

2026 NATIONAL STUDENT ARTS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

EMPOWERING FUTURE CREATIVE LEADERS!

WASHINGTON, DC

JULY 24–26



YOUR VOICE. YOUR ART. YOUR FUTURE.
LET'S CREATE WHAT'S NEXT—TOGETHER!

GRAND HYATT WASHINGTON

1000 H Street NW

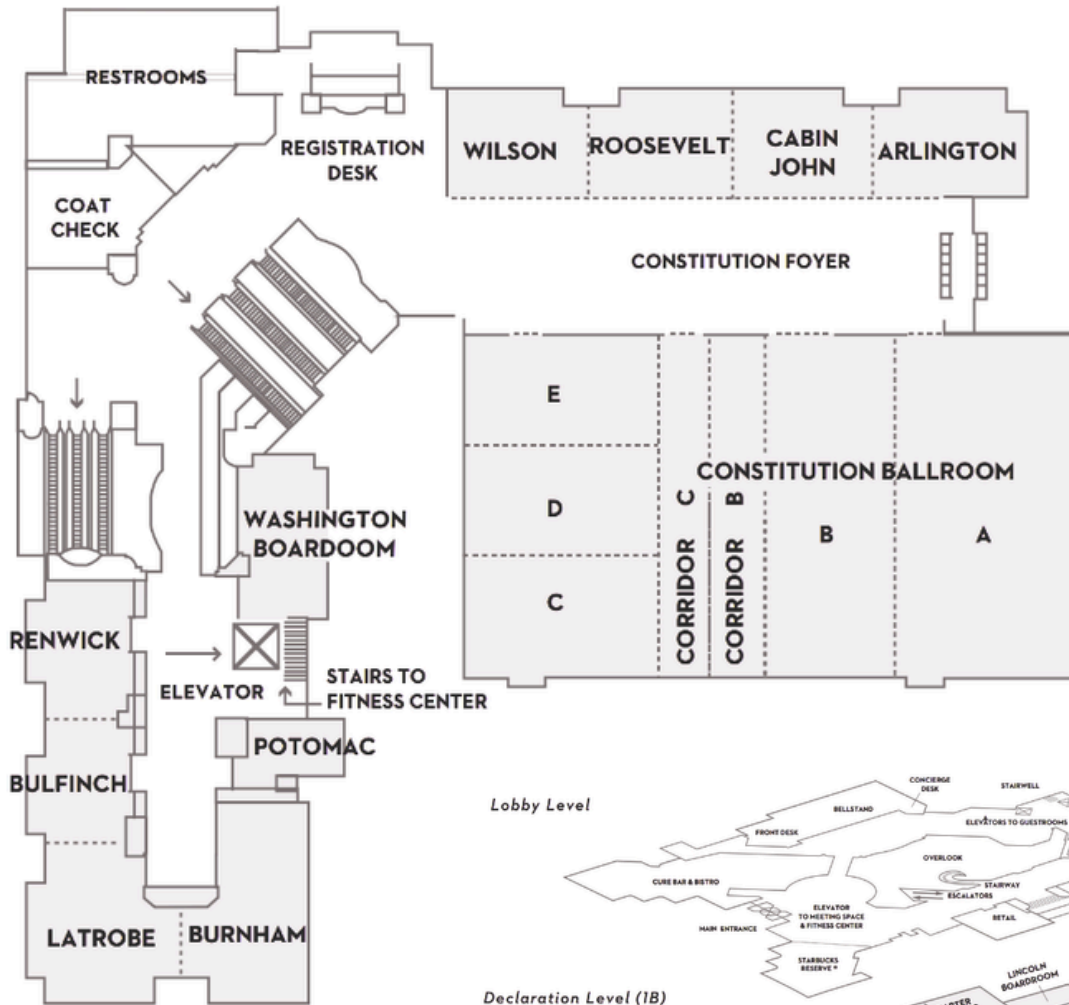
Washington, DC 20001, USA

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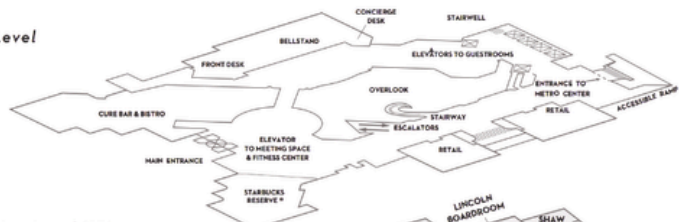
grandhyattwashington.com

FLOOR PLAN

The 2026 National Student Leadership Conference will be held at the Grand Hyatt Washington, on the **Constitution Level (3B)**.



