

FROM PAGE 1 » MUSEUM

Millions have been spent to expand galleries

» The Lantern is practical as well as pretty, linking the second, third and fourth-floor galleries with a scissoring "butterfly" staircase.

On the inside, much of the restoration work went into the atrium, the hub that links every artery of the museum. The marble, floors, plaster and railings have been refreshed and the atrium's original soft yellow-beige paint colour restored. The building has also been properly "wired" for distance education and collaboration with other museums.

Millions have been spent on the galleries. The Blue Water, Earth and Animalium galleries debut this weekend (fossils, mammals and birds — were phased in during construction). The museum's star attraction is a 19.8-metre-long blue whale skeleton (the whale was found dead in Newfoundland in 1975), which couldn't be displayed until now. The atrium has always been a destination for wedding photos but a new dining salon and boardroom have been added with an eye to generating rental revenue, which has always been a top priority for the privately owned corporation that has spent all of its \$30-million



Ottawa as seen from inside the Museum of Nature's splashy new Lantern glass tower. PAWEL DWULIT FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

budget from the government. A spike in attendance could help the bottom line. The museum drew about 250,000 visitors a year before the redesign, but dipped to as low as 100,000 during the reno. DiCosimo expects some 350,000 people to visit this year.

From a heritage standpoint, the Museum of Nature was not something to be neglected. It has variously housed several museums and galleries including the National Gallery of Canada and hosted Parliament for four years after the Parliament buildings burned down in 1916.

So the federal government footed the \$216-million bill for structural updates, with the museum raising "gallery-development" funds from private sources.

Soon, the museum's leadership will change as well. DiCosimo retires on July 5 and newly elected board chair Florence Minz is hoping the sparkling new digs will help lure someone with scientific credibility, but also entrepreneurial vigour, to shape its future.

"This has moved the museum, a national treasure, a quantum jump forward," Minz says.

More gets a 'Fort Knox' to store art and valuables

filling customs forms.

"It's a state-of-the-art facility," said Francois Curiel, Asia president of Christie's, which has leased a floor of the building to provide storage for private clients. "Storage will again become a significant part of the business."

past decade on arts facilities such as museums, concert halls and exhibitions. "The art market is growing rapidly."

metals, antiques, vintage cars, wine, cigars



Over 25 years, we have evolved our viewpoint
about design to create extraordinary
moments and opportunities for people to have
experiences that change their understanding
and perspective of the world they live in.

REICH+PETCH

1867 Yonge Street Toronto, ON Canada M4S 1Y5
TEL (416) 480 2020 FAX (416) 480 1881
www.reich-petch.com
info@reich-petch.com