

# METAL MUSEUM

## *Reigniting the Fire* THE METAL MUSEUM IN OVERTON PARK



The Metal Museum, located in Memphis, Tennessee, has launched a capital campaign to transform Rust Hall, the former home of the Memphis College of Art, from a private education facility into the Metal Museum in Overton Park, a public, state-of-the-art museum facility and educational center. This transformation will not only provide the Museum with the physical space to expand and enhance its programming—and by extension its audiences—it will also serve the international metalsmithing community as a global leader in the preservation, promotion, and advancement of fine metalwork.

## ABOUT THE METAL MUSEUM



Despite the importance and prevalence of metal to everyday life, there is only one museum in the United States, and only a few in the world, dedicated specifically to this medium. First proposed at the 1975 National Ornamental and Miscellaneous Metals Association conference, the Metal Museum was born from the idea of an industry museum focused solely on ornamental ironwork. Upon opening to the public in 1979, the Museum quickly expanded its mission to preserve, promote, and advance all forms of fine metalwork, including sculpture, jewelry, hollowware, enamel, and architectural ironwork.

In addition to offering rotating exhibitions, the Museum houses a permanent collection of objects and an extensive library that together document the field of American metalsmithing. The Museum also provides educational opportunities for learners and artists of all ages and skills through its Metals Studios and community programs.

This distinct focus on fine metalworking has positioned the Museum as an artistic and educational center within the international metal-smithing community, serving as both a resource and an advocate for artists and their work and as a leader in field through its recognition and promotion of metal arts.

*The work of many artists featured at the Metal Museum—in exhibitions and collections—can be found in other nationally recognized institutions.*

**RENWICK GALLERY OF THE  
SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM**  
Washington, DC

**MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN**  
New York, NY

**THE ENAMEL ARTS FOUNDATION**  
Los Angeles, CA

## ABOUT THE EXPANSION PROJECT



### *The Vision*

The Metal Museum is on the cusp of a major transformation—one which will not only address the physical needs of the institution but will elevate the Museum and the field of fine metalwork through new and expanded opportunities in the areas of art education and creation as well as civic presence and inclusivity. The expansion holds the promise of manifesting the relationships between various aspects of the Museum’s uncommon scope—making, curating, exhibiting, and education—as an equally interconnected experience for visitors, artists, and staff alike.

The proposed Metal Museum in Overton Park will house rotating exhibitions and the permanent collection in spacious galleries, a larger and more modern metals studio, and dedicated spaces for community education programming. With more than 80,000 square feet, the Museum will break free from the restrictions of its current location—which was never intended to serve the public or store artwork and delicate materials—to address the needs of artists and participants in a way it has not been able to before. Furthermore, the location of the building in the center



of Memphis provides the Museum with a new level of accessibility and visibility. With most of the Museum's operations moving to Overton Park, the current campus, tucked along the bluff of the Mississippi River, will be transformed into an international artist-in-residence program.

The Museum also adds an important element to Overton Park by transforming an empty building into a cultural arts destination in the center of Memphis. As the Museum expands its programming, a unique opportunity to attract more artists, collectors, researchers, and fine art and craft patrons to Memphis emerges alongside a renewed interest in the Museum among local audiences. With an increased number of exhibitions, classes, and events, the Museum will attract more than 75,000 visitors per year, including an increased number of artists from across the country to take part in an advanced classes and workshops. The expansion also positions the Museum to strategically build its collection, gaining greater visibility as the global leader in the preservation and promotion of the field of fine metalwork and actively contributing to the conversation of contemporary art and craft and the role metalsmithing plays in each.

*“Our goal as a foundation is to raise the profile of enameling. We feel this can be best accomplished through museum partnerships with organizations like the Metal Museum, Yale University Art Gallery, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Arkansas Arts Center, and the Crocker Art Museum.”*

**—HAROLD NELSON & BERNARD JAZZAR**  
Enamel Arts Foundation (Los Angeles, CA)



## *The Location*

To achieve this vision, the Metal Museum will transform Rust Hall, the former home of the Memphis College of Art, into the Metal Museum in Overton Park, a state-of-the-art museum and educational facility. One of the first examples of modern architecture in Memphis, Rust Hall was once called the “Taj Mahal of Memphis.” Designed by Memphis architect Roy Harrover, it won the national Progressive Architecture Award in 1960 and was named the “Building of the Decade” for the 1950s by the American Institute of Architects.

