

AS ASSETS GO, A MUSEUM'S COLLECTION IS ITS GREATEST.

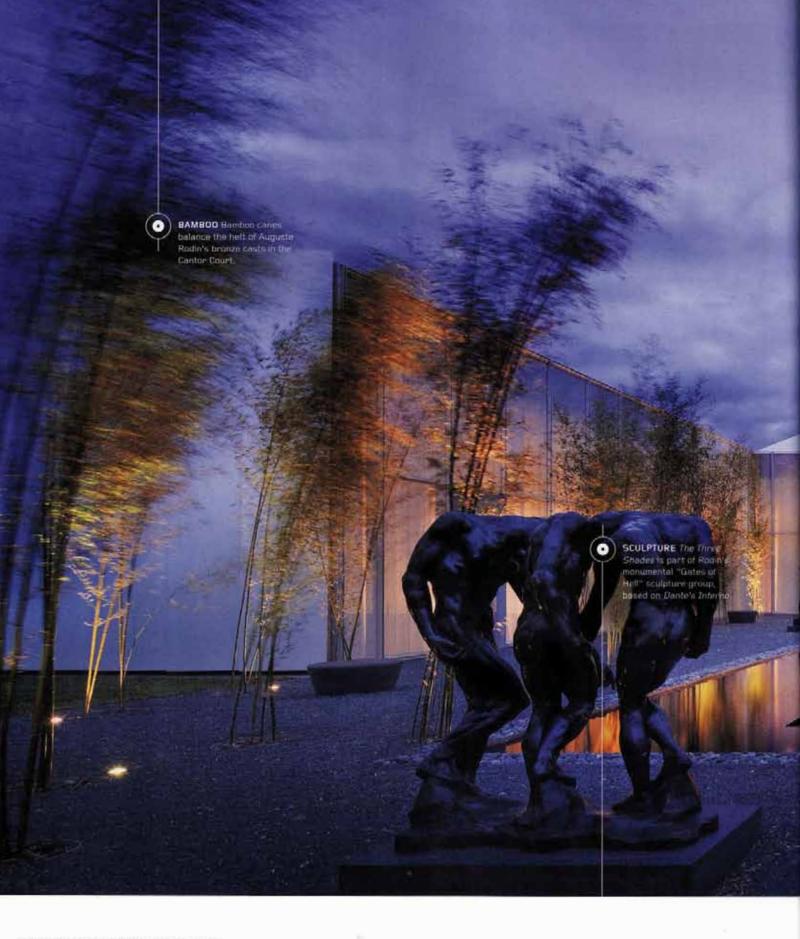
By 2000, the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh (NCMA) needed a larger home for its growing collection, which includes works by Homer, Bierstadt, Giotto, and Giacometti. In planning to move the permanent collection to a new building, which was completed in 2010 by the architecture firm Thomas Phifer and Partners with Pearce Brinkley Cease + Lee, the museum incorporated its other great asset into the expansion plan: a 164-acre site between Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill.

The firm Peter Walker and Partners (PWP) was originally hired by NCMA in 2006 to design the landscape around the new addition, working with the Durham firm of Lappas + Havener. Walker completed schematic designs for the museum's grounds, which included several elements that survive today, including an entry allée and a series of reflecting pools meant to mirror the building's planes. But Walker left the project in 2007 (museum officials and members of the design team have been rather reticent around this issue), and the museum turned to Lappas + Havener to complete the design, which received an award of excellence last fall from the North Carolina Chapter of ASIA.

For the museum and sculpture park, Lappas + Havener developed a design for the entire site, from a series of formal sculpture courts around Phifer's new West Building outward to a looser, pastoral sculpture park that follows an existing greenway. "The interpretation of nature in the more rural part of the site is the framework for this museum landscape," says Walt Havener, ASLA, the principal designer. "We've taken the rolling topography [of the greenway] and intensified it around the museum in terms of landforms and drainage."