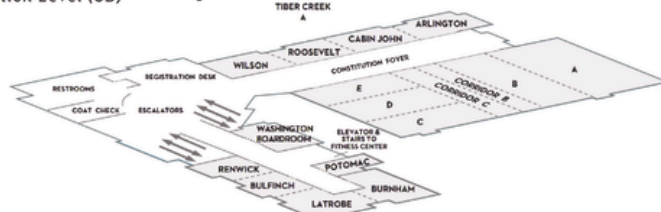
Lobby Level



Declaration Level (1B)



Constitution Level (3B)





AGENDA

FRIDAY, JULY 24

Enjoy Breakfast on Your Own

7:30–8:00 am

Registration: Badge Pickup | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

8:00–8:30 am

Day 1 Welcome | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

8:30–9:00 am

Opening Remarks: Wanda Knight, NAEA Past President | [Constitution AB](#)

9:00–10:00 am

Keynote: Erin Harkey, CEO of Americans for the Arts | [Constitution AB](#)

10:00 AM–12:00 pm

Museum Visit: Tour of the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) & Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) | [8th St NW & G St NW](#)

12:00–1:00 pm

Lunch (provided) | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

1:00–2:00 pm

Workshop: Creative Connections | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

2:00–3:00 pm

Workshop: Leadership Obstacle Dolls | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

3:00–4:00 pm

Workshop: Visualizing Impact With ARTEFFECT | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

4:00–5:30 pm

Museum Visit: Tour of the ARTEFFECT Exhibition at the Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream | [1503 Pennsylvania Ave NW](#)

Enjoy the Evening on Your Own

SATURDAY, JULY 25

Enjoy Breakfast on Your Own

8:00–9:00 am

Day 2 Welcome and Workshop: Art in Action | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

9:00–10:30 am

Keynote & Workshop: Katty Huertas, Multidisciplinary Artist | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

10:30–11:30 am

Workshop: Creating Community Through Art | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

11:30 AM–12:30 pm

Lunch (provided) | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

12:30–4:00 pm

Museum Visit: Tour of the National Gallery of Art (NGA) | [Constitution Ave NW](#)

4:00–5:00 pm

Workshop: TASK Party | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

Enjoy the Evening on Your Own

SUNDAY, JULY 26

Enjoy Breakfast on Your Own

8:00–8:30 am

Day 3 Welcome and Workshop: Collaborative Artist Cards | [Bulfinch/Renwick](#)

8:30–9:00 am

Introduction: Amy Pfeiler-Wunder, NAEA President-Elect | [Constitution AB](#)

9:00–10:45 am

Keynote & Workshop: Jennifer White-Johnson, Artist | [Constitution AB](#)


10:45–11:30 am

Keynote: Rachel McGrain, Arts Education in Maryland Schools | [Constitution AB](#)

11:30 AM–12:00 pm

Closing Remarks: Cindy Todd, NAEA President | [Constitution AB](#)

Conference Departure: Enjoy Lunch on Your Own





2026 NATIONAL
STUDENT ARTS
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
EMPOWERING FUTURE CREATIVE LEADERS!



DEAR STUDENTS,

Welcome to the **2026 National Student Arts Leadership Conference!**

On behalf of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), I am thrilled to welcome you to this exciting gathering of young artists, creative thinkers, and future leaders from across the country. Whether you traveled from near or far, you are now part of a community of students who share a passion for creativity, self-expression, and making a positive impact through the arts.

Over the next 3 days, you will have the opportunity to learn from inspiring artists, arts leaders, and advocates; participate in hands-on workshops; visit world-class museums and cultural institutions; and connect with fellow students who believe in the power of creativity. Most importantly, you will discover that leadership is not about having all the answers—it is about using your unique voice, talents, and ideas to inspire others and create meaningful change.

The arts have the power to connect people, strengthen communities, tell important stories, and imagine new possibilities. As artists and creative thinkers, you have the ability to shape the future in innovative, compassionate, and impactful ways. This conference was created to help you build confidence in that ability and to encourage you to see yourself not only as an artist but as a leader.

Throughout the conference, I encourage you to be curious, ask questions, try something new, introduce yourself to someone you have never met, and embrace every opportunity that comes your way. We hope the connections you make, the ideas you share, and the experiences you have here may continue to inspire you long after the conference ends.

