Background

The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden is located at 700 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC, on the National Mall, and is part of the Hirshhorn Museum complex. The Commission provided comments on the concept design at its June 6, 2019 meeting, and supported the Smithsonian Institution’s (Smithsonian) intention to revitalize the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden to improve the visitor experience and public engagement, and accommodate the museum’s mission and contemporary programming needs.

At the December 3, 2020 meeting, the Commission approved the preliminary site development plans for the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden Revitalization project, with the exception of the proposed changes to the inner partition wall and the reflecting pool. The Commission recommended the applicant study other design alternatives for the reflecting pool and provide a comprehensive rationale for the programming needs that require the expanded aprons around the Bunshaft reflecting pool and the change in height and material proposed for the inner partition wall prior to any Commission consideration.

The purpose of this presentation is to provide the Commission with the information submitted by the Smithsonian as requested at the December 3, 2020 meeting. The presentation will afford the Commission an opportunity to consider and ask questions on the outstanding issues, namely the proposed treatment of the inner partition wall, before taking action on the revised preliminary site development plans, tentatively scheduled for July. The question for Commission discussion is whether the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, as a complex, will retain its historic significance and character with this rehabilitation, and whether the program need justifies the change in height and material of the inner partition wall. The Smithsonian will further articulate their need at the information presentation. The following report lays out a framework for analyzing the proposed changes. The Commission will review the final site developments plans for the project in early Fall 2021.
The Current Proposal

In response to the Commission’s recommendations, the Smithsonian has prepared a narrative containing updated programming information pertaining to their proposed changes to the historic Bunshaft reflecting pool and the inner partition wall. The Smithsonian has included a new design for the reflecting pool that retains its original dimensions and location, and removes the proposed expanded apron on three sides. The new reflecting pool to the south in the Central Gallery has also been reduced in size to compliment the dimensions of the Bunshaft reflecting pool, and an expanded planting bed is now proposed to the north of the reflecting pool, adjacent to the inner partition wall. The Smithsonian has indicated that they will now pursue this design approach for the reflecting pool, as it provides a balance to historic preservation goals and the need for the envisioned programming of the garden revitalization project. This new design approach has been shared with the Section 106 Consulting Parties, and has received general support. Commission staff supports the new pool design since it retains the footprint and location of the original Bunshaft pool.

With regard to the inner partition wall, it suffers from concrete disease and requires replacement like all the other aggregate concrete elements of the Sculpture Garden. The Smithsonian continues to propose rebuilding the wall in its same location but 18 inches lower in height with a change in material from granite aggregate concrete, to stacked stones, including some Swenson Pink granite stone.

Analysis Framework

The inner partition wall is a contributing feature of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Complex and therefore the decision to lower the wall and change its material from aggregate to stacked stone should be evaluated in the context of the entire rehabilitation project and in accordance with the criteria laid out in the Section 106 process for rehabilitation projects. Per the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, “rehabilitation” acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character. The standards state that the historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved and the removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided. In summary, change may be acceptable to meet continuing or changing uses as long as the property’s historic significance and character is preserved. Therefore, the questions that need to be discussed include:

- What is the property’s historic significance and character?
- How does the proposal impact the property’s historic significance and character?
- What is the changing use or program need that is driving this rehabilitation?
- Can the program need be met while avoiding the alteration of material?

What is the property’s historic significance and character?

In the Determination of Eligibility (DOE) form for the National Register of Historic Places prepared by the Smithsonian in 2016, and agreed to by the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO), the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden as a complex were
determined to meet Criteria for the National Register, with the form stating that “the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden is significant … as an outstanding example of Modernist architecture by a recognized master in the field, with a design that was closely tailored to its urban planning context as well as associated collection of Modern and Contemporary art”. In addition, the form states “the building, plaza, and sculpture garden are significant for its evocation of the rigorous Modernism for which … Bunshaft … is renowned. The design is also significant as a representation of the changing conception of the National Mall, which during the 1960s and 1970s experienced a marked break from Neoclassicism and shift towards Modernism.

The DOE recognizes that the architecture of the museum building is anchored by its central concrete drum and fountain, and that the surrounding plaza and associated sculpture garden are similarly significant features of the Hirshhorn composition, conceived as a single unit. The plaza surrounding the building—and in particular, the battered walls that encase it—define the building’s site and elevate it above its surrounding context. The sunken sculpture garden is significant as it represents the controversy the design of the Hirshhorn created, as well as the compromises that became necessary to see it completed.

In evaluating the integrity of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the DOE states the museum’s location and setting on the National Mall have remained intact, and therefore the property has retained its integrity of setting and location. In addition, the DOE states the property has retained its integrity of design as a singular architectural and urban landmark. The limited material palette that defines the character of these spaces is generally unaltered, allowing the site to convey its integrity of materials and workmanship. The DOE acknowledges that the plaza and sculpture garden have been modified from their original appearances, based on Lester Collins’ design in 1981, the strong formal elements that generate the character of these spaces has been retained, allowing them to retain their integrity of design. (In the case of the plaza, it is the perimeter walls and relationship to the museum drum; in the case of the sculpture garden, it is the sunken nature and intimacy of scale in relation to the National Mall). The DOE notes the spaces continue to act as backgrounds for the display of sculpture and as quiet, Zen-like, and contemplative retreats from the surrounding urban environment. Therefore, they continue to convey their integrity of feeling and association.

The DOE identified the following elements of the Hirshhorn and Sculpture Garden as contributing features to its historic significance and character:

- **Hirshhorn Museum Building and Plaza**: drum-like building form with central courtyard; battered perimeter walls; sculptural, cast-in-place concrete piers; precast concrete cladding panels; painted, coffered concrete ground-level ceiling structure; third-story balcony and fenestration; circular fountain in interior courtyard; glazed entrance lobby with revolving doors; magnolia trees and circular bed at northwest corner of the site; setting for the display of rotating sculpture; loading dock ramp, retaining walls, and fence.

- **Hirshhorn Museum Building Interior**: first-floor lobby interior; second and third floor corridors and galleries; terrazzo floors; and escalators.
Sculpture Garden: sunken plan; aggregate concrete perimeter walls and inner partition wall; south stairs; north stairs; reflecting pool; and setting for the display of rotating sculpture.

As part of the Section 106 Consultation, the Smithsonian reevaluated the work of Lester Collins, and determined that his design also contributed to the significance of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, which lead them to suggest the period of significance for the DOE be revised to include 1981, for the garden only. The contributing elements of Collins’ work include the lateral north ramps for accessibility, hardscape paving materials, garden rooms, and the partial east ramp in the Central Gallery.

**How does the proposal impact the property’s historic significance and character?**

In terms of how the proposed rehabilitation impacts the historic significance of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden complex, the proposal maintains a majority of the contributing elements and also reestablishes the south stairs under Jefferson Avenue, connecting the museum to the garden. The project would primarily impact two contributing elements to the significance of the complex as a whole: 1) the north entrance by removing the Collins lateral north ramps to accommodate ADA accessibility, and altering the north stair, and 2) the change in material of the inner partition wall from concrete to stone, and lowering the wall 18 inches.

