

2. THE FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO

(combining the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in Golden Gate Park

& the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in Lincoln Park)

San Francisco, California

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BACKGROUND:

In the 1960s, Mayor Alioto of San Francisco decided to develop a comprehensive masterplan for the city's museums of traditional art. The first of the two primary elements in this plan was the creation of a new museum of Asian Art (the only major museum in America devoted exclusively to Asian art), housed in a new wing built on the structure that had housed the de Young Museum for many years. The second element in the cultural plan was the administrative combination and legal merger of the de Young Museum (opened 1894) and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor (opened 1924). The two existing museums were well respected locally, but did not rank very high in national ratings. By combining the resources of the two museums, a much more effective institution was created. The merger began as an experiment in 1970 with the appointment of Ian White as Director & Lanier Graham as Chief Curator. The merger was confirmed by a public vote in 1972. The new Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco soon became one of the "top ten" museums in the US, and has maintained that status ever since.

PROGRAM MASTERPLAN:

General Program Masterplan combined the collections of the city's two Old Master museums in the 70 galleries of two buildings. Planning process directed by Lanier Graham in association with the senior curatorial staff. The primary concept was to turn the CPLH into America's only museum dedicated to French art, while the de Young remained a comprehensive museum of world art, including new galleries for tribal art and new galleries for American art (neither of which had permanent galleries). This general plan remained the basis for all of the architectural designs and program designs until the 1990s, when the donation of the Rockefeller Collection of American Art (the most important American collection in the United States) required a change. The new Masterplan turned most of the de Young galleries into American galleries, while the CPLH became a "jewel box" for the presentation of the best European art. Most of the new architecture was by Rosekrans & Broder of San Francisco. Combined exhibition space in 70 galleries: 125,000 square feet.

Planning & Design: Phase One 1970-1971

Installation: 1971-1972

Planning & Design: Phase Two 1971-1973

Installation: 1974-1975

Planning & Design: Phase Three 1973-1974

Installation: 1976-1977