

Among our favorite activities when we travel is visiting sculpture gardens. Here are a few of the best in the United States. We haven't seen them all...yet.

Brookgreen Gardens: Located only 3 ½ hours by car in Murrell's Inlet, SC, Brookgreen Gardens is among the premier sculpture gardens in the country. Along with extensive botanical gardens, Brookgreen Gardens is home to over 2,000 works of sculpture by 430 American sculptors. It is, in fact, the most extensive collection of American figurative sculpture in the country. When the sculptor Anna Hyatt Huntington and her husband, Archer, moved to South Carolina in 1930, their idea was to build a retreat where Anna could recover from tuberculosis. Eighteen months later, they established the first public sculpture garden in America, Brookgreen Gardens, whose purpose is to collect, exhibit, and preserve American figurative sculpture.

Among the large-scale sculptures found in the garden are those of Anna Huntington, including *Don Quichote* (1947). The *Sancho Panza* sculpture in the background is by Carl Paul Jennewein (1971).



The largest sculpture in the garden is *Pegasus*, a 1954 sculpture by Laura Gardin Fraser.



Storm King Art Center: Located approximately 50 miles from New York City in the Hudson Valley town of Cornwall, Storm King boasts perhaps the most extensive collection of contemporary outdoor sculptures in the United States. Envisioned initially as devoted to Hudson River School painting, its founders became committed to modern sculpture early on. Now covering some 500 acres, the park has 115 permanent, rotating sculptures. Some are built directly into the landscape, like the creator of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Maya Lin's *Wavefield*.



The photo below is of Zhang Huan's 2007 sculpture, *Three Legged Buddha*, 28 feet tall and weighing over 12 tons. The Chinese artist (1965-present) became well-known for his performance art, many testing his physical limits.



Glenstone Museum: The Glenstone Museum, located in the Washington DC suburb of Potomac, MD, started in 2006 as a single building of indoor art and expanded by 2018 to a massive sculpture garden of 20th and 21st-century art. Situated on 300 acres, the museum combines indoor galleries and outside art. The museum offers "a contemplative, intimate setting for experiencing iconic works of art and architecture within a natural environment." Among the outdoor sculptures is Jeff Koons's *Split-Rocker*, which is 37 feet high. From spring to fall, 24,000 annuals adorn the planted form. Koons work is often associated with objects of popular culture.



Another of the masterpieces on view is Tony Smith's 1973 spider-like *Smug*. The sculpture is 11 feet tall and measures 78 by 64 feet in length and width. Smith (1912-1980) was a pioneer of American minimalist sculpture.



deCordova Sculpture Garden: Located in Lincoln, MA, about 20 miles west of Boston, deCordova Sculpture Park is the largest outdoor art venue in New England. The museum opened in 1950 to showcase the art of New England artists but now includes works by various talents. The 30-acre garden sits on the former estate of collectors Julian and Elizabeth deCordova. The sculpture collection includes Paul Matisse's *Musical Fence* (1980), pictured below. Paul Matisse (1933-present), the grandson of Henri Matisse, is known for his public art installations, which often include sound. *Musical Fence* is meant to be interacted with (played).



Another sculpture found in the garden is Jim Dine's *Two Big Black Hearts* (1985). Over 12 feet tall and weighing 3,200 pounds each, the hearts are comprised of bronze casts of commonplace items such as hands, faces, seashells, and tools. Dine first rose to prominence as a Pop artist during the 1950s and is particularly associated with the stylized heart in sculpture and painting.

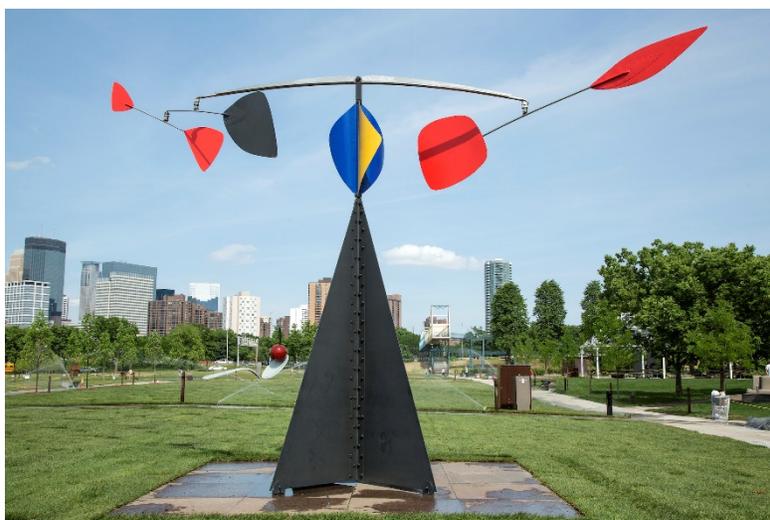


Minneapolis Sculpture Garden: The Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is at the Walker Art Center In Minneapolis, MN. Its operation is coordinated between the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Accessible to the public, the sculpture garden features over 60 sculptures from the

Walker's collection over 11 acres of park. The park's showcase piece is *Spoonbridge and Cherry*. The piece was designed by husband and wife sculptors Claes Oldenburg (1929-2022) and Coosje van Bruggen (1942-2009) for the garden's opening 1988. It has become an iconic image of the city of Minneapolis.



