

Reprint
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10 Top College Museums

New England - and Massachusetts in particular - is richly endowed with great college art collections. As teaching collections, almost all of them span continents and epochs. And they're all easily accessible to the public. Here are 10 of the best.

The greatest, without question, is Harvard Art Museum in Cambridge - a university collection that is richer and deeper than all but three or four of the country's great public museums; it has, for instance, around 80 works just by Edgar Degas, as well as ancient sculpture from Greece and Rome, European old masters, Asian art, modern German art, and a sizzling selection of Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. Unfortunately, until 2013, only the highlights of the collection will be on view at the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, while the museum's primary home undergoes an extensive renovation.

www.artmuseums.harvard.edu

The Smith College Museum of Art in Northampton has focused on 19th- and early 20th-century works from Europe and America since 1920, with important pieces by such artists as Paul Cezanne, Degas, John Singleton Copley, Gustave Courbet, and Pablo Picasso. But the collection, which dates back to 1879, stretches to Asian and ancient art and has some striking postwar American works,

including Frank Stella's 40-foot long "Damascus Gate (Variation III)."

www.smith.edu/artmuseum

Founded in 1961, the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University in Waltham is unique among New England museums in that it specializes in modern and contemporary art. It has top-shelf works by, among others, Picasso, Willem de Kooning, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Morris Louis, Andy Warhol, Ed Ruscha, Roy Lichtenstein, and Ad Reinhardt. Last year, under financial pressure, the university threatened to close the Rose and sell off the collection, igniting a huge controversy. Under new directorship, it remains open, at least for now, with changing exhibitions and a rotating selection of works from the permanent collection.

www.brandeis.edu/rose

The Williams College Museum of Art in Williamstown has a collection of more than 15,000 works, with an emphasis on modern and contemporary art (more than 30 percent of the collection), American art stretching back to the late 18th century (just under half of the collection), and art from diverse cultures around the globe, especially Indian, Assyrian, Greek, Roman, and African work.

www.wcma.org

The Davis Museum and Cultural Center at Wellesley College, Wellesley, is more than 120 years old. Housed in a building designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Rafael Moneo, the 10,000-object collection includes pieces from almost every continent, from ancient times to the present.

www.wellesley.edu/DavisMuseum

The Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art in Providence boasts around 85,000 objects. The works range from ancient and Asian art through European old masters to modern and contemporary art and photography, as well as the decorative arts, with masterpieces of European furniture, glass, and silver plus Asian textiles and costumes. One of its great prizes, Edouard Manet's portrait of Berthe Morisot, will be the focus of a Manet exhibition scheduled for 2011.

www.risdmuseum.org

The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in South Hadley, founded in 1876, has 15,000 works, ranging from Egyptian and Peruvian artifacts to gems of American, Indian, and European art. Highlights include the museum's first acquisition, Albert Bierstadt's view of Hetchy Hetchy Canyon in California, an 11th-century Indian stone sculpture of the god Ganesha, and a rare Greek bronze statuette of a boy.

www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum

Amherst College's Mead Art Museum in Amherst has 16,000 objects, among them Hudson River School landscapes, Claude Monet's "Morning on the Seine," Assyrian carvings, a British Jacobean panel room, Russian pre-revolutionary modern art, Yoruba sculpture, Japanese prints, and Mexican ceramics.

www.amherst.edu/museums/mead

The Bowdoin College Museum of Art in Brunswick, Maine, began its life as a collection of European paintings, prints, and family portraits belonging to James Bowdoin III and his family. Housed in a building designed by Charles Follen McKim (whose firm designed the Boston Public Library), its collection of 14,500 objects includes European old masters, Assyrian carving, Pre-Columbian art, African sculpture, and decorative arts from around the world.

www.bowdoin.edu/art-museum

The collection of the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H., stretches back to 1772, three years after the college was founded. It now has 65,000 objects. The collection is particularly strong in Native American, African, and Melanesian art, and it has six Assyrian stone reliefs, as well as works by Europeans from Perugino to Picasso.

www.hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu

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