

INTRODUCTION



MISSION STATEMENT

Located on one of the most important sites in American history, the port of arrival for nearly half of all Africans forced to North America, the International African American Museum (IAAM) in Charleston will illuminate the influential histories of Africans and their descendants in South Carolina, highlighting their diasporic connections throughout the nation and the world.

TIMELINE

The IAAM is scheduled to break ground in 2019 and open its doors in 2021.

HISTORY & BACKGROUND

“Know from whence you came. If you know whence you came, there are absolutely no limitations to where you can go.”

- James Baldwin

The International African American Museum’s most defining feature is its location at the historic site of Gadsden’s Wharf. Nearly half of all enslaved Africans forced to North America arrived through Charleston, and the majority disembarked at Gadsden’s Wharf, taking their first steps into this country after long, arduous, and often deadly voyages. Today, millions of African Americans can trace their ancestors to Charleston.

Deemed “Ground Zero” of the African American Experience by Harvard professor and historian Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the

IAAM’s location at Gadsden’s Wharf presents an opportunity to help people understand the national and international significance of African American history. This is a story of struggle, heartbreak, joy and achievement.

The museum will call attention to this powerful place and to the stories of the people who came ashore here – their countries of origin, the trajectory of their lives and the lives of their descendants in America, their courageous battles for freedom, and the indelible marks of culture, tradition and language that continue to enhance and define our country. The Wharf is a physical embodiment of history and of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade that forced the migration of millions of Africans. It is also a tangible representation of unyielding bravery, tenacity and hope.



“I, too, am America.”

- Langston Hughes

Museums are not meant to simply house relics of the past or repeat old stories that have no bearing on the present day. At their best, museums should inform the way we think, provide us with new perspectives, and play an active role in shaping current dialogues.

Today, discussions about race are ubiquitous. Stories on the news about race relations abound, and concerns about racial justice in the country are palpable. To address these enduring issues, engage in productive conversations and work together to find pragmatic and permanent solutions, we need the right lens. We need to learn about the past to understand our reality today. The International African American Museum will serve as that illuminating lens and educational resource – telling stories that are relevant today, facilitating understanding between disparate groups, and showing us where we have been and why it matters, so that we can work together to move forward.

The museum will connect families with their lost ancestors at the Center for Family History, explore the origins and experiences of African peoples that entered America through Charleston, and celebrate some of the country’s leading thinkers, businesspeople, artists, musicians and heroes. The stories that we will tell at the International African American Museum will show us who we are as Americans and help us discover ways to embrace our roles in this global society to make us better both as individuals and as members of an international community.

VIDEOS



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IAAM VIDEO LINKS

[Flyover Animation of International African American Museum](#)

This two-minute animated video provides a birds-eye view of the museum with beautiful renderings from Ralph Appelbaum and his team.

[Introduction to International African American Museum \(3 Minutes\)](#)

This short video invites viewers to explore the museum.

[Introduction to International African American Museum \(8 Minutes\)](#)

Dive deeper into the IAAM, its purpose, and the history and diversity it will celebrate with this longer-form video, featuring commentary by lauded historians, professors and civil rights activists.

ACCOLADES



“Gadsden’s Wharf is a sacred space. And you have the opportunity to do something there that can help people understand not only the immediacy of the story you’re telling, but also its vital importance through a national lens. This is, after all, the story of America. A story of struggle, heartbreak, joy and achievement. For me, it is crucial that you succeed, because the story you are telling shows us who we are and can make us even better.”

