

# METROPOLIS

## Three Museums Bring Art Outdoors

*Metropolis*

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August 16, 2022



COURTESY TIPPET RISE ART CENTER/JAMES FLORIO. PHOTO BY JAMES FLORIO

In the age of social distancing and social media, outdoor art centers are experiencing a boon.

Art museums tend to come in one of two flavors; there are the monumental, classical buildings like The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Louvre, and there are the white box galleries that house modern and contemporary collections. Art-viewing also tends to be an indoor experience with museums primarily located in urban centers, but three museums offer an alternative that seems to be gaining popularity as museum goers seek out socially distanced venues and Instagram-worthy vistas. Set in stunning landscapes, Montana's Tippet Rise Art Center, Maryland's Glenstone, and the Hudson Valley's Storm King Art Center invite visitors to enjoy art and nature in equal measure; this summer, all three have announced or undertaken recent expansions and new projects.



Domo by Ensemble Studio. COURTESY IWAN BAAN

Located in Fishtail, Montana, not far from Yellowstone National Park, Tippet Rise is home to sculptures by Alexander Calder, Mark di Suvero, and Francis Kéré. It's also home to a herd of cattle and a flock of sheep. In addition to being a working ranch, Tippet Rise hosts a robust classical music program in a purpose-built timber frame "music barn." But the main draw is the sculptures, which are spread across 12,500 acres. Founders Cathy and Peter Halstead felt it was important that each sculpture was located in its own valley to give the viewer an uninterrupted experience with the art. "We want to make the invisible visible through the art, to give people the freedom to connect, to inspire, to dream," says Cathy Halstead.



"I like to work big," says sculptor Patrick Dougherty. "I think of my stickworks sculptures as big drawings, where you can use your whole body instead of just your hand," he explains. "[Cursive Takes a Holiday] symbolizes a more dynamic way of learning than the schoolhouse itself, which is based on mathematics, and reason and utility and this is based on happenstance and moment by moment creative effort." COURTESY TIPPET RISE ART CENTER/JAMES FLORIO. PHOTO BY JAMES FLORIO

One of the artists whom Tippet Rise has given the freedom to dream is Patrick Dougherty. His piece, *Cursive Takes a Holiday*, is a companion to his 2015 sculpture *Daydreams*, both made of thousands of woven willow branches inside a reproduction of a 19th-century schoolhouse, the latter was the first sculpture built at the art center. *Cursive Takes a Holiday* also extends from the schoolhouse, creating rooms that visitors can explore. Crafted out of thousands of willow branches harvested from a nearby streambed and bent and woven into shape, the structures take on otherworldly forms.

Other installations include *Beartooth Portal* (2015), *Inverted Portal* (2016), and *Domo* (2016) a series of pieces by Ensemble Studio, the Spanish architecture and sculpture practice led by Antón García-Abril and [Débora Mesa](#). Each of the three pieces were made by creating molds in the ground to cast large quantities of cement.

Visitors seeking shade and shelter in the rugged terrain can find it at [Xylem](#) (2019), an installation by Pritzker prize-winning architect Francis Kéré. A pavilion by a shady stream, it was assembled from lodgepole pine trees that had been felled by a beetle infestation.



COURTESY GLENSTONE

Glenstone, a contemporary art museum in Potomac, Maryland, is not an exclusively outdoor experience but aims to curate “art, architecture, and nature in a serene and contemplative environment.” This summer they debuted a new pavilion to house *Four Rounds: Equal Weight, Unequal Measure* (2017), a massive sculpture by Richard Serra. Designed by New York-based architect Thomas Phifer in collaboration with the artist, the pavilion is a concrete box illuminated from above by skylights that span the width of the roof. It’s just the sort of spare, foreboding place perfect for contemplating weight and measurement.

The project expands on Glenstone’s existing architectural language defined by simple white forms that emerge from a lush, wooded landscape. Other buildings on the site include Phifer’s 2018 “Pavilions,” a cluster of cubic masonry buildings arranged around a central reflecting pool, and the “Gallery,” a 2006 building by Charles Gwathmey. The new pavilion is located alongside a woodland stream and is accessible via an elevated boardwalk, allowing visitors to experience a sharp juxtaposition of natural and man-made forms.



Rendering of new welcome sequence at Storm King Art Center. Background right: Alexander Calder, *The Arch*, 1975. Purchase fund and gift of the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation © 2021 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. © STORM KING ART CENTER

At Storm King Art Center, which was founded in 1960, much-needed additions are underway. The museum has embarked on a \$45 million capital plan to build a new entry sequence and art conservation building to better serve the museum’s growing audience, community of artists, and staff.

A collaboration between Dublin-based [heneghan peng architects](#), [WXY architecture](#), and landscape architecture firms Gustafson Porter + Bowman and [Reed Hilderbrand](#), the entry sequence will comprise centralized parking, orientation and visitor information, accessible restrooms, and group gathering spaces. Native plantings will surround and guide visitors through an “outdoor lobby”—a semi-sheltered area where visitors can pick up tickets, use bathrooms, and learn about the museum and its programming. The plan will also make the 500-acre campus car free—except for a trolley, golf carts, and mobility vehicles.

Slated for completion in 2024, the project will include the first purpose-built buildings at Storm King and will help accommodate more visitors. Amy Weisser, deputy director of strategic planning and projects, says, “Increased attendance is absolutely something that we seek not for its own sake, but for the opportunity to share Storm King with more people.”

Its location in the Hudson Valley, less than two hours from Manhattan, made the museum a popular refuge and socially distanced activity during the pandemic. “When we reopened in July 2020, we saw a real interest from audiences and reflected that people were actually staying longer than they usually stayed because of the fairly unique opportunity that it offered to be in a safe space,” says Weisser. A quick look on Instagram confirms this—there are over 270,000 posts geotagged to the museum’s location. There are selfies with iconic sculptures including new works by Wangechi Mutu, moody photographs of artworks, and images of the landscape and wildflower meadows.

That’s the thing about an outdoor museum, it offers something for everyone.

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