



Staten Island Advance

Staten Island Museum: Nothing to show at May 10 gala but its new \$26.8M home at Snug Harbor



The new Staten Island Museum, in the "temple row" on the grounds of the Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, Livingston. (*Advance file photo*)

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on April 21, 2014 at 9:12 AM, updated April 21, 2014 at 9:19 AM

LIVINGSTON -- When the 133-year-old Staten Island Museum finally throws wide the doors of its new home, there will be nothing to see.

That's the whole idea.

"Imagine: A Gala Preview Celebration" May 10 in the museum's newly retrofitted headquarters on the grounds of the Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical

Garden, will be all about enjoying the interior before it is transformed into regulation museum space.

For the moment, the three-story headquarters is only full of potential. Exhibits, text, art, graphics, furniture and all the other expected art-history-and-science treasures will be installed in the next few months.

So, the May party (cocktails, dinner, dancing and a tour) will ask guests to simply enjoy the new 21st-Century interior of the building, an 1879-vintage Greek Revival structure on the cultural center's "temple row."

The marble and granite facade, now glistening, is unaltered. The interior, however, was virtually gutted so that a new steel skeleton could be installed inside. One historic feature, a wrought-iron staircase, was preserved and repaired.

Building A, as it has been identified for years, was dormitory space when the campus was a gated retirement community for mariners, from 1833 to the mid 1970s.

Earmarked for the Staten Island Museum for 40 years, the retrofitting was first launched in the mid 1980s, but halted when funds ran out. It was restarted with a much-improved design in 2011.

Museum president and CEO Elizabeth Egbert recalled, "There was a point in the construction process when you could literally see from the dirt floor in the basement to the roof of the building with only steel beams holding the fragile historic exterior in place. I had horrifying nightmares during that phase of it collapsing."

The \$26.8 million city-funded renovation included the installation of a geothermal heating and cooling system, one of the first in the city

Tickets for "Imagine: A Gala Preview Celebration" are \$200 a head. For reservations or information, contact Amanda Straniere at 718-483-7119 or AStraniere@StatenIslandMuseum.org