

# A cultural escape

## Arts and museums in the Twin Cities

by Deborah Ultan Boudewyns

While attending ACRL's 12th National Conference in Minneapolis in April, be sure to find time to explore this cultural hotbed brimming with unique and accessible sites.

The two nationally hailed museums of the Twin Cities—the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts—are both in the middle of expansion projects.

The **Walker Art Center**, one of the most progressive and challenging contemporary art centers in the country, will be closed this spring. However the adjacent Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, one of the nation's largest urban sculpture parks, will remain open to the public. Stroll among sculptural icons, such as the Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen "Spoonbridge and Cherry" and Georges Segal's "Walking man," while witnessing the mighty construction site and design of the new Walker Art Center by the Swiss architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron, in partnership with Minneapolis-based Hammel, Green and Abrahamson, Inc.

Strolling across the Siah Armajani Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge, which links the Sculp-

ture Garden and Loring Park, is a thrill for thousands of downtown visitors every year. The bridge gives pedestrians comfortable passage over 16 lanes of streets and highway. Rewarding your bravery is a block of cafés and restaurants across from the park.

The Walker Art Center is loved for its enticing exhibitions and educational programs. Because of its central and vital role to the community, Walker Without Walls was created for the duration of the expansion project.

The **Minneapolis Institute of Arts** is the scholar's museum of the Upper Midwest with collections that cover the world and date back 5,000 years. Recently, Minnesota collectors of Chinese art contributed to the advancement of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts collection, making it one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Chinese art. The newly expanded gallery of up to 20,000 square feet, designed by architect Michael Graves, features this exceptional collection of Chinese art. Information about the exhibit, tours, and the permanent collection can be found at [www.artsmia.org](http://www.artsmia.org). Book lovers will want to visit the Minneapolis Institute of Arts

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### About the author

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for the special spring exhibition showcasing the first modern-day, hand-painted bible. The exhibit “Illuminating the Word: The Saint John’s Bible” will display approximately 70 pages of the bible, revealing the medieval and modern techniques of craftsmanship. Saint John’s has become an international center of the book arts and is in keeping with the Benedictine monasteries of the past. In 2003, the BBC presented a documentary on the six-year making of the bible project.

The **Weisman Art Museum** resides in a Frank Gehry structure, fantastical and Gaudi-like, situated alongside the Mississippi River on the University of Minnesota (UM)-Twin Cities campus. The modest sized but gem-filled collection features 20th-century American art with a cross-section of contemporary art from around the world. Special exhibitions from museums around the country are brought

to the gallery year-round, and this February marks the opening of an exhibition of works spanning from 1897 to 1930, by Alfred Maurer, the painter often referred to as “the first American modern.”

In keeping with its mission to collaborate with the UM faculty, students, and the community, the Weisman Art Museum has sponsored a special program “Public Art on Campus.” Displayed in a variety of locales around campus, such as building entrances and hallways, courtyards, and plazas, the art ranges from traditional sculpture to multimedia installations. This is an amusing treasure hunt of sorts that leads to discoveries about art, the campus, and Minnesota.

A smaller gallery on the UM west bank campus is the **Katherine E. Nash Gallery**.

The gallery, designed by nationally acclaimed architects Meyer, Scherer, and Rockcastle, is located in the beautiful new Regis Center for Art, strategically placed in the newly defined “Arts Quarter.” Exhibits include faculty and student work, but not exclusively.

Between downtown Minneapolis and the UM-Twin Cities campus is the **Mill City Museum**. Built within the ruins of the original Washburn A. Mill, the museum has been added to the Minnesota Historical Society’s network of museums and historic sites. The museum offers a tour that leads visitors to a giant elevator, where they can watch an exciting simulated performance of workers in the mill.

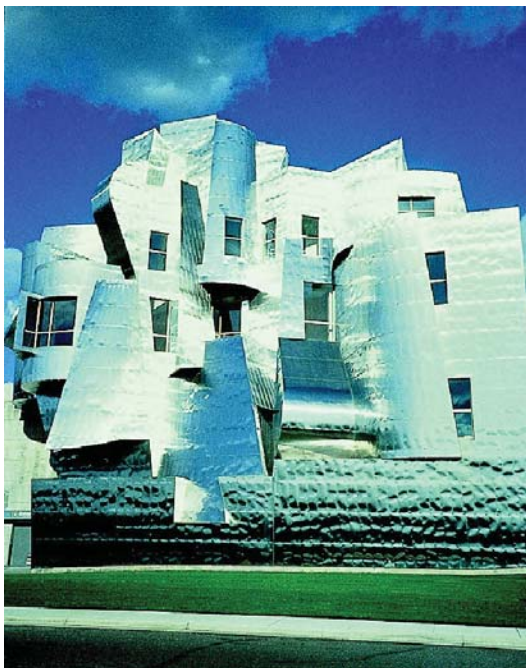
Creatively conceived and executed, the tour documents the flour milling industry that generated the growth of Minneapolis. Journeying through the eight-story Flour Tower is an illuminating way

to learn about Minnesota’s history. The tour ends on the top floor and balcony, where the view of Minneapolis and the river is truly extraordinary. Wander outside the museum’s courtyard, through the mill ruins, to the scenic overlook from the Stone Arch Bridge, first built in the 1880s.

Across Washington Avenue from the Mill City Museum is the **Minnesota Center for the Book Arts**, which offers a multisensory environment with a gallery, printmaking and papermaking studios, deli, and gift shop. Great respect for the tradition of bookmaking is merged with the vitality of a cultural arts center. Exhibit information for spring is yet to be determined, but a visit regardless promises to satiate those who relish the tactile quality of books.