We are honored to have you join us. Thank you for bringing your creativity, energy, and perspective to this experience. I cannot wait to see what you create, what you learn, and how you will continue to lead through the arts in your schools and communities.

Welcome to Washington, DC. Welcome to a community of creative leaders. And welcome to a weekend filled with inspiration, connection, and possibility!

Warmly,

Paula Liz

Associate Director of Programs and Creative Engagement
National Art Education Association (NAEA)

KEYNOTES

FRIDAY, JULY 24

ERIN HARKEY

CEO, Americans for the Arts

Erin Harkey has over 20 years of experience helping individuals and communities succeed through the arts. Erin was the commissioner of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE). She served the City of Chicago as a project administrator, then as deputy commissioner for programming and first deputy commissioner. In her dual role as senior policy advisor for arts in culture in the mayor's office, she advised on cultural policy and arts strategy across all City departments and agencies. She previously managed public art programs at the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the Arts Council for Long Beach. Harkey holds two master's degrees in public art administration and urban planning from the University of Southern California (USC) and a bachelor's degree in marketing from Howard University.

americansforthearts.org



ARTEFFECT

Workshop, Exhibition, & Competition

ARTEFFECT is a visual arts education initiative that invites educators and students to explore the inspiring stories of unsung heroes—and their invaluable lessons as role models—through the visual arts. The ARTEFFECT annual competition offers multiple awards and encourages young artists to shape the future by celebrating stories of role models from history.

arteffectlmc.org

SATURDAY, JULY 25



KEYNOTES

KATTY HUERTAS

Multidisciplinary Visual Artist

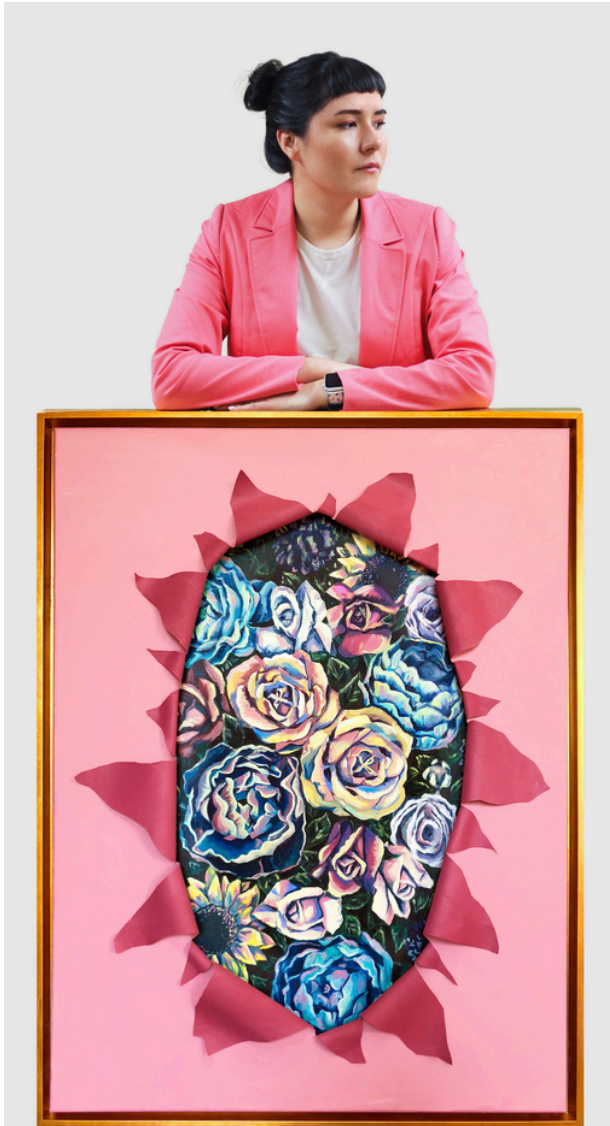
Katty Huertas is a multidisciplinary artist born in Bogota, Colombia, and based in Washington, DC, creating surrealist figurative work inspired by folktales and personal narratives.

Katty received a BA from Florida International University in 2016 and an MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in 2020.

Her work has been exhibited in galleries across multiple cities, including New York; San Francisco, Baltimore; Washington, DC; Austin; and Bogotá, Colombia. Through her practice, she has also participated in public art installations. In 2023, Huertas completed a mural in Washington, DC, as part of NoMa in Color. Her latest public art installation, incorporating projection and animation, is currently on view at the K Street underpass in Washington, DC.

