



## Press Release

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# BUFFALO AKG ART MUSEUM KICKS OFF OPENING SEASON WITH CELEBRATORY RIBBON-CUTTING

**Ceremony Begins Special Preview Week of Public Access to New and Expanded Campus Designed by OMA/Shohei Shigematsu in collaboration with Cooper Robertson**

**Beginning June 22, the Museum's Renovated Robert and Elisabeth Wilmers Building, Seymour H. Knox Building, and Ralph C. Wilson Jr Town Square, Featuring *Common Sky*, Will be Fully Open to the Public; New Jeffrey E. Gundlach Building to Open July 20**

*To download materials and press images related to this announcement, [click here](#).*

June 12, 2023: Today, the Buffalo AKG Art Museum (formerly the Albright-Knox Art Gallery) welcomed its local community, special guests, and supporters from around the world for a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the start of the museum's summer opening season. The event marked the first opportunity for the public to visit the museum's renewed and vastly expanded campus designed by OMA/Shohei Shigematsu in collaboration with Cooper Robertson. The culmination of a \$230 million capital campaign, the largest such campaign for a cultural institution in the history of Western New York, and three-and-half years of construction, the new Buffalo AKG comprises more than 50,000 square feet of prime exhibition space, five state-of-the-art studio classrooms, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Town Square, and more than half an acre of new public green space situated above an underground parking garage. Designed with substantial input from communities throughout Western New York and the museum's leadership, the renewed and expanded campus is ensconced within the city's beloved Frederick Law Olmsted-designed Delaware Park. With the addition of three new points of entry positioned throughout the campus, the museum's architectural presence now reflects and advances its mission to radically increase the accessibility of its facilities and engage all members of its community with an inclusive, interactive, and porous campus.

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Following today's celebration and a special preview day on June 13 dedicated to the museum's community partners, educators, and

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members, the entire new campus will be open to the public free of admission from June 15 through June 18, 2023. Beginning June 19, 2023, the public will be able to visit the museum's renovated Robert and Elisabeth Wilmers Building, Seymour H. Knox Building, and the new Ralph Wilson Town Square, featuring *Common Sky*, a new, monumental site-specific artwork by Olafur Eliasson and Sebastian Behmann of Studio Other Spaces. On the campus's north side, the Jeffrey E. Gundlach Building, a new work of signature architecture by OMA/Shohei Shigematsu in collaboration with Cooper Robertson, will open to the public on July 20, 2023.

“With dogged determination and much passion, we here at the Buffalo AKG have aspired to uplift our community by building a museum of and for the people, a museum without walls that segregate, separate, and tie down the human spirit and imagination. We have dreamt of the moment when people from all walks of life, from all backgrounds, can walk unhindered through the doors of a new museum, one that harnesses the full measure of its historic legacy along with all the potential it holds for the future. Knitting together the hard work and dedication of hundreds of staff members, board members, volunteers, community partners, elected officials, donors, family members, and many others: this day is now upon us,” said Janne Sirén, Peggy Pierce Elfvin Director. “The Buffalo AKG has always been a bit of a rebel, precociously seeking out, even defining the artistic revolutions of tomorrow alongside artists and other creative spirits who are the wellspring of courageous, radical creativity. Thanks to our new, state-of-the-art twenty-first century campus, we now have the opportunity to empower people to dream big, to actualize and activate in welcoming spaces their own creativity through the transformative power of art.”

“The trifecta of our internationally recognized art collection, our soon-to-be world-renowned architectural campus, and the many special individuals who commit to this institution as staff, volunteers, supporters, and visitors alike, combine to create a museum that any place in the world would be proud to call its hometown art museum,” said Alice Jacobs, Board President of the Buffalo AKG. “We are grateful to the generations of past philanthropists who created and sustained the Albright-Knox Art Gallery for more than 161 years. Today, in becoming the Buffalo AKG, we welcome many new philanthropists who are committed to the idea that museums are much more than art on the walls. While Buffalo as a place of culture and creativity may have been a well-kept secret for a long time, after today the word will definitely be out.”

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“It has been an incredible experience designing a new building and campus fit for the great curatorial and programmatic ambitions of the Buffalo AKG Art Museum,” said Shohei Shigematsu, Partner at OMA. “Creating a space for one of the greatest collections of modern and contemporary art, in a historic park and campus, informed a design centered around dialogue amongst three generations of buildings; and art, park, and city. The new Gundlach Building is informed by enriching the dialogue of art and contexts with people. Clad in a glass veil, the building is radically transparent, capturing the campus history and nature from the inside and exposing the internal activities to the outside. The space created in between the veil and gallery becomes an enclosed terrace for diverse activities. A set of new and restored elements visually and physically link the campus together to create a true arts campus—the edifice and plinth form provides architectural continuity; the scenic bridge immerses architecture, art, and people in nature; the restored historic stair and great lawn opens the campus to the city. Together, the building and campus reflect a collective ambition to push the museum typology toward a more open future.”