The specific elements of the rehabilitation proposal include:

- Replacing the failing aggregate concrete of the perimeter walls with in-kind material, and raising the height slightly to meet code requirements.
- Retention of the historic Bunshaft reflecting pool in the Central Gallery, in its original location and dimensions (per the current proposal).
- Restoration of the underground connection between the garden, the plaza, and the museum building while reincorporating the original historic tunnel stairs. This connection is a major feature of the original design that has been lost to visitors for decades.
- The introduction of new auxiliary walls of stacked stone within the garden to define space and serve as backdrops for the Museum’s sculpture.
- A new reflecting pool will also be added within the garden’s Central Gallery to allow for staging and seating opportunities for performances, when drained.
- New accessibility ramps will be relocated from the north entrance to the western side of the garden, providing access from both the north and south.
New overlooks will be created on the east and west sides of the garden, while the north entrance from the National Mall will be expanded to create a new overlook to the garden. The Smithsonian has stated that the new overlook wall on the north, in aggregate, would hold the composition of the garden, Museum building, and plaza together. They have said that new stacked stone material for the inner partition wall, as well as the new auxiliary walls, will be visible at the new northern entrance overlook into the garden, however you would not be able to see the stacked stone walls when looking at the Museum from the National Mall. This change has the potential to alter the views into the garden from the north entrance. Under current conditions, a person standing at the entrance to the garden from the National Mall, would see the inner partition wall made of aggregate with the Hirshhorn building drum in the background. Under the proposed condition, a person in this same location would see a new wall of aggregate at the north overlook, slightly closer to the entrance with the Hirshhorn building drum in the background.

Upon approaching the new overlook, a person could look down and see the inner partition wall which the Smithsonian proposes to rebuild with stacked stone at a height 18 inches lower than the existing wall. The east and west gardens would remain largely intimate settings for sculpture while the Central Gallery (pool and plaza area) would be more visible from the overlook.

What is the changing use or program need that is driving this rehabilitation?

The Smithsonian’s intention to revitalize the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden is to improve the visitor experience and public engagement, and accommodate the museum’s mission and contemporary programming needs. The Smithsonian has indicated the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden Revitalization project will address the following goals for the Hirshhorn Museum:

- Reinforce the connections between the National Mall, Sculpture Garden, and Museum.
- Enhance visitor experience and public engagement.
- Create flexible space for artists working to push the media of sculpture and performance forward into the twenty-first century.
- Show the Museum’s historically significant bronze sculpture collection to the strongest effect.
- Revitalize and build upon the historic framework of the Sculpture Garden.
- Replace failing infrastructure, meet current code requirements, and design for resilience and sustainability.

Specifically, with regard to the changes proposed for the inner partition wall:

- They view the Central Gallery as the one place that can accommodate the growing number of large installations and performances they would like to showcase. While the east and west gardens will continue to be intimate spaces for viewing bronze sculpture, the Central Gallery would be the location for this more modern program. The Smithsonian contends that the aesthetics of this space, including the backdrop (inner partition wall of stacked
stone), the water features, and plantings, are integral to this new program of large installations and performances, while creating a cohesive vision for the next iteration of the garden’s life. In addition, as rebuilt in stacked stone, the inner partition wall would link the east and west galleries of the garden.

- They have also noted that the use of stacked stone for the inner partition wall will provide better acoustics for performances envisioned in the Central Gallery. This is based on acoustic studies they have commissioned.
- With regard to lowering the wall by eighteen inches (to an overall height of eight feet three inches, at the base in the Central Gallery), the Smithsonian would like to increase views of the Central Gallery once visitors from the National Mall approach the overlook. The Smithsonian has done several studies that show the majority of museum visitors approach their museums from the National Mall. While the Smithsonian’s proposal to reintroduce the south stairs from the Hirshhorn building will bring more visitors into the garden from the museum, they would like to lower the inner partition wall eighteen inches to draw more people down into the sunken garden once they see Central Gallery from the overlook on the National Mall side of the complex.

In response to the Commission’s comments at the last meeting, the Smithsonian has also provided several examples of stacked stone walls around the National Mall and examples of this technique serving as the backdrop for bronze sculpture. They have noted the organic and natural appearance of the stacked stones complement a full range of textures and tones in the modern sculpture collection, as shown in multiple comparisons.

**Can the program need be met while avoiding the alternation of material?**

The Smithsonian considered other spaces for large installations and performance art, but they have indicated there are no spaces that can provide the scale and aesthetics of the sunken Central Gallery for this changing use. They have further noted the importance from an aesthetic and acoustic perspective, of the wall (as a backdrop), the plantings, and pools designed cohesively as a space for this new program.

Should the inner partition wall retain its current height and material, the Smithsonian maintains that their programmatic goals for this project would be diminished, especially pertaining to visitor experience, better acoustics, as well as the aesthetic and curatorial intents envisioned by the project. The Smithsonian contends that the lowered and stacked stone inner partition wall is the singular element which knits together the Sculpture Garden’s east, central, and west spaces, and it serves in its own right as a rich and dynamically textured focal point, strengthening the Garden’s central axis, sense of proportion, and impact. The stacked stone wall provides a distinctive artistic backdrop for performance art, enhancing the visitor experience with added visual interest and emphasis.
Summary

In summary, the Smithsonian has articulated a new program need based on changing uses – in this case the desire to accommodate performances and larger installations in addition to the bronze sculpture. The proposed rehabilitation project will maintain a majority of the contributing elements and it will also reestablish the south stairs under Jefferson Avenue, connecting the museum to the garden. The project would primarily impact two contributing elements to the significance of the complex as a whole: 1) the north entrance by removing the Collins lateral north ramps to accommodate ADA accessibility, and altering the north stair, and 2) the change in material of the inner partition wall from concrete to stone, and lowering the wall 18 inches. Based on the criteria used to determine its eligibility, it appears the property will retain its eligibility for listing in the National Register, should the project be approved.

The question for Commission discussion is whether the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, as a complex, will retain its historic significance and character with this rehabilitation, and whether the program need justifies the change in height and material of the inner partition wall. The Smithsonian will further articulate their need at the information presentation and will provide additional renderings prior to the Commission’s future action, showing the experience and arrival sequence of entering the Sculpture Garden from the National Mall.
Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden Revitalization

Independence Avenue, SW & 7th Street, SW, Washington DC

Approval of Preliminary Site Development Plans

Smithsonian Institution
The Smithsonian Institution has submitted an application for revised preliminary site development plans for the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden Revitalization project for Commission review. The revised plans are focused on a new reflecting pool design alternative and information on proposed changes to the inner partition wall. The applicant has also provided additional information regarding the programming needs for the proposed changes envisioned in the Museum’s revitalization project.

The Commission reviewed the applicant’s plans at its December 3, 2020 meeting, and approved the preliminary site development plans for the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden Revitalization, with the exception of the proposed changes to the inner partition wall and the reflecting pool. The Commission recommended the applicant provide a comprehensive rationale for the programming needs that require the expanded aprons around the Bunshaft reflecting pool and study other design alternatives prior to any Commission consideration. In respect to the proposed changes to the historic inner partition wall, the Commission also recommended the applicant provide a comprehensive rationale of the programming need for the change in material prior to any Commission consideration.

The applicant is providing the requested information in this submission for a revised Preliminary review. The Section 106 Consultation process is continuing, with an expected Memorandum of Agreement to be executed prior to the final review by the Commission.
Site Location
Title Slide for Submission Presentation

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
Sculpture Garden Revitalization

Supplemental Narrative
Revised Preliminary Review
National Capital Planning Commission
June 3, 2021
Introduction

The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) granted approval of preliminary site development plans for the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden Revitalization project at its December 3, 2020 meeting. NCPC’s approval excepted changes to the inner partition wall and the reflecting pool. Addressing the program requirements of a 21st century contemporary art museum allows the Smithsonian to also create a broader welcome for visitors from the National Mall.

NCPC’s approval supports the Smithsonian’s desire to improve the area around the reflecting pool, including the addition of another pool and Art Platform, to enhance the space and accommodate a new focus on performance art. NCPC recommended that the Smithsonian Institution provide a comprehensive rationale for the programming needs that require expanded tiers of water around the Bunshaft reflecting pool, and to study other design alternatives prior to any Commission consideration.

