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## Glass Museum's new galleries take shape

Expansion wing set to open March 2015

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Two years after groundbreaking, the gently curving walls and towering skylights of the new contemporary glass art galleries are taking shape, marking a new phase in the \$64 million expansion wing at the Corning Museum of Glass.

The site has slowly progressed from a muddy pit to a monstrous steel and rebar skeleton, and now the structure is nearly enclosed.

Construction by Gilbane-Welliver will wrap up in December, leaving the CMOG staff about three months to move 70 of the museum's large-scale glass sculptures and installations into their new home, Karol White, CMOG's executive director, told The Leader during a hardhat tour Friday.

Previously set for December, the target date for opening the new wing to the public is now March 20, 2015, the vernal equinox.

The 26,000-square-foot new contemporary gallery is divided into five gallery spaces flowing together with curving walls, ringed by an outer corridor called "the porch" where more works will be displayed. The porch will have a 150-foot-long window overlooking a small park to be landscaped outside the new wing.

Reflecting the objects in them, each of the galleries will have a different theme, including nature, the human body, history and design, Wight said.

The new wing was designed by New York City architect Tom Phifer. White walls and high ceilings give way to skylights - some translucent, some transparent - that flood the galleries with soft natural light, said Rob Cassetti, CMOG's senior director of creative services and marketing.

"It's a really simple, minimalist design," Cassetti said.



CMoG's Karol Wight and Rob Cassetti stand in one of the new gallery spaces in the museum's expansion wing, set to open March 20, 2015.

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The roughly 400,000 people who visit the museum annually will come into the main admissions lobby, and enter the new galleries as the first stop on their tour. "I think it'll be striking for a visitor arriving," Cassetti said. "It's an iconic structure being built on this campus."

From there, they'll go by the other main feature of the new wing - a 500-seat new theater for the hot glass shows.

The shell of the new theater is also taking shape.

The new theater will have a much larger stage, with the main seating area circled by a balcony. There will be skylights and large windows overlooking the courtyard and the inner part of the CMOG campus. It will use the same huge ventilator from the old Steuben Glass factory that used to sit in the same spot.

From the new theater, visitors will cross a bridge into the existing part of the museum, and continue on a circular path through the rest of the galleries.



The new theater for hot glass shows is taking shape in CMOG's new wing.

Corning Inc. is funding the expansion, and some of the company's signature products will be built into the new wing.

Gorilla Glass will be used to encase the works in the new galleries, marking Gorilla's first use in a museum. The Corning ONE Wireless Platform will ensure guests will have wi-fi and cell signals on their phones and tablets. It's the same fiber-based wireless technology used for Super Bowls and Las Vegas casinos.

There's plenty of work ahead as the project hits the home stretch, but Wight says it's a "dream come true" for the staff as the new wing takes shape.

"I've been in a lot of museums, and I've never experienced a space like this before," said Wight, who came to Corning in 2011 from the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

"To be able to showcase our collection in a space that was so very thoughtfully designed ... is just tremendously exciting."

**Source: Corning Leader**

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