

## Seattle Art Museum Brief History

For seven decades, the Seattle Art Museum has been one of the Pacific Northwest's leading visual arts institutions. When SAM opened its doors in Volunteer Park in 1933, the museum's collection focused primarily on Asian art. Today, the downtown Seattle Art Museum, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Robert Venturi (of Venturi, Scott Brown & Assoc.) and completed in 1991, has matured into a world-class arts institution with a global perspective. The collections of the Seattle Art Museum number approximately 24,000 objects in the following active collecting areas: **African art, American art, Ancient Mediterranean and Islamic art, Asian art, decorative arts, European art, modern and contemporary art, Native and Meso-American art, and Oceanic and Aboriginal art.** The ranges and depths of these collections are unmatched in the region.

In 2004 SAM began construction on a much-needed expansion of the **downtown museum**. The phased expansion, opening May 5, 2007, was designed by Allied Works Architecture of Portland, OR, to accommodate the museum's rapidly growing collections, exhibition programs and audiences, while increasing downtown Seattle's cultural and economic vitality. Eventually, when SAM's master plan is fully realized, the museum will occupy some 300,000 square feet in the new building for a total of 450,000 square feet (including the South Building).

The original facilities in Volunteer Park reopened in 1994 as the **Seattle Asian Art Museum**, featuring exhibitions of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Himalayan and Southeast Asian art. A lively international center for Asian art and culture, the Seattle Asian Art Museum's holdings rank in the top 10 outside of Asia, and its Japanese collection is one of the top five in the U.S.

In January 2007, the museum gained a third venue with the opening of the **Olympic Sculpture Park**. The park transformed downtown Seattle's largest undeveloped waterfront property from a former industrial site into open and vibrant green space for art. This new park gives residents and visitors the opportunity to experience a variety of sculpture in an outdoor setting, while enjoying the incredible views and beauty of the Olympic Mountains and Puget Sound. Admission to the park is free.