



## Rubells' Washington, DC museum is taking shape

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The former Randall School will host a second location for the contemporary art collection, as well as apartments  
Rendering courtesy of Blinder Belle Architects and Planners

A forthcoming museum in the US capital by the Miami art collectors Don and Mera Rubell will give viewers an opportunity to see art as it's being made on site. Among the amenities in the works for the Rubell Museum in Washington, DC is an observation space where visitors can watch resident artists at work. "You would actually see the art piece being made," says Hany Hassan, a partner at Beyer Blinder Belle Architects, the museum's designer.

The Rubell Museum's second location is slated to open some time next year, expanding the the collection's footprint beyond its current home in Miami's Allapattah neighbourhood. The new outlet will show painting, sculpture and other works from the Rubells' holdings in a renovated building, the long-closed Randall Junior High School in south-west Washington, DC.

While details about the museum and its art offerings are still under wraps and a spokesperson for the Rubells declined to elaborate on the project, the building itself is coming into view. Plans for a working artist space point to a possible extension of the Miami museum's noted artist-in-residence programme, which in 2019 hosted the Ghanaian artist Amoako Bofo, or something entirely new.

The Rubells' pitch for the DC museum is novel in other ways. The 31,000 sq. ft museum will split its campus with a residential building with nearly 500 apartments, one-fifth of which will be set aside as affordable housing. The historic museum structure and 12-story U-shaped residential building will share a courtyard between them, giving apartment residents unparalleled access to the museum.

Sculpture is not a given for the museum courtyard, Hassan says, but it will be accessible to the public. "That is a tremendous amenity for the residents and the neighbourhood," he says.

### Ten years in the making

The outpost is a long time in the making: the Rubells purchased the Randall School building for \$6.5m from the former Corcoran Gallery of Art in 2010. The school is kitty-corner to another Rubell property, the Capitol Skyline Hotel. Along with the Rubells' acquisition of a hotel in nearby Baltimore in 2013, the Randall School purchase suggested a significant push in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Yet the plans for the museum stalled and the restored Capitol Skyline—which was designed by Morris Lapidus, the architect behind the famous Fontainebleau Hotel on South Beach—has served as a shelter for people experiencing homelessness during quarantine.

With plans for the DC Rubell Museum back on track, Hassan says that viewers and residents alike can expect a more lived-in museum experience. "It's not an office building where people disappear at 5pm or 6pm," Hassan says. "This is going to be a living, breathing development, with people in the courtyard, people on the roof and so on. It will bring life and light to the area."