It's a topography Lappas + Havener knew better than just about anyone. The firm has been involved with the museum since the early 2000s, before Walker's or Phifer's arrival in Raleigh, and had completed an early site plan for the museum's property. The firm's







SITE

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Lappas + Havener; North Caroline Museum of Art

- LAPPAS + HAVENER
 created a stripped-down
 version of the Museum
 Park forest's texture,
 color, and structure
 around the new
 West Building.
- 2 VISITORS ascend a bluff to enter the museum's sculpture park.
- THE HOUSE CREEK

 DREENWAY TRAIL loops
 through NCMA's sculpture
 park, past half a dozen
 sculptures along the
 wooded "art loop."
- THE LOWE'S PARK PAYTLION by Tunic Design and Mike Cindric stands at the nexus of three sculpture park trails.
- A MORAINE defines
 the wildest part of the
 landscape design, which
 becomes more scripted
 as you get closer to
 the museum.



RIGHT

The entire building and its sculpture courts can be eccessed by a meandering path through a grove of must broke, nobye miodow grasseli, and fescue lawns.

- 1 West Building, Cantor Court
- 2 Bryan Court
- 3 East Court
- 4 South Court
- 5 Entry Path
- 6 Entry Court (Elm Allée)
- 7 Entry Plaza
- 8 East Building
- 9 Amphitheater

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Lappas + Haveher, North Carolina Museum of Art

> **EXPANSION** RENDERING

HOW MANY **AMERICAN** MUSEUMS COUNT THE LANDSCAPE AMONG THEIR

scheme for the bioretention pond that now sits southeast of the museum buildings also dates from this period.

Since 1983, NCMA operated out of an ungainly brick bunker designed by Edward Durell Stone and completed after his death. The building had

major problems from the beginning. It came in way over budget, so many of its galleries had to be cut and the collection hung wherever there was wall space-including spaces along the walls of a cavernous atrium. Stone's original scheme included a series of Babylonian terraces that were also value-engineered out in the end, making it appear as though the museum-shrunken and denuded-had haplessly landed in a mowed field.

PRIME

ASSETS?

The plan for Phifer's 127,000-square-foot West Building is a central hall with five galleries that spiral away from its spine. It's a highly orthodox grid, to be sure, that orders the building's structure as well as your movement. Everything seems to snap to a line. Within that framework, five exterior courts open in the spaces between extruded galleries-some are long and thin; others are foreshortened and broad. Each gallery is programmed in concert with an elemental focus—on stone, water, or reeds-and conspicuously named for donors.



Robert Bladen's Three Elements slices diagonally across the Wheeler Court to break an otherwise monotonous grid.