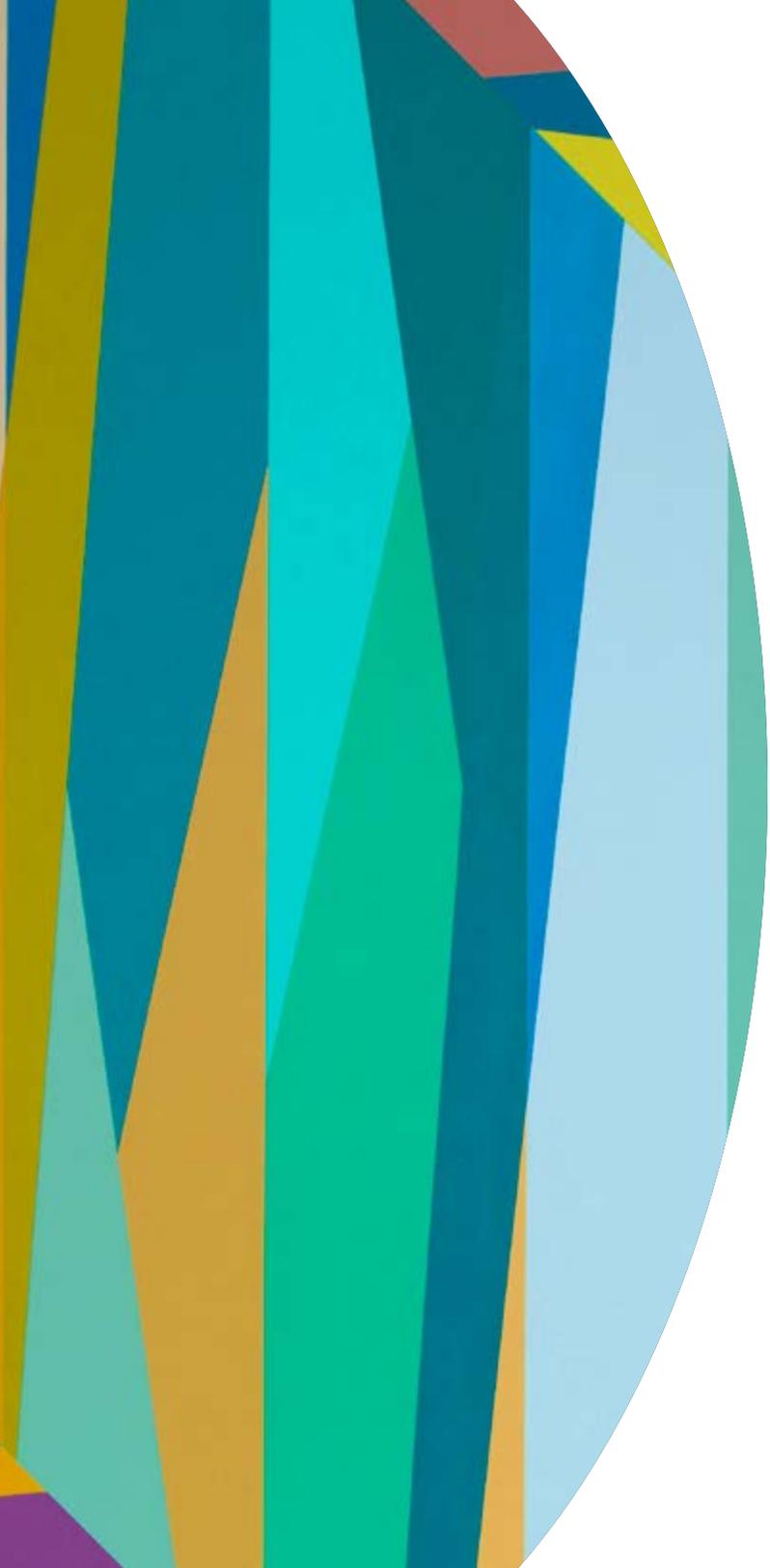
– *Lonnie Bunch, Director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture*

“Forty-eight point one percent of all of the African slaves that came to the United States entered this country through Charleston. So blackness, black culture, the African experience, the African American experience, slavery – however you want to slice it – this is ground zero. I think it’s very important that a great city in the south be the home of a great museum celebrating the achievements, the history and the culture of persons of African descent. And I can think of no place more ideal, no place more perfect, no place more appropriate than Charleston.”

– *Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Harvard Professor and Historian*

“The tragedy, struggle and triumph of enslaved Africans coming to this country represent a very important chapter in our nation’s history, especially because those Africans and their descendants have contributed so greatly to the progress and culture of our country. There is no more relevant place in America in which to tell this story than Gadsden’s Wharf in Charleston, South Carolina. I strongly support this museum, because it will tell the extraordinary story of the origins and achievements of African Americans. I’m confident that telling that story exactly in the place where it occurred will help all Americans better understand and appreciate who we are as a people and as a great nation.”

