



## History

The Columbia Museum of Art opened to the public on March 23, 1950 at its original site, the historic Taylor House on the corner of Bull and Senate Streets. The Museum was Columbia's premier cultural institution throughout the 1950s and '60s with its art, natural history and science museum that included a planetarium.

During these years, the Museum's art collection was enhanced by large additions of Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque art from the Kress Foundation of New York that formed the nucleus of an important European collection. Modest wings were added to the west and east facades of the building in the '60s to accommodate the growing collection as well as the planetarium. During the '70s and '80s, the Museum pared down its wider role as a general museum with the deaccession of its natural history collection.

Faced with expensive care required for the building and the need for growth, the Museum pursued a host of initiatives, both at its past locale and at a variety of sites – all of which proved unfeasible. It was widely recognized that significant public money was a key to the institution's future. Finally, the City visited the idea of moving the Museum to the former Macy's department store located on Main Street.

The downtown site proposal was attractive to local municipal bodies such as Richland County Council and the Columbia City Council because it simultaneously addressed two public problems: the need for expanded public museum facilities and the need to revitalize downtown as the major retail establishments were leaving. The Columbia business community supported the site proposal for its commercial opportunities, possible increase in property values, and potential to attract new visitors downtown.

The new museum facility on Main Street, designed and engineered by Stevens and Wilkinson, opened to the public on July 18, 1998 and allowed the Museum to showcase its substantial art collection. The Museum currently has over 20,000 square feet of gallery space that permits it to bring a wider range of traveling exhibitions to South Carolina and provides the necessary space for the proper presentation of its collection, which includes over 8,800 objects. The current building has well-designed workspaces, storage for collections, art studios, a public auditorium, art library, Museum Shop and public reception spaces.

On July 18, 2009 the Museum opened renovated galleries and re-installed collection. More than 400 fine and decorative art objects are on view, with approximately 90 works on view for the first

time and expanded didactic materials to provide context for the collection.

On the second floor, the galleries occupy nearly 12,000 square feet and house the Museum's permanent collection of fine and decorative art. The 17 galleries are dedicated to ancient art from Greece, Rome and Egypt; late Medieval and early Renaissance; High Renaissance; Renaissance; Renaissance in Venice; Mannerism; 17th century Baroque; 18th century European; Neoclassicism; Asian and China Trade; Colonial and Federal America; 19th century American; 19th century European; early 20th century American; and Art Glass.

Temporary exhibitions are presented in a flexible space on the first floor that contains a minimum of 4,000 square feet with the capability of expanding to nearly 7,000 square feet. Gallery 15, on the second floor, also offers smaller changing installations.

The Museum provides a "window to the world" for visitors not only through the display of its collection, but with public programs. From Art School classes for teens and adults, to programs

specially designed for preschool children, people of all ages can find classes and workshops that inspire and enrich. For those visitors interested in lifelong learning, they can attend lectures, gallery talks and films. Music is another part of the Museum's offerings; world-class musicians as well as local musicians participate in concerts year round. School programs, including home school programs, offered by the Museum are some of the best in the area. School tours are curriculum-based and include an exploration of the galleries and a creative hands-on activity in the studios.

The Museum released a study conducted by Miley Gallo & Associates, LLC showing the Museum's economic impact within the community — more than \$23 million due to direct, indirect and induced impacts, giving the City of Columbia and Richland County Council a more than ten-fold return on their investment. In addition to the money generated, the Museum supports almost 370 jobs in the Columbia area. More than 12,000 people visit the Museum each month and spend almost \$8.2 million on lodging, food and beverages.