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[mdavison@arkmfa.org](mailto:mdavison@arkmfa.org)**Arkansas Arts Center becomes Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts***Capital Campaign supporting the Little Rock museum's new building and endowment surpasses \$135 million, establishes new goal of \$142 million*

**LITTLE ROCK, Ark.** – The Arkansas Arts Center officially became the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts January 25. While unveiling the museum's new brand, AMFA leaders announced that the capital campaign supporting the construction of its new museum building has raised \$135,944,426, surpassing its previous goal of \$128 million. The campaign's new fundraising goal is \$142 million.

The new Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, home to a renowned art collection, art school, and performing arts experiences, will open in 2022 as a significant architectural landmark for the region. The museum's new website can be viewed at [arkmfa.org](http://arkmfa.org).

"AMFA is at a defining moment in its history," AMFA Board of Trustees President Van Tilbury said. "Our new name reflects this monumental transformation. Welcome to the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts."

The institution's new identity is both a promise for its future and a nod to the past. The Museum of Fine Arts, which opened in Little Rock's MacArthur Park in 1937, became the Arkansas Arts Center in 1959, and the building underwent several renovations and additions in the latter half of the 20th century. The new Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts is currently under construction in MacArthur Park, a project that began in 2016. The Art Deco façade from 1937, bearing the title "Museum of Fine Arts," will be revealed once again as the north entrance of the new AMFA when it opens in 2022.

"The new Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts will offer new opportunities for our community to experience the visual and performing arts," Little Rock Mayor Frank Scott, Jr. said. "It also places Little Rock among the great cultural destinations of the New South – places like Dallas, Texas; Memphis, Tenn.; Jackson, Miss.; and Bentonville, Ark."

The new Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, designed by renowned architecture practice Studio Gang and landscape architecture firm SCAPE, is being realized through a capital campaign, Reimagining the Arkansas Arts Center: Campaign for our Cultural Future, led by Harriet and Warren Stephens.

"The new Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts is a game-changer for our city and state, and the enthusiasm for the project has prompted us to think even bigger," said Warren Stephens, AMFA Foundation Chair and Capital Campaign Co-Chair. "As we continue to build the endowment, this new fundraising goal will

allow the museum to bring dynamic and diverse special exhibitions to Little Rock and offer our community and statewide audiences engaging arts experiences.”

### **Support for the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts**

A capital fundraising campaign, *Reimagining the Arkansas Arts Center: Campaign for our Cultural Future*, is supporting the construction of the new museum and providing transition and opening support while also strengthening the endowment, yielding support for operations, exhibitions, acquisitions, and education and outreach programming in the new museum.

As the campaign’s fundraising goal increases, so too do the aspirations for the new museum. The now-\$142 million capital campaign will allow for careful preservation of the museum’s historic façade, more programming space – including an additional 1,000 square feet of gallery space – and an expanded landscape footprint.

The campaign includes a \$31,245,000 contribution from the City of Little Rock generated through a hotel-tax revenue bond. Overwhelming private support has more than quadrupled the public contribution to the project. Lead private donors include Windgate Foundation, Harriet and Warren Stephens, the State of Arkansas, and Winthrop Rockefeller Charitable Trust. The Windgate Foundation Art School, Harriet and Warren Stephens Galleries, and Governor Winthrop Rockefeller Lecture Hall in the new building are named in recognition of these incredible gifts. The campaign now has 24 “21st Century Founders of the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts” contributing gifts between \$1 million and \$35 million. The campaign also has 55 Leadership Donors, individuals, families, corporations, and foundations contributing between \$100,000 and \$999,999, 34 Major Donors contributing between \$25,000 and \$99,999, and many other contributors. A full list of 21st Century Founders and Leadership and Major Donors can be viewed [here](#).

“The arts are paramount to building strong and dynamic communities,” said Harriet Stephens, Building Committee Chair and Capital Campaign Co-Chair. “The new Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts will be a landmark for the state and will be further recognized both nationally and internationally for its world-class collection and architecture. As the campaign continues, we hope many more Arkansans will join us in continuing to build our cultural future in our state.”