**Mill City Museum was built within the ruins of the original Washburn A. Mill. Image provided by the Mill City Museum Public Relations office.**



The Weisman Art Museum resides in a Frank Gehry structure, situated alongside the Mississippi River on the University of Minnesota UM-Twin Cities campus. The image was provided by the museum's Public Affairs office.

While those of Swedish descent will find Minnesota especially interesting, due to its strong ties to that country and its immigrants,

the **American Swedish Institute** provides a great cultural experience for all. The institute was founded by Swedish immigrant and newspaper publisher Swan J. Turnblad "to celebrate Swedish culture." Located just south of downtown Minneapolis, the American Swedish Institute's historic museum offers a variety of programs, tours, and a gift shop. The Turnblad mansion is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is the only castle in the Twin Cities. As part of their yearlong 75th anniversary celebration is the February opening of the exhibition "A Community Collects," presenting art and everyday objects from the personal collections of members of the American Swedish Institute.

Learning more about Minnesota requires crossing the river to the **Minnesota History Center**. Architecture fans will want to see Hammel, Green & Abrahamson's L-shaped building set into a hillside in downtown St. Paul. The building provides 300,000 square feet of archival storage and three public levels of galleries, an auditorium, restaurant, and gift shops.

The **Minnesota Historical Society** is the world's largest repository of Minnesota

## ACRL National Conference needs you!

Would you:

- Like to gain the satisfaction of assisting your colleagues?
- Like to meet new people and expand your professional network?
- Give something back to the profession?
- Provide some additional justification for attending a conference?

If the answer to any of the above questions is yes, the 12th National ACRL Conference in Minneapolis, April 7–10, 2005, has something for you. To put on a successful conference requires many volunteers to serve in such roles as meeting room assistants, event ticket-takers or ush-

ers, Hospitality Booth assistants, Placement Service assistants, Internet Café assistants, and preconference assistants.

### What do you need to do to volunteer?

- Be prepared to give a few hours of your time
  - E-mail Volunteers Committee chair, Bob Rose, at [rosenf@uwec.edu](mailto:rosenf@uwec.edu). Please include your name, mailing address, email address, phone number, and dates you would be available to serve as a volunteer (if known).
  - And of course, you will need to register (and pay) to attend the conference
- See you in Minneapolis!

materials. On exhibit in April will be the Smithsonian's "The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden," which includes artifacts from the Smithsonian Institution and Minnesota Historical Society collections.

Other sites await those who embark on the mini-excursion to St. Paul. The **Minnesota Museum of American Art** is located in its new Riverfront Gallery in downtown St. Paul. The permanent collection with its focus on American art reinforces its companion collection at the Weisman Art Museum. While the spring exhibition schedule has not been determined, there is likely to be a show of pieces from the permanent collection—a necessary visit for followers of American painting.

On the first and third Friday of the month, the Minnesota Museum of American Art hosts soirees with live music, which could make for an elegant evening out.

The **Science Museum of Minnesota** boasts acres of indoor space filled with educational exhibits on anthropology, biology, and paleontology. Windows align the galleries with fantastic views of the Mississippi River. This spring, "Chinasaurus: The Great Dinosaurs of China" will display a collection of authentic Chinese fossils. Fossils have been one of the trademarks of the museum's collections along with an emphasis on artifacts of American Indian cultures of the Plains and Upper Midwest.

The smaller-scale, nonprofit galleries and art centers in Minneapolis are just as professional and well-established as the larger museums and cultural centers listed so far. Many of these spaces aim to show the work of local and regional artists complemented by internationally recognized artists. The **Minnesota Center for Photography** is newly relocated in a 4,000-square-foot gallery in the north east section of Minneapolis, which is a fast-growing spot for the arts, boutiques, and the café culture. The **Northern Clay Center** and the **Textile Center** are located on either side of the UM-Twin Cities campus, and **Intermedia Arts** and the **Soo Visual Art Center** are located on the south

side of Minneapolis, another emerging area for the arts.

While you prepare your presentations and schedule workshops and various meetings, be sure to plan to sneak in some of these small adventures; when you look back on your trip to the Twin Cities, you will be satisfied that you experienced a burgeoning cultural scene in the Upper Midwest. ■

## Where to go

- **Walker Art Center** (1750 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55403, 612-375-7622)
- **Minneapolis Institute of Arts** (2400 Third Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55404, 612-870-3131)
- **Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum** (University of Minnesota, 333 East River Road, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 612-625-9494)
- **Katherine E. Nash Gallery** (Department of Art, 405 21st Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55455, 612-624-7530)
- **Mill City Museum** (704 South Second Street, Minneapolis, MN 55401, 612-341-7555)
- **Minnesota Center for Book Arts** (1011 Washington Ave. So. Suite 100, Minneapolis, MN 55415, 612-215-2520)
- **American Swedish Institute** (2600 Park Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55407, 612-871-4907)
- **Minnesota History Center** (345 Kellogg Blvd. West, St. Paul, MN 55102, 651-296-6126)
- **Minnesota Museum of Art** (50 West Kellogg Boulevard—at Market Street—St. Paul, MN 55102, 651-292-4355)
- **Science Museum of Minnesota** (120 West Kellogg Boulevard, St. Paul, MN 55102, 651-221-9444)

For Web sites and contact information for the museums listed here, see the online article ([www.ala.org/acrl](http://www.ala.org/acrl), select "C&RL News" from the Quicklinks dropdown menu).