



RUBIN
MUSEUM
OF ART

FROM:
Rubin Museum of Art
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***RUBIN MUSEUM'S NEW EDUCATION CENTER TO OFFER
NEW YORKERS A UNIQUE RESOURCE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING***

New York, NY — In early 2011, the Rubin Museum of Art will unveil a new center for its extensive art education offerings. The inviting and easily-accessible glass-fronted space occupies the street- and lower-levels of a former storefront on West 17th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. The Education Center has been designed by Lee H. Skolnick Architecture + Design Partnership.

Since the Rubin Museum first opened its doors to the public six years ago, its commitment to education has been noteworthy, its Education Department having served more than 35,000 students and their teachers from public and private schools in the New York region.

“So often, arts education, even in museums, is an afterthought. Not here. With the new Education Center, the museum demonstrates its conviction that the in-depth experience of Himalayan art can shed light on one’s self and the entirety of the world’s cultures,” says Marcos A. Stafne, Head of Education and Visitor Experience.

Eric Schoenberg, Chair of the Education Committee of the Board of Trustees, says, “The Board of Trustees is especially proud to make this financial and institutional commitment in these trying economic times. This new Center is evidence of our belief in the role that museums can play in

arts education, particularly as the arts curriculum is diminished in our public schools.”

“As well as providing spaces for learning and art-making as serene and inviting as the museum’s galleries, the 5,000 square-foot expansion has been especially designed to facilitate life-long learning,” continued Stafne. “Users will range from toddlers and students and their parents to teens and college students and even seniors.”

“It was a particularly interesting challenge to live up to the extremely high level of design that the Rubin has achieved in its other facilities and galleries,” said Lee Skolnick, founder of Lee H. Skolnick Architecture + Design Partnership. “At the same time, we sought a fresh and appropriate visual language informed by Himalayan art to inspire curiosity, excitement and learning in the diverse group that will take advantage of the enhanced educational programming.”

A dramatic visual feature on the main level of the Center is an elliptical staircase enveloped in a glowing translucent wall, its resin surface embedded with photographs of colorful Tibetan prayer flags flying in the wind. This focal point, designed by Lee H. Skolnick Architecture + Design Partnership to connect the Center’s main level with spaces below, echoes the well-loved spiral staircase in the main building and is visible from the street.

To the left of the sculptural spiral staircase, glowing display cases will showcase a changing array of art, including both works from the museum’s teaching collection and those created by students in the Center’s workshops. In front of the staircase stands a reception desk amid a rich palette of yellows, purples, greens and browns. Unifying this level is a dark, speckled bamboo floor, composed of alternating light strips against a darker field.

A large workshop studio, with sinks, work surfaces, and storage designed to support art making across media, occupies the rear space of the main level, separated from the front by a wall of built-in cabinetry.

Visitors can access the lower level by the central spiral staircase or by elevator. Lowering the floor slab for greater ceiling height, orchestrating lighting, and preserving an existing lightwell has endowed this lower level, primarily designed to accommodate seminar courses and staff workspaces, with light and a feeling of openness.

The nature of the museum's permanent collection, and the emphasis educators here place on promoting awareness of diverse cultural traditions and history, make the Rubin Museum's education programs unique among peer institutions. Educators at the Rubin tailor comprehensive programs to the needs of multiple audiences, aiming to ensure that visitors will be engaged at the level of their understanding. All the programs encourage close observation, and the discoveries that process entails, for a deeper experience of Himalayan art. Museum educators also work with teachers of pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students in a variety of ways: fieldtrips to the museum's galleries, pre-visit school interactive presentations, and in-depth school residencies designed to develop critical thinking, self reflection, and the basic art techniques of the Himalayan region. The museum also has an active teen after-school program and partnerships with universities.

"We have lacked adequate space for art making classes and were unable to accommodate school and community groups for much more than an hour-long gallery tour," explains Stafne. "Now we can serve more New Yorkers in deeper and more substantial ways."

"There is a trend throughout the country toward lifelong learning," said Lee Skolnick, who has designed some 50 children's museums and education centers around the country. "Certainly, the Rubin is in the forefront of the effort to serve multiple audiences. Our team was encouraged to give a great deal of thought to how to devise a space that could equally well serve a six-year old and a 70-year old."

About the Rubin Museum of Art

RMA holds one of the world's most important collections of Himalayan art. Paintings, pictorial textiles, and sculpture are drawn from cultures that touch upon the arc of mountains that extends from Afghanistan in the northwest to Myanmar (Burma) in the southeast and includes Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, and Bhutan. The larger Himalayan cultural sphere, determined by significant cultural exchange over millennia, includes Iran, India, China, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. This rich cultural legacy, largely unfamiliar to Western viewers, offers an uncommon opportunity for visual adventure and aesthetic discovery.

Admission to RMA is \$10 for adults; \$5 for seniors; \$5 for students (with ID); free for seniors the first Monday of every month; and free for children under 12 and for museum members. Gallery admission is free to all on Fridays between 6pm and 10pm.

Open Monday 11 am to 5 pm, Wednesday 11 am to 7 pm, Thursday 11 am to 5 pm, Friday 11 am to 10 pm, Saturday and Sunday from 11 am to 6 pm; closed on Tuesday. The Rubin Museum of Art is located at 150 West 17th Street, New York, NY. To reach the museum by subway, visitors may take the A, C or E to 14th Street; the 1 to 18th Street; 1, 2, 3 to 14th Street; F and M to 14th

Street; N, R, Q, 4, 5 and 6 to 14th or the L to 6th Avenue. By bus, visitors may take the B20 to the corner of 7th Avenue and 17th Street. For more information on RMA please visit www.rmanyc.org or the public may call 212-620-5000.

About Lee H. Skolnick Architecture + Design Partnership

Lee H. Skolnick Architecture + Design Partnership (LHSA+DP) is a New York-based firm whose cross-disciplinary team of architects, exhibit designers, and educators has received international acclaim for designing its high-end residential projects, unique educational buildings and the distinctive cultural institutions and exhibitions throughout the U.S.

Rocket Park at the New York Hall of Science in Queens, a renovation for Poly Prep Country Day School, and the Children's Learning Discovery Center for the Queens Public Library (set to open later this year) are among the firm's recent education-related projects. LHSA+DP is also currently designing the DiMenna Children's History Museum as part of the \$60 million renovation of the New York Historical Society in Manhattan, scheduled to open in 2011. For more on LHSA+DP visit www.skolnick.com.

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