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MUSEUM BACKGROUNDER

The North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA), which opened to the public in 1956, houses the first major museum collection in the country to be formed by State legislation and funding. Since the initial 1947 appropriation that established its collection, the Museum has continued to be a model of enlightened public policy.

Today, it encompasses a collection that spans more than 5,000 years of history, a variety of celebrated exhibitions and public programs, an amphitheater for outdoor performances, and the nation's largest museum park—164 acres of public trails and parkland containing major works of art. One of the leading art museums in the American South, the NCMA recently completed a major, three-year expansion that places it in the front ranks of museums nationwide.

Collection

Since its initial acquisition of 139 works of European and American art, made in 1947 with a \$1 million appropriation of State funds, the North Carolina Museum of Art collection has grown to include major holdings in European painting from the Renaissance to the 19th century (enhanced in 1960 by an extraordinary gift from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation of 75 works dating primarily from the Italian Renaissance and Baroque periods), Egyptian funerary art, sculpture and vase painting from ancient Greece and Rome, American art of the 18th through 20th centuries, and international contemporary art. Other strengths include African, ancient American, pre-Columbian, and Oceanic art, and Jewish ceremonial objects, with one of only two permanent displays of Jewish art in an American art museum.



Berlinghiero, *Madonna and Child*, about 1230-40.
Tempera and gold leaf on panel, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Gift of Wachovia Bank and Trust Company, 1957.



El Anatsui, *Lines That Link Humanity*, 2008. Found aluminum and copper wire, 18 x 25 ft. Gift of Barbara and Sam Wells, 2009.

At present, the Museum is actively building its collection, which, along with the expansion, transforms the visitor experience. Recent acquisitions include, for example, a gift from the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation of 28 works by August Rodin, making the NCMA the leading repository of this artist's work in the southeastern United States.

A promised gift of mid- to late-20th-century art from the collection of Jim and Mary Patton includes work by Jackie Ferrara, Adolph Gottlieb, Ellsworth Kelly, Per Kirkeby, David Park, and Sean Scully, among others. Other new works of both historical and contemporary art include examples by such artists as El Anatsui, Roxy Paine, Jaume Plensa, and Ursula von Rydingsvard. These will be sited in the NCMA's new West Building and in the surrounding gardens.

Museum Park

The 164-acre Museum Park, opened in 1999, consists of open areas with streams, woodlands, trails, and monumental works of art. The Park is a laboratory for experimentation with environmental art and restoration and a place in which the public can experience the relationship between art and nature. It is also the site of activities ranging from concerts and festivals to nature study and family programs. The Park's trails are part of Raleigh's 63-mile Capitol Area Greenway System.

The Museum's amphitheater, the Joseph M. Bryan, Jr., Theater, the site of outdoor films and musical performances, is located in the Park. With 500 seats and lawn seating for 2,000, the Theater was designed by a team that included artist Barbara Kruger, who created a work in which eight-foot letters spell out "PICTURE THIS"; architects Henry Smith-Miller and Laurie Hawkinson; and landscape architect Nicholas Quennell.



Gyre (1999) by Thomas Sayre in Museum Park.

Planning and policy for Museum Park are developed with the assistance of the Partnership for Art and Ecology, a collaboration of the Museum and the College of Natural Resources of North Carolina State University.

Exhibitions and Public Programs

In addition to displaying selections from its permanent collection, the Museum organizes and hosts a variety of special exhibitions. Recent examples have included *Julie Mehretu: City Sitings* (2008), with nine monumental paintings by this well-known contemporary artist; *The Big Picture* (2007), dedicated to contemporary large-scale photography; *Monet in Normandy* (2006–07); *The Potters Eye: Art and Tradition in North Carolina Pottery* (2005–06); and *Art in the Age of Rubens and Rembrandt* (2002–03), among many others.

The Museum is known for its dynamic roster of public programs. Offerings for adults include lectures and symposia, films, concerts, and more, while children's programming includes art workshops, performances, summer camps, and thematic family festivals. The Museum's interactive learning center, The Collection Connection, invites visitors of all ages to make connections between works in the Museum collection and familiar images. Every summer, the Museum offers schoolteachers art and cultural seminars based on the Museum's collection.

Expansion



View of the Rodin Court and Garden in the new West Building. Photo by Scott Frances. Courtesy NCMA.

The North Carolina Museum of Art first opened to the public in a renovated state office building in downtown Raleigh, the state capital. In 1983, it opened in its present location, in a building designed by Edward Durell Stone. On April 24, 2010, following a seven-month closure, the Museum reopened with an expanded and revitalized campus. A highlight of this is an important new building designed by architects Thomas Phifer and Partners, New York.

The new building, designed and constructed with great environmental sensitivity, is entirely paid for with funds from the State of North Carolina, Wake County, and the City of Raleigh, representing more than 60 years of government

leadership and vision. With 127,000 square feet, it will provide a significantly larger home for the Museum's permanent collection, enabling the Stone-designed building to be dedicated to rotating special exhibitions, education and public programs, and public events, as well as collections management and other administrative functions.

In addition to the new building, the NCMA's campus has undergone significant improvements, including the addition of a large entry courtyard and garden, redesign of the pond, the addition of site-specific artworks, and more.

Leadership

The director of the North Carolina Museum of Art is Lawrence J. Wheeler, Ph.D. Caterri Woodrum is deputy director and CFO; John W. Coffey II is deputy director for art; Daniel Gottlieb is director of planning and exhibition design.

General Information

The North Carolina Museum of Art is located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road in Raleigh. It is the art museum of the State of North Carolina (Bev Perdue, governor) and an agency of the Department of Cultural Resources (Linda A. Carlisle, secretary).

Admission to the Museum and grounds is free of charge. For information the public may call (919) 839-NCMA (6262), or visit www.ncartmuseum.org.

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Press Information

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