Katty's work has been featured in *Elle Korea*, *Creative Review*, *Creative Boom*, and by Adobe, Behance, and Booooooom. Her collaborators include the National Gallery of Art, HBO Max, Adobe, Disney+, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*, among others. She has taught at the Latin American Youth Center, MICA, and Corcoran School of the Arts & Design at George Washington University. She also currently works as an art director at *The Washington Post*. In 2026, Katty was awarded the DC Arts and Humanities Fellowship.

kattyhuertas.com



KEYNOTES

SUNDAY, JULY 26

JENNIFER WHITE-JOHNSON

Disabled Art Activist and Design Educator

Jen White-Johnson is a disabled and neurodivergent artist and designer educator who centers Black disabled joy and futures in her work, informed by disability justice and Black feminist disability framework. Jen has presented her disability justice activist work and collaborated with a number of brands and art spaces across print and digital such as Target, Coachella and Adobe Design. Jen's work is also permanently archived at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National African American Museum of History and Culture in DC. Jen holds a BA in Visual Art from The University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) and a MFA in Graphic Design from the Maryland Institute College of Art, where she also imparts her knowledge as a current instructor. Jen resides in Baltimore, MD, with her husband and 11-year-old son.

jenwhitejohnson.com



FRIDAY, JULY 24

SPEAKERS



PAULA LIZ
NAEA Staff



MACKENZI WRIGHT
NAEA Staff



WANDA KNIGHT
NAEA Past President



RENNA MOORE-EDWARDS
Art Educator



REBECCA WILKINSON
Art Educator



TONI GUGLIELMO
Executive Director,
ARTEFFECT



CONNOR WALDEN
Project Manager,
ARTEFFECT



KATE ROSE PROVISO
Program Coordinator,
ARTEFFECT

SATURDAY, JULY 25 & SUNDAY, JULY 26



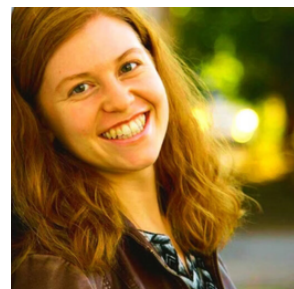
ANJALI WELLS
Executive Director of
Creative Outlets



CINDY TODD
NAEA President



AMY PFEILER-WUNDER
NAEA President-Elect



RACHEL MCGRAIN
Executive Director of Arts
Education in Maryland Schools

SESSIONS

FRIDAY, JULY 24

DAY 1 WELCOME

8:00–8:30 am | Bulfinch/Renwick | Paula Liz and Mackenzi Wright

Welcome to the 2026 National Student Arts Leadership Conference!

OPENING REMARKS

8:30–9:00 am | Constitution AB | Wanda Knight

Conference opening remarks presented by Wanda Knight, NAEA Past President.

KEYNOTE

9:00–10:00 am | Constitution AB | Erin Harkey

Keynote presentation by Erin Harkey, CEO for Americans for the Arts.

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS: COLLABORATIVE ARTMAKING

1:00–2:00 pm | Bulfinch/Renwick | Paula Liz and Mackenzi Wright

Kick off the conference by connecting with fellow attendees through a collaborative art-making experience. In this interactive icebreaker, students will work together to create art while introducing themselves and learning about peers from across the country. This activity sets the tone for the conference by encouraging creativity, teamwork, and new connections!

LEADERSHIP OBSTACLE DOLLS: TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP FEARS INTO EMPOWERED ACTION THROUGH CREATIVE PRACTICE

2:00–3:00 pm | Bulfinch/Renwick | Renna Moore-Edwards and Rebecca Wilkinson

What is holding you back from stepping fully into leadership? In this hands-on workshop, you will create a symbolic “leadership obstacle doll” representing a fear or barrier that limits your growth. Through guided reflection and artmaking, you will transform that obstacle into a visual plan for courageous action. This session centers creativity as a leadership tool and fosters an inclusive space for emerging leadership voices. You will leave with a tangible artifact, a reflective process you can adapt for mentoring others, and a renewed sense of agency in your leadership journey.

VISUALIZING IMPACT: LEAD WITH YOUR CREATIVE STRENGTHS

3:00–4:00 pm | Bulfinch/Renwick | Toni Guglielmo, Connor Walden, and Kate Rose Provisor from ARTEFFECT

This interactive workshop fosters self-awareness and identity development among young artists as emerging creative leaders. Participants take a brief self-assessment that introduces different leadership styles. Discussion explores each style’s strengths, tips for effective collaboration, and refining one’s artistic voice. The workshop highlights unsung heroes from history as role models, examining their leadership traits and actions that improved the lives of others. Through engaging activities, participants connect past, present, and future, empowering them to recognize their potential to make a positive impact through their art. The experience concludes with a tour of the ARTEFFECT exhibition at MCAAD, featuring award-winning student artwork.



