



Free for All

It may not be home to the Hope Diamond, but Raleigh is often dubbed the “Smithsonian of the South.” It’s no wonder—the city’s museums are gems in their own right. And the fact that many of them are free makes a visit priceless in more ways than one.



BY BROOKE PORTER —

North Carolina Museum of Art

IN 1947, NORTH CAROLINA became the first state to use public funds to buy art—and this museum’s collection was born. In April, the museum unveiled a new 127,000-square-foot, light-filled building with a soaring glass exterior, growing the exhibition space by 50%. (The original building is being used for special exhibitions, like *American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell*, opening Nov. 7.) The space is home to many newly acquired works, including paintings by Pablo Picasso and Ellsworth Kelly and 28 Auguste Rodin sculptures (making the museum the largest depository of the artist’s work in the South, with 31). The environmentally friendly structure has 362 skylights and shades that rise and fall based on sun levels, so the art is always perfectly illuminated. 2110 Blue Ridge Rd; 919-839-6262; www.ncartmuseum.org