

# LEVER

LEVER Architecture Wins International Design Competition to Expand Portland Museum of Art in Portland, ME

Firm to Lead \$100 million Campus Expansion



LEVER Architecture, Courtesy of Portland Museum of Art, Maine / Dovetail Design Strategists  
Rendering by Darcstudio

January 9, 2023, Portland, OR – It was announced today that LEVER Architecture, the architecture firm based in Portland, OR and Los Angeles, CA, has been selected as the design architect for the Portland Museum of Art’s (PMA) \$100 million campus expansion and unification project.

“This is one of the most significant moments in the PMA’s 140-year history,” says Mark Bessire, the Judy and Leonard Lauder Director of the Portland Museum of Art. “LEVER, and the team they have assembled, have demonstrated that they care deeply about our region’s future, our unique arts culture, and the needs of our community. They share our values of courage, equity, service, sustainability, and trust, and we can’t wait to get to work with LEVER and our communities to imagine Maine’s next great landmark.”

## LEVER ARCHITECTURE

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LEVER Architecture's winning concept imagines the PMA campus unified through an innovative, sustainable building that knits together PMA's existing campus of four architecturally significant downtown Portland properties. The design—proposed primarily from sustainable mass timber, one of LEVER's defining characteristics—will add 60,000 square feet of flexible, community, gallery, and public space, enabling 300,000–500,000 visitors per year.

"The PMA's competition brief was a challenge to the very definition of what a museum is," says LEVER Principal, Chandra Robinson. "It was a call to action to designers around the world to question what it means to truly design for people, for communities, and for a specific place in the world. We would not have been able to challenge the idea of a museum without conceptualizing a new model of inclusive participation. Our teams' perspectives on Wabanaki culture, community engagement, and universal accessibility were at the root of this design process."



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LEVER's concept imagines a new building made from mass timber, terracotta, and glass, and includes nods to Maine communities, history, and culture. The curved roofline is designed to frame the sun as it rises and sets, in honor of Maine's Wabanaki communities and the land they call Wabanakik, or Dawnland. The timber used in LEVER's design speaks to the state's lumber industry heritage while reimagining its future as a hallmark of environmental stewardship, much in

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the same way the PMA's other buildings embody their time and place and reflect other aspects of Maine's history. Critically, mass timber is incredibly strong, durable, and sustainable, with an ability to sequester carbon. Other sustainable building materials and practices, such as geothermal energy, will be explored as the project moves into future phases.

"We are humbled to work with this visionary institution and create a new museum that truly embodies the mission Art for All," Robinson continues. "Maine's natural beauty and welcoming community have been such an inspiration to the team, and we cannot wait to create a new museum that takes a giant step into the future and brings us all to a time and place that celebrates how art and the human spirit are intertwined."



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LEVER Architecture was selected through a juried international design competition led by Dovetail Design Strategists that attracted submissions from

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104 teams representing 20 countries. The submissions were narrowed down to four finalists who developed concept designs for a public concept design gallery and comment period. In addition to LEVER, the finalists were: Adjaye Associates, MVRDV and Toshiko Mori Architects + Johnston Marklee + Preston Scott Cohen.

The full design team includes:

- LEVER Architecture: Design Architect
- Simons Architects: Executive Architect
- Unknown Studio: Landscape Architect
- Chris Newell, Akomawt Educational Initiative: Indigenous Inclusion Advisor
- Openbox: Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Consultant
- Once-Future Office: Signage, Graphics, and Wayfinding Consultant
- Studio Pacifica: Accessibility and Universal Design Consultant
- Atelier Ten: Sustainability Consultant
- Guy Nordenson and Associates: Structural Design Engineer
- Thornton Tomasetti: Structural Engineer of Record and Sustainability / LCA Modeling
- Altieri Sebor Wieber: MEP/FP Engineer
- Arup: Lighting, Acoustical, Theater, Security, and AV/IT Engineer
- Woodard and Curran: Civil Engineer
- Simpson Gumpertz and Heger: Building Enclosure Consultant
- Stuart Lynn: Cost Consultant
- Openbox: Video production
- Darcstudio: Renderings

#### About LEVER Architecture

LEVER Architecture is an emerging practice recognized for design excellence and innovative work with mass timber construction. Based in Portland, Oregon and Los Angeles, the 55-person firm collaborates with communities and institutions to design buildings that elevate human experience and foreground equity.

Their work encompasses multiple scales and types, ranging from a major expansion of Adidas' North American headquarters to student housing for the Pacific Northwest College of Art. In parallel with their projects, the firm develops and tests next generation building assemblies and sustainable tools—a research effort supported by more than \$2M in grant funding. For this commitment to groundbreaking design, LEVER was recognized by Fast Company as one of the world's most innovative companies; and in 2017, was named to Architectural Record's Design Vanguard and the Architectural League of New York's Emerging Voices.

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Selected current projects include Portland State University's new Art and Design School, two libraries for Multnomah County Library, a multi-building campus project for NBCUniversal; and 843 N Spring Street, a development slated to become one of LA's largest Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) buildings. LEVER was founded in 2009. <https://leverarchitecture.com>

#### About the Portland Museum of Art

With an extensive collection and internationally renowned exhibitions, the Portland Museum of Art is the cultural heart of Portland, Maine. The PMA boasts significant and diverse collection of American, European, and contemporary art, as well as iconic works from Maine—highlighting the rich artistic tradition of the state and its artists. The museum brings it all to life with unparalleled programming. From special members-only events, Free School Tours, and a commitment to family activities, to PMA Films, curator talks, and tours of the Winslow Homer Studio—it's all happening at the PMA.

<https://www.portlandmuseum.org>

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