– *President Jimmy Carter*



“The [IAAM] in Charleston will offer a look into some of the most compelling stories in our country’s history. This long overdue museum will raise public awareness and help contribute to the nation’s search for unity in our pursuit of a ‘more perfect union.’”

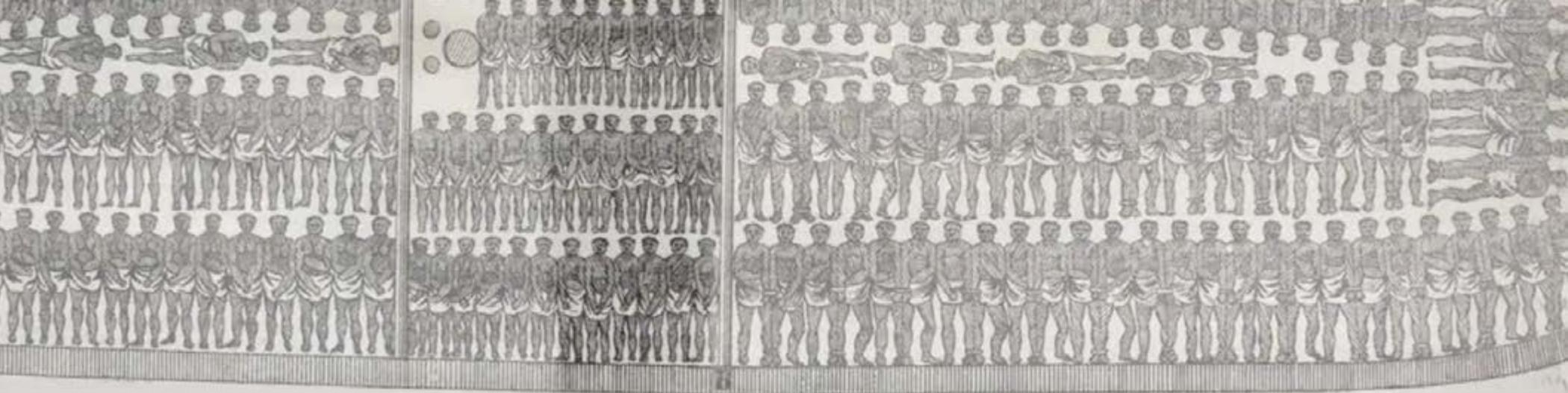
– *James E. Clyburn, United States House of Representatives*

“The [IAAM] to be built at Gadsden’s Wharf in Charleston is one of the most important commemorative projects in American history.”

