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Visiting Kansas City: [Nelson-Atkins](#) Art Museum



## Translucent Walls and Steam

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KANSAS CITY, MO — In a beautiful meditative space, sitting on black clean modern armless chairs eating Tapas — the cuisine culture of the day — listening to the enthusiastic server who sounded a tiny bit like Sarah Palin, I'm looking out a wall-length glass to a giant lawn dart two times my size.

A yellow school bus drives away from in front of the classic American public building which sits on one side of a rectangular reflecting pond — me, 90 degrees away reflecting on it — as the lights come on at the top of the 50-foot tall columns around the entrance dramatizing this 1930s building's three dimensionality. Three-D clouds fill in the background of this painting beyond the glass wall in the Nelson-Atkins Art Museum Cafe. High white ones rolling off to the west to bed — as sunset always seems to us although we know better from physics. Some few pink ones are already behind the residential, low commercial skyline, tucked in.

We went into the old, classic building of the museum and looked at classical Western paintings organized educationally by date. We were in the mood to see a masterpiece. We breezed through their Asian art to get to see a collection of Henry Moore maquettes. A miniature Henry Moore museum, and then spent some more time looking for a masterpiece. We finally found the museum's Caravaggio. The painter painted boldly dramatic blacker blacks and



*Caravaggio's painting of St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness, dramatically captured inside the classic building of the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri.*

whiter whites than the painters hung near him, and included no unnecessary frills, unlike the baroque guys who followed him. Okay, we learned something new.

After this search, the lights had come on and the new addition glowed white in the black night. We walked around it, along a similar path we'd taken inside, except the path was in grass. The museum is open until 9 p.m. on Thursday and Friday nights. The new galleries in this addition are half buried in the ground and the exterior walls are made of a translucent material. We walked over and around the galleries and saw people throwing Frisbees, practicing martial arts, taking silhouette photos of themselves against the illuminated walls.

Inside, these galleries contain the modern art, also organized by periods. Someone at the museum has collected a nice group of Abstract Expressionist work — one of each: Rothko, deKooning, Reinhardt, Gottlieb, Gorky, Pollack, Franz Kline and two nice David Smith sculptures — and a room of pop art, another of minimalism, and one that was the current period that is very diverse and undefined post modernism.

We wanted to like the temporary exhibit in the Hallmark Card Company's galleries by the couple named Robert and Shana ParkeHarrison. Photographs (or photograveurs) of the Everyman in settings that were meant to prove the proverb of the title, over staged and sterile. They were so sterile the artists had to print them in black and white to give them some warmth, said my companion. A little too close to advertising. Some company could use the series to promote business travel. Man wearing a suit overcoming things. Okay, if you're going to be in the photograph you have to have a costume. He had to wear the suit. There is not an edginess or a lot of depth that makes me ask myself more. Doesn't reveal much about the place. The new color photos were more interesting. One, the infinite glow of snow interrupted by a line of trash and one tree that made it a landscape, my companion continued. I disagreed with my companion slightly. I thought the Everyman was in Anyplace and that was fitting. The photographs were transferred and etched onto a metal plate, inked in warm black, hand rubbed off and printed like fine art print, not offset or photo printed. Thus, they were photograveurs not photographs. The point of building very elaborate things to photograph seemed to be to explain the titles, like raking up a huge pile of trash and calling it Harvest.



*Inside the classic old museum building in Kansas City, Missouri, is a miniature museum of little Henry Moore Sculptures.*

Our approach to the museum was fun because we were on foot and less predictable for the staff who expected people to rise out of the parking structure and confront the reflecting pool, and then descend back into the earth to the modern art stuff. We strolled onto the grounds from the Kansas City Art Institute neighborhood and saw an Oldenburg lawn dart, then walked around looking for an entrance and saw three more of them: actually badminton birdies. The classic building was designed to have two prominent entrances with grand stairs leading up to banks of door, but looked so cold and imposing we didn't want to climb them. We walked through some sculpture gardens and to a slit of an entrance, to find a walkway, stairs and doors into the new addition. Inside with pleasantly welcoming and expansive.

The current exhibition in the changing gallery was art from the age of steam locomotives. 1860 to 1960. Kansas City was created by the railroads and it was a easy show to like, nothing that had to be explained. And if you needed explanation, there was a video when you walked it that said it all. There is no need to say more.

*Terry Talty was an Art Tourist at the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art in October of 2008.*



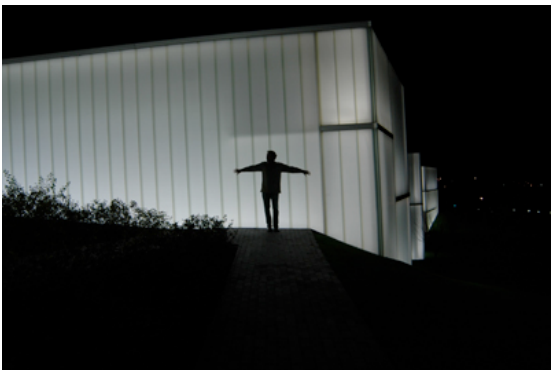
Henry Moore, Oldenburg & femme, and the TaltyBremner photo team, in the fall of 2008 on the grounds of the Nelson Atkins Museum.



Henry Moore, Oldenburg & femme, and the TaltyBremner photo team, in the fall of 2008 on the grounds of the Nelson Atkins Museum.



Outside the Block Addition to the Nelson Atkins Museum in Kansas City, Missouri, high above Grand Avenue.



Outside the Block Addition to the Nelson Atkins Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. Inside is Modern Art.