

news release

For immediate release

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NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM OF ART UNVEILS DESIGN FOR NEW BUILDING AND EXPANDED CAMPUS, CREATING NATION'S LARGEST ART MUSEUM PARK

New Building To Open In 2009

RALEIGH, N.C.—On September 14, 2006 the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA)—the first major American art museum collection to be formed by state legislation and appropriation—unveiled the much-anticipated design for an ambitious expansion initiative, including construction of a new 127,000 square foot building to house the institution's outstanding permanent collection of more than 5,000 objects spanning antiquity to the present day. This expansion initiative will also transform the NCMA's existing 1983 Edward Durrell Stone building into a center for temporary exhibitions, collections management, education, and administration, and create lyrical gardens and outdoor galleries in a landscape for art and artist-conceived environmental projects. The institution's completed 164-acre campus will be the nation's largest art museum park, with walking paths, bike trails, ecological projects conceived with artists, and site-specific commissioned works in a rolling green landscape fringed by pine woods.

The Museum broke ground on the project in December 2006 and will open to the public in 2009. The new NCMA building has been designed by noted architect Thomas Phifer

of Thomas Phifer and Partners, New York. Local executive architect for the project is Pearce Brinkley Cease + Lee Architects of Raleigh, N.C. The landscape architect for the expansion project is Peter Walker of Peter Walker and Partners, Berkeley, Ca., which is working in collaboration with the local firm of Lappas + Havener, Durham, N.C.

The graceful new single-story Phifer pavilion will provide the Museum with 45 percent more exhibition space for presenting works from its permanent collection, including a group of more than two-dozen Auguste Rodin sculptures donated to the Museum in 2005 by the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation. In addition to dramatically expanded exhibition space, the new building will offer a Museum store, a café, and a dramatic garden entry plaza that unifies the composition of new and existing architecture with the NCMA's landmark outdoor amphitheater created in 1997 by Laurie Hawkinson and Henry Smith-Miller of Smith-Miller Hawkinson Architects, with renowned artist Barbara Kruger.

The NCMA expansion initiative is a \$138 million capital project that includes construction of the new building, adaptive re-use of the existing Stone building, creation of the new gardens, significant expansion of the Museum's endowment, and other costs related to planned growth. The NCMA has raised \$78 million to date toward this financial goal, including an unprecedented appropriation of \$52.2 million from the North Carolina State Legislature and \$15 million in funding from the City of Raleigh and Wake County.

"The expansion of the NCMA is an event of local and regional importance, and of national and international ambition. By creating a more appropriate, beautiful and inspiring home for the Museum's outstanding permanent collections, we will be able offer every resident of and visitor to our state a singular experience, an intellectual and emotional journey with art and nature, and programming for people of all ages. In the nation's largest art museum campus, we will finally be able to accommodate larger crowds for special exhibitions, and attract more international exhibitions and alliances. An expanded Museum will add to our community's quality of life and have a positive impact on the economy," said Museum Director Lawrence J. Wheeler.

Selecting An Architect

The NCMA's decision to undertake a major building program was catalyzed by exceptional institutional growth over the past two decades. As the institution's exhibition program matured, attendance increased and collections grew. However, space limitations placed extreme constraints upon the Museum's ability to present its nationally important permanent collections. Upon officially securing the property that now constitute the NCMA's 164-acre park, Director Lawrence J. Wheeler and the NCMA boards saw a clear opportunity to dramatically increase the Museum's contribution to the cultural life and economic well-being of their city, state, and region through a project designed to create one of the finest cultural destinations in the southeastern United States—an oasis for art and learning of national impact and international perspective.

The NCMA systematically narrowed an initial list of approximately 30 candidate architects and identified three firms of special interest: Arata Isozaki & Associates of Tokyo, Thomas Phifer & Partners of New York City, and Weiss/Manfredi Architects of New York City. The Museum's Selection Committee conducted in-depth interviews with the candidates, viewed buildings and other projects, and visited the firms' offices in order to arrive at a decision in 2002. In announcing their decision to award the NCMA expansion commission to Thomas Phifer and Partners, the selection committee cited the firm's dual emphasis upon technical innovation and the art and craft of making supple, serene buildings that establish an eloquent dialogue with both the natural and human ecologies of their sites.