NCPC’s approval finds that the inner partition wall is a central focus of the overall garden and backdrop to the reflecting pool, and that the aggregate concrete material relates the Sculpture Garden to the museum building. NCPC’s approval recommended that the Smithsonian provide a comprehensive rationale of the programming need for a change in material at the inner partition wall prior to any Commission consideration.

The Sculpture Garden was designed by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and opened to the public in 1974. Modifications designed by Lester Collins, and completed in 1981, provided accessibility, shade, and enhanced sculpture display. The period of significance for the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden is 1974, 1981 to reflect the layers of significance in the Garden, with character defining features present from both areas, including the reflecting pool and inner partition wall.

Performance art, large scale sculpture and other forms of contemporary art have arisen since the 1974 design and subsequent 1981 modification of the Sculpture Garden. As a museum of contemporary art, changes are necessary for this space to allow for the curating and commissioning of contemporary art in a way not possible with the current facilities.

In response to NCPC’s recommendation, this document is submitted for purposes of gaining approval for the inner partition wall, and the revised alternative for the reflecting pool which balances the purpose and need of the project and museum programming with historic preservation requirements. It also provides the Hirshhorn Museum’s reasons for reconstructing the inner partition wall in stacked stone as the essential cohesive element to artist Hiroshi Sugimoto’s design.
Executive Summary

Introduction
The Central Gallery lies at the heart of artist Hiroshi Sugimoto’s vision and is the central nexus of the Sculpture Garden itself. Spatially, it provides the link between the East and West Galleries and connects the National Mall to the Museum Plaza. Conceptually, it unifies together the layered history of the Sculpture Garden with the evolving program of a 21st-century contemporary art museum.

The existing Central Gallery lacks the means to support this evolution—there is an absence of gathering space, adequate shade and seating, and functional acoustics. Currently the space no longer serves as a focal point within the Sculpture Garden to provide a connection between the National Mall and Museum. Furthermore, its primary elements—the reflecting pool and inner partition wall—are in poor condition and their presence has become diminished in a complex landscape. The Central Gallery also plays a critical role in the Sculpture Garden’s stormwater management plan and the Hirshhorn’s role within the Smithsonian context by addressing key priorities of the South Mall Campus Master Plan.

Program
The reenvisioned Central Gallery will accommodate the museum’s mission and program, improve visitor experience, and enhance the physical and visual connections between the Hirshhorn and the National Mall. The expanded reflecting pool and reconstructed inner partition wall will enable the Hirshhorn to successfully curate their modern and contemporary art program.

The program for the Central Gallery includes:
- Primary location for dynamic presentations of performance art, a current and future focus of the museum’s expanding collections and programming.
- Unique gallery setting to inspire site-specific programming and for exhibiting the Museum’s collection, providing proximity to water, reflection, and views from all sides and above.
- A primary location for visitor engagement and amenities including individual contemplation and communal celebration.

In order to respond to this program, the Central Gallery shall be adaptable and flexible, provide acceptable acoustics, establish clear visibility and views, and provide a distinct setting to inspire artists.

Jan Rosenblit, an artist featured in Does the Body Rule the Mind, Or Does the Mind Rule the Body? 2018, the first Hirshhorn exhibition devoted exclusively to performance art.
Executive Summary

The reflecting pool, once a central element in the rigorous composition of the Sculpture Garden is now overwhelmed by the complex landscape and scale of contemporary art. It offers the potential to again be a focal point for the Sculpture Garden, a place of gathering and inspiration.

Reflecting Pool Alternative - December 2020

Hiroshi Sugimoto’s design response to the program includes an enlarged reflecting pool that integrates the 1974 pool within a larger composition. An Art and Performance Platform is situated at the center, surrounded by tiered levels of the pool. This alternative provides the following opportunities:

- Seating tiers increase audience capacity for performances in the round.
- Increased water surface area improves the cooling affect for visitors and maximizes stormwater reuse.
- Tier around 1974 pool enhances performance opportunities and maximizes flexibility of seating arrangements.
- Central Gallery proportions balance shaded seating, circulation space, exhibition space, and performance area.
- Distinct 1974 pool footprint honors the historic pool proportions.
- Enlarged pool is reestablished as the focal point of the Central Gallery for programming and for everyday visitors as a place for rest and contemplation.

Reflecting Pool – Revised Alternative

At the request of NCPC and Consulting Parties, a revised pool alternative has been developed. This pool design eliminates the outer tier surrounding the 1974 pool, thus reducing the width of the overall pool footprint to maintain a cohesive design. To offset the increased paving area, landscape beds to the east and west have been enlarged and new landscaping has been added north of the pool. The revised pool alternative provides the following opportunities:

- Flexibility for performances in the round and seating is maintained with the tiers in the new water feature south of the 1974 pool.
- Audience capacity in the reflecting pool is reduced by 20% and cooling capacity is reduced by 25%, which is offset with proposed expanded planting beds and shaded integral bench seating.
- 1974 pool is maintained.
- Central Gallery proportions balance shaded seating, circulation space, exhibition space, and performance area.
- The design closely approximates the dimensions of the turf panel and reflecting pool in the Central Gallery, maintaining site organization and composition.

The new alternative balances Museum and Sculpture Garden programming with historic preservation requirements. Upon receiving feedback from Consulting Parties after a March 10th, 2021 meeting, the Smithsonian intends to advance the design of this project with the Reflecting Pool Revised Alternative.
Executive Summary Continued

Executive Summary

Inner Partition Wall
The inner partition wall in stacked stone is the essential cohesive element to artist Hiroshi Sugimoto’s design. The shape of the wall and reduced height provide necessary improvements for program flexibility and visitor experience. Similar to the stacked stone walls introduced in the east and west galleries, this wall will form a backdrop for the exhibition space providing new curatorial possibilities not currently feasible and allowing the Hirshhorn to display its collection to the greatest effect. The design this wall has not changed since the Preliminary submission, other than the addition of the planting bed in the Central Gallery south of the wall.

Reconstruction of this wall in stacked stone fulfills the following programmatic needs:
- Provides a distinctive artistic backdrop with added visual interest for performance art and exhibitions.
- Wall profile and articulation improves acoustics for performance art.
- The texture and warmth of the stacked stone highlights human scale for both bronze masterworks and performances.
- Reduced height creates equitable interior sightlines from the aisle for all visitors, introduces new vantage points, improves wayfinding, and strengthens the link to the Museum Plaza.
- Reduced height increases audience capacity and provides performance support area from the aisle for lighting, audiovisuals, or other equipment.
- Reduced height facilitates successful placement and viewing of sculpture in the aisle.

South Mall Campus Master Plan Priorities
The South Mall Campus Master Plan, approved by NCPC in June 2018, developed key priorities to be implemented by projects within the campus, including the Sculpture Garden Renovation. The proposed design of the Sculpture Garden and specifically of the Central Gallery, addresses many key priorities of the South Mall Campus Master Plan including:

Enter and Experience: Make points of entry clear, more accessible, and easier to find through improved orientation, wayfinding, and location. The lowered inner partition wall improves orientation and wayfinding. The generous visual and physical connection from the Central Gallery to the underground passage enhances entry and the relationship to the Hirshhorn Museum. Bringing together water, rock, light, and reflection, the inner partition wall, reflecting pool, and underground passage create a memorable experience for visitor engagement with art.

Activate the After hours: Provide the experiential, program, and technical capacity to support active nightlife within the South Mall Campus museums and gardens. The design of the Central Gallery supports new programming opportunities and experiences. Technical improvements including lighting, acoustics, and integrated AV systems will accommodate active and experiential programming including performance art, artist’s talks, and events.

