

BENTON MUSEUM OF ART POMONA COLLEGE

Architect's Statement



Loeb Art Pavilion. Photo: Richard Barnes

The Benton Museum of Art offers a vibrant, contemporary, and highly relevant art program at Pomona College in Claremont, California. Underscoring openness and accessibility the Museum has multiple entrances, outdoor sculpture gardens, community courtyards, and large expansive glazing. The architecture provides unparalleled access to its extensive collections of Western and Native American Art through a unique approach to art study rooms and archival spaces. The Benton is LEED Gold Certified with one of the lowest EUIs (Energy Use Intensity) of any museum in California. And the design references the Beaux-Arts tradition of the Pomona College campus with its courtyards, porticos, organizing arcades, and expressive, cast-in-place concrete construction.

The Pomona College campus is remarkable in its beauty and unique among American higher education environments. The overall dominant feeling is of calm and peacefulness, yet the atmosphere is neither bucolic nor laid back. It is a complex mixture of attributes underlined by the dignity and even noble toughness of buildings and courtyards, with their disciplined yet soothingly rhythmic sequences of open and closed spaces of ever-changing configurations and design. This remarkable yet elusive character of the Pomona College campus is the quality that we set out to capture, interpret, and establish as the soul of the Benton Museum. To this end we introduced and reinterpreted the rich yet orderly tartan armature of solids and voids, hard and soft spaces, dark and light spaces, made through a combination of cast-in-place concrete structural walls and expansive glazed openings. The result is a museum experience where the interior and exterior experience is always adjacent, ensuring protection of the artwork while constantly providing a view and access to nature.

The program for the Benton Museum at Pomona College is a direct result of the educational mission of the institution. The architecture creates the experience of a major, world-class, 21st-century museum, albeit in a relatively small footprint. The architecture also provides unique and innovative methods of interacting with art through the arrangement of its galleries, art storage, art handling routes, educational spaces, and archival vaults.

The Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College received LEED-NC Version 3 Gold certification and was designed to be in line with the State of California's goal for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, as per the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. This building will contribute to Pomona College's goals of reducing building energy by 15%, reducing GHG emissions to 0 by 2030, and 100% compliance with Green Building Standards. The Benton is designed to outperform the ASHRAE 90.1-2010 Baseline building by at least 30%.