

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **EXPANDED MUSEUM FEATURES NEW RESTAURANT, STORE, AND COLLECTION GUIDES**

*Offerings Enrich Museum Experience*

In addition to creating an outstanding new home for the Museum's collection, the North Carolina Museum of Art's (NCMA) new gallery building, designed by architects Thomas Phifer and Partners and known as West Building, also contains a **new restaurant** and **retail store**. The 127,000 square foot, light-filled building provides not only expansive spaces devoted to the exhibition of artworks, but also superb new areas created specifically for dining and shopping. These amenities enrich the visitor experience of the Museum and add to its appeal as a compelling leisure destination.

In conjunction with the opening of West Building and the reinstallation of the Museum's prestigious permanent collection, the Museum also unveils numerous **self-guided interpretative resources** for visitors of all ages. These encompass audio tours and printed "Art Encounter" gallery guides, offering additional layers of information and encouraging visitors to experience the Museum's collection, which spans some 5,000 years, at their own pace.

#### **The Museum Store**

A striking new retail store opens in West Building on April 23. Inspired by the Museum's transformation, the new Museum Store is set to debut with a greatly expanded range of merchandise. The Store's clean lines, sleek white fixtures and furnishings, and abundant natural light blend with the overall design of the building and provide a simple and beautiful backdrop for an array of new items.

The Museum Store features unusual jewelry, glass, books, stationery, apparel, design items, and children's items. In an exciting new initiative, the Store is introducing a line of signature branded items and exclusive NCMA-developed products featuring reproductions of works of art from the permanent collection. Indeed, a majority of the products available—even new shopping bags and gift wrap—have been inspired by the atmosphere and architecture of the new building, works of art in the collection, and the Museum Park. In addition, the Store offers commissioned artworks created solely for the NCMA by award-winning local and international designers and artisans. This unique, high-quality merchandise

ranges from ceramic vessels, jars, and teapots by Barbara Sebastian, a participant in the 2010 Smithsonian Crafts Show, to exquisite glass art by Penland School of Craft alumna Tommie Rush. Honoring North Carolina's rich arts-and-crafts traditions, the Museum Store also specializes in handcrafted items by North Carolina artisans, chief among them objects by master potters Blaine Avery and Joel Queen and gracefully shaped wooden vessels by self-taught artist Joel Hunnicutt.

The Museum Store is open during regular Museum hours. It also has an online retail operation that carries a wide selection of merchandise: <http://store.ncartmuseum.org/>.

### **Iris, the Museum Restaurant**

The Museum's new restaurant serves fresh, innovative cuisine in the contemporary setting of the new building. Chefs Andy and Jennifer Hicks specialize in seasonal fare and use many locally sourced ingredients to create innovative and delectable menu items. Many dishes have been inspired by works in the collection that call to mind regional flavors or suggest an enticing pairing of cultures.

Named in honor of Museum benefactor Iris Cantor—and evoking images of the exquisite flower that bears the same name—Iris, the Museum Restaurant is located at the front of West Building, in a rectangular space that is open to the rest of the building. White walls and a soaring glass wall facing courtyard vistas combine with minimalist décor to give the new space an airy and contemporary atmosphere. Opposite the glass wall, a monumental sculpture of swirling saplings, by North Carolina artist Patrick Dougherty, runs the length of the restaurant. Sleek white furnishings complement the luminous day-lit space.

Iris, the Museum Restaurant, serves lunch Tuesday through Saturday, dinner on Friday, and Sunday brunch. Hours are Tuesday–Saturday: 11:30 am–2 pm; Friday dinner: 5:30–10 pm (last seating 8:30 pm); Sunday: 10:30 am–2:30 pm Reservations: (919) 664-6838.

### **Audio Guides and Other Interpretive Resources**

A variety of new interpretive materials offer visitors avenues for experiencing the reinstallation of the permanent collection.

Two new audio guides are available in a variety of formats. The Museum's **Cell Phone Tour** provides informal remarks by curators, educators, artists, and scholars about works in the galleries and the Museum Park. Visitors may access the indoor/outdoor tour by dialing (919) 327-1533 from their cell phones. An audio wand may also be rented at the Information Desk for the indoor portion of the tour.

The **Soundtrack Experience** is an innovative audio program that pairs works of art with sound clips to help visitors discover their own interpretations of works in the collection. For example, while looking at a the Museum's *Market Scene on a Quay*, by Frans Snyders, which shows the abundant foods available in the Flemish port of Antwerp in the 17th century, including fish, crustaceans, fowl, game, and produce, visitors listen to a recording of legendary chef Julia Child discussing European markets and the

proper preparation for game, including hanging, plucking, and roasting. This free tour is available using an audio player from the Information Desk.

Museum staff has also developed a series of self-guided "**Art Encounters**," printed materials available at carts located at either end of the new building. These free gallery resources are designed to help adults and families experience the world of art in new ways. The *NCMA Owner's Manual* is a general introduction to the highlights of the Museum's wide-ranging collection. Visitors can learn about the genius of Auguste Rodin and meet some of the characters residing in the inferno with *The Gates of Hell*. *The Ancient Egypt* Art Encounters introduces visitors to the mysteries of Egypt as depicted in the Museum's oldest works of art, while *The Grand Tour* leads visitors on an aristocratic tour of the European continent to "buy" fine art. Combining art and anthropology, *A Wedding Celebration* explores marriage ceremonies in different cultures.

Two Art Encounters were specifically created for children and families. *Be a Color Catcher* challenges the Museum's youngest visitors to discover how artists use color in surprising ways, and *Are You Game?* invites exploration of all the Museum's galleries, as children collect cards to play a game at home.

Art Encounters are made possible by the support of Wachovia Wells Wachovia Fargo Foundation.

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### **Press Information**

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