

# Natural light key to design of Clyfford Still Museum

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Officials of the Clyfford Still Museum today unveiled a design by architect Brad Cloepfil that stands up to one of the most challenging sites in Denver by incorporating rich landscaping, concrete sparked by quartz aggregate, and second-floor galleries filled with natural light.

The design, unveiled during a press preview today at the Denver Art Museum, shows a two-story neo-modernist structure fronted by a grove of trees.

The building's entry will be on West 13th Avenue; visitors will pass through the grove to a walkway and into a museum where the interior walls will be as heavily textured as the exterior. Strips of skylights and carefully placed windows will allow natural light in many of the second-floor galleries.

"The city has so much sky," said Cloepfil. "Natural light is the greatest gift of architecture here."

But the bottom line is still the artwork.

"What can the architecture provide for this work?" said Cloepfil. "The quest for me is something that embodies the visceral. The building is not an image. The building is not an idea. It's the spirit the building can evoke."

The Still Museum, located next to Daniel Libeskind's exuberant addition to the Denver Art Museum, is projected to open in 2010 (with a groundbreaking in 2009) and house 95 percent of the artist's work. The city worked out the donation agreement with Still's widow in 2004, which at that time required the museum be opened in 10 years.

A public presentation of the design is set for 5 p.m. today in the Denver Art Museum's Sharp Auditorium.

In January, Still Museum officials announced the museum had raised gifts and pledges of about \$25 million toward the project. That includes half the amount - \$17 million - needed for its \$33-million capital campaign to construct a building of 31,500 square feet.

Cloepfil, who was chosen in November of 2006, founded Allied Works in 1994 in Portland, Ore., and has since added an office in New York. He won the commission over two other contenders: Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and Ohlhausen DuBois Architects, both of New York. The museum had sent requests for qualifications to 23 firms, inviting them to respond; in all, 15 did.

Still, a groundbreaking Abstract Expressionist, died in 1980 with most of his work in storage, and wanted it to be shown in a facility owned by an American city - not a museum. Still's widow, Patricia, had put strong restrictions on a building design in a donation agreement.

A year after the gift, she died, and Denver also received work in a bequest from her. The total: about 2,300 paintings and works on paper, plus the artist's archives.

Architect Cloepfil has a track record in museum design, especially buildings set near strong architectural statements, such as an expansion of the Seattle Art Museum near its building by Robert Venturi of Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, and the Contemporary Art Museum of St. Louis, next to Tadao Ando's striking Pulitzer Foundation.

The architect also has created a controversy in New York by stripping Edward Durrell Stone's 1964 2 Columbus Circle of its part blunt/part fanciful skin in order to put on a radically new facade for the Museum of Arts and Design.

At the time of his selection in 2006, Cloepfil said he was excited to be building next to the Hamilton Building.

"The language of my architecture will be more elemental and experience-based," he said. "There will be a dialogue between the art spaces, a dialogue between the art and a dialogue between the architecture.

Still Museum director Dean Sobel said then that the selection committee was impressed with Cloepfil's comprehension of the artist's work.

"He understands the importance of the artworks, and he is intuitive about what drove Still toward such a highly original style," Sobel said. "He's very intuitive. He'll use Still and his artwork to guide him and me in so many decisions."

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