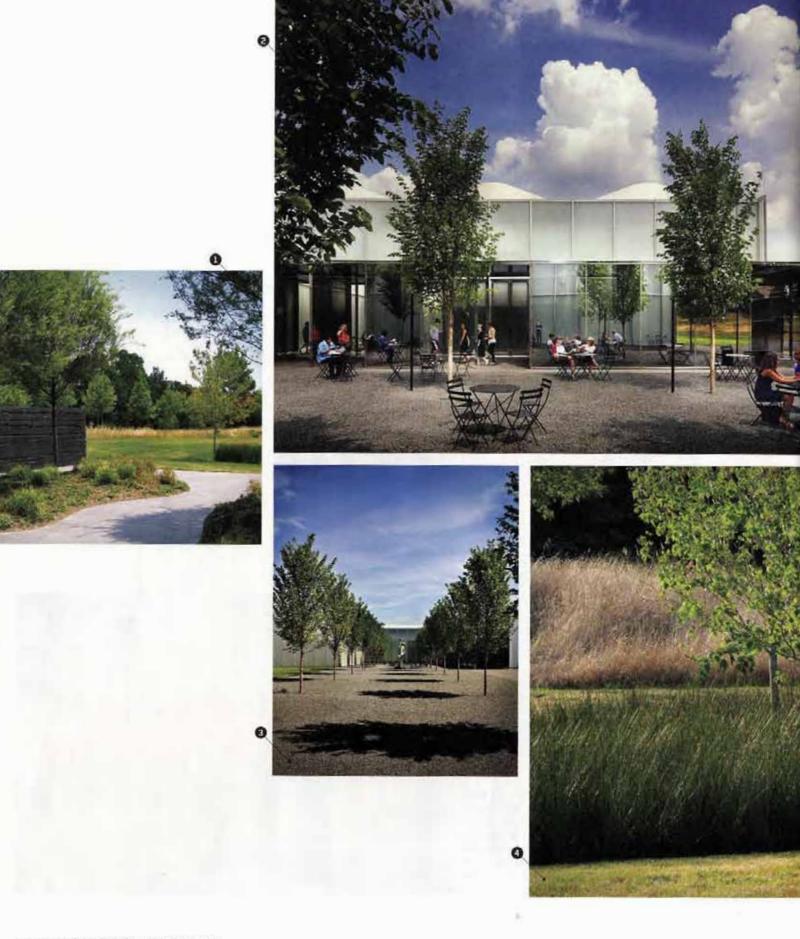
BELOW

Visitors don't arrive at the museum so much as they descend into its landscape and the entry plaza from the parking lot.

IMAGE CREDITS

KC Ramsay







THE ENTRY PLAZA ACTS AS A HINGE BETWEEN CONVENTIONAL MUSEUM SPACE AND THE LANDSCAPE BEYOND.





1 WALL

A black, poured-in-place concrete wall defines the Cantor Court's western border.

2 CANDRY

NCMA's entry court is bounded by a canopy that's reflective on the outside and semitransporent from the inside

3 ELMS

An American elm aliee mediatos between the ordry path and the entry plaza.

4 PATH

The exterior sculpture counts can be reached by a meandering path through native meadow grasses and feacus lawns.

S BAMBOO

The Cantor Court's underlit bemboo creates a sprightly presence at right against Rodin's torqued figures

6 LANDSCAPE

"In time," says Thomas Philler, "the landscape will grow and take over as the principal image of the inuseum."

IMAGE CREDITS

 Courtey Lappas + Havener, North Carolina Museum of Art.
 Scott Frances, 3, KC Ramsay, 4 Courtesy Lappas + Havener, North Carolina Museum of Art, 5, Jesse Turner, 6, Scott Frances.



ABOVE

Biorstention terraces, in part, filter-storm runoff between the museum's teshval lawn and the pond below

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Lappas + Hovener, North Carolina Museum of Art. On the west is Cantor Court, which is bisected by a big reflecting pool and forces you to approach its Rodin bronzes and bamboo canes in a roundabout way. On the north is Bryan Court, which is more of a ramble among perennial beds and Chinese elms. Bryan Court also contains two sculptures that are notable; Robert Bladen's Three Elements, which slices diagonally across the court to break an otherwise monotonous grid, and Lappas + Havener's black, poured-in-place concrete wall that defines the court's western border. Striations in the wall, which are remnants of sand randomly distributed during the pouring process, rough up an otherwise sleek patio of granite pavers.

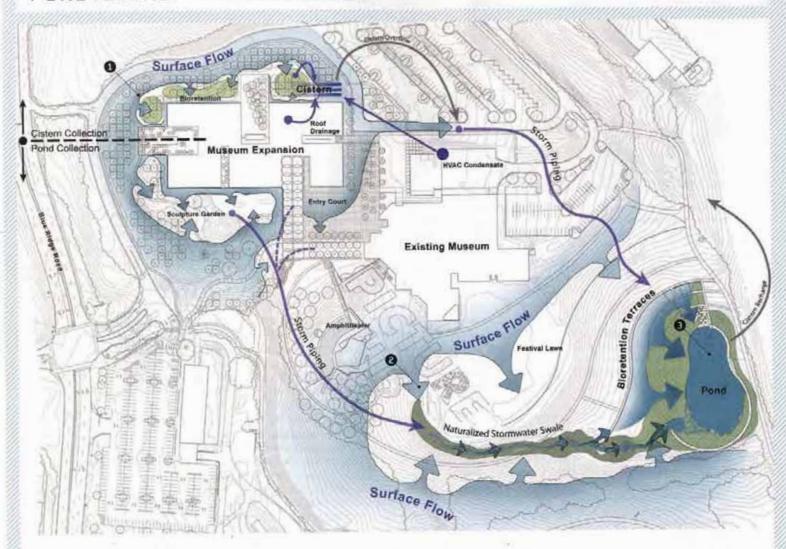
Phifer's expansion has an entry plaza, but it doesn't have a back side. The entire building and its sculpture courts can be reached by a meandering path through a grove of river birches, native meadow grasses, and fescue lawns. Because the museum does not charge admission, museum officials and the design team agreed that access to the galleries and courts does not have to be as highly controlled as it is at a museum that does charge. "The porosity of this building is unique," Havener says, "and because it's a free institution, you can enter from four different points and have different paths and experiences through the landscape."