“After delivering half a million dollars in federal funding to the Albright-Knox Gallery, one of Buffalo’s greatest treasures, I am proud to see the renovation and expansion of a beloved Buffalo cultural staple come to fruition,” said Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer. “I’m excited to see the continued success of this world-class cultural institution for Western New York to continue to benefit from its presence in the community.”

“The breathtaking Buffalo AKG Art Museum is one of the world's finest institutions for modern and contemporary art -- showcasing the economic and cultural renaissance Western New York has experienced in recent years,” said Governor Kathy Hochul. “Buffalo is very fortunate to have a world-renowned art museum with a reputation that has grown to even greater prominence as it expands its campus and collection of works. The new building and campus are a dramatic work of art that will attract visitors and support the regional tourism economy for decades to come.”

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime moment for Buffalo AKG, and we applaud the museum for its foresight and conviction in planning a dramatically renewed and expanded campus that will serve so many stakeholders and its bold mission for decades to come,” said Cooper Robertson partner Erin Flynn, RA, LEED AP. “Not only does this expansion bring signature architecture to the region’s cultural attractions, it also reflects

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the depth of community input and engagement that Buffalo AKG embodies. We are delighted to be part of this story."

"It's been an extraordinary honor for Gilbane to help build the new Buffalo AKG Art Museum," said Keith Leal, Vice President and Upstate New York Business Leader, Gilbane Building Company. "This exquisite museum is truly a masterpiece and will captivate visitors from all over the world. We are incredibly grateful for our partnership with the Buffalo AKG Art Museum team, OMA, Cooper Robertson, Arc Building Partners, our subcontractor partners and the trades workers. This transformational project is the result of tremendous collaboration and dedication and will make Buffalo proud."

## **The New Buffalo AKG Campus, Inaugural Exhibitions & New Artist Commissions**

Driven to expand its accessibility and engagement with its local and global communities, in November 2019, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (as it was known since its previous expansion in 1962) broke ground on the most significant campus expansion and development project in the museum's 161-year history. Now, on June 12, 2023, the museum reopens as the Buffalo AKG Art Museum.

On the north side of the campus is the Gundlach Building—a work of signature architecture designed by OMA/Shohei Shigematsu in collaboration with Cooper Robertson, which adds more than 30,000 square feet of exhibition space. Featuring a translucent glass curtain wall, the Gundlach Building furthers the museum's mission of accessibility and initiates a dialogue with the surrounding community, inverting the traditional model of the art museum as an opaque facility and creating tremendous porosity between interior and exterior.

Galleries are located on all three floors of the Gundlach Building. Ranging from the intimate Ronnen Glass Box Theater on the ground floor, to the enclosed Sculpture Terrace on the second, to the expansive 7,530-square-foot gallery on the third, the Gundlach Building offers artists and curators a broad range of highly flexible exhibition spaces to present contemporary and modern art of all scales and media. Visitors can enter the Gundlach Building both from the ground level and from the subsurface parking garage. The staircase from the parking garage to the ground level will be adorned with *Others Will Know*, an innovative site-specific artwork by Swedish artist Miriam Bäckström. The immersive woven tapestry was designed using 3-D mapping and virtual reality technologies to create the illusion of depth, transparency, and

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multi-dimensionality. The inaugural exhibition on the first floor of the Gundlach Building is *Clyfford Still: A Legacy for Buffalo* — a presentation of the museum’s entire collection of thirty-three works by Clyfford Still, alongside an installation of works by artists influenced by or in dialogue with Still’s work, including Joe Bradley, Georg Baselitz, Richard Diebenkorn, and Ida Ekblad. To inaugurate the new building’s Glass Box Theater, the museum will present the immersive audio-visual installation *Lap-See Lam: Dreamers’ Quay*, marking the artist’s first North American museum exhibition.

The Gundlach Building is physically connected to the Wilmers and Knox Buildings through the John J. Albright Bridge. The Albright Bridge takes visitors from the second floor of the Gundlach Building to the main floor of the Wilmers Building through a unique, circuitous path that was designed to protect a grove of historic oak trees, ensure a slope compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and facilitate the transport of artworks from one end of the campus to the other.

