

Welcoming New Audiences: Renovating the Harrison Auditorium

On November 1, we marked the kickoff of our *Building Transformation* project with a groundbreaking—or, rather, seat removal—event in the Museum’s Harrison Auditorium. (For more on this very special occasion, turn the page to “The New Penn Museum.”) It was held in the Auditorium not only because that is our largest public space—indeed, it is one of the few spaces on Penn’s campus that can hold over 600 people—but also because its upcoming renovation embodies so many of our goals for transforming the visitor experience that this project will accomplish.

The Harrison Auditorium is named for Charles Custis Harrison, visionary Provost of Penn (1894–1910) and President of the Museum (1911–1929) during some of our most iconic excavations. His spirit of making and sharing our discoveries lives on in the Auditorium that welcomes so many visitors. Constructed between 1912 and 1915, the Museum’s Harrison Wing is on the National Register of Historic Places. With its original glazed tiles, wrought iron lighting fixtures, and domed ceiling punctuated with a bronze sunburst, the Auditorium is a stunning historic space.

The Harrison Auditorium is not only an architectural masterpiece but also one of the most-used public spaces in the Museum. It welcomes audiences from Penn as well as from cultural and civic groups for lectures, film series, and University events including Commencement, school tours, and cultural celebrations. The Harrison Auditorium helps to build communities.

When it opened in 1915, the Auditorium was a state-of-the-art facility. It has been many decades, though, since that description applied. Now, we will transform the Auditorium to reach its full potential once more. Upgrades will focus on accessibility, visitor comfort, and enhanced visual and lighting systems. The Auditorium’s lobby will also be renovated, leveling the floor to the rest-



Williams Director Julian Siggers speaks at the November 1 *Building Transformation* construction kickoff event.

rooms, creating new restrooms, and adding a new seating and coatroom area. The Auditorium will also be more accessible than ever before via a new passenger elevator and the reopened 1899 staircases—see the following pages for more details.

As part of creating a more welcoming space, the Auditorium’s beautiful Art Deco-style seats from the 1940s will be completely refurbished—repainted and reupholstered, they will maintain the historic style of the space alongside its next programmatic capacities. I invite you to join the Auditorium’s transformation by naming a seat. For more information, please contact Kristen Lauerman at 215.573.5251 or lauerman@upenn.edu.

Alongside our building renovations, the Museum continues to make new discoveries every day, and I hope you enjoy exploring some of these in this issue of *Expedition*.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julian Siggers". The signature is fluid and cursive.

JULIAN SIGGERS, PH.D.
WILLIAMS DIRECTOR