



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Kerri VanderHoff
Grand Rapids Art Museum
616-831-2914
kvanderhoff@artmuseumgr.org

Brian Burch
Lambert, Edwards & Associates
616-233-0500
bburch@lambert-edwards.com

**GRAND RAPIDS ART MUSEUM EARNS TITLE OF THE WORLD'S FIRST
GOLD LEED CERTIFIED ART MUSEUM**

*Michigan Art Museum Integrates Extensive
Sustainable Systems to Earn LEED Gold Certification*

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., March 20, 2008 – The Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM) today announced it has received a gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program—the first and only newly built art museum in the world to receive LEED certification.

LEED certification is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance, sustainable buildings. A gold certification recognizes a superior level of energy and environmental performance. From its conception, the new GRAM integrated extensive sustainable systems. GRAM opened to the public on Oct. 5, 2007.

Lead donor for the new museum is Peter Wege, an environmentalist whose foundation made LEED certification a requirement of its \$20 million gift. Wege stated, "The gold standard was always our goal. It's a great achievement that establishes our beautiful art museum as an international standard of excellence in architecture and green design."

Achieving LEED certification is a particular challenge for art museums, given the exacting climate standards for art preservation and the volume of visitors they receive. Design was further complicated by the variability and unpredictability of Michigan's four-season climate. The building was designed by wHY Architecture, led by principals Kulapat Yantrasast and Yo Hakomori, and construction was overseen by Rockford Construction.

"Environmental stewardship is a commitment that is evidenced throughout our museum facility. We are proud to be the first of the next generation of cultural buildings," said Celeste Adams, museum director. "Our commitment to current and future generations is to provide national and international caliber exhibitions and collections of art in a renowned facility that offers a unique place of beauty, tranquility and sustainability."

GRAM incorporates energy-efficient lighting, heating and cooling systems and strict recycling systems for water and operational supplies. Its innovative water collection system reduces the museum's demand for city-treated water by 20 percent.

Visitors to the museum realize 70 percent natural light throughout its public, gallery and managerial spaces, while views to outdoor courtyards, indigenous plants and trees beckon visitors to expand their cultural experience.

Thirty percent of the inventory at GRAM's Museum Store is environmentally friendly—including recycled paper notebooks, organic cotton clothing and recycled fashion accessories. The central urban location of the museum allows for easy access by public transportation or bicycle. To further augment its certification, GRAM continues to build awareness of environmentally friendly efficiencies in the region through its education programs and activities.

Located in the heart of the growing West Michigan community, the new museum building is located adjacent to artist Maya Lin's *Ecliptic* (2000), an urban, sculptural park in downtown Grand Rapids, Mich. The new building comprises 125,000 square feet and provides more than three times the gallery space of its former building for its permanent collection and temporary exhibitions, as well as increased space for education and public programs.

The Building

The 125,000 square-foot concrete and glass building capitalizes on the city's dramatic vistas and striking landscape, creating continuity between the art within the Grand Rapids Art Museum and the natural environment surrounding it. The building is organized around a central pavilion of glass and light-colored architectural concrete flanked by a reflecting pool with a water wall and pocket park, open-air sculpture courtyard and dining terraces.

As visitors move from the expansive entry pavilion toward the gallery wing, natural light gives the space a sense of upward procession toward the special exhibition and permanent collection galleries, which total more than 20,000 square-feet. The three-floor gallery wing features glass skylight lanterns that admit natural light into the space and illuminate the building at night. In addition to its galleries, the Art Museum includes a multi-use, flexible seating auditorium, education center, art reference library, works on paper study, café, museum store and conference rooms.

Outside, a large portico with an expansive roof canopy cantilevered toward the park extends the building's connection to *Ecliptic*, providing shaded comfort in warm weather and a protected area from which to view ice skaters on the *Ecliptic* rink in the winter. Among other public amenities is a warming shelter for the skating rink within Maya Lin's *Ecliptic*. The building also includes lower-level underground loading dock, central security and staff parking.

About wHY Architecture and Kulapat Yantrasast

wHY Architecture, an architectural design and planning office, is based in Los Angeles. The two founding partners, Yo Hakomori and Kulapat Yantrasast, pursue design solutions to create architecture of tranquility and simplicity with keen attention and sensitivity to materials and detail.

Kulapat, principal on the project, has particular expertise in museum design and experience working on cultural facilities around the world. A native of Thailand, he studied in Japan where he received his Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Architecture from the University of Tokyo. In Japan he worked with world-renowned Pritzker Prize laureate architect, Tadao Ando, with whom he remains closely associated. He has served as project architect on many major museums and buildings in the U.S. and abroad. In addition to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Tex., he has also worked on the ARMANI/TEATRO for Giorgio Armani in Milan, the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Mass. and The Foundation Francois Pinault in Paris.

Current wHY Architecture projects include the Grand Rapids Art Museum; gallery designs and reinstallations for the Art Institute of Chicago; the Social and Public Art Resource Center in Venice, California; the Cesar Chavez Memorial on the campus of San Jose State University; the Art Bridge crossing the L.A. River in North Hollywood, Calif.; as well as several private residential and commercial projects. wHY Architecture also designed *Four Salvaged Boxes*, an exhibition

that presents environmental design solutions. The exhibition closes at the Grand Rapids Art Museum on March 23 and travels on to Thailand and Japan.

About the Grand Rapids Art Museum

The mission of the Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM) is to provide a gathering place where people of all ages and backgrounds can enrich their lives through interaction with works of art in a thought-provoking and creative way. Established in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids, the new art museum is internationally known for its distinguished design and Gold LEED certified status. Established in 1910 as the Grand Rapids Art Association, the Art Museum has grown to include more than 5,000 works of art, including American and European 19th and 20th century painting and sculpture and more than 3,000 works on paper. Embracing the city's legacy as a leading center of design and manufacturing, GRAM has a growing collection in the area of design and modern craft.

###