



MEDIA CONTACT

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Lawrence J. Wheeler Director, North Carolina Museum of Art

Lawrence J. Wheeler was named director of the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) in October 1994. Since that time the Museum has become one of the leading art museums in the American South. Its program of major exhibitions—including presentations of the work of Rodin, *Rembrandt in America*, and *Monet in Normandy*—have attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Museum from across the nation and around the world.

Prior to joining the NCMA, Dr. Wheeler was director of development at the Cleveland Museum of Art from 1985 to 1994. From 1977 to 1985, he served as deputy secretary for the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, where he was responsible for overseeing the construction of the original NCMA building.

In 2006, under Dr. Wheeler's leadership, the Museum unveiled its much-anticipated design for an ambitious expansion. Dr. Wheeler's vision for a spacious, light-filled structure to house the Museum's collection became a reality upon completion of the building in spring 2010. Today the AIA Award-winning West Building, surrounded by sculpture gardens and reflecting pools, presents works drawn from the institution's outstanding permanent collection of more than 5,000 objects from ancient Egypt to the present day. The expansion initiative also transformed the Museum's original building into a center for temporary exhibitions, collections management, education, and administration.

Dr. Wheeler has worked passionately to develop the Museum's collection, including securing a gift of 29 Rodin sculptures from the Cantor Foundation, making the NCMA the largest repository of Rodin's work in the American South. He has also helped build the modern and contemporary collections substantially, including a gift of works by masters of mid- to late-20th-century American art—Milton Avery, Richard Diebenkorn, Helen Frankenthaler, Adolph Gottlieb, Hans Hofmann, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Motherwell, David Park, Sean Scully, Frank Stella, and many others—from the private collection of Jim and Mary Patton.

Dr. Wheeler's awards include the Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters from the Republic of France, the Medal of Arts from the city of Raleigh, the Leadership Award from the *Triangle Business Journal*, the Design Guild Award from the North Carolina State University College of Design, and the Thad Eure Memorial Award from the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau. In December 2000 he was named Tar Heel of the Year by the *Raleigh News and Observer*, which called him "the godfather of the Triangle's cultural boom" and cited his skill at melding "arts, politics, and commerce into a powerful new cultural force." In November 2010 Wheeler received the inaugural Mary D. B. T. Semans Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts from Duke University's Nasher Museum of Art.

Lawrence Wheeler grew up in Lakeland, Florida. He holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in history and French from Pfeiffer College and a Master of Arts and Ph.D. in European history from the University of Georgia.

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Photo courtesy of the *Triangle Business Journal*



Dr. Wheeler reviews the NCMA's *Judith and Holofernes* by Kehinde Wiley.