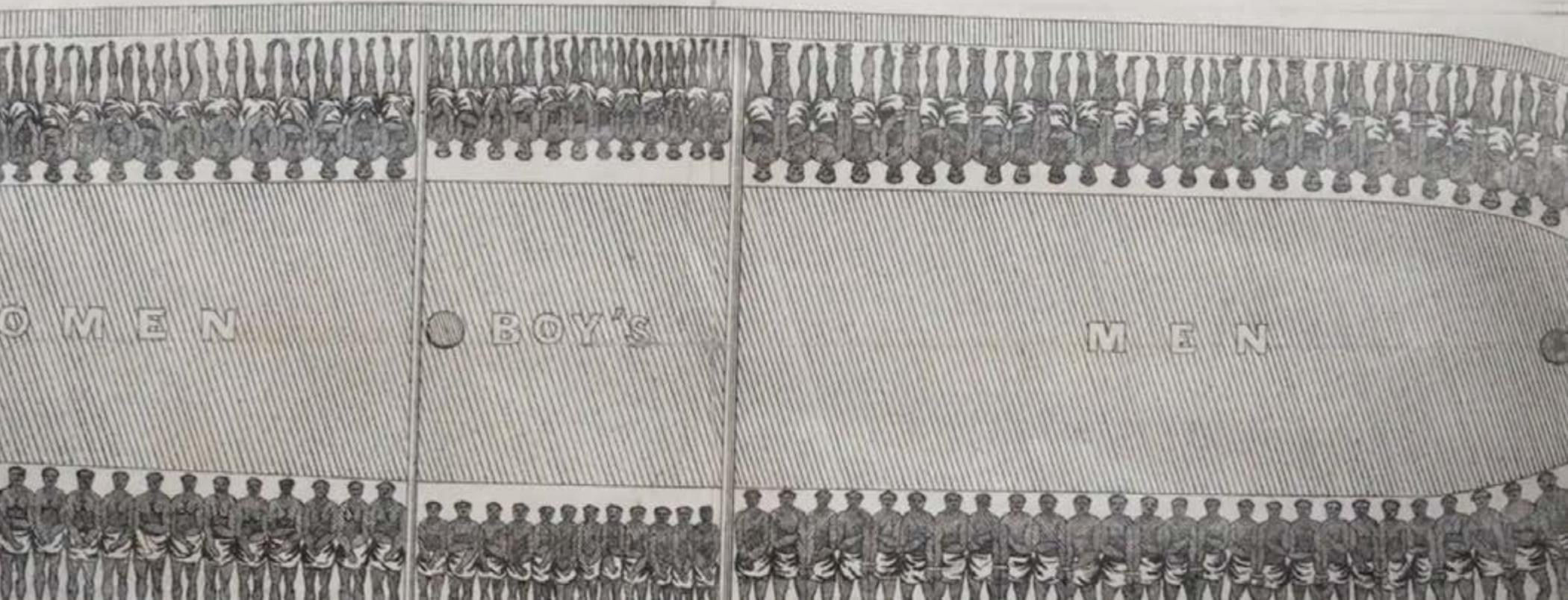
– *David W. Blight, Class of 1954 Professor of American History, Director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition, Yale University*

“It’s the Ellis Island without a welcoming Statue of Liberty, and I think what the museum does is say, ‘Let’s learn our history.’ We can both feel this stultifying prison that slavery obviously is and at the same time be uplifted knowing that we have appealed to the better angels of our nature.”

– *Ken Burns, Filmmaker*



OF 130 ADDITIONAL SLAVES ROUND THE WINGS OR SIDES OF THE LOWER DECK BY MEANS OF PLATFORMS OR SHELVES
 (A CHURCH) THE SLAVES STOWED ON THE SHELVES AND BELOW THEM HAVE ONLY A HEIGHT OF 2 FEET 7 INCHES
 BETWEEN THE BEAMS: AND FAR LESS UNDER THE BEAMS. *See Fig 1.*



DESIGN



ARCHITECTURE

The IAAM’s architecture is being directed by two of the country’s leading architectural firms, Pei Cobb Freed & Partners and Moody Nolan. Henry Cobb and Curtis Moody are jointly leading the effort.

The minimalist building will be raised off the ground out of reverence for the historic and hallowed ground of the former site of Gadsden’s Wharf. This will also allow for contemplative areas, a water feature and gardens that provide the museum’s guests with space for reflection on the ground level.

PEI COBB FREED & PARTNERS

In 1955, Pei Cobb Freed & Partners was founded by I. M. Pei, who Arch Daily dubbed “the greatest living member of the modernist generation of architects,” Eason H. Leonard and Henry N. Cobb. Over the past six decades, the firm has completed more than 250 projects – ranging from museums to religious institutions to corporate buildings – in more than 100 cities around the globe.

Today, the award-winning organization is composed of eight partners and nearly 100 associates. Some of the firm’s best-known work includes the crystalline extension to the Louvre in Paris, the JFK Presidential Library in Boston and the Bank of China Tower in Hong Kong.