Thomas Phifer formed his eponymous firm in 1997 following a decade as design partner for the firm of Richard Meier & Partners, where he was responsible for the design of some of the office's most honored and visible public buildings and private residences. Phifer, who in 1995 received the prestigious Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, has received wide attention and critical praise for work that is sophisticated in its treatment of complex construction details, advanced in its application of new and ecologically sensitive technologies, and highly attentive to methods by which an

atmosphere of serenity can be achieved through appropriate forms, materials, and innovative control of natural daylight. Thomas Phifer and Partners has designed numerous residential, commercial and institutional buildings, including the Steelcase Workstage 001 Building, a high-technology prototype office building in Grand Rapids, Michigan; a new United States Federal Courthouse in an historic district of Salt Lake City, Utah; the Arizona State University Gateway Project, a campus-within-a-campus for study and presentation of visual and performing arts; restoration and expansion of Castle Clinton Federal Monument at the Battery in New York City, including a new visitor center and outdoor performance theater over New York Harbor; and collection of widely published residences in New York, including the Taghkanic House in New York, recipient of a PA Award. Thomas Phifer and Partners was chosen by the Mayor's Office of New York City in 2005 to redesign the streetlights of the city.

The New Building

The new building at the NCMA—with one level above ground for permanent collections galleries and public spaces, and one below ground for back-of-house functions and a sub-grade connection to the existing Stone building—will be the jewel of a carefully reconfigured arrangement of architecture, cultivated gardens, and uncultivated natural landscape. Bordered by woods and major highways, the NCMA campus is conceived to suggest a cultural oasis, a retreat where visitors can see a Temporary exhibition, watch a film, walk along art-punctuated trails in a focused visit, or spend an entire day exploring one of the finest general art collections in the nation at a leisurely pace.

The new building, with a total of 127,000 square feet, was designed to “sit very, very softly and gently upon the landscape,” according to Phifer. It will rise to just 26 feet above the ground. As visitors approach it from a serpentine road into the campus, the structure will appear as a single, softly luminous volume that merges with the landscape by abstracted reflections of land and sky on its lightly shimmering surface. “Instead of using glass we are investigating how steel—the ultimate opaque material—can actually be used to create an ethereal effect,” Phifer explained.

The decision to make a one-story building derived from the challenge of creating ideal viewing conditions for the Museum's permanent collections. "We started with the art," Phifer commented. "Our mission was to give the Museum beautiful, contemplative, but alive-feeling spaces defined by good proportions, human scale, connections to nature outside, and plenty of controlled natural light. A single-story building allows us to deliver the maximum amount of all of these attributes, especially controlled top-light in all appropriate spaces. And staying close to the ground plane creates a feeling of accessibility to visitors and a strong connection to place. The building is literally and figuratively grounded. This was a priority for us as designers translating the profound public trust, the privilege of a state museum showing a great collection owned by the people."

Visitors will be drawn into the building by a double allée of upright trees in a 5,650-square foot entry courtyard with an outdoor "porch garden" designed by Peter Walker of Peter Walker and Partners. Emerging from this garden into the Front Hall of the new building, visitors will have a clear view of art installed in the long Central Hall of the permanent collections galleries beyond the visitor information desk. This open, light-filled area of the Front Hall will also connect to a new café, a retail store, restrooms, and coat check area. Here, as throughout the entire building, daylight will create a soft, constant glow and windows will offer views of outdoor Garden Galleries and vistas beyond.

The long 11,500-square foot Central Hall of the building is described by Phifer as "both a path and a destination" —an exhibition space for sculpture, a spine along which clusters of galleries are organized for display of the Museum's permanent collection, and a spot for re-orientation during the journey through art of different areas and origins. Works by Rodin will be installed at the end of the Central Hall, where a clear glass window wall will offer vistas onto gardens, more Rodin works, and the unfolding landscape in the distance. With white oak floors and pale, plastered, 16-foot walls throughout, more than 65,000 total square feet of exhibition galleries will be suffused

with controlled natural light (and supplemental electrical light as needed), and will be strategically pierced with windows for glimpses of the natural context. Indoor galleries will house, in rough chronological order, antiquities, Renaissance art, European painting and sculpture, American art, African art, pre-Columbian art, Jewish ceremonial art, and modern and contemporary art.