On this walk around the Phifer building, two smaller courts appear as skinny incisions into the building's cubic volumes: a pool to the east that uses black dye to enhance its reflectivity and a boulder garden to the south, which is dotted with six-million-year-old granite rocks from western North Carolina and grounded by beds of vinca and hellebores.

People arriving at the museum can see the South Court as they move down toward the entry plaza. In the larger scheme, each of these courts actually acts as a stage you're supposed to view from the museum's interior. Phifer's interest in transparency plays out here in an almost voyeuristic way: The translucent sun shades that screen natural light into the museum also act as veils that blur the view out. The forms in each of the exterior courts—Rodins and rocks and so forth—appear in a soft white haze. You can detect people and sculpture outside, but the view in from one of these courts is obscured by these sun shades, and the courts effectively become stage sets.

The fifth court is the entry plaza, which brings you in from one of two skillfully hidden parking lots and governs the circulation

POND+BIORETENTION PROJECT



- BIORETENTION Road surface flow is absorbed by a bioretention area between the Cariton and Wheeler courts.
- 2 SWALE Surface flow from the museum's festival levin combines with runoff from the museum in a naturalized stormwater swale.
- 3 RECHARGE The pond recharges the museum's fountains and irrigation system after collecting water from multiple sources

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Lappes + Havener, North Carolina Museum of Art A key component in Lappas + Havener's work for the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) is its pond renovation project, which draws from the museum's cistern and irrigation system. The museum will incorporate the pond into its ecology education programming. It's bordered by two rings of pink step walls and sits at the museum site's far eastern edge along the sculpture park's return path to the museum's campus. As you go from the pond back up toward the museum's plaza, water is continually moving down into the low-lying wetland.

Between an access road to the north and a four-lane city road to the west, NCMA's new West Building landscape acts as a sponge for road surface flow down into a bioretention area between the Bryan and Cantor sculpture courts. Stormwater from these courts, as well as HVAC condensate from the older East Building, are funneled into a 90,000-gallon cistern just to the east of Bryan Court. Storm piping from this cistern, as well as from the museum's entry court area, feeds into a series of bioretention terraces and a naturalized stormwater swale, which also collects surface flow from the bluff that separates NCMA's sculpture park from its building campus. From these sources, the water empties into the museum's pond, which is surrounded by red switchgrass, little bluestem, and Indiangrass along its upper terrace and a mixture of grasses along its lower terrace.

In this scheme, recycled water can recharge the museum's fountains and irrigation system, even during times of drought restrictions. Lappas + Havener and NCMA, in accordance with its grant from the North Carolina Clean Water Management Fund, hope that the pond will improve water quality in the House Creek basin. •

NCMA WEST BUILDING PLANTS

SCIENTIFIC NAME

O CANTOR COURT

Nymphaea 'Attraction' Nymphaea 'Chartle's Choice' Nymphaea 'Colorado' Phyllostachys nuda

(CHILDREN'S GARDEN (EAST)

llex cornuta 'Sizzler' llex vomitoria 'Shadow's Female' Illicium floridanum Panicum virgatum 'Shenandoah' Quercus phellos 'QPSTA' Rosa 'Radsunny'

EAST COURT

Phyllostachys nigra 'Hale'

ENTRY COURT

Acer rubrum 'October Glory'
Betula nigra 'Dura Heat'
Geranium sanguineum 'John Elsley'
Helleborus orientalis 'Candy Love'
Magnolia granditlora 'Little Gem'
Magnolia x soulangiana 'Dark Alexander'
Mepeta 'Snowflake'
Pleioblastus distichus 'Mini'
Ulmus americana 'Princeton'