Doug Aitken, Song 1, Hirshhorn Museum, 2012.
Executive Summary Continued

Engage the Gardens: Capitalize on the beauty and popularity of the existing gardens by improving circulation, providing better maintenance facilities, integrating with museum programs, and expanding their ability to accommodate large groups. The Central Gallery is the anchor to the Sculpture Garden design, the central gathering space for social engagement, active museum programs, and community. The proposed design of the Central Gallery has generous shaded seating to accommodate large groups. The reflecting pool is designed for maximum flexibility to be integrated into museum programs. It is also a central component of stormwater management. The basin’s capacity will accommodate on-site retention of captured rainwater to resolve infrastructure and maintenance challenges.

Connect the Campus: Improve circulation across the campus to encourage entry from the National Mall, facilitate east-west pedestrian flow both at and below grade, and remove impediments to a connected campus. The Sculpture Garden is uniquely located within the National Mall, able to directly connect with the many visitors to the Mall. The Sculpture Garden design fully engages with the National Mall context through accessible overlooks and accessible entrances on the north and south sides. Lowering the inner partition wall enhances wayfinding and circulation from the National Mall to the Hirshhorn Museum and the larger South Mall Campus of the Smithsonian.

Conclusion

Sugimoto’s design has always been inspired by and built upon the existing history of Asian design influences from Bunshaft and Collins in the Sculpture Garden. The proposed design specifically preserves or maintains character-defining features, and with a robust signage program, enriches the experience for all visitors to the Sculpture Garden for the future.

Together, the Revised Alternative reflecting pool, inner partition wall, and underground passage will enable the Hirshhorn to bring new programming to enliven the heart of the Sculpture Garden. The Central Gallery will be a destination for site-specific performance art and installations, inspiring artists with its unique setting and many possibilities. It will also be a destination for social activity for our community, a place to linger, contemplate, and engage.

By revitalizing the Sculpture Garden for the 21st century, the Smithsonian elevates the civic nature of the space by improving visitor experience, creating exciting opportunities for social activity, events, and providing a flexible space for all types of contemporary and performance art.
Central Gallery

Program

National Mandate
The revitalized Sculpture Garden will support the Hirshhorn's mission to "share the transformative power of modern and contemporary art with audiences at all levels of awareness and understanding by creating meaningful personal experiences in which art, artists, audiences, and ideas converge." Central to fulfilling this mission is to provide a venue for contemporary performance artists. The Central Gallery is envisioned as the principal space to support this form of artwork and will support the curation of impactful performance art exhibitions and vibrant new commissions reflecting artist responses to the new gallery space. The Central Gallery will also support sculpture installations including site-specific works and the display of the Hirshhorn's modern sculpture collection.

When the Sculpture Garden first opened in 1974 and through the 1981 renovation, performance art—at the time, a young medium not typically exhibited in museum spaces—was not envisioned as part of the Hirshhorn's core presentation and the campus was not designed to support it. Modifications are required to successfully curate this emerging artform. The design of both the reflecting pool and the inner partition wall are critical to realizing the success of this programmatic need.

A First for the National Mall
Performance art is one of the most radical forms of contemporary artmaking. It is ephemeral and immediate, taking the form of transitory actions rather than material objects; it allows artists to respond to and shape their work in dialogue with live audiences; and it foregrounds contemporary social issues. As a leader in the performative arts, the Hirshhorn would be one of the first museums to have a designated space for this experimental form. This is in keeping with its ongoing commitment to performance art; in 2016, the museum became one of the first in the country to appoint a curator devoted exclusively to new media and performance art, and in 2018, the Museum held its first dedicated exhibition of performance art inside the Hirshhorn museum and acquired its first work in this medium.

Evolution of Performance Art
Performance art emerged as a distinct medium in the 1950s and 60s, though its antecedents reach back to the early 20th century. Early figures in performance art sought alternatives to traditional forms such as painting and sculpture, turning instead to the possibilities of the human body, live action, and duration. At the same time, they rejected many elements of conventional theater—its elaborate stage settings, character and plot-based structures, and separation between performers and audience. Early performances were normally unscripted, often following only a loose plan or incorporating chance; they were largely nonnarrative, instead focusing on actions, gestures, and the physical reality of the artist's own body. They often dissolved the boundary between performer and viewer entirely, inviting audience participation. Over the past decade, museums have increasingly begun to exhibit and collect works of performance art, now considered one of the most important artistic forms of our time. Today, performance works range across diverse formats—including single performers who explore movement and gesture or deliver monologues; durational performance, in which artists subject themselves to grueling acts of endurance; experimental dance choreographed for museum settings rather than theaters; performances that engage with video, projection, and other kinds of technology, and more.

Central Gallery Program
Staging performance art at the Hirshhorn campus is challenging and often infeasible. The proposed design will support a flexible, dynamic approach that can accommodate many different performance styles and highlight this artform at the Garden’s center. Additionally, the compelling design of the renovated Sculpture Garden will provide inspiration to artists to develop new work specifically for the site. The Hirshhorn envisions a vibrant calendar of performance art presentations, centered around spring and fall seasons with two to three featured works each.

Mariana Valencia, an artist featured in Does the Body Rule the Mind, Or Does the Mind Rule the Body? 2018, the first Hirshhorn exhibition devoted exclusively to performance art.
Central Gallery Existing Challenges

The Central Gallery has significantly evolved over the life of the museum. Its current state limits its ability to support the program of a contemporary art museum. Both the existing reflecting pool and the inner partition wall present functional and operational challenges in the Sculpture Garden.

Central Gallery Evolution
Bunshaft’s design was open and austere, serving as a gallery for the modern sculpture collection. The inner partition wall featured prominently to define this central space and functioned as a boundary between the Sculpture Garden and the terraces of the northern edge along the National Mall. A rectilinear reflecting pool and a lone tree completed the composition. The reflecting pool width aligned with the north entry, emphasizing the north-south symmetry of the campus. The Central Gallery was linked to the plaza by the underground passage at the south and by sightlines to other areas of the Sculpture Garden. Generous stairs flanked the central space to provide impromptu sitting areas.

The 1981 modifications by Lester Collins softened the Central Gallery with the introduction of grass panels. The flanking stairs were replaced by a ramp and sloped planting beds with trees to create a gallery-room quality for the space. The plantings diminished the presence of the reflecting pool, absorbed within the new context of Collins’s landscape, it was no longer the sole feature in the austere gravel of the Central Gallery. The role of the inner partition wall also changed. Supplemented with the hardscape of the lateral north ramps and vertical landscaping, it no longer functioned as a boundary. The inner partition wall was now an interior wall, the divider of the upper and lower garden, forming an aisle for sculpture display and a backdrop to the Central Gallery.

Central Gallery Challenges
Over time, the Central Gallery has continued to change with the closure of the underground passage and the evolving landscape due to maturation of plantings and replacement of specimens that did not survive. During much of the year, plantings largely obscure the inner partition wall in the Central Garden. The scale of contemporary art also diminishes and overwhelms the presence of the reflecting pool, now an element within a complex composition. The role of the Central Gallery as a focal point in the Garden is also diminished. The space functions as one in a series of galleries for visitors to pass through rather than as a focal point for the Sculpture Garden. It no longer functions as an entry gallery from the Plaza and there is a lack of seating limiting its use as a gathering space.
Central Gallery Existing Challenges

Staging performance art in the existing Hirshhorn campus is challenging. The Plaza is not conducive to intimate arrangements often required by artists. The existing Sculpture Garden is also unfavorable to presenting performative works—the site lacks a clearly demarcated gathering space, adequate seating, acceptable acoustics, and necessary support for staging and technology. The existing Garden is both uninspiring to performance artists and inhospitable to our broader public as a welcoming civic gathering space.

