

NEWS RELEASE

STREET 2110 Blue Ridge Road Raleigh, NC 27607-6494
MAIL 4630 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-4630
TEL 919.839.6262 FAX 919.733.8034 WEB ncartmuseum.org



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MUSEUM REOPENED APRIL 24, FOLLOWING MAJOR THREE-YEAR EXPANSION; DRAMATIC NEW BUILDING AND SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE PROVIDE NEW HOME FOR PRESTIGIOUS COLLECTION

*Designed by Thomas Phifer and Partners,
project integrates art and nature, transforming visitor experience*

The **North Carolina Museum of Art** (NCMA)—one of the most important and distinguished museums in the South—has completed a major, three-year expansion and **opened to the public on April 24, 2010**. The expansion dramatically transforms the visitor experience of the Museum, which, sited in a 164-acre park in Raleigh, offers a unique blend of art, architecture, and nature.

The centerpiece of the expansion is a new 127,000-square-foot, light-filled building designed by New York-based architects **Thomas Phifer and Partners**. The single-story structure, surrounded by gardens and courtyards, showcases the Museum's wide-ranging collection, including dozens of new and recent acquisitions.



View of the Rodin Court. Photo by Scott Frances. Courtesy NCMA.

On the occasion of the expansion, the Museum has acquired many additional works through gifts, promised gifts, commissions, and purchase. These encompass important examples of both contemporary and historical art from around the world. Highlights include site-specific work by such internationally acclaimed artists as Roxy Paine and Ursula von Rydingsvard, installed in the landscape, and El Anatsui, Patrick Dougherty, Jackie Ferrara, Ellsworth Kelly, David Park, Jaume Plensa, and others, installed in the new building.

NCMA Director Lawrence J. Wheeler states, "The North Carolina Museum of Art is thrilled to have completed its transformative expansion and looks forward to welcoming friends old and new to its



North Carolina Museum of Art. Photo by Scott Frances. Courtesy NCMA.

glorious new building and landscape. We could not have asked for more: a building that is both aesthetically stunning and environmentally “green”; a space to show our collection to the very best advantage; and a place that will serve as a destination not only for art lovers but also for anyone seeking a respite and a place of beauty and serenity. Importantly, all of this is free of admission, and has been paid for with public funds—a truly inspiring example of enlightened

government, one that ensures that the NCMA really is the *people’s* museum.”

In addition to creating a significantly larger home for the Museum’s collection, the new building, known as the West Building, also contains a new restaurant and retail store. The expansion project also enables the NCMA’s 1983 East Building, designed by the eminent architect Edward Durell Stone (1902–78), to become a dynamic center dedicated to temporary exhibitions, education and public programs, and public events, as well as a place for collections management and other administrative functions.

The two Museum buildings are located on a campus of softly rolling hills edged by native woods. Major works of sculpture and artist-conceived environmental projects are sited throughout this landscape, which also includes an outdoor amphitheater created in collaboration with artist Barbara Kruger, as well as picnic areas and trails for walking and biking.

The New Building

The low rectangular volume of the new building blends seamlessly into the NCMA’s reconfigured arrangement of architecture, gardens, and uncultivated landscape. Indeed, approached via a serpentine road that leads from a nearby highway into the Museum campus, the building—clad in anodized aluminum panels with large areas of glass—appears to dematerialize into soft reflections of the surrounding landscape and sky. The structure’s distinctive roofline is defined by a rhythmic series of curves that expresses a system of vaults and coffers that bring daylight into the building.

Mr. Phifer states, “In designing the new building for the North Carolina Museum of Art, we wanted to create something that is beautiful but that does not compete with the art, a building that puts the art first and foremost. All of the building’s elements, from the oculi in the ceiling, designed to bring in controlled natural light, to the expanses of glass that bring the outdoors in, to the views between and among galleries,



Detail, Entry Canopy. Photo by Scott Frances. Courtesy NCMA.

have been created with an eye to providing the best possible experience for viewing the diversity of art in the collection. It has been a very great pleasure to see the building come to completion, and it will be an absolute thrill to see it come alive with visitors.”

While—unusually—there are four doors into the new building, enabling visitors in the gardens and plazas to enter freely, many people will be drawn to the main entrance by an allée of trees sited in an



View of the Rodin Galleries. Photo by Scott Frances.
Courtesy NCMA.

entry-garden. This is part of a new 5,650-square-foot plaza that links the new and existing architecture with the landmark 1997 amphitheater. Upon entering the building through tall glass doors, visitors will find themselves in a capacious sculpture hall, immediately engaged with art, rather than in the more typical museum lobby, which separates the outdoor environment from the works of art inside.

