This terminal project studio will be challenged with the design of new gallery and related spaces for the Portland (Maine) Museum of Art. It is the subject of an ongoing international architectural competition. Our task will be to review the given site and program as stated in the competition brief and propose a well-considered solution based on our joint studio investigations. We will not be bound in any way by proposals that may have been made by competitors. In fact, although our task will be to acknowledge the design guidelines of the competition we will also be challenged to 'go beyond' to develop an appropriate solution within the universal bounds of good design.

The program calls for an environmentally and ecologically responsible expansion which will double the size of the existing museum complex that includes a design by the office of I.M. Pei. Our studio will focus on the design of a given building or buildings for detailed development, but we will also examine the campus and urban design potential of the site. Besides the challenges posed by museum design and associated technical demands, we will study topics with a broad architectural/sustainable component such as structure, materials, and construction. A special focus will be on daylighting of interior space. We will also be challenged to respond to the context of the site both in terms of its urban setting and its existing historic structures.

The following is a statement by the competition organizers:

The Portland Museum of Art Campus Unification + Expansion International Design Competition challenges architects to develop a design that addresses accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability, landscape and graphic design to create an inclusive place that champions open expression and makes art accessible to all, a place that delivers on the promise of the PMA’s mission, Art for All.
The Portland Museum of Art (the PMA), founded in 1882, is Maine’s largest and most visited art institution, and among the oldest museums in America. Located in the heart of downtown Portland, one of the country’s most beloved cities, the museum encompasses a full city block of historically and architecturally significant buildings. The PMA’s world-class collection includes more than 18,000 objects, including 19th-and-20th century American and European art, modern and contemporary art, and iconic works from Maine that highlight the rich artistic traditions of the state and its artists.

The museum has outgrown its current campus due to increased visitation and several major gifts to its collection. The broadening and diversification of the artwork, record attendance prior to the pandemic and community feedback have underlined the need for more space.

The PMA sees this as an opportunity to discover the impact a museum can have when it is built through an inclusive lens. By creating a community hub with myriad collaborative spaces, and focusing on groundbreaking approaches to art, the PMA believes it can become a place where all people feel they belong. More than just a new building, the PMA’s campus unification and expansion is a value proposition, envisioning the monumental positive impact museums can have on their communities.

The institution’s progressive and inclusive outlook on curation, education, and engagement will be reflected through innovative and future-forward architecture. This will ensure the PMA and the region’s future is rooted in diversity, equity, accessibility, inclusivity, and sustainability. And as a result, the PMA will transform the very nature of what a museum can be.

The PMA’s new museum wing will anchor and integrate the entire campus and double the institution’s existing size. It will be an environmentally and ecologically responsible expansion that will accommodate new collections and major exhibitions, host community events, programs, and performance space for the seeing and making of art, and will consolidate all staff offices.

The museum’s bold and ambitious agenda will physically harness the PMA’s commitments and deep values through an architecture that will renew, revitalize and redefine a museum’s role in society. The PMA is courageous, forward-looking and intent on creating a paradigm shift for museums around the globe.

The PMA imagines an inclusive and iconic Landmark for the Future.