

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**ISABELLA  
STEWART GARDNER  
MUSEUM**

**BRA Board of Directors Approves Gardner Museum Restoration,  
Expansion Project and New Building Design by Renzo Piano**

*BRA Board approval a significant step in a planning process more than a decade in development and review; project will allow the museum to preserve and protect the historic Palace, the collection, and Isabella Gardner's legacy – “for the education and enjoyment of the public forever”*

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS ▪ TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2008 – The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum confirmed today that the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) Board of Directors voted unanimously to approve the museum's restoration and expansion plans, including a new building designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect, Renzo Piano. The museum will continue to work with BRA staff toward approval of the final design. The museum must also secure approval from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Formal regulatory approvals for the project began in late 2006.

In addition to BRA Board approval, the Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) voted unanimously in December 2007 to support the museum's plans.

The project has earned the enthusiastic support of Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, who recognizes the importance of the project and believes the new building will be a great gift to the city. City Councilman Michael Ross also spoke in favor of the project.

For more than a year-and-a-half, the museum has also worked with the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC), the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), and the Boston Preservation Alliance (BPA) to review the museum's planning process and to ensure that the critical preservation goals of the project are being met. The Gardner Museum has submitted the proposed project plans to the Office of the Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for their review and court approval to ensure that the project is keeping with the parameters of Isabella Gardner's will.

Other recent and ongoing preservation projects include the installation of a museum-wide, state-of-the-art climate control system (1991-1996), and an equally comprehensive six-to-eight year lighting project, launched in 2004, geared to enhance lighting in the galleries while preserving the distinctive atmosphere Isabella Gardner created more than a hundred years ago. The new building project is the latest effort by the museum to ensure the integrity of the historic Palace and the preservation of the permanent collection.

**Statement of Need**

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is facing an urgent need to alleviate escalating wear and tear on the Palace and the collections. The museum that Mrs. Gardner built 100 years ago with a staff of 20 and just over 1,000 annual visitors now welcomes close to 200,000 visitors each year and maintains a staff of more than 100. Ten thousand people a year attend concerts and other programs in the Tapestry Room alone. Education and community programs are largely confined to a small basement meeting room. Administrative offices are carved out of hallways and closets.

A new building is essential to the preservation of the Gardner, providing the space required to support the needs of the Palace and its treasures – and to better serve the museum's many publics. The additional space will allow the museum to better accommodate the demands of visitor access and to preserve and deepen a commitment to vibrant arts programming that continues Isabella Gardner's legacy – in order, in Mrs. Gardner's words, to provide “for the education and enjoyment of the public forever.”

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### **About the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum**

A little more than 100 years ago, Isabella Stewart Gardner developed a new context for art in America by creating a museum where visitors experienced music, performance, the beauty of gardens, and historic and contemporary art – all in a highly personal setting.

Modeled on a 15<sup>th</sup>-century Venetian palazzo, centered around a light-filled interior courtyard garden, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is home to more than 2,500 art objects, spanning 30 centuries, including works by Botticelli, Titian, Raphael, Rembrandt, Degas, and Sargent – and the first Matisse to enter an American collection. Contemporary and historic exhibitions; America’s oldest museum concert series; lectures; special performances; an Artist-in-Residence program; and school and community partnerships continue to enrich the permanent collection and provide ongoing inspiration for visitors the world over.

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is located at 280 The Fenway, Boston, Massachusetts; Anne Hawley is *Norma Jean Calderwood Director*.

For additional information or a calendar of special exhibitions, concerts, and other events or programming, visit the museum online at **[gardnermuseum.org](http://gardnermuseum.org)**

**ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM** · 280 The Fenway Boston, MA 02115 · 617 566 1401 [www.gardnermuseum.org](http://www.gardnermuseum.org) · Tue.-Sun., 11 am-5pm; plus Gardner After Hours every third Thursday 5-9pm (Sept-Jun) · \$12 adults; \$10 seniors; \$5 students; \$2 discount w/ same day Museums of Fine Arts admission; FREE for members, children under 18, and all named Isabella

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### **AVAILABLE IMAGES**

Select images representative of the project and illustrative of the unique atmosphere of the Gardner Museum – including gallery views of the Tapestry Room that will be returned to its original orientation as part of the project – are available by request through the Museum’s press office.

### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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*For additional information about the museum’s proposed restoration and expansion project:*

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*For additional details about the BRA process and Board vote*