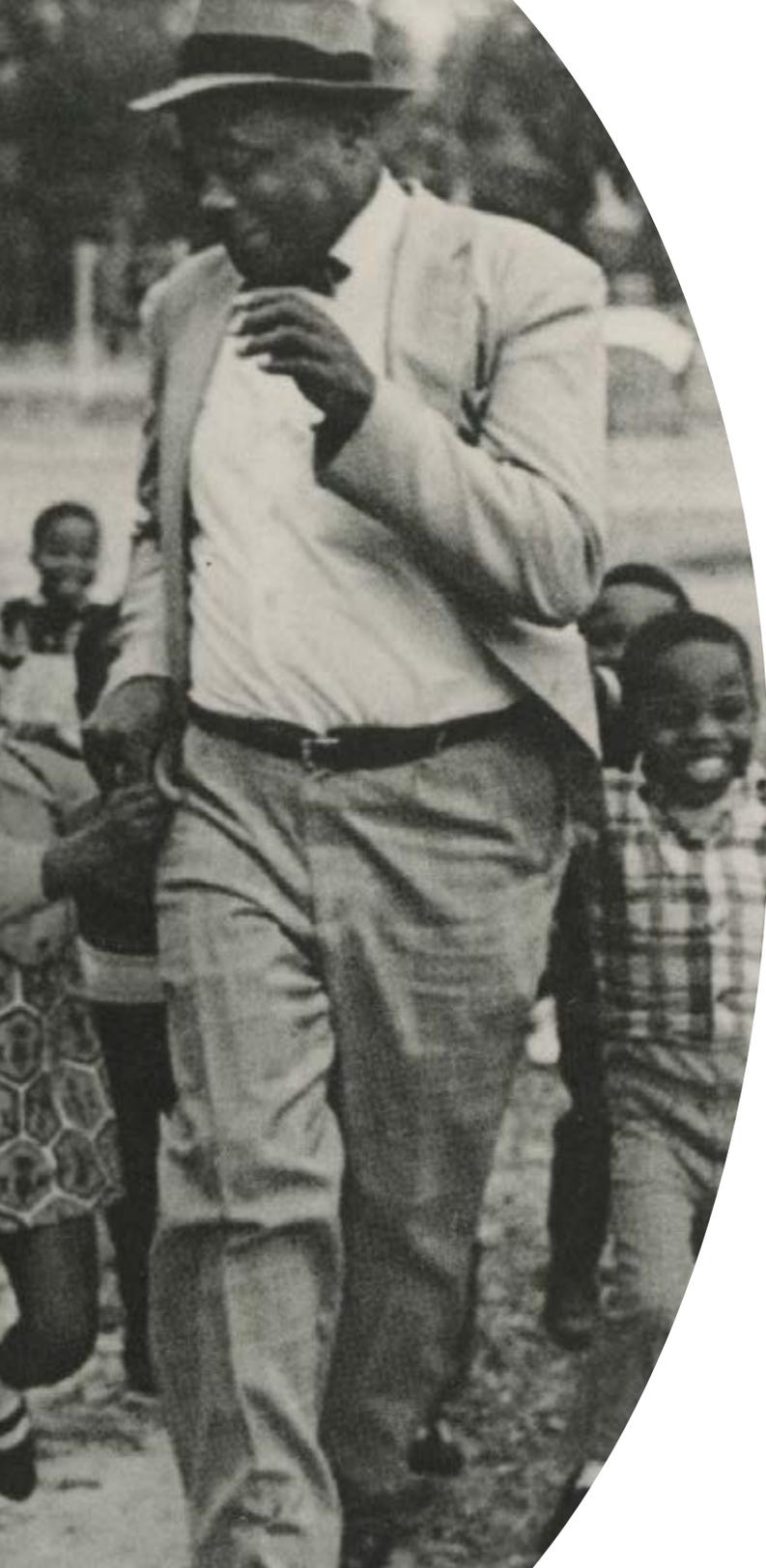
HENRY N. COBB

Since co-founding his firm in the 1950s, Cobb has designed countless structures, most recently serving as the principle designer for The Ellipse 360 in Taipei, Kristal Kule in Istanbul and 7 Bryan Park in New York. Over the last few decades, he has also pursued teaching engagements. In the 1980s, Cobb served as Studio Professor and Chairman of the Department of Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where he continues to teach on occasion. He spent a year as the Architect in Residence at the American Academy in Rome in 1992.

Cobb is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and an Academician of the National Academy of Design. He was born and raised in Boston and attended Phillips Exeter Academy, Harvard College and Harvard Graduate School of Design.

