

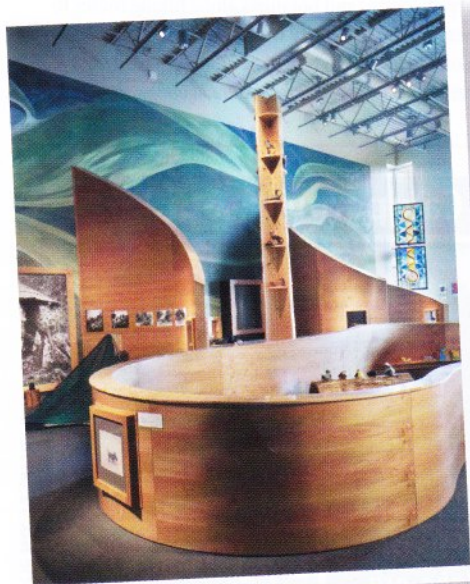
The LIGHTCATCHER

A new building at Bellingham's Whatcom Museum combines luminous architecture with an art-and-play experience for all ages.

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IF YOU ARE heading to Bellingham, Washington, you won't want to miss the city's newest addition to its downtown cultural district, the Whatcom Museum's Lightcatcher building. Opened in November 2009, the Lightcatcher is an architectural milestone with an expansive design and climate-controlled art galleries that allow the museum to host world-class art exhibits for the first time. (Look for a Smithsonian exhibit in September 2010.)



The 42,000-square-foot museum features two fine art galleries, a Family Interactive Gallery (the FIG), a museum store, a café, an outdoor courtyard, and classrooms.

The innovative building, defined by and named for its eye-catching 180-foot curved glass wall—the light catcher itself—is the first museum in Washington built to LEED Silver-Level specifications. Featuring a green roof and rainwater harvesting strategies, the museum integrates native materials to connect visitors to the Pacific Northwest's environment and history. The light catcher, designed to capture sunlight, gives the interior a unique golden glow. High ceilings and spacious galleries offer a beautiful setting for an afternoon of fine art.

What sets the museum apart, though, is its blend of family interactive space and fine art galleries under one roof. While older children will enjoy wandering the art galleries, the FIG invites younger children to engage with interactive play spaces in a separate gallery, also designed to

connect youngsters to the region's history and environment. The play spaces, defined by curved walls of alder, integrate art concepts such as color, design, patterns, and kinetics for an art-and-play experience for the whole family.

The current exhibitions in the two art galleries feature "Show of Hands" (through August 8), more than 90 works by 63 women artists from Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia from 1880 to present; "Expanded Horizons" (through August 29), a photographic exhibit of the Whatcom County region by J.W. Sandison; and "Outside the Home" (through November 13), a photographic display of women at work, displayed in the upper mezzanine area.

Admission is \$10 general, \$8 students/senior/military, and \$4.50 children under 5.

More information and a calendar of events are available at www.whatcommuseum.org. □