Reflecting Pool Challenges
The reflecting pool also presents operational challenges. It currently lacks several safety measures; it provides no lighting, the dark border provides no visual contrast at the leading edge, nor detectable warnings to warn vision impaired visitors of the grade change. These unsafe conditions limit programming in the Central Gallery during evening hours.

The fluid applied coating at the pool basin requires constant maintenance and regularly must be kept empty to serve as the sole stormwater collection means in the Sculpture Garden limiting its ability to function as a reflecting pool. The pool is often left unfilled to serve as an emergency reservoir for frequent/periodic flooding events. There are no permanent seating opportunities or respite points around the reflecting pool, lessening engagement and visitation of the Sculpture Garden.
Central Gallery Existing Challenges

Inner Partition Wall Challenges
The inner partition wall is in poor condition today, suffering from irreparable alkali silica reaction, necessitating replacement. The design of the wall also presents operational challenges. At over five feet in height from the grade of the alleé, it creates an inequitable viewing experience for visitors and severs any visual link from the upper garden to the Central Gallery. Sightlines from the alleé to the underground passage are non-existent, impacting this critical link and visitor wayfinding.

This wall also negatively impacts the variety and types of art that can be placed within the alleé, limiting sculpture to a diminutive or oversized height to avoid awkward backdrop transitions behind sculpture. The height of the wall is consistently a challenge and adversely impacts how the Hirshhorn can curatorially program the alleé.

The profile and material of the inner partition wall are problematic for Central Gallery acoustics. The flat vertical concrete wall has the potential to introduce late arriving acoustical reflections into the Central Gallery, often described as an “acoustic echo”. The existing concrete wall reflects sound in a specular (mirror-like) manner because of the relatively smooth surface of the concrete. Specular sound reflections are perceived as being “harsh” to a listener’s ear. These conditions limit the ability of the existing wall to function as an acceptable backdrop for performance art.
Central Gallery Artist’s Vision

As a museum of contemporary art, it is fitting for the Hirshhorn to commission an artist to revitalize the Sculpture Garden to achieve a unified vision for the display of modern and contemporary art. Japanese artist and architect Hiroshi Sugimoto follows the clear lineage of Asian design influences layered into the Garden’s history. Gordon Bunshaft introduced a minimalist and contemplative sunken garden likely inspired by the Japanese Zen tradition through collaborations with Isamu Noguchi, the acclaimed Japanese-American artist known for fusing traditional and modern art. Later changes by Lester Collins incorporated Asian cup garden traditions to create garden rooms which often combine rich vegetation, rock and water features.

Hiroshi Sugimoto has merged these design influences in his vision for the Central Gallery as the heart of the Sculpture Garden, a place entwined with art, people, and inspiration. Inspired by Bunshaft’s unrealized design, an enlarged reflecting pool draws visitors in for rest, contemplation, and engagement. The pool’s flexible, dynamic design will accommodate a variety of performance art and sculptures designed for this gallery space. The inner partition wall, rebuilt in stacked stone will form a compelling backdrop to the Central Gallery while linking the east and west galleries. Shaded seating, inspired by elements of both Bunshaft and Collins, will encourage visitors to gather and linger. These elements bring together water, rock, and landscape in a cohesive vision for the next iteration of the Sculpture Garden’s life.

View from the Hirshhorn balcony illustrating the vision for the Central Gallery.

Top left: Isamu Noguchi, Nina Bunshaft, and Gordon Bunshaft at the rock garden at Ryōan-ji. Middle left: Lester Collins’s mist-free Garden incorporating elements of stone and water. Bottom left: Hiroshi Sugimoto’s design for a guesthouse with garden near Tokyo incorporates a stacked stone wall forming a backdrop and boundary.
Reflecting Pool Alternative in December 2020 Submission

Design Response

NCPC Commission Action: Recommends the applicant provide a comprehensive rationale for the programming needs that require the expanded aprons around the Bunshaft reflecting pool and study other design alternatives prior to any Commission consideration.

This alternative was presented at the Preliminary review in December 2020. As requested, the rationale for the expanded aprons is described below. This alternative was carefully designed to consider artistic potential, visitor comfort, its historic overlay, and proportions within a larger composition. A widened north star opening will re-establish the connection with the retained dimension of the 1974 pool that was lost during the 1981 modifications to restore the relationship between the Museum, balcony window, and Central Gallery. The proposed solution retains the 1974 pool dimensions as a terrace feature in an enlarged reflecting pool.

Art and Performance Platform

At the heart of the Sculpture Garden is an Art and Performance Platform of 17’8” by 17’8”, serving as a flexible programming space to facilitate diverse exhibitions and performances. Walkways on either side of the platform provide access and additional performance space. The size of the stage and the tiers around it have been carefully dimensioned to adapt to various seating and performance setups. The pool was sized to balance the need for adequate performance space with sufficient circulation space.
Reflecting Pool Alternative - December 2020

Design Response

The platform can accommodate performances meant to be seen from a fixed vantage point—with the option of having the central stone wall to the north or tunnel to the south as a backdrop—and performances meant to be seen in the round. Surrounded by a recessed pool, stage extensions can be added in numerous configurations to allow for expanded performance space. The plan is seasonally flexible, providing options for the central platform to present sculpture or to be left open when not in use.

Visitor Seating

The plan provides a flexible approach to seating. The central space includes built-in, amphitheater style seating to the east and west to accommodate 128 visitors for formal events, informal gatherings, or as a place of rest and contemplation. Chairs may be brought in and placed on all four sides of the space for larger events hosting up to 496 people. For a more intimate experience, the lower pool may be drained to reveal an additional three tiers of seating closer to the stage. Seating within the pool can accommodate performative works for 323 visitors. This flexibility in capacity and arrangement provides a space that can adapt to artists’ needs and inspire site-specific works.

Visitor Comfort

When filled, the pool with its nearly 3,400 square feet of surface area is a powerful response to the needs for evaporative cooling for increasingly hot summers. Various other stages of water levels can be created by integrated water pumps, defined by the different tiers south and north of the platform.
Reflecting Pool and Central Gallery Program Information

Reflecting Pool and Central Gallery Program
Design Response

Program
The following are examples of the range of performance artworks and exhibitions possible with the flexible reflecting pool design. The pool is designed as a changing element—a response to the changing nature of art. All configurations shown can be adapted to the Revised Reflecting Pool Alternative.

Performer(s) on central stage with both pools filled, viewed in the round
In durational performances, artists endure often uncomfortable poses and situations for long spans of time. In one example, an artist sits at a small table for eight hours each day, inviting viewers to sit opposite her and gaze into her eyes in silence. A performance of this kind would work best with a visually demarcated staging area, and seating on all four sides for audience members to view the work in the round.

Performer(s) on central stage with south pool drained, with dominant vantage point
Some works of performance art incorporate simple set designs. In one example, an artist duo carries out slow movements inspired by Butoh theater while interacting with scorched materials against a backdrop that evokes a burned landscape. Given the presence of a backdrop, this piece and others of its kind would be best served by a stage with a dominant vantage point; seating could be placed primarily to the south side of the pool.
Reflecting Pool and Central Gallery Program Information

Reflecting Pool and Central Gallery Program

Design Response

Performer(s) on central stage with lower pool drained

Other works of performance necessitate more intimate settings. In one recent work, an artist incorporates scraps of song, wordplay, and changing vocal inflections into a sprawling monologue that reflects on contemporary life. Given their verbal nature and direct address to the audience, works of this kind require viewers to be positioned closer to the stage. In such cases, the lower pool could be emptied so that the tiered seating could be used.