MOODY NOLAN

In 1982, Curtis Moody founded Moody and Associates made up of a two-person team – Curtis and a single graduate student. As time went on, Curtis joined forces with Howard E. Nolan & Associates, an engineering firm, yielding Moody Nolan. Today,



the firm, which is the largest African American-owned architectural firm in the country, boasts nine offices around the country and 175 employees. Projects of note include the Nashville Music City Center, the Miami University Farmer School of Business, and the Malcolm X City Colleges of Chicago.

CURTIS "CURT" MOODY

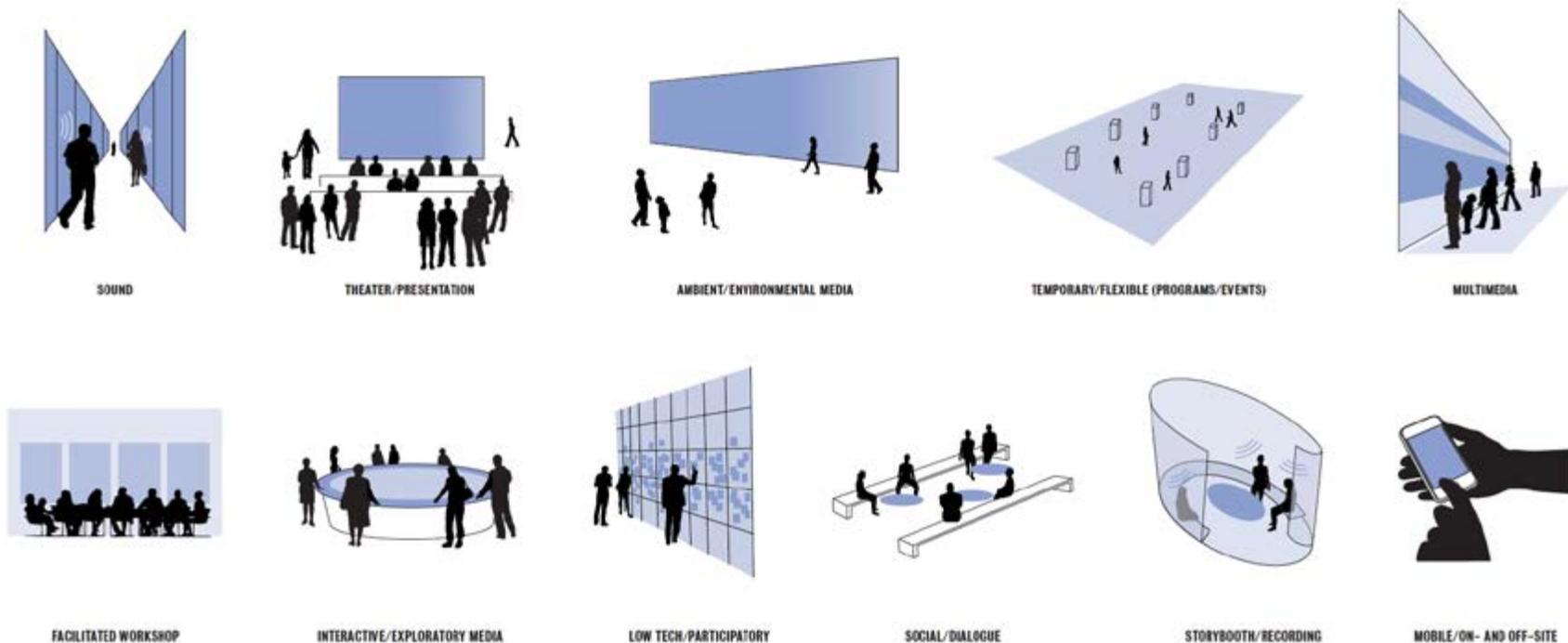
Moody founded his eponymous firm in the midst of a downturned economy and went on to grow his business into one that is known not only for its architecture, but for its interior design and engineering. Moody graduated from Ohio State and Harvard Graduate School of Design. His firm maintains its office in the city in which it was founded and where Moody was raised, in Columbus, Ohio. Moody has directed architectural projects around the country, but he has remained constant in his service of his home state, designing both the Eric Kunzel Center for Performing Arts & Education in Cincinnati and the Columbus Metropolitan Library. Moody Nolan will stay in the family – Jonathan Moody, Curtis' son, will take over as CEO in the next few years.

