

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM
441 F STREET, N.W., SUITE 312
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1 November 2004

Dear Dr. Spelman:

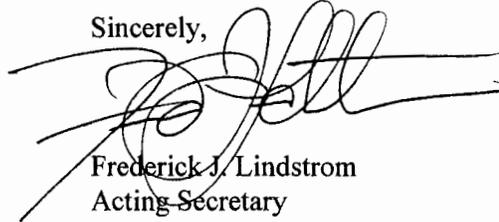
During its meeting on 21 October, the Commission reviewed the Smithsonian's concept design for the new Elephant House and exhibit yard, as part of the second phase of the Asia Trail project at the National Zoological Park. The proposed new Elephant House and yard are to be located to the north side of the Olmsted Walk, on the site where the cheetah and zebra exhibits are currently found. The members found the facility's design to be attractive and expressive of its intended use. The texture of the proposed board-formed concrete on the central portion of the structure, the green roof of natural growing turf, and the use of the natural stone walls will undoubtedly reinforce the more natural aspects of this wild animal exhibit. The members suggest that the building's details reinforce the "natural" theme.

As for the design of the exhibit yard and surrounding grounds, a more detailed landscape plan with a clear and accurate indication of which of the existing trees are to be preserved and the location of new trees should be presented along with precise renderings of the complex's surroundings. The members commented on the need for careful attention to the modeling and finishing of the artificial rock formations to make them appear as realistic as possible. However, their preference would be for natural rocks to be used in the exhibit areas. In addition, as the design team studies the range of materials to be used, it will be helpful for material samples to be shown at our next review of the design development.

It is understood that the existing historic Elephant House will be preserved and its future use reprogrammed; and that the current cheetah and zebra exhibits will be moved to an as yet undefined location. These changes will require revisions to the Zoo's master plan to address these new interventions and uses. We look forward to a presentation of the revised master plan in the near future.

With these caveats and suggestions, the concept design was approved. The new Elephant House and yard will provide an exciting experience for the Zoo visitors and better living conditions for the elephants. We look forward the continued review of the project as the design develops, including material samples and the landscape plan. As always, the staff is available to assist you and the design team.

Sincerely,



Frederick J. Lindstrom
Acting Secretary

Dr. Lucy H. Spelman
Director, Smithsonian National Zoological Park
3001 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008

cc: Harry Rombach, R.A., Smithsonian
Leon Chatelain, Chatelain Architects