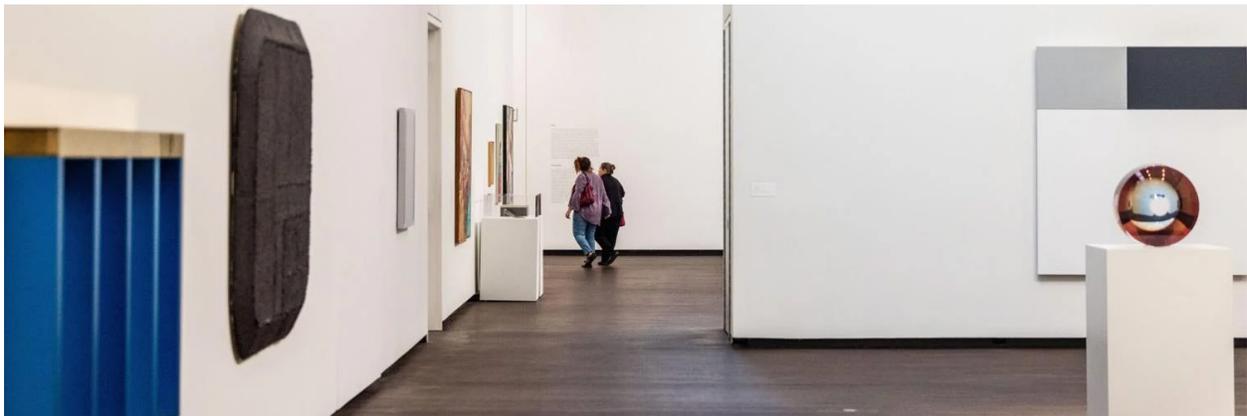


THE JOSLYN Omaha World-Herald

ALERT TOP STORY TOPICAL

Joslyn Art Museum sees highest attendance in nearly 20 years after \$100 million expansion

Grace Lewis | Jan 10, 2026



People walk through a gallery at The Joslyn on Wednesday. The museum has crossed the 200,000-visitor mark only a handful of times in its 94-year-history, including last year. CHRIS MACHIAN, THE WORLD-HERALD

In its first full year since a \$100 million renovation, the Joslyn Art Museum achieved its highest attendance in nearly two decades, earning local, national and global attention.

More than 206,500 people from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and 62 other countries visited The Joslyn in 2025, according to Amy Rummel, director of marketing and public relations at the museum.

Rummel said the institution has crossed the 200,000-visitor mark only a handful of times in its 94-year-history.

"We have been delighted to experience visitors' encounters with the new spaces, new galleries, new acquisitions, new programs," she said.

While the museum was closed to the public, employees worked behind the scenes to complete the first full reinstallation of the museum's collections since its 1931 opening and to prepare for the opening of the new 42,000-square-foot Rhonda & Howard Hawks Pavilion.

"We are excited to be reopened, to reengage with the Omaha community and the region after a time of closure, excited to share all that we're working on now and in the future," said Jack Becker, executive director and CEO of The Joslyn.

Becker said the new Hawks Pavilion complements the museum's existing structures, enhancing the viewer's experience of the adjacent 1931 Art Deco building and the rectangular Scott Pavilion from 1994.

Designed by the world-renowned Norwegian firm Snøhetta, in partnership with Omaha's own Alley Poyner Macchietto, the expansion has received international recognition.

Becker said that while the museum received many accolades, one international honor stood out: the Prix Versailles World Title for Exterior Design, awarded at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The Joslyn was the only U.S. museum to earn a world title in its category.

"It was pretty great to be recognized at that kind of stage for Omaha and for the institution," he said.

The Nebraska chapter of the American Institute of Architects granted The Joslyn two awards for excellence for both the new Hawks Pavilion and the restored historic interiors. The project achieved LEED Gold Certification for sustainability and won the Nebraska Engineering Excellence Grand Award from the American Council of Engineering Companies.

USA Today dubbed The Joslyn the sixth-best art museum in the nation for 2025. Local honors, including the Greater Omaha Chamber's Headliner of the Year Award and Omaha By Design's Laurels Award for People-Centered Design, mirrored the national ranking.

The Joslyn earned a spot in Midwest Living's "Best of the Midwest," and the Omaha Metropolitan Area Tourism Awards named it a top attraction.

Renovations foster growth of local hub

Despite the international spotlight, Becker said the museum's core mission hasn't shifted, highlighting The Joslyn is free to visit.

"We are first and foremost a local hub," he said. "We are here to serve this community and this region and this state. That is always our primary goal."

The Hawks Pavilion now serves as the museum's entrance and enhances connectivity between the two preexisting buildings. Becker said an expanded cafe setting and new location for the museum shop provide more opportunities for people to engage with the arts and with one another. He said the museum feels more open, light and welcoming.

The renovation allowed for more classrooms, studios and space for programs at The Joslyn, Becker said.

He said The Joslyn saw a high program participation rate in 2025, especially for Art-tastic Saturdays, held on the first Saturday of each month, and the monthly Nights at The Joslyn.

"The Joslyn is sort of your cornerstone for ... learning and engagement, and I think that's really terrific for us," Becker said.

The additional space also creates new opportunities to keep things fresh, he said.

The ambitious "Dripping Earth" project, by Cannupa Hanska Luger, opened in November and runs until March.

Luger, an artist with ancestral ties to North Dakota's Mandan and Hidatsa Tribes, uses The Joslyn's 19th-century Karl Bodmer collection as a point of departure, blending traditional clay work with modern materials like industrial felt and used sports equipment, according to Becker and The Joslyn's website.

Becker said the multimedia elements, which incorporate video, sculpture and sound, create an immersive experience visitors seem to enjoy.

He said he's seen visitors respond to many different aspects of the museum in the past year, from special exhibitions to permanent collections.

"There really is something here for everybody," Becker said.



People walk through the Rhonda & Howard Hawks Pavilion at the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha on Wednesday. The pavilion now serves as The Joslyn's entrance and enhances connectivity between the museum's two preexisting buildings.

CHRIS MACHIAN, THE WORLD-HERALD



People walk through the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha on Wednesday. The increase in visitor traffic last year was fueled in part by the museum's reopening in September 2024 after a nearly two-year closure that began in spring 2022.

CHRIS MACHIAN, THE WORLD-HERALD