SATURDAY, JULY 25



SESSIONS

DAY 2 WELCOME AND WORKSHOP: ART IN ACTION—USING CREATIVITY TO BUILD COMMUNITY AND ADVOCATE FOR THE ARTS

8:00–9:00 am | Bulfinch/Renwick | Paula Liz and Mackenzi Wright

Learn how art can strengthen communities and inspire change! In this interactive workshop, participants will learn about successful community service and advocacy art projects, brainstorm ideas for their own schools and communities, and explore ways to support the future of arts education. The session concludes with participants creating postcards to elected officials, using their voices and stories to advocate for the arts.

ARTIST KEYNOTE AND WORKSHOP: THINKING CONCEPTUALLY

9:00–10:30 am | Bulfinch/Renwick | Katty Huertas

Regardless of the medium, editorial illustration is rooted in conceptual thinking and often fast executions, which is why it fits perfectly for a workshop. It is also the first step into a commercial art career. In this workshop, we'll play with image-making and talk about new ways to conceptualize a story to end up with a finished piece. Whether through digital or physical collage, drawing, or painting, we'll create a visual piece that conveys an idea based on a published article while discussing the ins and outs of actually getting commissions to create these for clients.

CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH ART: HOW TO START AN ART NONPROFIT


10:30–11:30 am | Bulfinch/Renwick | Anjali Wells

This session will provide an overview of how community arts organizations are utilized both in the community and in classrooms. I'll share my journey in starting my organization, what we do, and how we operate. I'll also go into detail on the steps to start your own organization and how to secure grant funding to launch your work.

TASK PARTY: COLLABORATIVE ARTMAKING & CREATIVE PLAY

3:00–4:00 pm | Bulfinch/Renwick | Paula Liz and Mackenzi Wright

We will end the day with a fun, fast-paced TASK Party! Inspired by the interactive TASK project, participants will randomly select creative challenges and respond through collaborative artmaking, problem solving, and playful experimentation. There are no wrong answers—just opportunities to create, connect, take risks, and see where your imagination leads!



SESSIONS

SUNDAY, JULY 26

DAY 3 WELCOME AND WORKSHOP: COLLABORATIVE ARTIST TRADING CARDS

8:00–8:30 am | Bulfinch/Renwick | Paula Liz and Mackenzi Wright

Wrap up the conference with a collaborative artmaking experience! Participants will create Artist Trading Cards through a round-robin drawing activity, adding a small sketch inspired by their conference experience before passing the card to the next person. By the end, each student will leave with a unique miniature artwork created by their peers—a creative keepsake celebrating the connections, inspiration, and memories made!

OPENING REMARKS

8:30–9:00 am | Constitution AB | Amy Pfeiler-Wunder

Opening remarks presented by Amy Pfeiler-Wunder, NAEA President-Elect.

ARTIST KEYNOTE AND WORKSHOP: EMPOWERING NEURODIVERGENT VOICES—EMBRACING DISABILITY AS A RADICAL ACT OF CREATIVE REVOLUTION

9:00–10:30 am | Constitution AB | Jennifer White-Johnson

Imagine a world where the stories we tell and the images we create truly reflect the spectrum of disabled experiences. This keynote explores how neurodiversity isn't just a difference, it's a potent source of artistic innovation. We'll delve into how disabled creatives are seizing control of their narratives, challenging conventional perspectives, and reshaping the visual language of our culture. Using zine-making as an example of learning and self-advocacy, she will highlight work that amplifies anti-ableist visual design, disability justice, and community organizing.

FROM PASSION TO IMPACT: LEADING COLLABORATIVELY IN ARTS EDUCATION ADVOCACY

10:30–11:30 am | Constitution AB | Rachel McGrain

Advocating for arts education is not a single act. It takes sustained effort built on relationships, collaboration, and shared commitment. This session will highlight recent triumphs, challenges, and lessons learned from the statewide advocacy efforts of Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS). Participants will reflect on the power of creative voices to unite across disciplines, build effective coalitions, and elevate the impact of arts education in schools and communities. Get inspired to lead, equipped to advocate, and ready to create meaningful change wherever you are!