MEADOW

Quercus nuttallii 'QNFTA' Quercus shumardii 'QSFTC' Schizachyrium scoparium

NORTH GARDEN BID-CELLS

Acer rubrum 'Red Sunset'
Juncus effusus
Rosa 'Radsunny'

SOUTH COURT (BOULDER)

Helleborus orientalis 'Candy Love' Vinca minor

O SOUTH ENTRY WALK

Acer ginnala 'Red November' Berberis julianiae 'Spring Glory' Ilex vomitoria 'Shadow's Female'

WHEELER COURT

Carex muskingumensis 'Oehme" Nelumbo 'Momo Botan' Polystichum polyblepharum Ulmus parvifolia 'Emer II' Vinca minor

COMMON NAME

Attraction water tily Chartie's Choice water tily Colorado water tily Nuda bamboo

Sizzler holly Yaupon holly Florida anise Red switchgrass Hightower willow aak Sunny Knock Out rose

Dwarf black bamboo

October Glory red maple Dura Heat river birch Etsley geranium Candy Love hellebore Little Gem magnolia Dark Alexander magnolia Snowflake catnip Dwarf barnboo Princeton American elm

Highpoint Nuttall oak Panache shumard oak Little bluestem

Red Sunset red maple Common rush Sunny Knock Out rose

Candy Love hellebore Common periwinkle

Red November Amur maple Spring Glory barberry Yaupon holly

Variegated palm sedge Momo Botan lotus Korean tasselfern Alee lacebark elm Common periwinkle for the entire complex. An American elm allée, which survives from Walker's original scheme, defines the museum complex's processional path and marks the entrance to the amphitheater and sculpture park, which includes a clever in-ground piece by the installation artist Barbara Kruger that's largely imperceptible unless you are staring at an aerial photograph of the site.

The plaza acts as a hinge between conventional museum space and the landscape beyond. But it's a creaky hinge. Even if it's clear to someone standing in the plaza that the amphitheater is an obvious part of the museum experience, the sculpture park beyond is not as visually obvious. You have to walk the length of a football field and forge ahead over a bluff to reach it.

Once you do, though, you are greeted by Thomas Sayer's Gyre, an enormous, three-ring gateway for the sculpture park's meandering paths. One path leads to a belvedere and the other becomes the House Creek section of the Reedy Creek Greenway. "The sculpture park has a strong environmental education component to it, and bringing people through, via the greenway, is a way to stretch that message." Havener says.

The sculpture park, which is open to the public, defines the southern half of the museum's entire site. The paths, activated by site-specific pieces like Martha Jackson-Jarvis's mosaic monolith Crossroads/Trickster I and Jim Gallucci's twisted Whisper Bench, represent both museum programming as well as places to relax. Tongue-in-cheek picture frames hung along the wooded portion of the greenway (with a rotating series of paintings) are juxtaposed with small shelters such as Chris Drury's Cloud Chamber for the Trees and Sky, which doubles as a camera obscura.

Although there is art throughout the whole site, Phifer and Lappas + Havener gave the museum experience a hierarchy that has to do with proximity to the museum proper. "The site is a bit like a French landscape," Phifer says, "as things are very rough in the distance, and the closer you get to the château, the more precise things get."

Phifer, Lappas + Havener, and NCMA worked to expand the visitor's experience out of a concern for the museum's continued relevance and a sense of environmental stewardship. They looked to precedents outside of France, like the Kröller-Müller Museum in the Netherlands and Yorkshire Sculpture Park in England. For the NCMA property, Lappas + Havener established a series of paths and spaces that lead the visi-



RIGHT

In the warmer months, water filles soften the hand edgms of the Conton Count's reflecting pool.

IMAGE CREDIT

Courtesy Lappas + Havener, North Carolina Museum of Art "THE PARTI
IS ABOUT AN
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WALT HAVENER.

tor from a highly scripted series of formal sculpture gardens around the Phifer building to a completely wild landscape.

"The parti is about an arrangement between na-

ture and art," Havener says, "and the hand of horticulture and maintenance becomes more prevalent the closer you get to the building."