Some artists prefer to blur the line between performer and audience further. In one example, an artist performs movements inspired by voguing—a dance form developed in the 1980s by LGBTQ Black and Latino communities—while wearing a suit fitted with video monitors. Periodically, he moves among and interacts with audience members. Performances of this kind would similarly work best with the lower pool emptied, allowing the performer both to utilize the stage and to descend into the audience’s space. Viewers could move freely, sitting or standing. To allow seating in the round in the Revised Reflecting Pool Alternative, chairs could be placed to the north side of the 1974 pool.
Reflecting Pool and Central Gallery Program

Design Response

Larger number of performers on expanded stage with pool drained.

Modern and experimental dance companies increasingly produce work for museum settings. In one recent production, seven dancers and seven musicians rotate in and out of a nine-hour choreographed cycle. Audience members choose when to enter the work and how long to stay.

Dances such as this one that incorporate greater numbers of performers can be accommodated by an expanded stage space. Audience members would be invited to view such works in the round, seated in chairs and the amphitheater seating at the edges of the central space. Dance performances sometimes require special flooring, including sprung floors, which are better able to absorb shock and are easier on a dancer’s body. Draining the lower pool would allow the necessary supports for a sprung stage floor to be installed.

Sculpture Exhibition

The Hirshhorn Museum envisions this unique space as an opportunity to invite artists to create site-specific works and curated exhibitions. The flexibility of the pool provides potential for artists to be inspired by and engage with its many possible configurations. The setting will also provide a focused venue for curating the Hirshhorn’s collection with the central Art and Performance Platform providing an exceptional space for the display of art.
Reflecting Pool Revised Alternative

Design Response

Per NCPC’s recommendation, this revised pool alternative eliminates the expanded apron around the historic pool. This solution seeks to respond to historic preservation requirements, public and agency input, and design details to accomplish the project’s purpose and need.

The historic 1974 pool is maintained in its existing location and the historic connection between the reflecting pool and restored north entrance opening is re-established. The historic pool is harmoniously integrated within the new context of the Central Gallery.

Art and Performance Platform

A stone Art and Performance Platform with walkways and a new reflecting pool with tiers is located south of the historic pool. The new reflecting pool tiers can be drained or filled with water at the varying levels to complement site specific works, performances, and seating arrangements for formal and informal events. The Art and Performance Platform at the center of the pool functions as a flexible programming space.

Visitor Comfort

This alternative reduces the overall size of the reflecting pool to 2,500 square feet, which increases the amount of paving in the hot microclimate of the Sculpture Garden and diminishes the cooling capacity of the pool by 25 percent. To mitigate this increase in paving and to temper the environment, a planting bed
Reflecting Pool Revised Alternative

Design Response

is proposed north of the reflecting pool along the inner partition wall. The planting bed will provide a dedicated space for exhibiting sculpture. The planter will include a seat wall similar to the planter design throughout the Sculpture Garden. To further offset the effects of the smaller pool, the planter beds east and west of the Central Gallery have been slightly expanded to shift the amphitheater seating closer to the reflecting pool.

Visitor Seating

Fixed seating surrounding the pool is increased to 156 visitors in the revised alternative. However, seating in the pool for intimate performance art arrangements is reduced by approximately 20 percent as compared to the December 2020 alternative.

Program

With the elimination of the seating tier around the 1974 pool, opportunities for programming and observing performances in the round are diminished. Altering the compositional proportions of the Central Gallery places some limitations on the sizes of sculptures that can be displayed north of the 1974 pool.
Reflecting Pool Revised Alternative

Design Response

Reflecting Pool Details
Black granite that was historically installed at the perimeter of the reflecting pool is proposed in the 1974 pool basin, replacing the existing deteriorated fluid-applied coating adhered to the bottom and sides of the pool. Black granite is also proposed for the tiers of the new reflecting pool south of the Art and Performance Platform. Edge detailing will be improved to add visual contrast and integral tactile edge detection will be designed with the new paving. Lighting will be incorporated into pool edges to provide safety illumination and required egress lighting.

Stormwater Management
The enlarged reflecting pool will serve as a key component to the stormwater management system by accounting for 40% of the reclaimed stormwater demand retained on-site. Two below-grade cisterns will capture stormwater runoff to feed a filtration and treatment system for the reflecting pool water recharge and irrigation systems. Captured stormwater will sustainably support the flexible programming needs of the reflecting pool. This critical component to the stormwater design will assist in reducing water demand and help meet the Department of Energy and Environment on-site retention requirements. This strategy is coupled with the use of a modular suspended pavement system to support tree growth and stormwater absorption. Additionally, this project is pursuing SITES certification, a complementary program to the USGBC’s LEED rating system to address sustainable site development.
Reflecting Pool – Revised Alternative

Design Response

Planting Bed Precedents

In the revised pool alternative, a continuous planting bed is proposed east, west, and north of the pool to offset the amount of paving in the hot microclimate of the Sculpture Garden. The addition of a planting bed in the revised alternative will reduce the paving by 20 percent.

Introducing a planting bed south of the inner partition wall is in keeping with historic precedent in the Sculpture Garden. Bunshaft introduced a single tree in the Sculpture Garden, a pivotal planting in the stark environment, occupying a prominent position off-axis, forming a green counterpoint to the massive concrete inner partition wall. Instead of a stark rectilinear form in a sea of gravel, Collins paired the reflecting pool with planting beds and fields of turf. Collins’s central turf panel and reflecting pool measured 53’ north to south. The revised alternative maintains this focal point in the Central Gallery composition with a 51’ dimension north to south.

In Collins’s design, turf beds or berms occupied 70 percent of the base of the inner partition wall. Since Collins’s modifications, an additional nine trees have been added to the planters adjacent to the inner partition wall. Currently, plantings largely obscure visibility of the inner partition wall in the Central Gallery.

The planter bed north of the reflecting pool will contain low plants to not obscure the inner partition wall. This planting bed becomes a new sculpture display area, with the inner partition wall as a backdrop.
Inner Partition Wall

Design Response

NCPC Commission Action: Finds that the applicant has not demonstrated a strong programmatic rationale for altering the character-defining feature. Recommends the applicant provide a comprehensive rationale of the programming need for the change in material prior to any Commission consideration.

The stacked stone inner partition wall designed by Hiroshi Sugimoto serves to anchor the design’s overall integrity, sensibility and feeling of balance. Not only is it the singular element which knits together the Sculpture Garden’s east, central, and west spaces, it serves in its own right as a rich and dynamically textured focal point, strengthening the Garden’s central axis, sense of proportion, and impact. The stacked stone wall provides a distinctive artistic backdrop for performance art, enhancing the visitor experience with added visual interest and emphasis, similar to the articulated walls of many of the best historic and modern performance venues including the “crinkle” concrete walls of the Reach’s new performance spaces at the Kennedy Center.

When considering a design concept for the Sculpture Garden, Hiroshi Sugimoto writes, “I therefore decided to use the Japanese building technique known as Nozurazumi, a technique which has come down from medieval times and involves heaping up stones by hand. Although the process appears to be random, when the stones are piled up and the wall complete, a harmonious surface is the result. When modern sculpture gets such a background, it serves to highlight the true meaning of modern.”

Wall Construction

Each stone in these walls assumes a particular role, carefully considered and placed according to traditional Japanese dry-stacking techniques. This process uses more heavily dressed stones at corners and edges while relying on unaltered stones for surfaces. The visible stones are finished and structured at the same time, holding the wall together through strategic placement and shaping, while visually creating a specific pattern. Inherent in the concept of durability is the monolithic structure of the stone walls: They are made of stone boulders through and through. Their stacking, with a slightly angled sides, provides maximum stability.

The Hirshhorn complex features a limited material palette predominately of aggregate concrete, Swenson Pink granite, glass and bronze. The new stacked stone gallery walls and the inner partition will be built in a complementary toned reclaimed granite from Pennsylvania, different and secondary to the perimeter walls, consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. These hand-crafted walls, built by master stone masons using knowledge passed down between generations, are known for their high degree of structural integrity, built to withstand seismic events and centuries of use. The stone gallery walls provide a cohesive design while shaping space, movement and flow throughout the Sculpture Garden.

