

# REMAKING THE BAKER

NI GETS AN EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK AT ARTIS—NAPLES' PLANS FOR THE NEW BAKER MUSEUM, AND INSIGHT FROM THE PLAYERS BEHIND THE PROJECT

BY CARY BARBOR

RENDERINGS COURTESY OF WEISS/MANFREDI



AN ELEVATED WINDOW ON THE BUILDING'S SOUTH FACADE OFFERS A VIEW INTO EVENT SPACES ON THE FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS, AS WELL AS A SCULPTURE TERRACE.



AN OUTDOOR BAR LOOKS WEST FROM A HIGH ELEVATION, OFFERING MAGNIFICENT VIEWS AS WELL AS SPACE FOR SCULPTURES.

The destruction brought on by Hurricane Irma in September 2017 was intense, far-reaching, and frightening. It closed businesses, leveled homes, and wrecked acres of irreplaceable ancient plant life, just for starters. But much like the artists whose work is on display there, Artis—Naples took those unappealing raw materials and is turning them into something beautiful.

A major makeover of the entire Artis—Naples campus has been in the works long before Irma struck. But during the hurricane, water leaked into the second and third floors of The Baker Museum, forcing it to close. Thankfully, no art was damaged, but repairing the facility became an urgent priority.

Rather than simply patching the museum's facade, the decision makers at Artis—Naples agreed to rework the plans and make the first step of their large-scale renovations a complete reworking of The Baker Museum. In addition to being re-clad as a storm-resistant building, the facility will be expanded to the south and given an improved entrance, event and education spaces, gardens, and support areas. The museum's existing 28,000 square feet will grow to a total of about 45,000 square feet—an increase of more than 50 percent. The budget for The Baker Museum repair and expansion is \$25 million, and fundraising is ongoing.

"We had a consultant help us find

the best architect for the job," says Kathleen van Bergen, president and CEO of Artis—Naples. "He said, 'Ultimately you're going to choose timely or timeless.' And we knew that Naples was timeless." That drove their selection of Weiss/Manfredi, a top New York architecture firm known for such work as the Olympic Sculpture Park in Seattle and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden Visitor Center.

## WHAT'S NEW?

Co-founding architect Michael Manfredi notes that one of the biggest design strategies for the project, "is to open up and expand the courtyard between Hayes Hall and The Baker Museum, and turn it into a place of performance, gathering, and celebration."



AERIAL VIEW OF THE MASTER PLAN TO RENOVATE ARTIS—NAPLES SHOWS THE NEW BAKER MUSEUM ON THE RIGHT.





THE BAKER MUSEUM WILL FEATURE A WIDE OUTDOOR STAIRCASE AND A THIRD-FLOOR GALLERY THAT NUDGES INTO THE COURTYARD.

Other changes to the layout sprang from community comments elicited earlier in the design process. “What really energized us, which came through from the community, is that Naples has an incredibly beautiful outdoor climate,” Manfredi says. “One of the things we were really excited about was the reciprocity between inside and outside, particularly since we are interested in the engagement between architecture and landscape. The climate and the tropical plant forms in Naples are so fantastic to us.” This inspired such elements as a curved facade that gently bows into the courtyard, plantings on the upstairs terrace, and many windows, all of which visually cue museum-goers that they are in the tropics.

Another goal is to make the courtyard a social gathering space, even for people who may not be attending a performance or a museum show. “I want people to feel comfortable here and visit it more like a cultural park

instead of just a destination for an exhibition or a lecture,” says van Bergen.

Fellow Weiss/Manfredi co-founder Marion Weiss picked up on that theme. “Sometimes people who don’t know that they are invited into a cultural experience feel shy about engaging,” she says. The husband-and-wife architectural team set about designing a campus that “really speaks to the idea of reaching out to the broader community.”

