



VISIT RICHMOND VA

Institute for Contemporary Art



IVAN BARR

of the top comprehensive art museums in the United States, the extensive and diverse collection includes one of the most distinguished holdings of art nouveau and art deco works outside of Paris, as well as the largest public collection of Fabergé objects in America. To make art accessible to all, general admission is free and the VMFA is open 365 days a year. Special exhibitions and programs require a supplemental fee.

The new **Institute for Contemporary Art** (ica.vcu.edu) at Virginia Commonwealth University is a free and noncollecting institution presenting the works of contemporary artists. The inaugural exhibition, opened in April, is titled *Declaration* and “asks audiences to consider art’s power to catalyze important conversations and to open up new ways for each of us to think — and feel — in response to pressing issues of our times,” explains Stephanie Smith, ICA chief curator. More than a third of the works exploring themes of social justice, protest and community are either special commissions or world premieres conceived by established and emerging artists. *Declaration* is free to the public.

The **Richmond Arts District** (rvaartsdistrict.com) runs along Broad

Street and is home to a number of independent art galleries, including the **Ada Gallery** (adagallery.com), an artist-run contemporary space that hosts fascinating exhibitions and the **1708 Gallery** (1708gallery.org), a nonprofit organization and art space. Schedule your visit to experience **First Fridays Art Walk**, a monthly celebration with live music, special events and extended gallery hours. A block away on West Marshall Street, is **Gallery5** (gallery5.org), an award-winning visual and performing arts center that showcases cutting-edge contemporary art exhibits and serves as a launching pad for emerging artists. Richmond’s art scene continues with the **Reynolds Gallery** (reynoldsgallery.com) on Main Street, one of the most well-known Mid-Atlantic galleries that has hosted exhibitions featuring Alexander Calder and Max Ernst.

Art in Richmond isn’t only enclosed within museum and gallery walls. Here, art is truly viewed as a civic right, and public art has become a mainstay in Richmond’s streets thanks to the efforts of Ed Trask, a local street artist, and former councilman Jon Balliles. The pair co-founded the **RVA Street**



Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens

TOM HENNESSY

Art Festival (rvastreetart.com) in 2012, inviting local and international artists to help transform the streets and public spaces of Richmond. Colorful murals and graffiti art have rejuvenated entire communities, leaving a vibrant splash of color for all to enjoy in otherwise muted spaces. The annual festival is now one of the city’s most beloved and popular events.

Richmond also boasts one of the top botanical gardens in America. The spectacular grounds of the **Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens** (lewisginter.org) has more than 50 acres of themed gardens featuring flowers and plants from around the world. This summer, the gardens will concurrently host two art exhibitions. *Origami in the Garden* is an outdoor exhibit by Santa Fe sculptor Kevin Box. Exhibition manager Kristin Thoroman advises visitors not to miss *Box’s Emerging Peace sculpture*. “It’s a sculpture of a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis, and the way the butterfly is folded in the chrysalis is a perfect example of how nature is life’s original origami master. The *Butterflies LIVE!* exhibit, in the conservatory’s north wing, is a captivating experience inside the magnificent domed edifice.

MAKE A WEEKEND OF IT



Award-winning restaurant **Heritage** (heritageva.com), in the trendy Fan District, offers new American cuisine and artisanal cocktails that are almost too beautiful to drink.



BETTY CLICKER PHOTOGRAPHY

▲ **l’Opossum** (lopossum.com) in Oregon Hill dishes out gorgeously plated meals from a creative French-inspired menu. The décor is wildly eclectic, creating a fun and exuberant atmosphere for a night out.

Laura Lee’s (lauraleesva.com) is a popular modern American fern bar focusing on good food and good company. The exposed brick walls feature an eclectic art gallery.



The **Commonwealth** (thecommonwealthsuits.com) is a historic hotel that has undergone a modern renovation that beautifully encompasses Richmond’s storied past and its creative future. Suite doors are personalized with tattoo art and room furnishings are handcrafted by local artisans.



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▲ No visit to Richmond is complete without experiencing the lavish and decadent Sunday Champagne brunch in the gorgeous rotunda lobby of the **Jefferson Hotel** (jeffersonhotel.com). Surrounded by ornate marble columns and a Tiffany glass ceiling, it’s a grand buffet you won’t forget.

Make the heart of Richmond’s arts and design district your temporary home at the four-star **Quirk Hotel** (destinationhotels.com/quirk-hotel), which features local and regional art.