Concept sketch for the inner partition wall

Guest House with garden, near Tokyo, Hiroshi Sugimoto, 2018.
**Inner Partition Wall**

**Design Response**

The Odawara Art Foundation in Kanagawa, Japan supports performance and art exhibition. Designed by Hiroshi Sugimoto, this modernist landscape of interior and exterior gallery spaces, integrates restored structures from the 14th-16th centuries.

Stacked stone is used at Odawara similar to the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden showing the seamless interaction between pre-modern and modern materials and design. Stones are selected and placed deliberately and carefully as a response to the architecture and landscape of the particular site. The stones create a unique pattern using collected, found, and recycled material. All stonework was created in close cooperation with Japanese stonemasons, a collaboration between artist and craftsmen developed over decades.

The walls at the Hirshhorn will have their own pattern and appearance, unique to the site, also using reclaimed materials. The stacked stone walls will feature carefully selected stones, placed and shaped to interact with the Sculpture Garden landscape and architecture.
Inner Partition Wall

Design Response

Masons using the stacking technique of Noruzurazumi incorporate special, larger feature stones carefully placed throughout the surfaces of the walls. These stones, arranged in a harmonious composition, add visual interest, spark curiosity, and encourage contemplation. In recognition of the historic importance of the inner partition wall, feature stones for this wall will be selected from blocks found on the site of the Millenium Granite quarry in Maine, dating back to the time when the aggregate for the original concrete walls was quarried.

Granite will endure for centuries with minimal deterioration, outlasting concrete. Aggregate concrete attracts dirt and water stains over time requiring regular cleaning. The proposed stone walls will slowly become more beautiful as patina sets on its surfaces. Sun and weather changes, usually threats to most built environments, here become welcome helpers in the timeless process of aging gracefully.
Inner Partition Wall

Design Response

Curatorial Analysis

The inner partition wall offers not only a visually rich and dynamic anchor point for the performative arts in the Sculpture Garden design but an opportunity to highlight certain sculpture to maximum effect. The warm tones of the stacked stone wall and its simultaneous play between soft and hard edges will render particular works—notably the Modern bronze works that form the core of the Hirshhorn’s collection, with renewed freshness and impact.

From a curatorial perspective, not all sculpture is created equal, and—by extension—different modes and materials will be best served by different backdrops and situations in the Garden. For example, revisions to the allees—the main pathway which connects the East and West Galleries—offers a greater ability to show works which benefit from viewing in the round, an ability that is constricted along the current Garden’s main path. Sugimoto’s design, which integrates both new stacked stone and historic aggregate concrete walls as well as varying spatial possibilities for sculpture placement, provides the Hirshhorn with the flexibility to respond to the specific needs of individual sculptures, and in turn the ability to compellingly demonstrate the evolutions within the history of this medium over the past century. The placement of the stacked stone walls in dialogue with the concrete perimeter provides this curatorial flexibility.

The organic and natural appearance of the stacked stones complement a full range of textures and tones in the modern sculpture collection. The stark aggregate concrete provides a backdrop of the opposite effect. While both wall materials complement the bronze, the stacked stone walls add human scale, and variety in texture and warmth of color tone.

Sugimoto’s use of stacked stone is thoughtfully conceived of and proposed by an artist with enormous respect for the needs of artworks, and for the nuances involved in calibrating the most effective and enriching environments for their display. Created by master artisans, the stacked stone is artwork itself, and as demonstrated in the mock-ups, the warm colors and organic shapes visually complement the aggregate in the concrete walls as well as the sculpture. The Hirshhorn studied pairing numerous sculpture masterworks with the stacked stone wall mockup completed in 2018 and precise curation via computer aided design and physical modeling.

The concrete aggregate and stacked stone wall constructions work together in the Sculpture Garden creating options and flexibility in allowing the Hirshhorn to display sculptures to greatest effect. Sugimoto’s design integrity and vision fulfills the Hirshhorn’s mission to provide a unified and beautiful art experience for its visitors.
Inner Partition Wall

Design Response

The proposed stacked stone wall reconstructs the inner partition wall in its historic location, maintaining the wall's existing purpose in the Sculpture Garden's spatial organization. Changes to its height and profile are proposed to mitigate conditions inconducive to performance art and inequitable for visitors.

Acoustics

The inner partition wall profile reflects traditional stacked stone construction with its pylon shape, wider at the bottom and narrower at the top. Pylon shaped walls have original design precedent within the Hirshhorn Museum campus forming the perimeter enclosure of the Hirshhorn Museum plaza walls. This shape provides an important technical advantage for performance art and events that often incorporate sound, whether acoustic or amplified.

The existing inner partition wall would reflect sound back at listeners or artists creating an "acoustical echo", greatly limiting the ability to stage performance art or other events in the Central Gallery. In contrast, the angled surface of the stacked stone wall redirects reflected sound upwards to avoid acoustical anomalies, such as echoes. This is true both of sound generated from the central space and of site ambient noise. The stacked stone wall also has greater surface articulation given the depth of stone placement and facets to the stone surface creating beneficial acoustical diffusion or scattering of reflected sound. This feature wall functions similar to the acoustical "crinkle" walls in the performance spaces at the Kennedy Center's Reach. The angled stone wall offers a mitigation to the acoustical limitation imposed by the

Section diagram of the proposed inner partition wall acoustical properties. The surface of the proposed wall reflects sound upward instead of directly back at its source, thereby avoiding acoustical echo.
Inner Partition Wall

Design Response

existing, flat vertical concrete wall necessary to accommodate the program.

Visitor Experience

At over five feet tall, the current inner partition wall is a visual barrier that blocks sightlines from the existing allees and prevents equitable views for visitors. Lowering the wall eighteen inches will build upon the work Lester Collins began to make the Sculpture Garden more accessible; the proposed height improves sightlines for all visitors along the central axis providing expansive views across the Sculpture Garden and enhancing the connection to the museum. Visitors in the allees can engage with performances and exhibitions in the Central Gallery and have an open view to the underground passage to improve wayfinding from the National Mall.

The lowered height of the wall also provides an essential function for performance art and events requiring lighting and sound controls. The allees will serve as a staging area for lighting and sound operators. This vantage point offers the benefits of visibility of the performance area without compromising the visitor experience.

Lowering the inner partition wall improves curatorial options for placing sculpture in the allees by removing the awkward backdrop wall condition of the existing wall. Additionally, this provides opportunities for sculptures placed on the allees to be more visible from other parts of the Sculpture Garden, expanding on potential for interesting and effective curatorial sightlines.
Inner Partition Wall

Design Response

Stacked Stone Wall Precedents
Stacked stone walls are contextual to the Hirshhorn site as well as within the lineage of modern art, architecture, and landscape design. Numerous examples of stacked stone walls occur on and adjacent to the National Mall. These precedents illustrate examples of a variety of tones, scale, shape, and profiles, fitting with the National Mall Historic District's rolling period of significance. Examples of similar tone (Constitution Gardens and Bartholdi Park) and wall profile (Potomac Park) are prominent within the immediately adjacent National Mall context. A strong precedent for stacked stone walls on the National Mall is set by Constitution Gardens, a constructed park designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and completed in 1976. Constitution Gardens is therefore a contemporary to the Hirshhorn in both completion date and architect of record. It features stone walls with the appearance of dry-laid construction, considered contributing features of the landscape.