Also in the garden is Alexander Calder's 1966 *The Spinner*. Calder (1898-1976) is known for his innovative kinetic mobiles. "Sandy" Alexander was the third generation of Alexander Calder artists. (A new museum devoted to his mobiles is slated to open in his hometown of Philadelphia in late 2024 or early 2025).



Grounds for Sculpture: Located between Princeton and Trenton, NJ, Grounds for Sculpture is a combination sculpture garden, museum, and arboretum. The garden spans 42 acres and is home to almost 300 contemporary sculptures. One of the sculptures on the grounds is *Depression Breadline* by George Segal (1924-2000). Associated with the Pop Art movement, Segal's best-known works are his cast of life-size figures set in tableaux, often urban environments. He became identified with the technique of sculpting people by applying plaster bandages. The sculpture was initially commissioned for the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial.



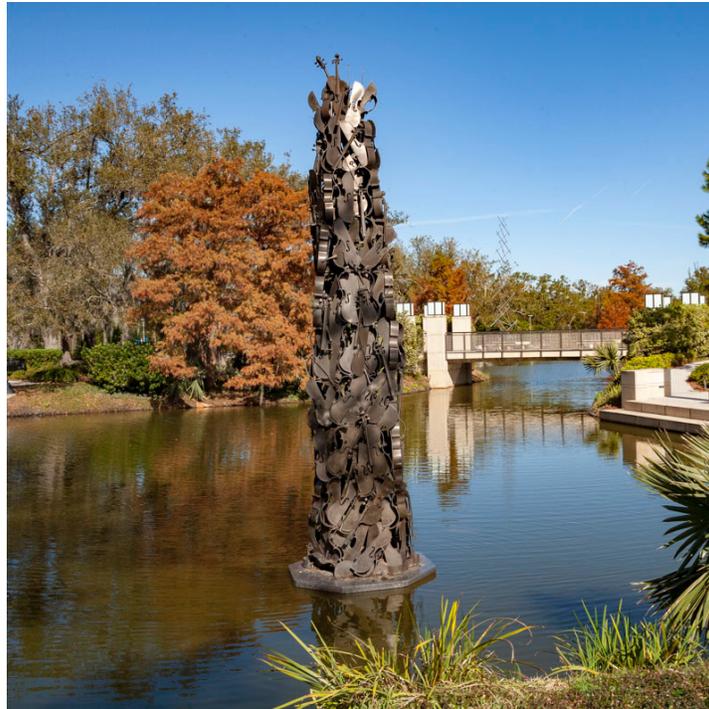
Grounds for Sculpture was the brainchild of artist and philanthropist J. Seward Johnson, grandson of the cofounder of Johnson & Johnson. Many of the sculptures at Grounds for Sculpture were created by Johnson himself, internationally famous for his lifelike bronze figures of ordinary people engaged in everyday situations. Some reflect Johnson's reimagining of famous paintings, such as Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, entitled *Déjeuner Déjà Vu*.



Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden: Adjacent to the New Orleans Museum of Art in New Orleans, LA, the Besthoff Sculpture Garden (accessible to the public) occupies some 11 acres in City Park amid lagoons, live oaks, and Spanish moss. The sculpture garden doubled its size in 2019 and has more than 90 sculptures today. Among the sculptures is Frank Gehry's *Bear with Us*, a life-size bear that looks like it was made from crumpled paper and covered with metal. Gehry (1924-present) is one of the preeminent architects of the 20th century, having designed the Walt Disney Concert Hall in LA, the Dancing House in Prague, the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain, the Museum of Pop Culture in Seattle and the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris, to name only a few.



In one of the lagoons in the garden, you will find *Pablo Casals's Obelisk* (1983) by French-born American artist Arman (1928-2005). The sculpture, over 20 feet tall, was built in homage to the Spanish-Puerto Rican cellist Pablo Casals. Born with the first name Armand, the artist dropped the “d” after a typo at an exhibition, preferring the “shortened” version. Many of Arman’s works feature musical instruments; they reflect his love of music.



Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park: Located in Grand Rapids, MI, this sculpture garden is among the top 45 most visited museums worldwide. Their collection showcases more than 200 sculptures. In 2023, *USA Today* voted the park the #1 Sculpture Park in the United States as part of their 10 Best Readers' Choice Awards. The park covers 158 acres; it includes a tropical conservatory, an 8-acre Japanese garden, significant works of modern and contemporary sculpture on the grounds and indoors, and a series of outdoor gardens and nature trails. Among the sculptors represented at the park are Louise Bourgeois, Auguste Rodin, and Henry Moore.

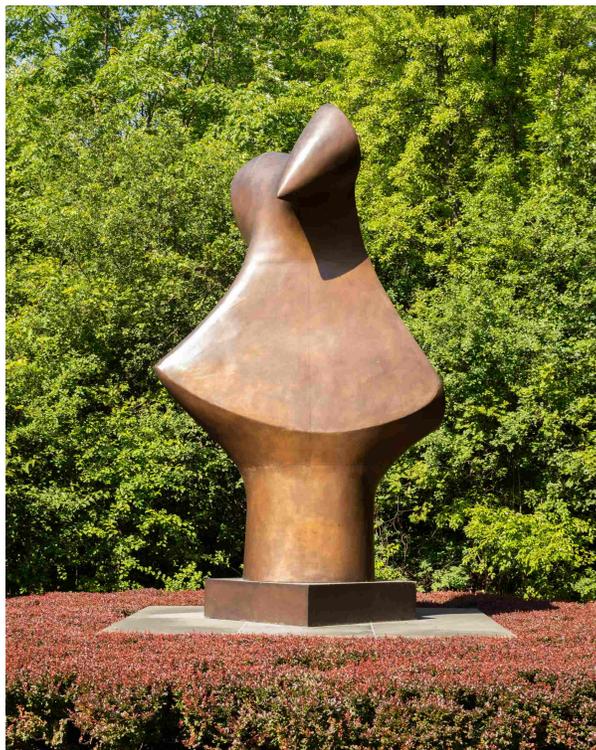
The garden's Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010) sculpture, *Spider*, reflects one of the sculptor's iconic themes, an homage to her mother, an image of cleverness, industriousness, and protectiveness.



The gardens also have a casting of Rodin's *The Kiss*.



The photo below is of *Bronze Form* by Henry Moore (1898-1986). Moore is considered to be the foremost British sculptor of the 20th century.



National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden: The National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden, located on the National Mall in Washington, DC, opened in 1999, and, according to the National Gallery of Art, “fulfills the centuries-old intentions of Charles Pierre L’Enfant, who, in his designs for The Mall in the 1790s, included a public, landscaped garden on the north side of Washington, DC’s ‘8th Street axis.’” The garden’s centerpiece is a fountain that becomes a skating rink in the winter. The garden contains sculptures by such luminaries as Louise Bourgeois, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, Marc Chagall, Joan Miró, Ellsworth Kelly, Tony Smith, Alexander Calder, Roy Lichtenstein, and Robert Indiana.

The photo below is of Louise Bourgeois’ *Spider*, cast in 1997. With a career spanning eight decades from the 1930s until 2010, the French-American artist Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010) is one of the significant modern and contemporary art figures. She is best known for her large-scale sculptures and installations inspired by her memories and experiences. Bourgeois started crafting her iconic spider sculptures late in her career. According to Bourgeois, “The Spider is an ode to my mother. She was my best friend. Like a spider, my mother was a weaver. My family was in the tapestry restoration business, and my mother was in charge of the workshop. Like spiders, my mother was very clever. Spiders are friendly presences that eat mosquitoes. We know that mosquitoes spread diseases and are, therefore, unwanted. So, spiders are helpful and protective, just like my mother.”



The garden also features another collaboration between Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, *Typewriter Eraser, Scale X*, completed in 1999.



I decided eleven pages was about as much as I could expect even the most devoted art lovers to read, but there are more. Some I have seen, and some are still on my bucket list. If you like art, being outdoors, and traveling around the US, here are a few more you might investigate.

Laumeier Sculpture Park: Near St. Louis, Mo.

Michigan Legacy Art Park: Crystal Mountain Resort, Thompsonville, MI.

Nasher Sculpture Center: Dallas, TX.

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art: Kansas City, MO.

Kentuck Knob: Dunbar, PA (near Fallingwater).

Socrates Sculpture Park: Queens, NY.

Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park: University Park, IL.

Olympic Sculpture Park: Seattle, WA.

Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden: Los Angeles, CA.

Art Omi: Ghent, NY.

Virginia B. Fairbanks Art and Nature Park: Indianapolis, IN.

Donald J. Hall Sculpture Park: Kansas City, MO.

The Neon Museum: Las Vegas, NV.

Sculpture Fields at Montague Park: Chattanooga, TN.

Porter Sculpture Park: Montrose, SD (near Sioux Falls).

Chihuly Garden and Glass: Seattle, WA.