CLOSING REMARKS

11:30–12:00 pm | Constitution AB | Cindy Todd

Presidential impact speech and closing remarks presented by Cindy Todd, NAEA President.

ON-SITE VISITS

MUSEUMS



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

8th St NW & G St NW | npg.si.edu

Experience portraiture beyond the frame. Our collections present people of remarkable character and achievement. These Americans—artists, politicians, scientists, inventors, activists, and performers—form our national identity. They help us understand who we are and remind us of what we can aspire to be. We look forward to sharing the faces and stories of inspiring Americans with you.

SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM

G St NW | americanart.si.edu

SAAM is a place to picture yourself in American art. As the global leader and trusted source on American art and craft, we engage our community, the nation, and the world by exploring tradition and innovation while showcasing the bold and unexpected. We celebrate a wide range of artistic expressions, reminding us that we are all makers.



MILKEN CENTER FOR ADVANCING THE AMERICAN DREAM

1503 Pennsylvania Ave NW | mcaad.org

The Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream is a cultural institution dedicated to illuminating pathways to opportunity for all. The ideal at the heart of the American Dream speaks to the aspirations of people everywhere: No matter who you are or where you come from, you should have an equal opportunity to succeed.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

6th St and Constitution Ave NW

The National Gallery of Art welcomes all people to explore art, creativity, and our shared humanity. Millions of people come through our doors each year—with even more online—making us one of the most visited art museums in the world. Our renowned collection includes over 160,000 works of art, from the ancient world to today.



THINGS TO DO

FOUNDING FARMERS

1924 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Cooperative-grower-owned spot serving farm-to-table-themed American fare.

THE HAMILTON

600 14th St NW

A hybrid live music venue and restaurant offering a diverse array of cuisine.

ELLA'S WOOD FIRED KITCHEN

610 9th St NW

Serving wood-fired pizzas and scratch-made Italian dishes.

ZAYTINYA

701 9th St NW

Innovative mezze menu inspired by Turkish, Greek, and Lebanese cuisines.

EVENING ACTIVITIES

MOONLIGHT MONUMENTS TOUR

Embark on a self-guided walking tour at night of the monuments located within the National Mall.

INTERNATIONAL SPY MUSEUM

700 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Washington, DC 20024

Hours: Sun–Fri: 9 am–7 pm; Sat: 9 am–8 pm

Admission: Adult (13–64) \$35.99; Youth (7–12) \$24.33

Web: spymuseum.org

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

8th St NW & G St NW

Hours: Open daily from 11:30 am–7:00 pm

Admission: FREE

Web: npg.si.edu

LOCAL DINING

OLD EBBIT GRILL

675 15th St NW

Historic restaurant offering American meals, including popular oyster specials.

LA GRANDE BOUCHERIE

699 14th St NW

Classic brasserie offering French fare amid art nouveau–inspired decor.

DISTRICT TACO

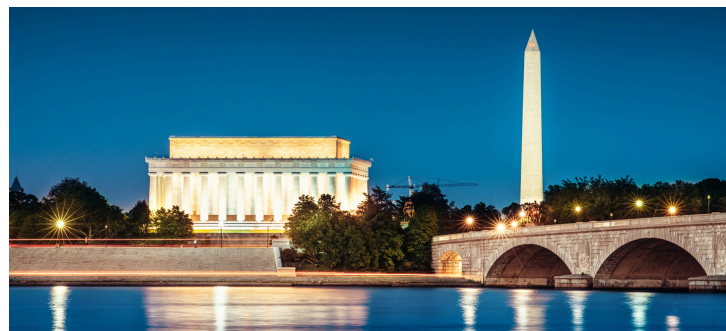
1309 F St NW

Local chain (originally a food truck) featuring customizable Yucatán-style tacos and burritos.

54 RESTAURANT

1201 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Casual eatery serving Vietnamese staples such as pho, summer rolls, and noodle dishes.



MUSEUM OF ILLUSIONS

CityCenterDC, 927 H St NW, Washington, DC 20001

Hours: Sun–Thurs: 10 am–8 pm; Fri & Sat: 10 am–9 pm

Admission: Adult: \$28.95 Child (5–12): \$23.95

Web: moiwashington.com

SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM

G Street Northwest

Hours: Open daily from 11:30 am–7:00 pm

Admission: FREE

Web: americanart.si.edu



NATIONAL
ART EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION

arteducators.org | 800-299-8321 | info@arteducators.org