The Lenfest Center for the Arts
A New Venue for Columbia’s Artists and for NYC

Columbia’s new venue for the arts in Manhattanville will draw audiences from across the University, nearby communities, and New York City. Located on an open piazza facing 125th Street, it will form the cultural heart of a spectacular suite of buildings and spaces designed by luminary architect Renzo Piano, awarded the Pritzker Prize in 1998 for his inventiveness in “searching for new dimensions.”

Piano’s design will provide a venue for Columbia’s thriving arts community based in the School of the Arts. The arts and the offerings of the School are woven throughout the life of the campus and both the graduate and undergraduate student experience. With its rehearsal rooms, film screening theater, multi-arts performance and exhibition spaces, and piazza, the new building will offer bold new opportunities for our artist community to present work from each of the four programs of the School: Film, Theater, Visual Arts, and Writing. The venue will invite collaboration as well as opportunities for the School of the Arts to work with many other schools, programs, and disciplines across the University.

Named for University Trustee Gerry Lenfest (’58 LAW) and his wife Marguerite Lenfest in honor of their generous commitment to the building, the Lenfest Center for the Arts will animate our new campus. It is easy to look ahead a few years and imagine a day spent immersed in the arts north of 125th Street and west of Broadway.

November 2012
The Promise of the Arts

After viewing an exhibition in the gallery, a visitor might choose to watch a rehearsal or participate in a master class in the top-floor space. After dinner, she may return to attend an evening performance or film screening, or sit in on a panel at the University’s new academic conference center, where neuroscientists from the Jerome L. Greene Science Center exchange views with visual arts faculty and art historians.

Gifts already committed to The Lenfest Center for the Arts provide momentum and confidence to move ahead on planning for the project, even as we look to raise additional funds to realize the promise of the arts.

The School of the Arts

The School of the Arts—at times in collaboration with other schools, departments, and centers at Columbia—will curate the building’s programs in film, writing, theater, and visual arts.

The School of the Arts is an innovative graduate professional school with a tradition of risk-taking. It is grounded in a deeply intellectual Ivy League university and energized by our location in New York City. From the Sundance Film Festival to the Venice Biennale, from the cover of the New York Times Book Review to Broadway, from America’s most established regional theaters to Europe and Asia’s renowned film and theater festivals, the success of the School’s faculty and alumni has never been as prominent and celebrated. Members of our faculty have received the highest recognition in their fields, including Academy Awards, Tony Awards, MacArthur Foundation Fellowships, Guggenheim Fellowships, Pulitzer Prizes, National Book Awards, and the Nobel Prize in Literature. Our alumni can claim a record of astonishing success, measured not simply by awards and prizes, contracts and contacts, but by the quality and cultural significance of their artistic achievements. The School also houses the renowned LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies and plays a vital and increasingly important role in the experience of Columbia’s undergraduates, arts majors and nonmajors alike.

The Location

The Lenfest Center for the Arts will stand prominently on a public piazza facing 125th Street. It will be highly accessible, the most public of the first new buildings planned for Manhattanville that also include the Jerome L. Greene Science Center, an academic conference center, and a new home for Columbia Business School. These are in turn the first wave in a 17-acre project developing over the next 30 to 50 years.
The Lenfest Center for the Arts

Naming Gift Opportunities

The Lenfest Center for the Arts
This 60,000-square-foot Renzo Piano arts showcase will be a gathering place and an audience destination. A visually compelling structure on five levels adjacent to a public piazza, it will provide a film theater and screening room, studio theater and flexible performance spaces, accessible galleries, and a flexible lofflike upper-story multi-arts space for rehearsal, performance, readings, and project development.

Outdoor Piazza: $10 million
The Piazza will provide a beautiful, prominent gathering space for artists, students, scientists, researchers, and the general public. Allowing for outdoor performances, projections, and events, the Piazza provides an exciting point of access from 125th Street to the new Manhattanville campus.

Lobby: $7.5 million
The first floor will house a transparent, light-filled lobby which will serve as a gateway to the arts for students, faculty, and the community at large. With its illuminated, open space, the lobby will provide a perfect venue for everyday gatherings as well as various arts receptions and events.

Katharina Otto-Bernstein Screening Room
This second-floor theater, the largest in the building, will hold approximately 150 seats and will be suitable for film screenings as well as lectures and presentations. With the School of the Arts as home to one of the leading graduate film programs in the country, this facility provides a much-needed opportunity for Columbia filmmakers to share their work.

Studio Theater and Flexible Performance Space:
$10 million
This third-floor facility provides maximum flexibility for theater and other performances and seats up to 99.

Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery
The fourth floor will be designed as a flexible gallery open to the public six days a week and featuring a schedule of academic, student, and faculty exhibitions.

Flexible Multi-Arts Teaching/Project Space: $10 million
The lofflike fifth-floor space allows for readings, performances, experimental interdisciplinary collaborations, and art production and exhibition.