

SafdieArchitects

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art Design Statement

Since Safdie Architects first began collaborating with Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, we have supported their vision by creating an open, accessible place to learn about and engage with art within the captivating Ozark landscape. This duality has afforded a new means of connecting art, nature, and community for the people of Bentonville and a new model for a site-specific cultural institution. In conceiving an expansion that seamlessly integrates with the original design, yet provides new and unique experiences, Safdie Architects explored different relationships between the museum pavilions and the surrounding landscape to enhance the visitor's experience.

The expansion amplifies this vision with new classrooms to expand the museum's educational and outreach program, two new galleries designed to accommodate shifting curatorial needs and diverse travelling exhibitions that feature a bespoke skylight system that safely brings in natural daylight, and outdoor areas for programming and to foster community engagement. Between each of the museum pavilions are transparent transitional spaces and lounges which create a pattern of soothing breaks from the experiences of the internal galleries, connecting the visitors to nature and providing visual diversity. The architecture and the transparency of the new pavilions make not only the landscape, but the changing of the seasons, a fundamental and active part of the museum visitor's experience.

The architectural expression of the expansion continues to resonate with the regional traditions of building and the vernacular of the Ozarks through expressed timber framing systems of Arkansas White Pine, sloping roof forms with extended overhangs that merge into the surrounding hillsides, porches looking out into the landscape, and copper cladding which, over time, will develop a rich patina.