Oriented on an east-west axis, the sculpture hall serves as the spine around which 40 exhibition galleries are organized. It contains examples of

classical sculpture and culminates at its west end with an installation of more than 30 works by Auguste Rodin, 28 of which are from a major gift from the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation. In just one of the many points at which the architecture seems to blend with its outdoor surroundings, a glass window-wall behind the Rodin works offers vistas of, and access to, a courtyard containing additional sculptures by the artist, as well as a reflecting pool and views of the unfolding landscape beyond.

There are five such courtyards, each of which seems to enter the building, breaching the perimeter of what would otherwise be a rectangular structure. All are visible through glass walls, and all but one are accessible directly from the sculpture hall, as well as from the outdoors. In addition to the Rodin courtyard, these include a landscaped courtyard on the north side of the building that houses a three-part sculpture by Ronald Bladen and a reflecting pool; a rock garden on the south façade containing 14 large granite boulders from western North Carolina; a courtyard next to the main entrance, also on the building’s south side, that serves as an outdoor seating area; and a reflecting pool—approximately 100 feet long and 25 feet wide—that appears to enter the east end of the building.

The new facility, which has white oak floors and white interior walls, provides more than 65,000 square feet of exhibition space. The galleries house examples from the Museum’s collections of antiquities, Renaissance art, European painting and sculpture, 18th- and 19th-century American art, African art, pre-Columbian art, Jewish ceremonial objects, and modern and contemporary art. Rather than being organized into a set pathway, the galleries contain entry and exit points throughout, inviting personal exploration and encouraging visitors to make their own connections among and between the works on view.



View of the Altarpiece Gallery. Photo by Scott Frances.
Courtesy NCMA.

The quantity of natural light that enters the building is controlled by the Museum as needed. Removable scrims in the ceiling oculi are calibrated to meet the lighting requirements for particular kinds of artwork, while fabric curtains on the glass walls are of three different densities, ranging from nearly opaque to diaphanous, depending on the type of work to be protected. In addition, roll-down shades enable a complete shut-out of outdoor light. All window coverings are in shades of white.

Changes to Existing Building

Prior to the creation of the new building, the Edward Durell Stone-designed East Building housed both special exhibitions and long-term installations drawn from the NCMA's permanent collection. Today, with the collection housed in the new building, renovation of the East Building has begun. When it is complete, in fall 2010, it will yield more than 12,000 square feet of gallery space to be used for special exhibitions—over 40 percent more than was previously available for this purpose.

The East Building will include an expanded box office and renovated lobby that will visually connect it to the West Building. It will also be the site of the NCMA's popular family and public programs, its administrative offices, library, and new art-storage facilities.

Key Project Professionals

The NCMA assembled an exceptional team for the expansion and renovation. In addition to Thomas Phifer and Partners, this includes the architect of record for the new building, Pierce Brinkley Cease + Lee Architects, Raleigh, N.C.; and landscape architects Lappas + Havener, PA, in Durham, N.C. Natural and artificial lighting design has been created in a collaboration between Fisher Marantz Stone, in New York City, and Ove Arup, in London and New York City.

Project Funding

The State of North Carolina, Wake County, and the City of Raleigh provided \$72.3 million for the construction of the West Building, as well as a \$7.6 million commitment for the repair and renovation of the East Building, bringing the public commitment to the project to \$79.9 million. This confident governmental investment demonstrates North Carolina's belief that the arts are important to the character of the state and its people.

North Carolina Museum of Art

The North Carolina Museum of Art houses the art collections of the State of North Carolina. The State's initial 1947 appropriation of \$1 million was used to purchase 139 European and American paintings and sculptures. In 1960, the Museum's collection was immeasurably enriched with the gift of 75 works of art from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, making the NCMA the country's second-largest repository of Kress gifts, exceeded only by the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, DC.

Today, in addition to presenting selections from its collection, the Museum organizes and hosts a diversity of special exhibitions and offers a rich complement of education and public programs.

The North Carolina Museum of Art first opened to the public in April 1956, in a renovated state office building in downtown Raleigh, the state capital. It launched the present Edward Durell Stone-designed facility on April 5, 1983. In 1997, as part of the 50th-anniversary



Gallery Plan

celebration of its founding, the Museum opened its performing arts and film venue, the Joseph M. Bryan, Jr., Theater, in Museum Park. With its present expansion and renewal, the Museum is poised to become one of the nation's most vital cultural destinations: www.ncartmuseum.org.

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Press Information

In North Carolina: Alesia DiCosola, North Carolina Museum of Art, (919) 664-6795; adicosola@ncartmuseum.org

Outside North Carolina: Jeanne Collins & Associates, LLC, New York City; (646) 486-7050; info@jcollinsassociates.com.