In addition to being one of the Memphis’s most celebrated buildings, Rust Hall is located in Overton Park, a large, 342-acre public park in the heart of Memphis. Overton Park is also home to the Memphis Zoo, the Brooks Museum of Art, a 9-hole golf course, an outdoor amphitheater, hiking trails, and one of the few remaining old growth forests in Tennessee. Overton Park has been described as to Memphis what Central Park is to New York City. Thus, as in many cities across the world, the Metal Museum seeks to become part of a park that interlinks spaces to gather, explore, create, and learn, and further contribute to the city’s vitality and livability.

Guiding the Museum through the design is wHY Architecture (Los Angeles, CA), an interdisciplinary design practice dedicated to serving the arts, communities, culture, and the environment. The team, led by founder and creative director Kulapat Yantrasast, shares a commitment to collaboration and approaching projects from many different angles to deliver holistic, sustainable solutions across scales.

With over 15 years of experience with cultural and institutional projects, wHY has developed a design philosophy that explores new ways to enhance the intrinsic identity of their client’s curatorial mission. Paired with their founding aspiration of helping museums connect to new and diverse audiences in the 21st century, wHY is a one-of-a-kind laboratory for vigorous and exceptional thinking regarding museum projects.



Proposed site plan  
of the Metal Museum  
in Overton Park

*wHY has worked with  
several other notable  
cultural clients.*

**SPEED ART MUSEUM**  
Louisville, KY

**MARCIANO ARTS  
FOUNDATION**  
Los Angeles, CA

**ASIAN ART MUSEUM**  
San Francisco, CA

**ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO**  
Chicago, IL

**MODERN ART MUSEUM  
OF FORT WORTH**  
(In Collaboration with Tadao Ando)  
Fort Worth, TX

## OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH EXPANSION



Atrium stairs to lower level entrance

### *Exhibitions & Collections*

For over 40 years, Metal Museum exhibitions have contributed to the development and recognition of the field of fine metalwork alongside contemporary art and design. The Museum's commitment to exhibiting and lending its collection has also resulted in many more artists and collectors turning to the Metal Museum as an ideal home for their work. Thus with larger exhibition spaces and consolidated art storage and research spaces that meet national museum standards, the Museum's collection and role within the museum field will grow, making the Museum and Memphis the destination for scholars, artists, collectors, curators, and writers interested in the field.

### *Metals Studios*

The Metals Studios—comprised of a blacksmith shop, foundry, fine metals studio, and design lab—provide educational opportunities for metalsmiths through artistic creation. The Studios, which have grown over the years to increase technical capacity and approaches to creation, are unique in their ability to offer artists the use of these spaces side-by-side. The Metal Museum in Overton Park presents an opportunity to

*“I love having work in the Metal Museum. The Metal Museum will show my work and lend my work. It’s not going to be relegated to the basement. So it represents [the artist] better.”*

**—MARY LEE HU**

Artist, Donor, Collections Committee Member

build a modern facility unlike any other that accommodates artists' and the Museum's current and future needs under one roof. As a result, the new Metals Studios are set to provide a consolidated and more conducive space for learning and collaboration across studio spaces while simultaneously exposing visitors to every step in the creative process.

### ***Community Education***

The Metal Museum in Overton Park is expected to dramatically impact community education programming for youth and adult learners. The building renovations, which include dedicated classrooms, educational studios, and multi-purpose event spaces, provide the Museum with space to grow existing programs and establish new ones, allowing the Museum to respond to the needs and interests of its community rather than to the limitations of its physical space. Additionally, the location provides significant programming partnership opportunities with organizations in and beyond Overton Park. With expanded programs and participation, the Museum will increase understanding and appreciation of metalwork among the public and bring active art creation back to Overton Park, inspiring generations through art making experiences.



## *Investment & Impact*

To make this vision a reality, the Metal Museum seeks to raise \$35 million. The transformation of the building to provide the Museum with the physical space to expand and enhance its programming and, by extension, its audiences is anticipated to cost \$21 million. Through thoughtful design and adaptive reuse, the Metal Museum and its programming will be much more accessible to a local and national audience and inspire active participation in the arts. A \$14 million endowment will ensure adequate financial resources for the perpetual maintenance and operation of the expanded facilities.

*“It is special to have my work here—  
in a place that values how objects are  
made and contextualizes metalworking  
within contemporary art.”*

**—LISA GRALNICK**  
2018 Master Metalsmith

An investment in this vision is an investment in the field of contemporary fine metalwork in all forms, in artists across disciplines and in all phases of their careers, and in work that will inspire the next generation to take an active role in this important art form.

