Mission of an Engaged Museum

The Michigan State University (MSU) Museum is committed to understanding, interpreting, and respecting natural and cultural diversity. As Michigan’s land-grant university museum, this commitment to society is met through education, exhibitions, research, and the building and stewardship of collections that focus on Michigan and its relationship to the Great Lakes and the world beyond.

About the MSU Museum

• The Museum is the state’s natural history and culture museum, and Michigan’s first affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution. Recent Smithsonian collaborations with MSU researchers and scholars have included publication of the world’s most comprehensive study of the species and range of birds in South Asia, and a Smithsonian Folklife Festival centerpiece program on Native American basketry traditions.

• The Museum maintains interdepartmental and cross-disciplinary linkages across campus with faculty-curators, educational programs, exhibits, and partnerships with the colleges of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Arts & Letters, Music, Natural Science, and Social Science, as well as programmatic partners in International Studies and Programs, Communication Arts and Sciences, and others.

• In addition to serving the university community, the MSU Museum is designated as an anchor organization by the state’s Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. The Museum works to research, document, preserve and share cultural expressions and provide service statewide, collaborating with communities on programs relating to arts, culture, heritage and other forms of creative expression.

• MSU Museum exhibitions provide innovative learning resources for lifelong exploration and engaged scholarship of culture, creativity, nature, science, humanity, and technology that seek to strengthen communities and inspire global stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

• Through its traveling exhibitions, virtual outreach education programs, collections research and loans, and ongoing fieldwork and study, the MSU Museum is engaged on campus, in the community, throughout the country, and worldwide.

• The MSU Museum produces annual events for campus, community, and regional audiences, such as the Great Lakes Folk Festival, MSU Federal Credit Union Dinosaur Dash, Darwin Discovery Day, a Chocolate Party Benefit, and a Wine Tasting Benefit.

• MSU Museum collections number nearly 1 million objects, artifacts, and specimens, and are housed in four buildings on the MSU campus. Collections are available for educational, classroom, and research use, and many are searchable online as part of national and international projects.

Programs

Educational
• Classroom Program
• FolkPatterns
• Museum Internships
• Museum Studies Program
• Summer Adventure Series
• Teacher Resource Program Tours
• Virtual Outreach Program
• Wildlife & Natural History Q-Line

Statewide
• CraftWORKS! Michigan
• FolkPatterns
• Michigan Barn and Farmstead Survey
• Michigan Barn Preservation Network
• Michigan Heritage Awards
• Michigan Stained Glass Census
• Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship
• Michigan Traditional Arts Program
• Michigan Native American Arts Initiative
• Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives
• Rural Arts & Culture Program

Great Lakes
• Center for Great Lakes Culture
• Great Lakes Folk Festival
• Great Lakes Folk Resources
• Great Lakes Quilt Center

International
• South African National Cultural Heritage
• Collections, Research, Fieldwork and Exhibition Development
Examples of MSU Museum Outreach

The Voices Project
The Voices Project at Michigan State University Museum presents resources to build greater understanding about farmers, farming and food. These issues and relationships affect everyone, every day. Our health and the environment are at stake.

This project was imagined as a way to make the voices of farmers come alive, and by doing this to stimulate discussion about the economic and ecological sustainability issues of contemporary agriculture—issues that affect children, families, farmers, and communities, as well as the land around us.

Arts and humanities approaches are at the core of the Voices Project. Using civic dialogue to engage farmers and the consumer public builds our capacity to learn and to transmit knowledge. Art and culture offer us new ways to look at the world around us. They open our minds to new ideas and introduce opportunities for relating to one another.

MSU partners
College of Agriculture and Natural Resources; Public Humanities Collaborative

Funded by
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

More information available online at:
foodfarmingandcommunity.org

Celebrating Science, Discovering Darwin
The Michigan State University Museum joins natural history organizations and science centers around the world in observing British naturalist Charles Darwin’s birthday in mid-February with programs that increase the public’s understanding of science.

Visitors explore, discover, and experience meet-the-scientist lectures, hands-on projects, tours of research collections and labs, and natural history identification, where curators and specialists identify rocks, bones, fossils and other objects. Research, education, and programming units from across campus take part in Darwin Discovery Day.

MSU partners
Department of Anthropology; Department of Ecology, Evolutionary Biology, and Behavior; Department of Geological Sciences; Integrative Studies; Lyman Briggs College of Science; College of Natural Science; Department of Plant Biology; and Department of Zoology

Community partners
Potter Park Zoo

Funded by
Partners listed above

More information available online at:
museum.msu.edu/events/naturalhistoryIDDay

Dear Mr. Mandela, Dear Ms. Parks
Children’s Letters, Global Lessons
Recently, Gregory Reed ’70, the personal lawyer of Rosa Parks, announced a planned gift to the Michigan State University Museum of a collection of letters children wrote to Parks. A similar collection of letters to another civil rights hero, former South African president and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nelson Mandela, exists at a new museum in rural South Africa, the Nelson Mandela Museum in Eastern Cape Province.

Working together, the two museums are using these letters to raise awareness of the deep parallels between the struggles for racial justice in the United States and South Africa.

The partners will create a touring exhibition, an online gallery of the letters targeted to school-age children and a CD of music from each nation to accompany the exhibition. Local schoolchildren will be encouraged to write letters to their own heroes who embody the values of Mandela and Parks. These letters will be posted in the virtual gallery and added to the exhibition.

Community partners
Nelson Mandela Museum, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Funded by
American Association of Museums

To view a comprehensive list of our outreach programs, please visit museum.msu.edu.