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Gem of a museum celebrates one year

Can it be true that the Museum & Gallery at Heritage Green already is a year old — today?

A visitor, in fact, could be excused for thinking the museum only recently opened its doors. This gem near downtown Greenville retains a wonderfully fresh look, with its elegant interior and appealing presentation of a first-rate art collection.

The details make this museum special: from the radiant lighting of the paintings to the informative descriptions of each art work, and the graceful music (Mozart's Concerto for Harp and Flute could be heard on a recent visit) breezing gently through the exhibition space.

Most remarkable are the paintings themselves — a few dozen works by European masters from the 14th to 19th centuries. Those works represent some of the finer paintings from the much larger collection of the Museum & Gallery at Bob Jones University.

It was an inspired decision on the part of Bob Jones University to build a satellite museum at Heritage Green. Bob Jones University officials believed that Heritage Green, already home to several other Greenville cultural venues, would offer the possibility of a more centralized and accessible location for showcasing the museum's art works.



FILE / Staff

Patrons enjoy artworks at the Museum & Gallery at Heritage Green, which opened a year ago today.

It has become just that: The Bob Jones collection gained a brighter spotlight when the Museum & Gallery at Heritage Green opened April 19, 2008.

The Heritage Green museum is not intended to replace the main museum on the Bob Jones campus. It's an extension of the main museum, and the gallery's space is modest. Only a small portion of the main museum's collection is displayed at any given time.

But there's much to be said for smaller-scale art exhibitions. Big-city museums often can overwhelm a visitor. The Museum & Gallery at Heritage Green offers the opportunity to spend a bit more time with every work of art, savoring each with the help of detailed panels providing background.

The first floor of the Heritage Green museum features a long-term exhibition, with paintings arranged in chronological



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order: from a 14th century "Madonna" by Bicci di Lorenzo to several works created in the 19th century.

A central place in the museum is reserved for one of the best-known works in the Bob Jones collection, a painting that actually has helped put Greenville on the international visual arts map. The "Madonna and Child with Saints" is thought to be the work of Raphael or Perugino but has not been definitively identified. Wherever this unidentified artist's works are displayed worldwide — there are 32 such works — he's known as "the Master of the Greenville tondo." The term "tondo" refers to the circular shape of the "Madonna" painting here in

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Greenville.

Though most of the works in the Museum & Gallery feature religious themes, the exhibition includes some striking historical portraits as well, such as Edwin Long's fine painting of the 19th-century English actor Henry Irving.

The 7,000-square-foot Museum & Gallery offers rotating exhibitions — a new exhibition may open this summer or fall — drawing on the 1,000-piece Bob Jones University art collection that includes antiquities, sculpture, biblical artifacts, decorative pieces and Russian icons. The Bob Jones collection is best known, however, for its 425 paintings by European masters from the 14th to 19th centuries, such as Rubens, van Dyck, Tintoretto, Veronese and Murillo.

At Heritage Green, the first-floor exhibition is complemented by a wealth of educational features, geared toward all ages, on the second floor.

The Museum & Gallery at Heritage Green was a vital addition to Greenville's other arts attractions. It's a museum that packs a lot of beauty and inspiration in a relatively small space.