EXHIBIT DESIGN

The IAAM will be a living, interactive place of education and discovery. Dynamic exhibits, interactive galleries, and a host of multimedia elements – from videos in the orientation theater that set the scene of the museum’s historic location to large-scale touch-screen displays that literally place history at guests’ fingertips – will yield an engaging and illuminating experience that caters to visitors of all ages.

Spearheaded by the award-winning Ralph Appelbaum and his team, the IAAM exhibitions will employ four main types of interpretive design approaches: didactic, which includes mixed-media, content-rich, layered, exploratory galleries; iconic, which will be sparser, provocative and emotionally impactful; social, which will be programmable, participatory, comfortable and reflective; and immersive, which will be the most media-rich, flexible, theatrical and interactive.

The interpretive design approaches will be made up of a variety of experiences, illustrated below:



As one moves through the museum, they will experience a wide array of distinct kinds of space – some will prompt dialogue, others will allow for reflection – like the story booths, which will be used for personal recordings – and still more will offer do-it-yourself experiences for children and adults alike.

RALPH APPELBAUM ASSOCIATES

Ralph Appelbaum Associates (RAA) is a multidisciplinary firm specializing in the planning and design of museums, exhibits, educational environments and visitor attractions. A family-owned company founded in 1978, its portfolio includes many of the world's most recognizable public learning institutions across 700 completed commissions in more than 50 countries. Most recently, the firm was extolled for its work at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. The museum opened in September to great fanfare and has welcomed thousands of visitors every day since.

Headquartered in New York with branch offices in London, Moscow, Berlin, Beijing and Dubai, RAA has a staff of over 200 practitioners including designers, architects, historians, educators, media specialists, technologists and researchers. RAA is known for its work for national governments, leading institutions and major corporations.

The firm is best known for large-scale, permanent interpretive museum projects requiring a marriage of complex educational content with physical environments that are at once compelling and smoothly operational.

RALPH APPELBAUM

Ralph Appelbaum is the biggest player in what's often called "interpretive design," which involves everything from the look of showcases, signage, interpretive films, web site design and the placement of objects to the overall concept for a museum. Over the years, as his influence has grown, he has gone from designing exhibitions to branding entire institutions. But more than anything else, he has become an expert at finding "the big idea" that helps museum directors and boards feel good about what they do. Appelbaum likes to say that his company "produces projects that are tied to big stories."

Appelbaum is most interested in museums that make us feel. Some of his best-known work includes the Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Newseum and the American Museum of Natural History.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

The most unique and defining feature of the IAAM is its location on the former site of Gadsden’s Wharf, the point of entry for hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans who were brought to America.

Given the sacred nature of the land and the water that borders it, the museum’s leaders have prioritized the design of the museum’s exterior, which will include gardens, performance plazas and a water feature that will serve as a focal point for reflection. The museum’s landscape architecture will be directed by Walter Hood, the creative director of Hood Design Studio.

HOOD DESIGN STUDIO

Walter Hood founded Hood Design Studio in 1992 in Oakland, California. The landscape architecture firm has yielded dozens of projects, from permanent work like the Bayview Opera House in San Francisco or the park at the Jackson Center for the Arts, to temporary installations like the W.E.B. DuBois Double Garden or the “...What I Hear I Keep” project – a visual and audio art installation based on the West African tradition of griots at the Friends of Peralta Hacienda Historical Park.

WALTER HOOD

Walter Hood grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina, and has spent the last couple of decades living and working in Oakland, California. His focus is largely on public spaces and urban environments ranging from Splash Pad Park, a local, community-based project that converted a traffic island along an Oakland interstate to a park for kids, to large-scale garden designs like the work he did for San Francisco’s M. H. de Young Museum. In 1997, Hood was a fellow at the American Academy in Rome in Landscape Architecture, and in 2009, he received the Cooper-Hewitt Design Award for Landscape Design.