

Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum
Busch-Reisinger Museum
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Press Release

Harvard Art Museums Newly Renovated and Expanded Facility Receives LEED Gold Certification

Among the museums' environmentally friendly features are energy-efficient LED bulbs throughout the galleries and a cutting-edge water recovery system

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The Harvard Art Museums' newly renovated and expanded facility has achieved LEED Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, in recognition of our commitment to energy conservation and environmental awareness. Among the museums' environmentally friendly features are energy-efficient LED bulbs throughout the galleries and a cutting-edge water recovery system.

"We always knew the new Harvard Art Museums would be deeply connected to Harvard's core mission, and that included sustainability," said Thomas W. Lentz, the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art Museums. "We worked in close partnership with the university's green building experts over the years to realize a new facility that would support Harvard's commitment to environmental sustainability and spur green innovation in the museum world. Today, the Harvard Art Museums are proud to be the newest member of Harvard's green campus."

Energy conservation in museum buildings is exceedingly difficult, given the strict temperature and climate requirements for protecting works of art, but the Harvard Art Museums took on the [challenge](#). The heating and cooling systems include thousands of sensors that monitor the indoor climate in real time. Additionally, the more than 400 shades that cover the glass roof not only reduce energy use by flooding the museum with natural light, but they can be continually adjusted to help keep the museums cool in the summer and warmer in the winter.

“We recognize that we are part of a community that values sustainability, and because of that we wanted to set the standard for energy conservation and green building in the museum setting,” said Peter Atkinson, the museums’ director of facilities planning and management.

One of the toughest sustainability challenges the museums’ project team tackled was deciding what kind of lighting would illuminate the museums’ world-renowned collections of art. The intention was to use LED bulbs to save energy and cut maintenance costs. Atkinson and his team first partnered with the museums’ Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies to ensure the new lighting would not affect the preservation of the art, nor visitors’ experience of it.

“From a preservation standpoint, the safety of LED lights for illuminating art and their ability to provide high-quality, consistent color rendering were our primary concerns,” said Angela Chang, assistant director and conservator of objects and sculpture at the Straus Center. “We researched and confirmed these capabilities. We also realized an additional benefit of light bulbs with long life spans: with less frequent lifts and ladders in gallery spaces we could reduce the potential for risk to the art.”

After [months](#) of testing, the museums installed nearly 2,000 LED bulbs throughout the facility. As expected, the new bulbs provide an even wash of light across the color spectrum and eliminate the problem of heat stratification in gallery spaces. Conventional incandescent light bulbs produce extra heat, creating a “heat cloud” along the ceiling that requires cooling. Because LED bulbs produce dramatically less heat, additional cooling costs have been eliminated.

The decision to pioneer the use of LED bulbs at such a large scale has had a ripple effect beyond Harvard. As word spread of their use at Harvard, the university’s vendor reported a significant uptick in requests for the use of LEDs in museum settings.

The new facility was also designed with the surrounding ecosystem in mind. An innovative water recovery system collects rainwater from the museums and neighboring Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts and diverts it to a 10,000-gallon underground cistern. The reclaimed [water](#), which would have been otherwise discharged to the surrounding storm sewers at a daily rate of 21,600 gallons, is instead re-used for irrigation, for greywater in toilets, and for recharging the underground water table. Waterless urinals and other efficient water fixtures further reduce water use inside the museums. It is estimated that as a result of these changes, water use for irrigation will be reduced by 75 percent and in bathrooms by 81 percent.

Construction-related waste was also a serious consideration: 98 percent of all waste and debris from the project was diverted from landfills. Prior to renovation, the Harvard Art Museums [donated](#) many of their gallery lighting fixtures, exhibition display cases, and office furniture to more than two dozen nonprofit organizations, including other museums and organizations on campus. Sculptor and artist Liz Glynn '03 even used [recycled concrete](#) from the renovation to create full-scale replicas of Le Corbusier's iconic furniture, during her time as the Josep Lluís Sert Practitioner in the Arts at the Corbusier-designed Carpenter Center.

A post-completion commissioning project will continually evaluate and verify the performance of the building's mechanical systems, while also identifying new opportunities for further operational efficiency.

"The LEED Gold certification of the Harvard Art Museums, especially the path-breaking use of LEDs to light the collections, is a wonderful example of how the university's commitment to sustainability cuts across every possible space type on campus, from labs and classrooms to dining halls and museums," said Heather Henriksen, director of the Harvard Office for Sustainability.

About the Harvard Art Museums

The Harvard Art Museums, among the world's leading art institutions, comprise three museums (the Fogg, Busch-Reisinger, and Arthur M. Sackler Museums) and four research centers (the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, the Harvard Art Museums Archives, and the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis). The Fogg Museum includes Western art from the Middle Ages to the present; the Busch-Reisinger Museum, unique among North American museums, is dedicated to the study of all modes and periods of art from central and northern Europe, with an emphasis on German-speaking countries; and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum is focused on Asian, ancient, and Islamic and later Indian art. Together, the collections include approximately 250,000 objects in all media. The Harvard Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. Integral to Harvard University and the wider community, the museums and research centers serve as resources for students, scholars, and the public. For more than a century they have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and are renowned for their seminal role in developing the discipline of art history in the United States.

The Harvard Art Museums' recent renovation and expansion builds on the legacies of the three museums and unites their remarkable collections under one roof for the first time. Renzo Piano Building

Workshop's responsive design preserved the Fogg Museum's landmark 1927 facility, while transforming the space to accommodate 21st-century needs. Following a six-year building project, the museums now feature 40 percent more gallery space, an expanded Art Study Center, conservation labs, and classrooms, and a striking new glass roof that bridges the facility's historic and contemporary architecture. The new Harvard Art Museums' building is more functional, accessible, spacious, and above all, more transparent. The three constituent museums retain their distinct identities in this new facility, yet their close proximity provides exciting opportunities to experience works of art in a broader context. www.harvardartmuseums.org

Hours and Admission

Daily, 10am–5pm. Closed major holidays. Admission: \$15 adults, \$13 seniors (65+), \$10 non-Harvard students (18+). Free for members; youth under 18; Cambridge residents; and Harvard students, faculty, and staff (plus one guest). On Saturdays, from 10am–noon, Massachusetts residents receive free admission. Visit our website for information about other discounts and policies.

www.harvardartmuseums.org/plan-your-visit

Exhibitions, Events, and News

Our Special Exhibition Gallery presents important new research on artists and artistic practice, and our University Galleries are programmed in consultation with Harvard faculty to support coursework.

www.harvardartmuseums.org/visit/exhibitions

Lectures, workshops, films, performances, special events, and other programs are held throughout the year at the museums. www.harvardartmuseums.org/visit/calendar

Check out *Index*, our multimedia magazine, to keep up with what's happening at the Harvard Art Museums. <http://magazine.harvardartmuseums.org/>

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For more information, please contact:

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