

Sainsbury Centre



The architect Lord (Norman) Foster's first public building, the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia, is undergoing some major changes to provide additional display space, an internal link between the main and Crescent Wing galleries, improved shop, café and other visitor facilities, and a new education centre.

The award-winning Centre, which celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2003, was built to house the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection of world art, which the couple donated to the University in 1973.

It was expanded in 1991 when the Crescent Wing was added, giving an extra new lower gallery, dedicated conservation and technical facilities, a state-of-the-art visible storage display to house the reserve collection and space to accommodate the expanding Sainsbury Research Unit and newly established Museology programme.

Now the architect has designed these new facilities for his early patron, Lady Sainsbury, to celebrate her 90th birthday. The building work is to be funded by the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust.

The closure of the Sainsbury Centre while these works are under way provides an ideal opportunity to implement a thorough maintenance programme of upgrades, ensuring that the building faces its next quarter-century refreshed and in pristine condition.

Director Nichola Johnson said: "This would not be possible without the continued generosity of the Sainsbury family, for which we are extremely grateful. We are really looking forward to the enhanced public access and facilities that the project will bring. Our ever-increasing numbers of school visits are vital in encouraging young people to visit museums and it will be marvellous to be able to offer them a purpose-built space for their activities."

The Sainsbury Centre closed from August 1 2004 and will reopen with a major exhibition in spring 2006. This allows time for the exhibits to be packed and taken into specialised storage and for their reinstatement in the gallery after the works.

Provision is being made for staff and students of World Art Studies and Museology at the University to have access to important parts of the collection and library facilities during the closure.

Basement Link Project - further information

This project will transform the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts and Crescent Wing at the University of East Anglia, enhancing the visitor experience. It will provide an internal link between the Main Gallery and the Crescent Wing and additional display space, revamp the 25-year-old main building and provide for the ever growing education programme at the Sainsbury Centre with a new state of the art education space and artists' workshop.

- The entrance to the Main Gallery will have a canopy and new doors will be installed, improving access to the building. A visitor car park will also be created.
- Where the visitor enters the main building, there will be a wide 'bridge', over an atrium that extends down to basement level. Light wells, a lift and a spiral staircase will lead down to the new basement lobby and corridor.
- The spiral staircase will be extended to connect the current internal high level bridge, the ground floor and the basement corridor.
- New 'state of the art loos', cloak room and locker facilities will be accessible from the reception area.
- As the visitor walks past the light wells on the ground floor, they will find a new reception desk, new Gallery Shop units, and the entrances into the Permanent Collection and the Special Exhibition galleries. *The shop space will be extended in the atrium at basement level, please see below.*
- Continuing past the ground floor Gallery Shop, the Gallery Café will be refurbished, replacing the Café furniture and refitting the kitchen.
- At the bottom of the atrium a second reception area and extended Gallery Shop will be created. In this space, the visitor will be able to look along a wide corridor, flooded by daylight both from above and from the far end where it links with the Crescent Wing reception area.
- A wall of glass along the corridor will screen the new education space with workshop and IT facilities.
- Bays along the corridor will provide extra display space.
- All the flooring, lighting and the heating system in the main building will be renewed.
- Signage will be reviewed, both inside and outside the Gallery.

For further information, please contact Pippa Yuill, Marketing and Press Officer, on 01603 593649 or e-mail p.yuill@uea.ac.uk