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North Carolina Museum of Art Receives Two American Alliance of Museums Awards

African Gallery reinstallation and educational website NCMA Learn honored

Raleigh, N.C.—The North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) took home two awards from the annual meeting of the American Alliance of Museums, held May 6–9 in Phoenix, Arizona. The Museum’s newly reinstalled African Gallery, including its interactive Threads of Experience hands-on learning space, received a Special Achievement Award in the Excellence in Exhibition competition, and the NCMA’s educational website, NCMA Learn, won a MUSE Award in the Education and Outreach category.

“It is always an honor to be recognized by our museum peers and to stand out as one of the country’s most forward-thinking cultural institutions,” said Museum Director Larry Wheeler. “Both the African Gallery and NCMA Learn were collaborative undertakings created with the visitor at the forefront. We hope both projects help redefine how people interact with art.”

The reinstalled African Gallery was chosen for “special achievement for effective use of evaluation,” recognizing the “solid audience research utilized to inform different points of view and not dictate the narrative” of African art. The 6,500-square-foot gallery, which opened in June 2017 on the entry level of the Museum’s East Building, is three times as large as the collection’s previous space and features African art spanning 16 centuries. Highlights of the gallery include improved light control, a site-specific wall drawing by Nigerian-American artist Victor Okpuk, a North Carolina lender wall, and nearly twice as many works of art on view, including some that have not been on display in a decade.



The gallery’s interactive learning space Threads of Experience invites visitors to learn more about the collection through hands-on activities like a floor-to-ceiling loom, embroidery, and an interactive mirror that transforms the visitor’s image using textures and patterns from the collection. The NCMA worked with consulting curator Elizabeth Perrill from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro on the reinstallation, which was made possible through generous funding by the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust. The Museum also worked with Jeanine Ancelet at Audience Focus in conducting research to understand visitor needs through a

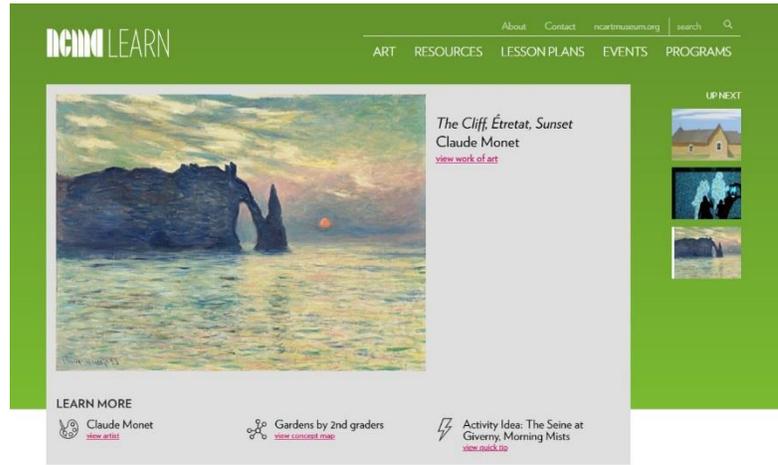
baseline study, visitor intercepts, and focus groups.

[NCMA Learn](#), the Museum’s educational website that launched in summer 2017, won a MUSE Award at the same conference in the Education and Outreach category. The MUSE awards competition recognizes outstanding achievement in gallery, library, archive, or museum media and technology

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efforts. The competition is an activity of the Media and Technology Professional Network of the American Alliance of Museums.

Created with Durham, N.C.-based digital agency Cuberis and made possible by the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation, the web portal for educators and students of all grade levels and disciplines is designed to facilitate learning in and through the arts using objects in the Museum's permanent collection. The site launched in time for the 2017–18 school year and featured a series of teacher workshops, school tours, and virtual field trips created to explore the intersection of technology and multi-subject integration.



The American Alliance of Museums has been developing best practices and advocating for Museums since 1906. It has more than 35,000 members including professionals, volunteers, institutions, and corporate partners. Its mission is to champion museums and nurture excellence in partnership with its members and allies. These awards were given as part of its annual meeting and Museum expo.

Images (top to bottom):

Visitors experience the new African Gallery at the North Carolina Museum of Art.

The home page of NCMA Learn, featuring lesson plans with Claude Monet's *The Cliff, Étretat, Sunset*, 1882–83.

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About the North Carolina Museum of Art

The North Carolina Museum of Art's permanent collection spans more than 5,000 years, from ancient Egypt to the present, making the institution one of the premier art museums in the South. The Museum's collection provides educational, aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural experiences for the citizens of North Carolina and beyond. The 164-acre Museum Park showcases the connection between art and nature through site-specific works of environmental art. The Museum offers changing national touring exhibitions, classes, lectures, family activities, films, and concerts.

The Museum opened West Building, home to the permanent collection, in 2010. The North Carolina Museum of Art, Lawrence J. Wheeler, director, is located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road in Raleigh. It is the art museum of the State of North Carolina, Roy Cooper, governor, and an agency of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Susi Hamilton, secretary.

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