



10 great places to see art in smaller cities

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By Bert Stern

At the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, "Marilyn Monroe: Life as a Legend" features images of the film icon by photographer Bert Stern. The exhibition runs through Jan. 2.



Automat: Detail from Edward Hopper's 1927 painting, which hangs at the Des Moines Art Center.

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collection

Malls aren't the only places bustling this time of year. The days after Thanksgiving are traditionally the busiest for art museums, too. But don't think you have to visit a large city to find culture. "You go to big museums and you often see the same things," says Michael Gormley, editorial director of the American Artist magazine group. Regional museums, by contrast, often feature gifted artists little known outside their area. Or they may specialize in a genre that major institutions just touch on. Gormley shares some of his favorite smaller city museums with Larry Bleiberg for USA TODAY.

Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library Winterthur, Del.

At Henry Francis du Pont's estate, you can see decorative art displayed in the intimate setting of a home, not the sterile environment of a museum, Gormley says. It's among many art highlights to be found in the Brandywine Valley of Pennsylvania and Delaware — "one of my favorite places on the planet," he says. 800-448-3883; winterthur.org

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Andy Warhol Museum Pittsburgh

The pop artist's hometown displays a

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comprehensive collection of his work. "Things are exhibited that you haven't seen before, and you get a whole different view of the artist," Gormley says. Through Jan. 2, the museum is showing a temporary exhibit: [Marilyn Monroe: Life as a Legend](#). "It's intriguing. They're both these amazing pop icons." 412-237-8300; warhol.org

Swope Art Museum
Terre Haute, Ind.

You'll find an impressive array of American works from the 19th and 20th centuries, along with artists with a connection to the state, like the Hoosier Group of Indiana impressionists. "Regionalism goes in and out of favor, and it's again resurfacing," Gormley says. "That's very good." 812-238-1676; swope.org

The Dali Museum
St. Petersburg, Fla.

Gormley says he's impressed by the museum's in-depth look at the famed surrealist, with the largest collection of his work outside Spain. "It's a different experience. It gives you more insight into the artist." The museum opens a new \$36 million home next year at a date and time Dali might have appreciated: 1/11/11 at 11:11 a.m. 800-442-3254; salvadoralimuseum.org

Honolulu Academy of Arts
Honolulu

This island institution holds one of the biggest collections of Asian art in the country. "They've got one of the best," Gormley says. It's now hosting an exhibit surveying 4,000 years of works from Southeast Asia, allowing visitors to see how Eastern art influenced Western artists. 808-532-8700; honoluluacademy.org

Tacoma Art Museum
Tacoma, Wash.

This collection of more than 3,500 pieces emphasizes works from the Northwest, including some by glass artist [Dale Chihuly](#). It's also known for its Japanese woodblock prints. Through Feb. 6, it hosts an exhibit tracing impressionism from Europe to the Northwest. "It helps you make connections and pulls things together," Gormley says. 253-272-4258; tacomaartmuseum.org

The Speed Art Museum
Louisville

The collection goes both broad and deep. Not only does it include African, European, Native American and ancient art, but there's an emphasis on the state's artists and craftsmen. The 700-piece Kentucky Collection includes furniture, quilts and paintings. "There's a pride of place here," Gormley says. "They have a collection that speaks to their region." 502-634-2700; speedmuseum.org

Fenimore Art Museum
Cooperstown, N.Y.

The National Baseball Hall of Fame isn't the only reason to visit this upstate town. The museum, run by the New York Historical Association, displays its history and art collection in a 1930s mansion. It's grand but decidedly domestic, Gormley says. "There are not big crowds and you can get acquainted with the art." Through December, it features more than two dozen portraits by John Singer Sargent. 888-547-1450; fenimoreartmuseum.org

Rahr-West Art Museum
Manitowoc, Wis.

You'll find a modern art gallery with works by [Pablo Picasso](#), [Robert Rauschenberg](#) and others in this Victorian mansion — a juxtaposition Gormley finds appealing. "There's kind of an inherent quirkiness to it." But the collection stands on its own, he adds. "They've got a great focus on significant works. These are linchpins of modernism." 920-686-3090; manitowoc.org/index.aspx?nid=470

Des Moines Art Center
Des Moines

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The focus is on contemporary art at this Midwest museum, which features works by [Jasper Johns](#), [Edward Hopper](#) and [Georgia O'Keeffe](#), among others. "These are big names in a small focused collection," Gormley says. "That's really exciting." The museum buildings are an attraction themselves with sections designed by [Elieel Saarinen](#), [I.M. Pei](#) and [Richard Meier](#). 515-277-4405; desmoinesartcenter.org

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