

# Turf News

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## *Annual Equipment & Product Buyer's Guide*

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# NATURAL GRASS ENHANCES ART AT THE JOSLYN

By Steve Trusty

On September 6, 2024, your editors attended a media event at The Joslyn in Omaha, Nebraska. The occasion was in advance of a highly anticipated unveiling. As The Joslyn’s press release stated, “The expanded and transformed Joslyn Art Museum celebrated its civic dedication ceremony on September 10, 2024, welcoming the public for the first time to a complete reinstallation of its distinctive collections, including numerous recent acquisitions, a full restoration of its original building (one of the finest Art Deco achievements in the United States), and the debut of the 42,000-square-foot Rhonda & Howard Hawks Pavilion designed by Snøhetta.



This architectural drawing captures The Joslyn campus, featuring the three stunning buildings and the surrounding landscape, including the Grand Lawn. Rendering: Moare, courtesy of The Joslyn

We joined representatives from architectural publications across the U.S. and around the globe, as well as local and regional print and broadcast representatives for an in-depth preview and tour. “The Rhonda & Howard Hawks Pavilion is the centerpiece of a project that reimagines The Joslyn visitor experience while expanding gallery space by more than 40 percent for a historic and growing collection. The 42,000-square-foot addition is designed by international architectural firm Snøhetta with Omaha-based Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture; the builder is Kiewit.”

As the press release reported, the Joslyn Art Museum was a gift to the people of Omaha from Sarah Joslyn in memory of her husband, George. From its first day, November 29, 1931, to today, the Museum has welcomed millions of visitors from around the world. The Joslyn’s

collection of over 12,000 objects represents 5,000 years of human creativity and the world’s diverse cultures. The campus now comprises three stunning buildings—distinct yet connected—surrounded by sculpture gardens. Learning and engagement opportunities abound, and general admission is free to all, always.”

As described in the press release and emphasized during the tour, “The new building elegantly merges with the beloved existing structures, producing a profound architectural icon for Omaha. Composed of light-colored pre-cast panels embedded with vibrant pops of pink aggregate, the exterior complements the rose-colored marble of the 1931 Joslyn Building and the 1994 Suzanne & Walter Scott Pavilion.

“The new Hawks Pavilion seems to float atop two granite garden walls, with a transparent first floor enclosing a new entry atrium, named for Phillip G. Schrager. The weightless effect of the expansion recalls the sky and the striking cloud formations above the Great Plains, as well as the deep overhangs and horizontal expression of Prairie School architecture. The curving design offers views of the surrounding gardens.”

In his presentation and during the ensuing tour conversations, Craig Dykers, Lead Architect and Co-Founder of Snøhetta, matched the description from his bio: “His interest in design as a promoter of social and physical well-being is supported by ongoing observation and development of an innovative and sustainable design process.” Dykers quote in the press release stated, “Our comprehensive reconsideration of the Museum grounds, the existing interiors, and the newest building all work together to create a more inviting entry for the growing spectrum of people that visit the Museum. Our goal has been to provide a harmonious place for guests, art, and gathering that will become a vessel for inspiration and creativity to flourish.”



In this exterior view from the far side of the Grand Lawn the natural grass appears to connect directly with the Grand Steps at the base of the 1931 Joslyn Building.

Michelle Delk, Landscape Architect and Partner, Snøhetta, also made a presentation and interacted with attendees during the media event. Her passion for the project was reflective of her bio. “Her work is evocative of a foundational premise shared with Snøhetta: to create places that enhance the positive relationships between people and their environments. And... Both aspirational and pragmatic, she seeks to discover and expand the urban landscape vernacular; striving to express the subtleties of place through the incongruities of member, environment, and social perceptions.”

With the stunning architecture star of the project, as anticipated, the role of the natural grass prompted The Joslyn to include your editors in the media event. As the press release reported, “The three acres of grounds at The Joslyn, redesigned by the Snøhetta landscape architecture team, establish a new entrance sequence for the Museum while providing sculpture gardens conceived as a sweeping collection of outdoor ‘rooms’ that wrap around the site, weaving the landscape and architecture together around a reflecting pool, *The Omaha Riverscape* (2008-09), by sculptor Jesus Morales. A new Grand Lawn (of natural grass) framed by native grasses and vibrant meadow plantings creates colorful variations throughout the seasons. The existing Discovery Garden is reconnected to the site by a new landscape for pedestrians, with paths that reveal sculptures and native plantings along the way.”

Natural grass forms the stage for all this, and both Dykers and Delk acknowledged the importance of its role during the media event. As the group viewed the Grand Lawn from the second floor of the Atrium overlooking it, Dykers stated, “The natural grass enhances the art.”



Craig Dykers, Lead Architect and Co-Founder of Snøhetta, at the far right in this photo, stated, “The natural grass enhances the art.”

When the media moved outside during the tour, Delk pointed out how the broad sidewalk and low concrete wall at the edge of the Grand Lawn, between it and the Grand Steps of the original 1931 Joslyn Building, created a gathering spot for visitors to enjoy the beauty of the setting. She said, “We envision the Grand Lawn as a welcoming site for casual interactions as well as a space for hosting public and private events.”



Michelle Delk, Landscape Architect and Partner, Snøhetta, shown here in the plaid top near the right of the photo, explains design elements of the Grand Lawn to media attendees.

As the group reached the far side of the Grand Lawn, Delk explained a design feature, “As you view the Grand Steps and Grand Entry from this angle, it appears that the Grand Steps lead directly to the welcoming expanse of the Grand Lawn. The conversation space of the walkway and wall disappear, creating a scene emphasizing the unity of art and nature.”



Natural grass enhances the Discovery Garden and encourages attendees to stroll onto its surface for a close-up view of the sculptures featured throughout it.

During your editors’ private conversation with Delk, she expressed her joy in knowing the natural grass will invite and encourage families to linger and explore the art within the landscape from an up-close and personal perspective. By design, natural grass truly enhances art at The Joslyn.

Steve Trusty is co-editor of *Turf News*.  
All photos by Steve Trusty unless otherwise noted.

