

Gwathmey Siegel & Associates explores
and reinterprets a Modernist design
vocabulary for **GLENSTONE**, a private museum
and residence in Maryland



1. Main house
2. Guest house
3. Pool house
4. Museum
5. Tony Smith sculpture
6. Richard Serra sculpture
7. Richard Serra sculpture

By Suzanne Stephens

A noticeable trend of late seems to be for major art collectors to create their own private museums, much as their Enlightenment forebears did in the 18th century. Instead of Horace Walpole, Sir John Soane, or Thomas Hope, however, you have Alice Walton (of the Wal-Mart family) building a new museum in Arkansas, designed by Moshe Safdie; newsprint mogul Peter Brant and his wife, Stephanie, turning to Richard Gluckman of Gluckman Mayner to renovate a barn for art at their Greenwich homestead; and Don Fisher, who enlisted Gluckman to design a new museum for his collection in the Presidio in San Francisco. The list goes on.

Glenstone, a 125-acre estate in Potomac, Maryland, is different from its cohorts. The art museum is a new structure conceived as part of a residential compound designed by one architect, Gwathmey Siegel & Associates. The collector, a Forbes 400-ranked industrialist, had first turned to Charles Gwathmey, FAIA, to design a New York City pied-à-terre for him, and admired the way the architect had integrated his art

collection into the setting. This led to the design of a new house on the Potomac, along with a plan for a semiprivate museum that would display works by Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly, and Robert Ryman, to name a few of the impressive cluster of 20th-century artists represented among the owner's holdings. (The museum, which is run by the Glenstone Foundation, is open by appointment.) The architects and the client worked with landscape architect Peter Walker and Partners to create a paradisiacal totality from scratch, with an extensive sculpture park embedded in a bucolic setting straight out of Capability Brown.

Project: *Glenstone residence and art museum, Potomac, Maryland*

Architect: *Gwathmey Siegel & Associates—Charles Gwathmey, FAIA, partner in charge; Robert*

Siegel, FAIA, partner

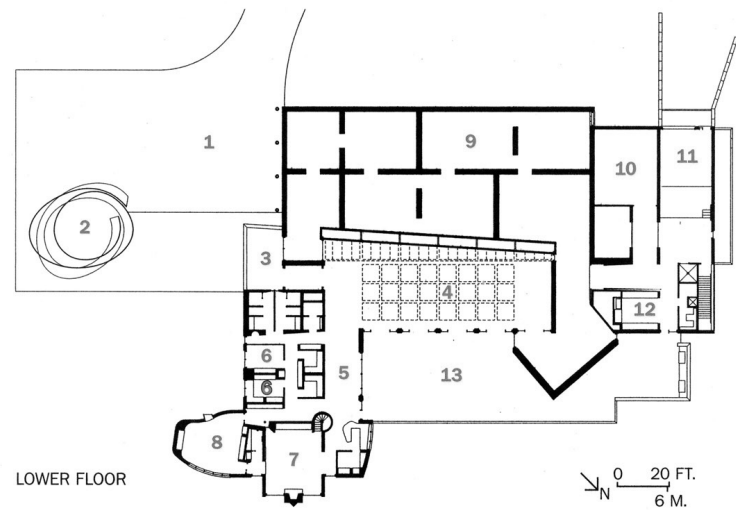
Engineers: *Severud Associates (structural); Thomas Polise Consulting Engineers (m/e/p)*

