

MUSEUM PARK BACKGROUNDER

The North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) is sited within a 164-acre park encompassing rolling fields, woodlands, and meandering creeks. One of the largest such parks in the nation, the Museum Park links art and nature, a hallmark of the overall NCMA experience.

The Museum Park landscape features more than a dozen site-specific temporary and permanent works of art. These are the result of a program that facilitates collaborations among artists, designers, and environmental scientists to create art that is inspired by the natural world.

The Park is also a laboratory for experimentation with environmental art and ecological restoration.

In addition to works of art, the Museum Park includes an outdoor amphitheater, the Joseph M. Bryan, Jr., Theater, created in collaboration with artist Barbara Kruger, and three miles of trails and picnic areas. The Park's House Creek Greenway Trail connects the Museum to the Capital Area Greenway system, a 63-mile network of public open spaces and recreational trails maintained by the City of Raleigh. Organized activities in the Park include concerts, film screenings, and festivals held in the Joseph M. Bryan, Jr., Theater and the John Deere Green near the Museum.



Ledelle Moe, *Collapse I*, 2000



Thomas Sayre, *Gyre*, 1999

The origins of the Park date to late 1999, when the Museum opened the Museum Park Trail, developed jointly with the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The mile-long bicycle-and-pedestrian loop was the first phase of a network of art trails planned for the site. The Park occupies the site of a former farm, which was later replaced by a now-relocated state prison. North Carolina legislators granted use of the site to the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources in the summer of 2000.

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

Art

The Museum Park's natural setting forms the backdrop for contemporary art installations by regional, national, and international artists. Highlights include:

PICTURE THIS, 1994–1997, by Barbara Kruger, Henry Smith-Miller, Laurie Hawkinson, and Nicholas Quennell: The Museum's outdoor stage and amphitheater is a large-scale environmental work of art and the result of a collaboration of an artist, architects, and a landscape architect. Giant letters made of a variety of materials spell out *PICTURE THIS* and cover over 2½ acres of land. Many of the sculpted letters incorporate text that refers to the history, culture, and landscape of North Carolina.

Gyre, 1999, by Thomas Sayre: Three large-scale ellipses made of concrete, colored with iron oxide, reinforced with steel, and mottled with pebble residue from earth casting.

Wind Machine, 2002, by Vollis Simpson: A 35-foot-tall kinetic work constructed from found objects, including bicycle wheels, propellers, candleholders, and a model airplane, and featuring a whirligig atop a red-white-and-blue pole.

Cloud Chamber for the Trees and Sky, 2003, by Chris Drury: A *camera obscura* (an oversize pinhole camera) made of stone, wood, and turf inverts an image of the sky inside the structure.

Crossroads, 2005, by Martha Jackson-Jarvis: A tall, sentinel-like form combines brightly colored Italian glass tiles, orange and red carnelian stones, and shattered bricks—recycled from the Polk Youth Correctional Facility, which was located on the Museum grounds from 1920 to 1993—to create a densely patterned, textured mosaic.

Benches, bike racks, and sign structures, 2005, by Al Frega: Functional art made of metal bars salvaged from the prison that once occupied part of the Museum grounds.

Lowe's Park Pavilion, 2007, by Mike Cindric and Vincent Petrarca: A pavilion whose shimmering panels mimic the iridescence of a dragonfly's wings; the structure provides seating and shelter and is often used as an outdoor classroom.

Collapse I, 2000, and Untitled, 2007, by Ledelle Moe: Large-scale sculptures of the human figure, constructed of welded steel bars, construction mesh, and concrete.

Invasive, 2008, by Steed Taylor: A series of "road tattoos" resembling invasive plant species, painted on the paved surfaces of the trails.

Whisper Bench, 2008, by Jim Gallucci: An interactive work of art and bench located on either side of a trail. The two sections of *Whisper Bench* are linked by a hidden sound pipe that enables visitors to whisper to each other.

A Closer Look, 2010, by Tim Purus: 12 metal plaques installed along the paths and trails, each with a unique illustration of animals and plants native to North Carolina. They were designed as reliefs so that visitors may create rubbings of the image using a crayon and paper.

Park Pictures, 2010, by André Leon Gray, Harrison Haynes, and Stacy-Lynn Waddell: Large-scale outdoor picture frames in three locations along the House Creek Greenway Trail, features three local artists. The designs relate to the natural environment and the landscape.



Mike Cindric and Vincent Petrarca, *Lowe's Pavilion*, 2007

Trails

The Museum Park's trail system leads visitors through natural areas and to commissioned works of art. Designed for hiking, walking, and jogging, the trails allow visitors to experience art and nature and are designed for various types of activities: Paved trails welcome bicycles and leashed dogs, while mulched and gravel trails are reserved for foot traffic. Trailside signs provide information on art, plants, animals, and ecology. Brochures with information about the artworks are also available.

House Creek Greenway Trail, 1 mile: This paved trail winds through woodlands and across House Creek before crossing the Raleigh Beltline via the longest pedestrian bridge in the state. The Greenway continues eastward through the campus of Meredith College to the Hillsborough Street-NCSU area. To the west, the trail leads to Blue Ridge Road and extends to Umstead State Park via the Reedy Creek Greenway. The Greenway is a joint project of the Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation, the N.C. Department of Transportation, and the Museum.

Museum Trail, .4 mile: This paved path, which connects Museum parking with the Greenway, passes a storm-water retention pond used by students for nature study. The pond is currently under redesign as a major work of environmental art.

Woodland Trail, .4 mile: This mulched trail, which lies in the Park's nature preserve, is for foot traffic only. It forms a loop that begins and ends on the House Creek Greenway near Martha Jackson-Jarvis's sculpture *Crossroads*.

Prairie Trail, .4 mile: This gravel trail bisects a former pasture that is being restored as a prairie, crosses House Creek, and returns to the Greenway through a section of forest bottomland.

Museum Pond

As part of an overall storm-water management plan, the Museum is currently rebuilding its retention pond, scheduled for completion in fall 2010. An innovative new system will transform the pond into a series of wetlands featuring terraces planted with native perennials and ornamental grasses. As water moves across these various ecosystems, pollutants will be filtered from the water via plant roots and soil particles. The pond and surrounding areas will serve to improve water quality and beautify the area with diverse species of plants.

Joseph M. Bryan, Jr., Theater

Opened in April 1997, the Joseph M. Bryan, Jr., Theater in the Museum Park is a 500-seat outdoor theater with lawn seating for 2,000. The facility spells out the phrase "PICTURE THIS" in 80-foot-long letters (*see description above*). In addition to hosting films and performances throughout the summer, the Theater features an area where visitors may picnic.



Joseph M. Bryan, Jr., Theater in the Park

General Information

The Museum Park is located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road, in Raleigh. It is open during daylight hours and entry is free. (Admission may be charged for performances held in the Park Theater.)

Restrooms, water fountains, and snacks are available inside the Museum and during events in the Park Theater. The Park is patrolled by State Capitol Police, Park staff, and Museum security. Public Information: (919) 839-NCMA; www.ncartmuseum.org.

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Press Information

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