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## **Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art Morgan Memorial Building Fact Sheet**

### **History**

The Morgan Memorial Building—the first Beaux-arts museum building in the U.S.—is the largest of the five interconnected buildings of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art. The building spans 35,961 square feet.

In 1907 renowned financier J. Pierpont Morgan proposed building the Morgan Memorial in honor of his father, and pledged \$500,000 for construction. Benjamin Wistar Morris, who also designed the adjoining Colt Memorial, was selected as architect and the final price tag for the Morgan Memorial was \$750,000.

The Morgan Memorial Building, fully opened to the public in 1915, provided exhibition space for the Wadsworth Atheneum’s growing fine arts collection.

In 1917, J.P. Morgan, Jr., presented the Wadsworth Atheneum—per his father’s will—with more than 1,300 objects from J. Pierpont Morgan’s collection of decorative arts, many of which have been on view in the building over the years.

### **Renovation**

The Morgan Memorial Building’s renovation began December 2009. Over the course of the project, work has addressed the following issues, while maintaining the building’s historical integrity:

- New roofing, skylights, and repairs to the historical Heinigke & Bowen stained glass laylight
- Integration of a proprietary energy plant and window treatments to stabilize gallery climate
- Enhancements to gallery lighting systems to accepted industry practices
- New ADA-compliant restrooms and existing restroom relocation/upgrade
- Improvement of existing storage area to a state-of-the-art facility to better protect collections
- Renovation of the building’s soaring Great Hall, in addition to cosmetic updates in galleries
- Wiring to bring in-gallery technologies and wi-fi to museum visitors

The total price tag of work done to the Morgan Memorial Building is around \$26 million—79% of the museum’s total \$33 million renovation budget.

### **Reopening & Centennial Celebration**

2015 marks the centennial of the public opening of the Morgan Memorial Building. A grand public reopening will take place Sept. 19, 2015.

Post-renovation the Morgan Memorial Building will boast the first complete reinstallation of the European Art Collection in over 20 years, showcasing over 1,000 world-class works of European

painting, sculpture, and decorative arts. A centerpiece of this presentation will be the museum's new treasure, Artemisia Gentileschi's "Self-Portrait as a Lute Player" (1616 – 18), on view to the public for the first time. An immersive Cabinet of Art and Curiosities will feature remarkable 17th-century objects, many from J. Pierpont Morgan's collection, combined with natural history specimens and other rarities.

This seminal moment in the Wadsworth Atheneum's rich legacy will celebrate the contributions J. Pierpont Morgan and other generous supporters of the museum have made with the unveiling of 17 new galleries and nearly 16,000 square feet of reclaimed exhibition space for the public's engagement with the museum's world-class collections.

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