Landscape: *Peter Walker and Partners*

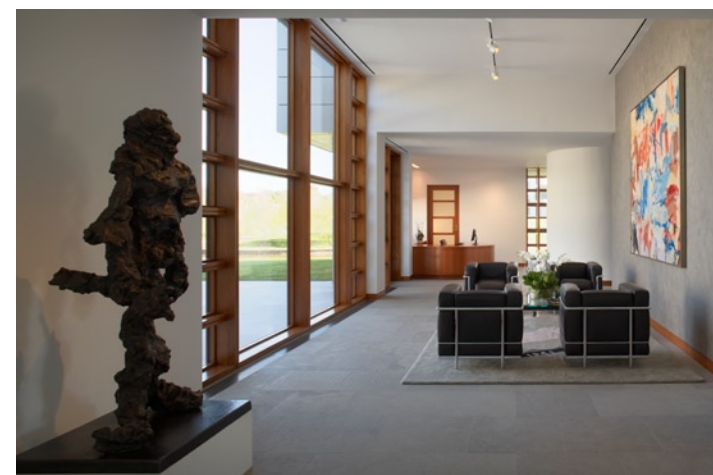
The striking itinerary through architecture and landscape begins at the gate, where a long, curving driveway leads past sugar maple trees, wild flowers, and rolling hills. "We wanted to establish an unfolding sequence of views," says Gwathmey. A large sculpture by Richard Serra, *Contour 290* (2004), sits on one side, and Tony Smith's *Smug* (1973/2005) on the other. The drive splits at the existing 2-acre pond, with a biomorphic shape that reappears as a design motif elsewhere in the complex. One serpentine leg of the drive leads to the main house; the other, to the museum.

In responding to the particularities of the site and the variegated program, which included a guest cottage and pool house, Gwathmey had the chance to rework architectural motifs he had developed over the years, as well as experiment with new formal notions. This opportunity may seem akin to Philip Johnson's creation of his Glass House compound in New Canaan, Connecticut. But there, Johnson, as his own client, added the separate structures for an underground art gallery, a sculpture gallery, along with the Glass House and other assorted buildings from 1949 to 1995. Owing to Johnson's shifting stylistic predilections, the result looks more like a group show than the assembled works of a single architect.

Not so with Gwathmey's ensemble, created between 2003 and 2006. Although each building has a separate identity, all adhere to Gwathmey Siegel's Modernist vocabulary. Indeed, despite the pastoral locale, the compound's amalgam of complexity and consistency seems closer in approach to Robert Mallet-Stevens's variegated, 1920s cluster of six cubiform villas on rue Mallet-Stevens in Paris. [For more details, go to <http://archrecord.construction.com/community/blogs/ARBlog.asp>.] At the



1. Entry court
2. Serra sculpture
3. Entrance
4. Sculpture gallery
5. Reception
6. Administrative office
7. Main office
8. Conference
9. Galleries
10. Art storage
11. Loading dock
12. Kitchen
13. Terrace



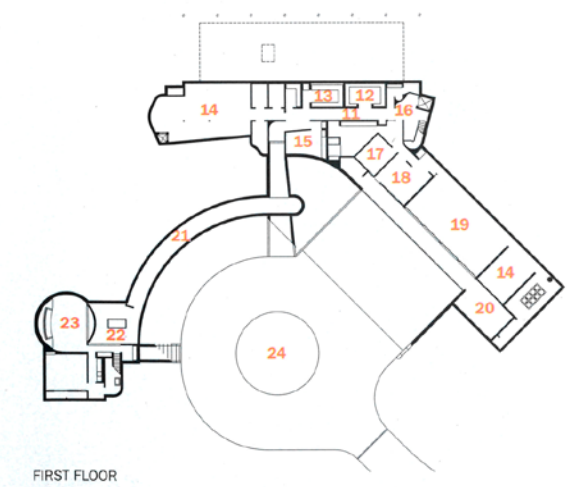
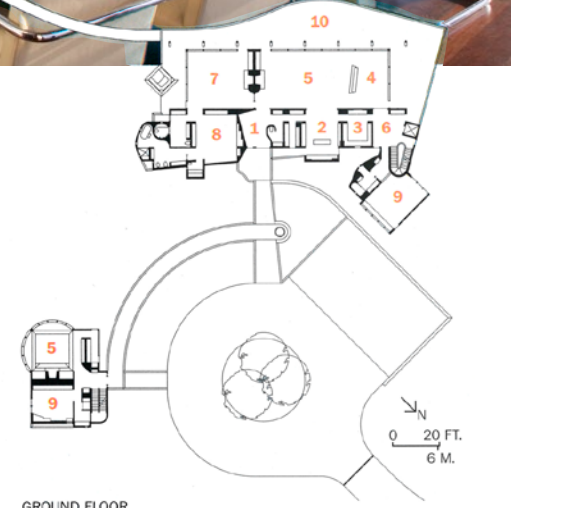
same time, the compound pays homage to various design elements in Modern architecture past, as if Gwathmey were exploring a genealogical legacy that he reveals in telling traces.

