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**New UMMA symbolizes promise in tough economic times;
March 28 reopening to reveal hip, lively "town square" for the arts**

ANN ARBOR, MI – Museums reborn in the 21st-century travel a long, difficult road from blueprint to grand-opening ribbon-cutting. In these tough economic times, that road for nonprofit cultural institutions is becoming even steeper.

Yet despite the current financial struggles throughout the museum world and beyond, the March 28 reopening of the expanded University of Michigan Museum of Art offers a much-needed sign of hope, and serves as a testament to the wonders of patronage and rewards of persistence.

"We are committed to giving visitors experiences of the full range of creative expression, and to building connections across cultures and across creative disciplines," said UMMA Director James Steward. "With the opening of a new wing and the restoration of our historic building, we now have the space to present our collections and exhibitions, and to partner with arts organizations throughout the university and the Ann Arbor arts community," he said.

"The aim is to create a 'town square' for the arts, and in doing so become one of the most dynamic university museums in the country," said Steward.

The \$41.9 million expansion and restoration of UMMA reveals a distinctively 21st-century approach to the ongoing transformation of museums as a public trust. The revamped space is symbolically located at the intersection of campus and community. Its collections represent 150 years of art collecting at the University of Michigan, with an increased range and amount of programming to position the museum as a meeting place for the arts.

The main goal for the new museum, according to Steward, is to become a vibrant venue for the 40,000-member student community eager for academic and social opportunities centered on the visual arts.

The emphasis on private financing and offering visitors an affordable experience – actually, there is no admission charge – is one of the many signs that UMMA is at the vanguard of university museums in the country, said Steward.

Over 90 percent of funds for building costs came from private donations for the expansion and restoration, which began in September 2006. The Museum's capital campaign was part of the University-wide Michigan Difference campaign, which concluded in December 2008. The Museum's campaign focused on increasing endowment and funding for operations as well as for the costs of construction, and generated over \$60 million in support.

The centerpiece of the new museum, which more than doubles its size, is the 53,000-square foot addition named the Maxine and Stuart Frankel and the Frankel Family Wing. The Frankels, of Bloomfield Hills, Mich., contributed \$10 million to the project.

The glass-and-limestone Frankel Wing addition features a light-filled expanse of galleries, classrooms, an auditorium, and the wide breadth of windows that frame the Museum's new gallery for cutting-edge contemporary art and open onto State Street and the Diag, the main pedestrian walkway through the heart of U-M's central campus.

The distinctively open, yet intimate atmosphere is likely to attract students looking for a place to contemplate art, study and hang out.

"UMMA is a wonderful new resource for cross-disciplinary programming," said Maxine Frankel. "It is a showcase for the depth and breadth of the museum's collections, and encourages visitors, especially students, on their own exploration.

"Our wish is that with the success of this project, UMMA becomes a model for donor generosity that translates into creating new environments for pioneering programs, research and learning," said Frankel.

Principal architect Brad Cloepfil and his firm, Allied Works Architecture of Portland, Oregon, designed UMMA's expansion and restoration. The UMMA project received the prestigious design award from the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

As a university-based museum, UMMA has a unique niche: less dependent on attendance revenue than a civic or city-owned museum, it can advance its focus to present richly aesthetic and historically significant art, while pushing the boundaries of status quo sensibilities.

"Museums must continually look for ways to reinvent themselves, to balance the need to educate and inform with the need to engage today's audiences," said Steward. "It's a continual process of innovation, rethinking and building strong relationships."

For UMMA, the result of those strong relationships translates into a generous base of patrons, and opening its doors to arts-related units at the university, including music, theater, dance, film, cultural studies, and literature.

The impact of the new multidisciplinary UMMA means a broader range of arts programming and events.

The museum will reopen with newly installed collections galleries featuring works drawn from its collections and three special exhibitions:

- *Museums in the 21st Century: Concepts, Projects, Buildings*, in which UMMA's expansion and restoration project figures,
- *Expressions of Vienna: Master Drawings by Klimt and Schiele from the Pulgram-McSparran Collection*, which highlights a recent gift of artwork by two iconic masters of Austrian Expressionism from two University of Michigan professors, and
- *UMMA Projects: Walead Beshty*, which inaugurates the museum's new signature series focusing on global contemporary art.

NOTE: A **24-HOUR PUBLIC OPENING**—from 6 p.m. Saturday, March 28 to 6 p.m. Sunday, March 29, 2009—caps a celebratory week of special events for the Museum’s family of donors, members, volunteers, and for University of Michigan faculty, staff and students.

For more information, please contact Stephanie Rieke Miller, 734-647-0524, srieke@umich.edu; or Frank Provenzano, 734-647-4411, fproven@umich.edu