### **A Century of History behind the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts**

The Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts’ history dates back more than 100 years. In 1914, a group of Little Rock women formed the Fine Arts Club with a mission to bring the arts to Arkansas. The Fine Arts Club planted the seeds for the Museum of Fine Arts which was built by the Works Progress Administration and opened in 1937.

In 1959, the then Museum of Fine Arts launched a fundraising campaign, led by Governor Winthrop Rockefeller, to create the Arkansas Arts Center. Rockefeller emphasized the role of residents in contributing to build an institution that would serve all of Arkansas. Businesses and individuals from all parts of the state – including children who saved nickels and dimes in jars – made donations. In 1960, the Little Rock Board of Directors adopted an ordinance officially establishing the Arkansas Arts Center, and the building opened in 1963. Over the next 50 years, the building underwent several expansions. In a 1982 renovation and expansion of the MacArthur Park campus, the original Art Deco façade of the Museum of Fine Arts was preserved as a feature of the building’s interior galleries.

In 2016, Little Rock residents overwhelmingly voted in favor of a hotel-tax bond to reimagine the Arkansas Arts Center. Designed by renowned architecture practice Studio Gang and landscape architect SCAPE, the new museum is currently under construction in MacArthur Park. With the 1937 Museum of Fine Arts façade once again revealed as the museum's entrance, the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts will continue the legacy born of the Fine Arts Club and Governor Rockefeller to serve the state of Arkansas through inspiring encounters with the arts.

### **Designing the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts**

"We are bringing the very best of art and architecture to Little Rock," AMFA Executive Director Victoria Ramirez said. "The increased campaign goal allows us to realize and better equip even more spaces for innovative events and programming to better serve the community. We are also able to show more art, including contemporary works, in the galleries, in hidden corners throughout the building, and grounds. The new building launches a new era of programming and exhibitions for the museum."

Designed by renowned architecture practice Studio Gang, the museum's distinctive new architectural identity signifies AMFA's role as a leading arts institution while celebrating its legacy. The design preserves and reveals the building's historic elements while applying elegant architectural solutions to facilitate inspiring encounters with the arts.

The building's key feature is a pleated roof that blossoms to the north and the south. The north courtyard entrance features a nod to the past in the renewed 1937 façade of the original Museum of Fine Arts. Prominent glass-enclosed spaces at either entrance welcome visitors into the building from MacArthur Park at the south and downtown Little Rock at the north. Inside, this innovative roofline creates a luminous grand atrium that clarifies the flow of the space and connects the museum's various programming areas.

The project brings a new level of prestige to Arkansas's architecture community. The new Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts has already been recognized as a leader among its peers. Studio Gang's design for the Museum of Fine Arts was honored with a Best of Design award from *The Architect's Newspaper* in 2019. The annual awards honor exceptional architecture, design and building projects throughout Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Studio Gang's award-winning body of work includes cultural institutions across the Americas and Europe. The practice's projects include the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the California College of the Arts in San Francisco, and the Writers Theater in Glencoe, Ill. Studio Gang is led by architect Jeanne Gang, a MacArthur Fellow and a Professor in Practice at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. The Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts is Studio Gang's first project in Arkansas.

Studio Gang is working in collaboration with Little Rock-based associate architecture firm Polk Stanley Wilcox to realize the new Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts. Landscape architecture firm SCAPE is designing 13 acres of MacArthur Park surrounding the museum to foster a deeper connection between the park and downtown Little Rock.

Inspiration for the landscape is drawn from Little Rock's unique regional ecologies – including the banks of Fourche Creek, the bluffs of Emerald Park, and the agrarian landscapes of the Mississippi Delta. SCAPE's design for the landscape relies on sustainable, native plantings – and incorporates more than 50

different species of perennials, shrubs, native trees, and ornamental grasses. Many of MacArthur Park's mature trees are preserved in the design and incorporated into a framework of new trees, which, over time, will create a canopy throughout the park to the south and west of the museum.

Media assets, including images, photographs, videos, and more, are available [here](#).

Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts programs are supported in part by: the AMFA Foundation; City of Little Rock; City of North Little Rock; Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau; and the Arkansas Arts Council, a division of Arkansas Heritage, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

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