



## North Carolina Museum of Art

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### **Statue of Bacchus Exhibition to Open at the North Carolina Museum of Art**

*Exhibition and programming explore decades-long conservation journey of the storied sculpture in the NCMA's collection*

**Raleigh, N.C.**—[\*The Statue of Bacchus\*](#), which has undergone extensive research since the 1960s when the North Carolina Museum of Art realized it was a patchwork of marble fragments, returns on view in special exhibition *Bacchus Conservation Project: The Story of a Sculpture*. Open March 7–September 27, 2020, the exhibition explores the history of the sculpture, the scientific investigation, the conservation process, and the making of its new arm. The exhibition also includes a series of related events, including a free Family Day, a scholarly panel, and a wine-tasting event.



The Bacchus Conservation Project, underway since 2013, is a multidisciplinary and multiphase endeavor, featuring scholars, scientists, engineers, artists, and even former North Carolina State University basketball player [Wyatt Walker](#).

“The Bacchus Conservation Project is a perfect example of the ways in which history, science, technology, art, and even sports can connect,” said Valerie Hillings, Museum director. “The Museum has been

working on this collection project since the 1960s. Thanks to today’s technology and the passionate commitment of our staff, we’ve been able to illuminate this art historical mystery. We’re thrilled to complete the Bacchus Conservation Project and celebrate with an exhibition and related events.”

Academic interest in the statue began in the 1960s when classical scholars realized the sculpture was a patchwork comprising a rare 2<sup>nd</sup>-century Roman torso, a head from a different ancient sculpture, and limbs, hair locks, berries, and leaves that were added later. The removal of the head 30 years ago initiated a derestoration process, but the treatment was not initially intended to extend to the rest of the sculpture.

Recent research, structural analysis, and materials analysis, however, led the Bacchus project team to reconsider the original plan. The team’s scientific, conservation, and curatorial data showed that Bacchus contains more fragments from ancient quarries than previously thought and that displaying

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each fragment separately did not make curatorial sense. Together, though, these ancient fragments create a wonderful statue of the Roman god of wine.

"Reusing the fragments for a re-creation posed a serious structural integrity risk, but putting the statue together again was feasible," said Caroline Rocheleau, NCMA curator of ancient art. "So instead, we opted for a reresoration of Bacchus. The culmination of this decades-long endeavor is incredibly exciting, and we can't wait to share it with our visitors."

In addition to creating a new arm for the statue, the new conservation treatment has returned the statue to its 1960s appearance, reattaching the head to the body.



The exhibition also features a marble touch station where visitors can learn about the different types of marble in the statue; a "build your own god" interactive station to customize a new Roman god; and the Story of Bacchus digital interactive, where visitors can explore the statue's history and the far-flung origins of its marble pieces.

An additional way to explore the statue is through a 360-degree video. Created as a form of digital outreach for high school students, the immersive experience includes an exploration of the Bacchus research and the NCMA's conservation lab. Published on the Museum educational resource website, [NCMA Learn](#), the 360-degree video is available to the public and to schools without the need to schedule a program held at a specific time.

Two publications are planned as part of the project: a coloring book featuring Bacchus and other deities, available March 15, and a scholarly publication available in August, presenting the research conducted over the last few years. Both publications will be for sale in the Museum Store. A schedule of related programming is below:

### **Duke Energy Family Day: Ancient Art Adventures**

March 15, 10 am–2 pm

Free

East and West Buildings

Designed for intergenerational audiences, Family Day introduces the big ideas behind the Bacchus project through age-appropriate activities across the two Museum buildings. Visitors can discover all things mythical in Greek and Roman art through hands-on art making, living sculpture, ancient hairstyling demonstrations, and a scavenger hunt. The event fosters close looking at the exhibition as well as making connections with the Museum's additional holdings in classical art.

### **Virtual Panel on Marble**

Thursday, March 12, 10:30–11 am

Free

Online

High schools statewide can join the NCMA for a free live session broadcast from the Bacchus exhibition. NCMA conservator Corey Riley and artist Peter Oakley discuss marble from a scientific and an artistic standpoint. The videoconference offers student the opportunity to ask questions and interact with the presenters.

### **Cheers to Bacchus! Lecture and Wine**

Thursday, April 30, 7–8:30 pm  
East Building, SECU Auditorium  
\$15 Members, \$18 Nonmembers

Toast the completion of the Bacchus Conservation Project with a glass of wine. Corey Smith Riley, objects conservator, discusses the conservation treatment that has restored the *Statue of Bacchus* to its original condition and reveals the secrets behind the quirky, historically correct, and reversible addition of its new right arm. (*The immersive 360 degree experience is available at this event.*)

### **Bacchus Scholars Day**

Saturday, September 12  
Details forthcoming

The science and scholarly research on the *Statue of Bacchus* is explored through presentations by the scholars and scientists who worked on the project. Scholars Day is intended for participants interested in the use of science and technology in the study and conservation of works of art, conservation history, and technical art history.

### **Image captions (top to bottom):**

NCMA conservator Corey Riley works with art handlers Andy Gabrysiak and Ben Briders to reattach the head of *Statue of Bacchus*.

Wyatt Walker, former North Carolina State University basketball player, models with a bunch of grapes at the team's practice facility in Raleigh while Heather Pendrak of Pendragon 3D scans his arm.

### **Project Information:**

The Bacchus Conservation Project is made possible by Bank of America and The Institute of Museum and Library Services (MA-30-16-0264-16). Additional support is provided by Steve and Frosene Zeis and Don Davis and Peggy Wilks.

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### **About the North Carolina Museum of Art**

The North Carolina Museum of Art's 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 Ann and Jim Goodnight 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 North Carolina Museum of Art is led by Director Valerie Hillings, PhD. Located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road in Raleigh, the NCMA is the art museum of the State of North Carolina and an agency of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, serving under the leadership of Governor Roy Cooper and the direction of Secretary Susi Hamilton, DNCR.