A masterpiece of neoclassical architecture, the creation of the Buffalo AKG involved extensive updates and improvements to the Wilmers Building, including the installation of an entirely new roof, a thorough cleaning of its marble façade, the replacement of cracked marble with red oak flooring, and the recreation of the historic staircase that originally adorned the building’s west façade. Presented in the Wilmers Building’s Hemicycle Gallery is the special exhibition *Through a Modernist Lens: Buffalo and the Photo-Secession*, which explores the Buffalo AKG’s significant historic photography collection, which originated in 1910—the landmark year when the museum hosted the groundbreaking *International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography*, the first show organized by an American museum that aimed to elevate photography’s stature from a purely scientific or documentary pursuit to a visual form of artistic expression.

On view throughout the rest of the Wilmers Building, as well as the second and third floors of the Gundlach Building, is a major installation of the museum’s world-renowned collection of modern and contemporary art organized by the Curatorial Department, led by Cathleen Chaffee, Charles Balbach Chief Curator, and Holly Hughes, the Buffalo AKG’s Godin-Spaulling Senior Curator for the Collection. The installation includes more than 400 artworks—dating from the second half of the eighteenth century to the present—installed chronologically in order to present the evolution of Western modern art and international contemporary art over the last two centuries. Encompassing painting, sculpture, photography, works on paper, and

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video and time-based media, the inaugural collection installation underscores the power of the Buffalo AKG's new campus to dynamically present a broad spectrum of modern and contemporary art across media and scales. The presentation culminates on the Gundlach Building's monumental third floor that will be dedicated to showcasing major highlights of the museum's recent acquisitions, including works by Nick Cave, Jeffrey Gibson, Arthur Jafa, Anselm Kiefer, Simone Leigh, and Teresa Margolles, among many others.

Substantial improvements were also made to the museum's existing Seymour H. Knox Building, designed by Gordon Bunshaft and completed in 1962. The building's original open-air and largely inaccessible interior courtyard has been covered with a site-specific artwork, *Common Sky*, by Olafur Eliasson and Sebastian Behmann of Studio Other Spaces. The sculpture is a canopy of glass and mirrors that transforms the space into the 6,000-square-foot Ralph Wilson Town Square—the centerpiece of the museum's community engagement and outreach activities. Free of admission charges year-round, the Knox Building features the 2,000-square-foot M&T Bank Gallery, five state-of-the-art studio classrooms, the 350-seat Stanford and Judith Lipsey Auditorium, and a new restaurant, Cornelia, adorned with a new site-specific commission by artist Firelei Báez, a thirty-foot-long glass mosaic, *Chorus of the Deep (something ephemeral and beautifully whole, when seen from the edge of one's vision, too full when taken head on)*, 2023. To open the new M&T Bank Gallery, the museum has organized *Looking Back: Lucas Samaras's Mirrored Room*, which will focus on the artist's *Room No. 2*, 1966, popularly known as the *Mirrored Room*, one of the most beloved works in the museum's collection. Alongside Samaras's iconic work, which was recently conserved, the museum will showcase archival and community-generated photographs of visitors experiencing the work over the decades and a custom-built photo booth for visitors to record testimonials.

## **A New Visitor Experience**

As the cornerstone of the museum's robust public programming, much of the Knox Building is programmed by the museum's new Department of Learning & Creativity. Under the stewardship of the museum's inaugural Delaware North Director of Learning & Creativity Charlie Garling, the museum has dramatically expanded its suite of programs designed to engage the community and visitors of all levels of ability. A central component of these efforts is Creative Commons, a new multigenerational learning and play space that illuminates art and creativity in accessible and interactive ways. Creative Commons will position learning through play at the heart of the Buffalo AKG's physical



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campus and extend engaging and interactive experiences to all corners of the museum's galleries. The result of the first ever philanthropic partnership between the LEGO Foundation and a fine art museum, Creative Commons is founded on LEGO's belief that play is a joyful, meaningful, iterative, actively engaging, and socially interactive experience. The goal of the space is to provide visitors with hands-on playful learning experiences and opportunities to express their identity, meaningfully connect with others, form connections with art in the Buffalo AKG's collection, and be creative.

For nearly five decades, the Buffalo AKG has presented a robust and beloved suite of programs for visitors with disabilities. As the museum prepares for its summer opening season, the Learning & Creativity Department has broadened its Access Programs and created a series of offerings designed for individuals of all levels of ability, veterans, and members of under-resourced communities. Access and Studio Programs will be presented in the Knox Building's five new classroom studios, each of which has a specific programmatic purpose, including a family room for young children and their families and caregivers; a community access room; a digital media studio; a ceramics studio; and a painting and drawing studio.

A central element of the Buffalo AKG's new offerings for visitors is AKGo!, a new audio experience created in partnership with Art Processors, a leader in interactive media and exhibition design. Through a series of seven immersive, thematic journeys, AKGo! actively empowers visitors to explore the museum at their own pace and according to their own interests. In addition to Buffalo AKG leaders like Sirén and Chaffee, AKGo! introduces a range of community voices to its audiences, including artists, a football hero, a comedian, an animal rescue expert, and architect Shohei Shigematsu himself. Each of the seven journeys is designed to engage different audiences, including adults with children, educators, excursionists and tourists, art experts, individuals new to art and art history, researchers, and experience seekers.

