

# NORTON SIMON MUSEUM FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Renovation of the Norton Simon Museum's Galleries, Sculpture Garden and Theater

The Norton Simon Museum concluded its 5-year, \$8.1 million renovation project in December 2000. The Museum's redesigned galleries, sculpture garden and theater now provide an outstanding setting for one of America's great art collections, and give a rich and varied experience for its many visitors.

### Galleries

In collaboration with the Museum's Board of Trustees and Art Department, world-renowned architect Frank O. Gehry redesigned the Museum's 51,000 square feet of gallery space, improving the lighting, increasing ceiling heights and converting large gallery corridors into more intimate spaces that are better suited to the display of the Museum's collection of Western and Asian art.

The building project, which began in 1995, was the first major renovation undertaken at the Museum since 1975. The original building, designed by Ladd & Kelsey, opened to the public in 1969. In December 1998, the Museum marked the completion of the first phase of the project with the re-opening of the main floor galleries. The redesigned garden-level galleries re-opened in June 1999. Noting that the Museum houses what is perhaps "the last great synoptic collection of Western art from the early Renaissance to the 20th century ever assembled by a single person," The *New York Times* reported that "the Simon collection has never looked better."



## Sculpture Garden

In October 1999, a completely re-landscaped garden was unveiled at the Norton Simon Museum. Noted California landscape designer Nancy Goslee Power transformed the outdoor space into a new 79,000 square foot sculpture garden inspired by Claude Monet's *Giverny*, with a natural pond at its center. Describing the design, Ms. Power stated, "The pond is filled with water lilies and surrounded by grasses and reeds, using a number of plants that are indigenous to California. The natural pond and garden-like setting attract bird life, dragonflies and frogs, and the coolness of the water is a pleasure for visitors."



## Norton Simon Museum Theater

Designed by the architectural firm Arthur Gensler Jr. & Associates, Inc., with color and fabric consulting from internationally known designer Phillippe B. Oates, the 290-seat Norton Simon Theater was first open to the public in December 2000. Today, it is used as a venue for films, concerts, lectures and symposia. Two films are shown during regular Museum hours: *The Art of Norton Simon*, a 30-minute film directed by Academy Award-winner Davis Guggenheim, recounts Norton Simon's life as a successful entrepreneur and prominent art collector; and *Sister Wendy at the Norton Simon Museum*, screened in three 20-minute episodes, highlights the Museum's renowned collection of Western and Asian art.



The redesign of the theater, which included the relocation of the projection booth and the removal of some seats, was intended to enhance the audience experience by providing the feeling of an intimate screening room. Design choices in the interior of the space were made to support the intimacy of the architecture and contribute to the multi-purpose acoustical capabilities of the theater.

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