic center, the port, the sea, and with his father's trade. During his time at university, the Milan Polytechnic, he worked in the studio of Franco Albini. He graduated in 1964 and then began to work with experimental lightweight structures and basic shelters. Between 1965 and 1970 he travelled extensively in America and Britain. In 1971, he founded the studio Piano & Rogers with Richard Rogers, and together they won the competition for the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the city where he now lives. From the early 70s until the 90s, he collaborated with the engineer Peter Rice, forming Atelier Piano & Rice, between 1977 and 1981. Finally, in 1981, he established Renzo Piano Building Workshop with a hundred people working in Paris, Genoa, and New York.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the leading advocate of 20th- and 21st-century American art. Founded in 1930, the Museum is regarded as the preeminent collection of American art and includes major works and materials from the estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, Louise Nevelson, and Lucas Samaras, as well as significant works by Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American

artists and provoking intense critical and public debate, the Whitney's signature show, the Biennial, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in America today. First housed on West 8th Street, the Whitney relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and in 1966 inaugurated its present home at 945 Madison Avenue, designed by Marcel Breuer.

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