The pairing of 20th century bronze sculpture and stacked stone walls has a distinct lineage and explicit connection to the Hirshhorn's own history. Joseph Hirshhorn lived for many years with his collection of outdoor sculpture installed on his property Round Hill, in Greenwich, Connecticut, a landscape punctuated by the use of stacked stone walls. There is a well-known photograph of Joseph Hirshhorn and artist Henry Moore outdoors at Round Hill together, standing next to Moore's Falling Warrior (now a centerpiece of the Hirshhorn's collection) with a low stacked stone wall visible behind.
Inner Partition Wall

Design Response

Hirshhorn’s friendship and patronage of Moore resulted in the Hirshhorn museum’s now almost unparalleled collection of works by the artist and is a relationship the museum will highlight with a dedicated ‘room’ in the revitalized Garden. Moore grew up in Yorkshire, where stacked stone was a permanent fixture in the visual landscape, and it is fitting to emphasize the pairing of bronze and stone here, where the radicality and sophistication of Moore’s work will render with renewed freshness and feeling.

Stacked stone walls have an established history within Modernism. Modernist architect and former curator at the Museum of Modern Art, Eliot Noyes used stacked stone as a prominent feature in his own house in New Canaan, Connecticut, now a site for contemporary art and architecture exhibitions. Eero Saarinen's Morse and Stiles Colleges at Yale provide precedent for the prominent use of stone in brutalist architecture.

Precedents in landscape architecture are ubiquitous. Lester Collins employed stacked stone extensively at Innisfree, the Beek Estates in Millbrook, New York where Collins worked for 55 years. At Innisfree, Collins experimented with Chinese and Japanese garden design principles incorporating the fundamental elements of stone and water. Dan Kiley, a prominent Modernist landscape architect, consulted with SOM on the design for Constitution Gardens. Kiley featured stacked stone walls in many of his projects including the Currier Farm in Danby, Vermont and the Kimmel Residence in Salisbury, Connecticut.
Mock-up Photographs

In April 2021, the Smithsonian completed a full-size mock-up in the Sculpture Garden featuring a stacked stone wall, Swenson Pink granite bench, reclaimed granite pavers, lighting, proposed groundcover plantings, and soil profile. This mock-up builds on the knowledge that emerged from the summer 2019 mock-up that tested two different stacked stone methodologies. The mock-up includes two sculptures to demonstrate compatibility with the stacked stone wall and aggregate concrete wall backdrops. The stacked stone height and reveal at the intersection with the concrete perimeter walls reflect the proposed design wall hierarchy of primary aggregate concrete perimeter walls and secondary stacked stone walls. The mock-up was constructed in collaboration between Japanese and American teams of stonemasons.

Hiroshi Sugimoto’s use of stacked stone is thoughtfully conceived of and proposed with enormous respect for the needs of artworks, creating effective and enriching environments for their display. Created by master artisans, the stacked stone is artwork itself, and as demonstrated in the mock-ups, the warm color tones and organic shapes visually complement the aggregate in the concrete walls as well as the sculpture. The elevations of the stacked stone walls vary, following the natural arrangement in fitting stones together.
Design Updates

Revised Southeast Corner
The configuration of the southeast corner of the Sculpture Garden has been modified to improve accessibility and sculpture layout. These revisions simplify circulation and planter bed layout ensuring all sculpture is accessible for viewing and to improve visitor experience.

Streetscape Improvements
Four new street trees are proposed along Jefferson Drive to improve the streetscape and pedestrian experience. As part of the 1981 modifications to the Sculpture Garden, four Gingko trees were planted along Jefferson Drive. These trees did not survive and were ultimately removed. Four elm trees are proposed in locations similar to the 1981 Collins tree plantings and will be augmented with a modular suspended pavement system to support tree health, soil volume, and water absorption.

1983 Plant Materials Plan, Gingko Trees Annotated in Green

Proposed Site Plan with Design Updates
Design Updates

The proposed elm trees shall be planted consistent with the Monumental Core Streetscape Standards currently being updated. These street trees provide shade for pedestrians, and frame views along the central 8th Street axis, the spatial organizer that anchors the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden campus. Minor adjustments to the tree spacing provide the Hirshhorn Museum crane access to place large-scale sculptures in the east and west galleries.

The Smithsonian is coordinating with the National Park Service on the Jefferson Drive street trees and the design of the sidewalk to support soil volume and water requirements for long-term tree health.
Historic Preservation Update

Historic Preservation
Design Response

Minimization and Mitigation Actions
Aggregate concrete walls have historically formed a strong sense of enclosure and cohesion across the Hirshhorn complex. These concrete walls continue to be a fundamental unifying feature of the Hirshhorn campus and will be strengthened by the proposed design with an enhanced northern boundary and perimeter walls that are replaced in kind.

Stacked stone walls, including the inner partition wall, will not be directly visible from the National Mall, minimizing adverse effects on the Hirshhorn’s relationship with the National Mall Historic District. Visitors will continue to identify the Hirshhorn campus with the consistent use of concrete perimeter walls creating a strong sense of enclosure and cohesion. The inner partition wall is the only historic wall to be reconstructed in stacked stone. To highlight the importance of the inner partition wall and to minimize adverse effects, this wall will be the only stacked stone wall to feature Swenson Pink granite.

Retaining the 1974 historic pool dimension with a new water feature and Art and Performance Platform to its south minimizes adverse effects to this character defining feature. The 1974 pool only will be heated during winter months to highlights its significance. The Revised Pool Alternative, devoid of the surrounding tiers, highlights the 1974 proportions in all conditions, and closely approximates the size of Collins’s central turf panel and reflecting pool composition.
Historic Preservation Update

Design Response

To minimize adverse effects of the Revised Alternative, the pool basin will feature black granite in keeping with the historic reflecting pool material. Maintaining the 1974 pool with a year-round water presence and use of black granite, highlights the layered and evolving design of the current Sculpture Garden, and elevates the preserved pool.

The Revised Pool Alternative balances Museum and Sculpture Garden programming with historic preservation requirements. While the new alternative diminishes performance flexibility in the Central Gallery, this design solution minimizes cumulative adverse effect to the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden.

The Sculpture Garden will feature two types of signage as mitigation items. This signage will enhance the visitor experience by connecting these specific design actions to the Garden's history. Exhibit signage will describe the history of the inner partition wall and the art form of its construction as well as the underground passage art installation.

Larger signage panels with educational information will be located at key overlooks, within the Sculpture Garden, and at the museum balcony. This signage will describe the evolution of the Sculpture Garden, from Gordon Bunshaft's design, to Lister Collins's modifications, to Hiroshi Sugimoto's revitalization.
Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden Revitalization

Supplemental Slides

The Inner Partition Wall

Information Presentation
1974 Image of Inner Partition Wall
Gordon Bunshaft Completed Design, 1974
Sunken Plan: Bunshaft Contributing Element
Perimeter Walls & Inner Partition Wall: Bunshaft Contributing Elements
Reflecting Pool: Bunshaft Contributing Element
North & South Stairs: Bunshaft Design Contributing Elements
Display for Sculpture: Bunshaft Contributing Element
1974 Character-Defining Features Remaining Summary

- Setting for Rotating Display of Sculpture
- Recessed Grade Below the National Mall
- Reflecting Pool
- Perimeter Concrete Walls
  - Inner Partition Wall
  - North & South Stairs
Lester Collins Design, 1981

1. Aerial view looking south-west.

2. Central Garden with defined walkways and planting beds.

3. View toward east perimeter wall.

4. Central Garden and view toward National Mall.

File: 7889
Hardscape Paving and Garden Rooms: Collins Contributing
Lateral North Ramps: Collins Contributing Elements
East Ramp: Collins Contributing Element
Current Photo of Inner Partition Wall, Looking South
Relationship of Garden to Museum
Current Photo Showing Relationship of Garden to Museum
Project Rendering Showing Proposed New Relationship of Garden to Museum