The Design of the New Home of The Studio Museum in Harlem

While currently closed for construction, the Studio Museum is working to deepen its roots in the community and strengthen its trailblazing role in the cultural landscape. The firm has received widespread recognition for its contributions to architecture. Adjaye Associates was commissioned to design the Studio Museum’s new home on West 125 Street. The museum, renowned for its dedication to artists of African descent, will be housed in a purpose-built home, which replaces a century-old commercial building on the site.

The museum will feature a range of new spaces, including:

- An education center on the third floor
- Galleries for temporary exhibitions and the unparalleled permanent collection on the fourth floor
- A lower level for presentations (lectures, screenings, performances, educational gatherings)
- A new dedicated space for the Artist-in-Residence program
- Artist studios, collection storage, and a multipurpose public space

The new museum will be a beacon of Black art, culture, and creativity, serving as a pipeline for the future of the community. It will be a place that challenges us, upends our perceptions, and expands our horizons, a welcoming presence at street level, a light-filled core that soars up through the entire museum.

Thelma Golden, Director and Chief Curator of the Studio Museum in Harlem, announced that the museum has commissioned Theaster Gates to lead a partnership to create a new home for the Studio Museum Harlem, we can ensure this historic neighborhood continues to be a cultural community, and I am honored to help support their new space and the expansion of the community.

Raymond J. McGuire, Studio Museum Board Chair, said, “Through the Studio Museum’s Fundraising Campaign, we are realizing our once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to carry this museum to even greater heights through expanded programs and our extraordinary new home.”

The Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Council, and the Office of the Manhattan Borough President have provided major support for the new home. Thelma Golden said, “With the help of these and other partners, The Studio Museum is an iconic institution that serves as an incubator of art and culture and artistic moments of Harlem whilst also holding the infinite possibilities of its future.”

Sir David Adjaye said, “This project is not just about the building; it’s about creating a pipeline for the next generation of artists and leaders.”

New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson said, “This project and all who played a role in the planning process for the museum’s new home.”

New York City Cultural Affairs Commissioner Gonzalo Casals said, “This is a fitting conclusion to a capital campaign, we are realizing our once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to carry this museum and enabling everything we do for artists of African descent, for our beloved community of Harlem.”

Lieutenant Governor Brian Benjamin said, “Harlem is a beacon of Black art, culture, and creativity, and I am proud that the de Blasio administration could support this project and congratulate all who played a role in the planning process for the museum’s new home.”

As the project moves forward, the museum will work closely with Theaster Gates and the wider community to shape the museum’s future and ensure it continues to serve as a vital cultural resource for Harlem and beyond. For more information, visit studiomuseum.org.