March 17, 2015

The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum

Summary
On March 21, 2015 the new George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum opens. The new museum complex combines the renovation of the historic Woodhull House, which now showcases the Albert H. Small Washingtoniana Collection and Center for National Capital Area Studies, with a newly constructed space that includes dedicated space for The Textile Museum, the Arthur D. Jenkins Library and the museum shop. The opening marked the final step of a nearly three-year integration process that brought the 90-year-old Textile Museum and Washingtoniana Collection to GW’s campus.

About the George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum
• The museum, designed by Hartman-Cox Architects, includes galleries, virtual displays and space for academic and scholarly activity and public programs
• A 53,000-square-foot museum complex is located on GW’s Foggy Bottom Campus and a 22,000-square-foot conservation and collections resource center is located on GW’s Virginia Science and Technology Campus.
• The new Foggy Bottom complex includes 46,000 square feet of new museum and exhibition space attached to the 7,000-square-foot historic Woodhull House.
• The museum complex is LEED Gold certified, and is the 11th LEED project across GW’s three campuses.
• The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum is the largest university museum in Washington, D.C.
• The museum and the conservation and collections resource center cost $33 million to build.
• Through exhibitions, programs and academic courses, the museum will enrich research, education and cultural understanding both across and beyond the university.
• The museum includes the 20,000-volume Arthur D. Jenkins Library, which is the world’s oldest library devoted exclusively to the textile arts and is among the most important resources for the study of textiles.
• The Albert H. Small Center for National Capital Area Studies, featuring the Washingtoniana Collection, is located in the historic Woodhull House and seeks to engage students, scholars and the public in research and educational programs pertaining to our nation’s capital.
• The museum shop will feature unique jewelry, home decor, books and gifts from around the world in support of the educational mission of the museum.

About The Textile Museum:
• The Textile Museum first opened its doors by appointment to visitors in 1925 with a collection of 275 rugs and 60 related textiles.
• Museum founder George Hewitt Myers started his collection with the purchase of a rug for his Yale University dorm room and established The Textile Museum to expand public knowledge and appreciation—locally, nationally and internationally—of the artistic merits and cultural importance of the world’s textiles.
• The collections now encompass more than 19,000 artworks, including approximately 1,000 hats and related headgear.
• The Textile Museum’s collections span five continents and five millennia.
• The Textile Museum has one of the world’s premier collections of carpets from Islamic cultures, with rugs from Spain, Egypt, Turkey and Iran.
• The largest textile in the collection is a 17th century carpet, which is almost 40 feet long and 15 feet wide.
• The oldest textiles in the collection are fragments from 2500-3000 B.C., from what is now Peru.
• The collections include Egyptian mummy wraps from the Pharaonic era.
• Artifacts, such as looms, dolls, jewelry and ceramics from Asia and Latin America, are also included in the collections, in some cases because they were found at the same burial site as related textiles.
• The collections include textiles made by indigenous peoples of Asia, Africa and the Americas because founder George Hewitt Myers believed European textiles originated in those traditions.

About the Albert H. Small Washingtoniana Collection
• In February 2011, Albert H. Small donated $5 million to GW toward the construction of the museum and his collection of the history of Washington, D.C., nearly 60 years in the making.
• The collection includes 1,000 artifacts documenting the history of Washington, D.C., including rare maps, drawings, letters and documents.
• Some of the rarest and most interesting pieces include: a letter written by George Washington to Congress in 1790 outlining the 10 square miles that would be the capital; a hand-drawn map, made by surveyor John Frederick Augustus Priggs in 1790, which shows the rivers and the road that ran from Georgetown to Anacostia called the Ferry Road; and a bandana, sold as a souvenir, with the design of the first engraved map of Washington.
• The historical objects and extensive reference library offer scholars opportunities to examine the evolution of one of the best-planned cities in the world.

Opening Exhibitions
  o Unraveling Identity: Our Textiles, Our Stories includes the largest number of artworks from The Textile Museum’s collections ever displayed. It spans 2,000 years and five continents and examines the stories that textiles tell about politics, religion, rites of passage and other facets of individual and cultural identity. The textile exhibition joins two historical exhibitions featuring pieces from the Albert H. Small Washingtoniana Collection.
  o Seat of Empire: Planning Washington, 1790–1801 uses historical maps and related images to tell the story of the early experiment in urban design that shaped the landscape of Washington, D.C. It is guest-curated by GW Adjunct Professor of History Kenneth R. Bowling.
  o The Civil War and the Making of Modern Washington tracks the city’s evolution from the beginning of the war through Reconstruction through maps, prints and illustrations of the federal buildings, barracks, hospitals, hotels and markets that served a burgeoning population, and is guest-curated by GW Professor of History Tyler Anbinder.

Conservation and Collections Resource Center
• Cooper Carry designed the 22,000-square-foot conservation and collections resource center that was built on GW’s Virginia Science and Technology Campus to facilitate access to and ensure the protection, study and care of the collections.
• The LEED Silver-certified facility contains temperature and humidity controls and an air filtration system, none of which were present at The Textile Museum’s original location.
• The conservation lab restores objects before exhibitions. It is nearly twice as large as The Textile Museum’s former lab and includes room for worktables for treating textiles, a designated area for wet cleaning and a separate dye lab.
• A specially built photography studio allows for the study and photography of large-scale pieces.
• The new conservation and collections resource center welcomes scholars and academics, as well as their students, from around the world through research appointments, exchange programs and other collaborations.

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