

Report of the President and Director

WITHOUT QUESTION, THE highlight of the year was the opening of the museum's Modern Wing. Conceived by my predecessor, James N. Wood, in 1999 as a modest extension suspended over the train tracks south of Gunsaulus Hall, it moved to its current site when the Goodman Theatre building became available to the museum in mid-2000. Over the course of the next four years, it grew in size and extent of program until, when I succeeded Jim in the fall of 2004, it was almost fully designed. Over the next year, in response to the extraordinary success of Millennium Park (which had opened in the summer of 2004), we added a third-floor sculpture terrace and restaurant, as well as a splendid pedestrian bridge connecting the new building to the park. We also changed some galleries and redesigned the garden, and in May 2005 received permission from the Board of Trustees to break ground. During the next four years, we raised more than \$400 million for the Modern Wing and the renovation of galleries in the Allerton Building and Gunsaulus Hall, including the masterful, indeed magical, Alsdorf Galleries of Indian, Southeast Asian, Himalayan, and Islamic Art. By the opening of the Modern Wing, I think it is fair to say that the entire museum had been transformed.

The opening itself was a great celebration. It began with a dazzling gala attended by Mayor Richard M. Daley, his wife, Maggie, and over one thousand people. This was followed by a day devoted to Chicago school children and their teachers in the Ryan Education Center; three days of open house for members, with tours of the galleries and new facilities; and a day and evening devoted to artists, architects, designers, collectors, and museum colleagues from around the world. Finally, the grand, public opening—complete with ribbon cutting and musical fanfare—featured speeches by Mayor Daley, Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's Chief of Staff, and our architect, Renzo Piano. After the ribbon cutting, the Modern Wing was formally opened to the public, and more than 45,000 people thronged the galleries and the Ryan Education Center in just the first two days.

It has to be acknowledged that the Modern Wing is a great success. It has allowed us to expand our mission as Chicago's encyclopedic art museum, with beautiful new galleries for our modern and contemporary collections and a large and appropriately outfitted modern center for museum education. But, just as important, the Modern Wing has emphasized our commitment to the life of Chicago. Its dramatic size, gleaming structure, and elegant integration with Millennium Park demonstrated to everyone that Chicago can still dream big and deliver on those dreams. The tens of thousands of people who came to the museum during our first open week came to claim the new building as their own. And they were rewarded.

The Modern Wing is the greatest addition to Chicago's cultural landscape in a century, and we are all so proud to see the warmth with which it has been received by the citizens of this great city.

That said, the Modern Wing opened in the midst of very difficult economic times. Like every cultural institution in the country, we felt the pressure of the downturn in the United States economy. We were forced to cut back to address the budgetary gap created by the performance of our investments and the softening of discretionary spending. And despite the success of the Modern Wing, we will have to do so again. It is a challenging time in the history of the museum, but we have faced such moments before. We can only be pleased that the Modern Wing itself was fully paid for and that it has provided us with a spectacular launching pad for meeting our current challenges and growing again in the future.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the year's important and beautiful exhibitions, including *Benin—Kings and Rituals: Court Arts from Nigeria*; *Becoming Edvard Munch: Influence, Anxiety, and Myth*; and *Drawn to Drawings: The Goldman Collection*—all three of which were shown in the United States only at the Art Institute, and the latter two of which were accompanied by major scholarly catalogues published by the museum. In addition, *The Divine Art: Four Centuries of European Tapestries*, an installation of our own great, but little-known, tapestry collection, was also accompanied by a full, scholarly catalogue of our holdings. Christa Thurman, the Christa C. Mayer Thurman Curator of Textiles, executed this exhibition, which was many years in the making, after forty-two years at the museum. It was a major accomplishment, involving the conservation of the tapestries as well as the exhibition, the publication, and a major international symposium. And it was the crowning moment in Christa's celebrated career. At the end of the fiscal year, Christa retired from her position; her dedication to the museum and her curatorial speciality has been acknowledged by everyone.

JAMES CUNO

PRESIDENT AND ELOISE W. MARTIN DIRECTOR