### COME IN

Another element visitors can look forward to when work is complete (which is slated for November 2019) is a new museum entrance. The former brought visitors rather inelegantly through a cramped shop and on to the main space. A more natural-feeling entrance is now planned in the curved east wall. It will open into the central courtyard between the museum and Hayes Hall. When patrons enter, they will come into an airy lobby that will measure three floors high and feature the sculpture *Blue Icicle* by Dale Chihuly (a beloved piece from the museum’s permanent collection) suspended from the ceiling. Now, says van Bergen, “the museum will have its own proper entrance. It will be a welcoming, open space where people can meet up before going into an exhibition or a lecture, and gather afterward to discuss what they’ve just seen.”

Another dramatic change is an outdoor staircase from the ground level reaching to the second, where visitors will find another floor of the museum as well as an event space. “The stairs are generous, almost like sixteenth-century stairs,” says Manfredi. “You could have a performance on [them] just as easily as hang out and sit in a shaded spot.”

### A SPACE TO REFLECT

Just above the staircase, on the third floor, is another arresting detail of the redesign: a breakout gallery curving out over the courtyard. There is room to display art on the interior wall, and seating so visitors can look

RIGHT: AN EVENT SPACE CAN FEATURE SMALL CONCERTS, LECTURES, AND MORE. SPECIAL ACOUSTIC TREATMENT WILL CONTAIN THE SOUND IN THE ROOM. BELOW: THE ENTRANCE TO THE COURTYARD WILL BE TRANSFORMED TO FEEL MORE OPEN AND WELCOMING.



through the large windows down into the courtyard. “It’s a space to reflect,” says van Bergen, “to step away from the exhibition, think about it, and talk about it with your friends, while looking at the gardens below.” Even if the museum is closed, guests on their way to a performance or an event elsewhere in the building can stop into this gallery.

An equally charming feature on the third floor is an outdoor terrace, which is kitted out to support heavy works of sculpture. A bar will be nestled under an arbor covered with live greenery. The third-floor elevation and the westward view might just make this the best place in town to catch the sunset over the Gulf of Mexico.

### DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

Every floor offers a flexible event space that can be used for small concerts, lectures, or seated dinners. These areas will be able to accommodate simultaneous music performances without the audience in one hearing the other.

“Acoustics at a professional level are everything,” says Manfredi. “We started with a box-within-a-box construction. Even the vibrations of a bass drum, which are usually the hardest to mask, are dampened. And then there are ways the materials are combined to further dampen noise levels in the event space so that sound is not trans-

mitted from one room to the other. The room is lined with almost a wood curtain that is as beautiful as much as it is acoustic. You also want the rooms to have a certain level of aliveness, too, so there’s always a delicate dance [in] hitting that acoustic sweet spot.”

### STAY DRY

To ensure the leakage brought on by Irma doesn’t happen again, the building will be fully re-clad for safety and protection, with a new, higher-quality facade. As part of this design, the exterior will incorporate both sand-colored stone and decorative architectural metal. Weiss/Manfredi will put in place a double layer of protection known in the business as a “rain screen” system best suited for areas prone to high winds and heavy rains. “It’s like a jogger wearing a nylon shell that breaks the wind and stops most of the water,” says Manfredi. “And whatever water gets in, your second layer, your thermal shirt, will take care of that.”

Weiss adds, “It’s setting the museum up for the future, with this commitment to a higher level of protection.”

Even as the building joins the collection of beautiful objects on display there, it will also help the organization realize its ambitions. “One of our goals was to make sure that the whole building, the new, expanded Baker Museum, is a microcosm of everything we do at Artis—Naples,” says van Bergen. “We have classroom spaces, performance spaces, learning spaces, social spaces, and, of course, galleries for art. And now it is all under one roof.” ◀◀



THE ORIGINAL MASTER PLAN RENDERING SHOWS A PREVIOUS ITERATION OF THE BAKER MUSEUM. PLANS ARE STILL IN PLACE TO INCLUDE THE ASCENDING COURTYARD AND OUTDOOR SCREEN, WHICH WILL SHOW MOVIES OR SCREEN PERFORMANCES GOING ON INSIDE.



THE PLANNED SOUTHERN EXPANSION IS EXPECTED TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL OUTDOOR SPACES WHERE VISITORS CAN EXPERIENCE SUNSET VIEWS.