## **How to Visit**

The Buffalo AKG will be open Thursdays and Fridays from 10 am to 8 pm, and Saturday, Sunday, and Monday from 10 am to 5 pm. Admission tickets will cost \$18 for adults, \$16 for students and seniors, \$10 for youth (ages 6 to 18), and will be free for children ages 5 and under. Admission is always free for members. From June 22 - July XX,

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admission tickets will be two for the price of one and will grant access to the Wilmers Building, along with the Knox Building and Wilson Foundation Town Square, which are free of admission year-round. Beginning July 20, admission tickets will grant single person access to the museum's entire campus, including the Gundlach Building.

As one of the benefits of museum membership, Buffalo AKG members receive advance access to general admission ticketing two weeks ahead of the public. The museum will hold Members' Preview Days on Sunday, June 11, and Tuesday, June 13.

To plan your visit, learn more about the Buffalo AKG and its offerings, and purchase admission tickets, please visit <https://buffaloakg.org/visit>.

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## **About the Buffalo AKG Art Museum**

Founded in 1862, the Buffalo AKG Art Museum (formerly the Albright-Knox Art Gallery) is the sixth oldest public art institution in the United States. For more than 160 years, the Buffalo AKG has collected, conserved, and exhibited the art of its time, often working directly with living artists. This tradition has given rise to one of the world's most extraordinary collections of modern and contemporary art.

In summer 2023, following the completion of the most significant campus development and expansion project in its history, the Buffalo AKG opened anew to the public. The project is funded by a \$230 million capital campaign, the largest such campaign for a cultural institution in the history of Western New York, including \$195 million raised for construction and \$35 million in additional operating endowment funds.

## **About OMA/Shohei Shigematsu**

The Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) is a leading international partnership practicing architecture, urbanism, and cultural analysis. Established in 2001, OMA New York is responsible for the firm's operations in the Americas and has overseen the successful completion of buildings across diverse typologies and scales.



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include a new building for the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, a multi-purpose venue for Faena's Miami Beach District, Sotheby's reimagined headquarters in New York, and an event pavilion for the Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles. His design for the expansion of the New Museum on Bowery is currently under construction.

## About Studio Other Spaces

Studio Other Spaces (SOS), founded by artist Olafur Eliasson and architect Sebastian Behmann in Berlin in 2014, connects architecture and art through interdisciplinary and experimental building projects and artworks for public space. Their shared interest in spatial experimentation led them to the holistic approach that defines Studio Other Spaces. In their work, they continuously move between overall perspectives and a highly detail-oriented level, exploring all aspects of a project through each stage of development - from inception to its life and reuse. SOS projects foreground the atmospheric and intangible qualities of their specific locations, approach materiality through research and experimentation, and emphasise physical movement as a means to shape space. Recent projects include *Common Sky* (2019-2023), a canopy of glass and mirrors for the courtyard of the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, New York; the wine-tasting pavilion *Vertical Panorama Pavilion* (2020-22) for the Donum Estate in Sonoma, California; *The Seeing City* (2015-22), a site-specific, permanent artistic installation designed for the top two floors of the Morland Mixité Capitale building in Paris, France; the design of Lyst Restaurant (2019) in Vejle's Fjordenhus; and the Meles Zenawi Memorial Park (2013-) in Addis Ababa, a campus comprising five buildings, several pavilions, and a park, conceived and built with Ethiopian partners and in collaboration with Vogt Landscape Architects. The studio's first solo exhibition, titled *The Design of Collaboration*, was on display at Kunst Meran Merano Arte in South Tyrol, Italy, from September 2020 through January 2021. As part of curator Hashim Sarkis's exhibition in the Central Pavilion for Biennale Architettura 2021, SOS collaborated with six co-designers to present *Future Assembly*, a more-than-human gathering inspired by the United Nations.

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## About Cooper Robertson

Cooper Robertson is a leading architecture firm with a diverse body of work. The firm is recognized nationally for design excellence with over 150 major awards for projects that integrate architecture and urban design at many scales, from buildings to public spaces to cities. Cooper Robertson is acknowledged as among the foremost museum planning and design firms in the country. The cultural practice is headed by Bruce Davis, AIA and Erin Flynn, RA, who have led an international field of over 50 museums through their reinvention and expansion, resulting in spaces that support the highest standards for the display and preservation of the world's most distinguished collections, and some of the world's best museum architecture. The firm's portfolio includes projects for the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Yale Center for British Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the J. Paul Getty Trust, and the Gateway Arch Museum.

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