Gwathmey says he conceived the main house as a “transparent yet defined volume,” with a floating, curved roof meant to “engage the landscape, the sculpture, and the architecture,” as it lifts off a wood-and-glass pavilion. Those entering the 15,000-square-foot main house from the circular car drop find the space in the vestibule compressed, then, in the living and dining areas, they find the space thrust vertically upward and horizontally outward, directing the eye to the picturesque view of the pond and museum. The soft upward curve of the ceiling is emphasized by the glimmering acoustical zinc panels, dramatically punctured by skylights. At the northwest corner, the steel-framed structure meets a three-story, stuccoed tower containing bedrooms and a gym; at the front, a grassy berm conceals cars, service areas, and a gallery to the guest house.

The museum’s main hall (left) opens out to a terrace via teak-framed glass doors. The light gray, flame-finished limestone floor sets off sculptures by John Chamberlain and Jeff Koons. The smaller galleries, with endgrain Douglas fir floors, frame artworks by Modernists including Franz Kline, Mark Rothko, and Clyfford Still (featured below), among others (opposite, bottom two).

To articulate the interlocking volumes, particularly their solid/void relationships on the exterior, Gwathmey chose to contrast opaque stucco with gleaming zinc and glass, uniting both with the teak window frames. At the same time, the canopylike roof and the connection to the tower along the north elevation bear a striking affinity to Le Corbusier’s Secretariat at Chandigarh, India (1958), not to mention the roof contour of Eero Saarinen’s Dulles Airport (1962). The Aaltoesque curves of connecting walls, and Adolf Loos–like punched windows in the stucco-clad tower underscore the nature of Gwathmey’s distillation process. Next door, the 3,000-square-foot guest cottage relates most clearly to early Gwathmey Siegel houses; particularly in the plan, which combines a square and circle, and in the section, where





- 1. Entrance hall
- 2. Family kitchen
- 3. Chef's kitchen
- 4. Dining
- 5. Living
- 6. Stair hall
- 7. Master bedroom
- 8. Dressing
- 9. Guest room
- 10. Terrace
- 11. Gallery
- 12. Wine cellar
- 13. Laundry
- 14. Mechanical
- 15. Staff room
- 16. Stair hall
- 17. Estate manager's office
- 18. Mudroom
- 19. Garage
- 20. Golf cart/storage
- 21. Hall
- 22. Game room
- 23. Screening room
- 24. Auto court



the geometries are sliced and manipulated. The teak-framed expanses of bowed glass and punched windows, however, mitigate the house's abstract formalism, underscoring its domestic scale.

The one-story-high, 22,000-square-foot museum, across the pond, recalls the rectilinear massing and horizontality of Mies van der Rohe's unbuilt Kroller-Müller house in Otterlo, the Netherlands, of 1912–13, along with the planarity and mass/void counterpoint of Mallet-Stevens's Villa Noailles (1924–33), at L'Hyères, France. The exterior materials of the museum, a French limestone with zinc panels, however, give it more texture and color than the taut, planar, white surfaces of its predecessors. Here, too, Gwathmey has introduced curves where program and materials change. Inside, a straightforward orthogonal plan separates galleries and administrative spaces. A braced-steel frame and concrete-slab floors provide the basic structure, with gypsum-reinforced-fiberglass barrel vaults, ⅝ inch thick, sheltering the galleries. The actual exhibition spaces are subdivided by thick, 22-inch-deep, freestanding partitions and floors surfaced in an endgrain Douglas fir stained a honey color to give a sense of

solidity and warmth to the galleries without competing for attention with the art. The art clearly upstages the architecture: Gwathmey and the client worked closely together to create a cadenced installation that allows the pieces to breathe, while still heightening the drama of the visual experience.

The ensemble could be called Gwathmey in sensearound. In creating Glenstone, the collector told Gwathmey to "create your own legacy." The resulting complex allows the architect's domestically scaled designs to be compellingly presented while telling a story about Modern architecture and his own version of it. ■

Sources

Standing-seam metal roof and metal panels (museum): *Rheinzink*
Glass: *Viracon (skylights); Schott Amiron*

Limestone: *Rocamat ("Pompignon")*
Teak windows, doors: *Duratherm*
Lighting: *Lightolier, Nulux (interior); Hydrel, BK Lighting, Bega (exterior)*

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