The sub-grade level of the new building will house mechanical support, art preparation space, and part of a new underground passageway connecting to the existing Stone building across the ground-level entry plaza.

The NCMA's existing Edward Durrell Stone building will be transformed into a lively center for temporary exhibitions, education programs and public events, collections management facilities, and reconfigured administrative offices. The current 9,200-square foot European Art gallery in the Stone building will become special exhibition galleries, increasing the Museum's capacity for presenting temporary shows by more than 40 percent. This space will be supplemented by another 3,000 square feet through addition of what is today the American Art gallery. The Stone building will also be the location of a new 4,000-square foot on-site art storage vault.

Summarizing his firm's approach to designing the NCMA expansion, Thomas Phifer has said, "The mission of the Museum is to teach, to enlighten, to delight people in ways that encourage them to take a personal journey and grow as individuals. The building has to advance that mission and express it in spaces, forms, and materials. So our design approach to the new building and the entire reconfigured campus has been to emphasize openness, connections to nature, and a real sense of place that will make people feel they belong at the Museum, own it, and want to explore every aspect of it. If our architecture can advance a sense of embrace, then it can also contribute to the quality of life in the state and the region. That's our goal and our responsibility. And for us it's also an honor."

About the North Carolina Museum of Art

The NCMA houses the art collections of the State of North Carolina. These collections had their beginnings in 1947 when the North Carolina General Assembly appropriated \$1 million in state funds for the purchase of works of art, making North Carolina the first state in the nation to use public funds to buy a collection of art.

The initial \$1 million appropriation was used to purchase 139 European and American paintings and sculpture. The Samuel H. Kress Foundation matched the appropriation with the gift of 75 works of art in 1960, adding the Museum to its program of endowing regional museums throughout the United States with works from the Kress Collection. This gift to the Museum became the largest and most important Kress donation of any except that given to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Today the Museum's permanent collection spans more than 5,000 years, from antiquity to the present, making it a premier cultural destination in the southeastern United States. The ancient art and artifacts collection includes Egyptian funerary art and important examples of sculpture and vase painting from the Greek and Roman worlds. The NCMA collection of European paintings and sculpture—from the Renaissance through impressionism—is internationally celebrated with important works by Giotto, Sandro Botticelli, Raphael, Anthony van Dyck, Peter Paul Rubens, Antonio Canova, and Claude Monet, among others. American art collections of work from the 18th and 19th centuries feature paintings by John Singleton Copley, Thomas Cole, Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins, and William Merritt Chase. Modern art holdings include foremost works by such American artists as Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe, Franz Kline, Frank Stella, Jacob Lawrence, Elizabeth Murray, and Joel Shapiro, and works by such European masters as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Paul Delvaux, and contemporary artists Anselm Kiefer, Gerhard Richter and Bill Viola. The Museum's collections also include African, ancient American, pre-Columbian, and Oceanic art, as well as Jewish ceremonial art.

In 2005 the Museum received a gift of more than two-dozen sculptures by Auguste Rodin from the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation. The Museum will install the

collection in its new Thomas Phifer-designed building and establish a Rodin study center in 2009. With this gift, the Museum becomes the only Rodin repository in the southern part of the United States. The first North Carolina Museum of Art building, opened to the public in April 1956, was housed in a renovated state office building in downtown Raleigh, the state capital. On April 5, 1983, the Museum opened in its present facility, designed by architect Edward Durrell Stone. Lawrence J. Wheeler, Ph.D., was named director of the NCMA in 1994.

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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 visual arts museums in the Southeast. The Museum uses its collection to provide educational, aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural experiences for the citizens of North Carolina and beyond. The Museum offers a series of changing national touring exhibitions, classes, lectures, family activities, films, and concerts. 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, Michael F. Easley, governor, and an agency of the Department of Cultural Resources, Lisbeth C. Evans, secretary. Museum hours are Tuesday–Thursday and Saturday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m.–9 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Monday. Admission is free. For information call (919) 839-NCMA (6262), or visit the NCMA's Web site at www.ncartmuseum.org.