Although the sculpture park is several hundred yards from the museum's courts and plaza, the two spaces conceptually hang together. Stripping the sculpture park's forest down to its most basic elements to reflect texture, color, and structure, Lappas + Havener inserted those elements back into the museum's immediate landscape. Oak trees along the sculpture park's ecotone reappear along the museum's entry path and South Garden, as do the sculpture park's native tall grasses.

Striations in the site's hierarchy become apparent when you stand on a belvedere about 100 yards inland from the sculpture park's entry bluff. Distant sculptures appear along the tree line before the southern edge of a pliant, no-mow meadow. A centurion smokestack (the remnant of a Civil War prison) stands to the west and paths dip down into the meadow, signaling three distinct paths that contain installation art pieces. Adjacent to the belvedere is a park pavilion by Raleigh's Tonic Design with Mike Cindric, which signals the return path to the museum.

Along that return path, Lappas + Havener have designed a bioretention pond that manages surface water and HVAC condensate with a naturalized stormwater swale, a rock weir, a wetland garden, and a grove of bald cypress. The museum plans to use this area as part of its educational programming.

In a larger sense, NCMA finds itself in the unusual position of curating the equilibrium between old and new concepts of a museum experience: the scripted and the unscripted elements of site as well as art and nature. In its artifice, the pond is a vital way station for the building's ecology, but it also draws nature closer to the more conventional museum spaces on the hill above.

There are other great sculpture parks in the United States—Storm King in New York or Laumeier in St. Louis come to mind—but how many preexisting American art museums count the landscape among their prime assets beyond a sculpture court? How many even have a landscape to count?

The only other one that comes close is the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA) (see "The Understory So Far," page 98). In 2010, the IMA opened its 100 Acres: Virginia B. Fairbanks Art and Nature Park west of the museum proper, designed by the late landscape architect Edward Blake with the architect Marlon Blackwell. Like NCMA, the IMA is advancing the idea that an art museum can include site-specific outdoor works in addition to painting and sculpture.

"Save for Indianapolis, there's nothing like what we have here," says Daniel Gottlieb, NCMA director of planning and design. "There are a lot of sculpture parks without our collection, and there are lots of collections without our relationship to the land."

"There is a strong functional relationship between the museum and the land, and there's an educational and curatorial relationship," Havener says. "But porosity and light are really what's at the heart of this project. They're integral to the building's concept of nature in the building, and they guided our ideas about movement through the landscape."

In a recent Artforum dedicated to defining the contemporary museum, the Danish artist Olafur Eliasson noted, "I like to distinguish between the museum as a reality producer and the museum as a reality container." NCMA offers a postscript to this distinction as a place to house art and a place to interpret it. The museum has invited the landscape to be part of our conventional notions of a contemporary museum and, as an agent of art's expansive definition, NCMA stands somewhere between exhibition, experience, and ecology. •

WILLIAM RICHARDS 19 THE EDITOR OF INFORM AND READINFORM COM.

Project Credits

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT LAPPAS + HAVENER, PA, DURHAM, NORTH CARDLINA. ARCHITECT THOMAS PHIFER AND PARTNERS. NEW YORK. ARCHITECT OF RECORD PIERCE BRINKLEY CEASE + LEE ARCHITECTS, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA. GENERAL CONTRACTOR BALFOUR BEATTY CONSTRUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH BARNHILL CONTRACTING COMPANY MEP ENGINEER ALTIERI SEBOR WIEBER, NEW YORK, ASSOCIATE MEP ENGINEER STANFORD WHITE ASSOCIATES, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA. STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING SOM, CHICAGO, LASSITER HOPKINS, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA. ELECTRICAL LIGHTING DESIGN FISHER MARANTZ STONE, NEW YORK, DAYLIGHTING DESIGN ARUP, LONGON, CIVIL, ENGINEER KIMLEY-HORN, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA. STORMWATER ENGINEER ARTIFEX, DENVER GOVERNOR OF NORTH CAROLINA MICHAEL EAGLEY SECRETARY OF DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL RESOURCES LISBETH EVAMS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NCMA LAWRENCE J. WHEELER, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND DESIGN, NCMA DAVIEL P. GOTTLIEB.