



Room to Grow

The Johnson Museum prepares to expand

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In the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art's basement storage rooms, art spills from every corner. In the entrance rises a stack of stone mosaics, so heavy they must be kept here, as close to the building's foundation as possible. Eastman Johnson's portrait of university founder Andrew Dickson White in its original frame stands near Willie Cole's eight-foot-tall "Chango Weather Beater," a wood and steel sculpture made in 2000. In the aisle, Iranian photographer Shirin Neshat's color print of women digging in the desert leans against a stack of framed works. Behind them, on one of three-dozen rolling aluminum storage units, hang oil paintings from 16th-century Antwerp beside framed textile samples from the 17th and 18th centuries and a vibrant 1971 canvas by Peter Max.

The museum opened just two years after Max finished his stylized orange and baby blue interpretation of a bouquet of wildflowers. Back then, the 61,000-square-foot building held a collection of 9,000 works and had room to grow. Three decades later, the building houses more than 30,000 works and hosts close to 90,000 visitors each year. Architect I. M. Pei anticipated such a time would come, and his original design provided for a 12,000-square-foot underground addition to the north side of the museum, topped with an all-weather Japanese garden.

With a \$1 million gift from Johnson Museum Advisory Council member and development committee chair Susan Lynch, that expansion is one step closer to reality. "It's important for someone who has an interest in a project to step up right away and make a commitment," says Lynch, who likens her role in the process to that of a venture

capitalist. "You put money behind a good idea and it becomes substantive. Other people see the example and they follow." Already, close to \$4 million of the \$10 million necessary to begin construction has been raised.

"It's not going to look dramatic," Lynch says of the expansion, which won't be visible from the building's exterior. "It won't be like looking out the windows on the sixth floor in the current structure—but the classrooms and additional space for galleries will be very important." And with design help from architect John L. Sullivan '62, who served as architect in charge of the original museum project, Lynch says both the building and the campus will be enhanced. "We're not going to have one museum upon which something was stuck by someone else. It will have architectural integrity; there will be an organic whole because the addition was part of the original concept."

In addition to her current pledge, Lynch's recent gifts to the museum include an audio tour of the fifth-floor Asian collection and a second-century Roman marble bust in honor of president emeritus and Mrs. Rawlings. Lynch is a graduate of Connecticut College but became involved with the university through her late husband, Ronald P. Lynch '58. Her son Charlie '90, MBA '95, and daughter-in-law Elizabeth Lynch '90, DVM '95, are also actively involved with Cornell.

Museum director Frank Robinson calls Lynch a "unifying force" and a "great cheerleader." "A museum should be dynamic—the intellectual, cultural, social center of a community," says Robinson. "This wing will greatly enhance that mission." ■

—SHARON TREGASKIS