

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS  
Minutes of the Art and Audience Committee Meeting  
Held, pursuant to due notice, Theater Level Conference Suite Room #1  
Thursday, 17 November 2011, 11:15 am

Presiding: Susan S. Goode, Acting Chair  
Secretary: Ms. Suzanne Broyles

There were present:

Thomas F. Farrell II, Co-Chair  
Karen C. Abramson  
Mrs. Whitt W. Clement  
Ms. Susan S. Goode  
Dr. Elizabeth F. Harris  
Keith R. Kissee  
Mrs. Deborah H. Quillen  
Dr. Lindley T. Smith  
Mrs. Suzanne T. Mastracco, Ex-Officio

By Invitation:

Alex Nyerges, Director  
Stephen D. Bonadies  
Ms. Suzanne Broyles  
Alfonso L. Carney, Jr.  
James C. Cherry  
Dr. Lee Anne Chesterfield  
Michael M. Connors  
Ms. Anne Kenny-Urban  
Ms. Linda Lipscomb  
Ms. Joan W. Murphy  
Robin Nicholson  
Agustin Rodriguez  
William A. Royall, Jr.  
Ms. Fern Spencer  
John R. Staelin

Absent:

James W. McGlothlin, Co-Chair  
G. Moffett Cochran  
John R. Curtis, Jr.  
Marlene A. Malek  
Mrs. Stanley F. Pauley  
Dr. Alvin J. Schexnider  
Thurston R. Moore, Ex-Officio

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Acting Chair, Susan S. Goode, called the meeting to order at 11:20 am and welcomed new Trustees Michael M. Connors of Washington, DC and Debbie Quillen of Bristol, Virginia.

II. MINUTES

**Motion:** proposed by Ms. Goode and seconded by Dr. Smith that the minutes of the last meeting of the Art and Audience Committee held on the 20th of September 2011 be approved as distributed on the 8th of November 2011. Motion carried.

III. REVIEW AND PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF THE 2013-15 EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

**2013-15 Overview – Robin Nicholson**

Robin Nicholson, Deputy Director reviewed the exhibition schedule for 2013 through 2015. He noted that three or four years ago the VMFA Board of Trustees approved the last exhibition portfolio and this will be our first portfolio of exhibitions created using our years worth of exhibition experience in our new facility.

Mr. Nicholson explained that the Fiscal Oversight Committee members have been asked to join us to continue the discussion on exhibition analysis and forecasting. To summarize the prior committee's presentation, we have been gathering information on past exhibitions and *Picasso* showed the highest attendance while smaller exhibitions such as *Quilts* underperformed. It was thought that we need to revise our revenue model and make concurrent reductions in exhibition budgets, not wait until the final weeks of an exhibition to make a reasonable estimate of the final outcomes in terms of visitors, per capita, and total revenue. At three weeks of *Mummy* we will be able to see how we are doing vs. the projections now that we have more current data instead of looking way back institutionally before the expansion. We will also monitor exhibitions' performance closely to check for softening in demand after the initial rush of members and devoted visitors. The goal is to serve more citizens by bringing them meaningful exhibition experiences and to enhance VMFA's earned revenue to build a sustainable economic model for the portfolio of exhibitions.

Mr. Nicholson remarked that special exhibitions are our lifeblood, critically important to us, and we need them to draw an audience. He spoke about the banner exhibition portfolio and distributed a document summarizing the information given. Robin Nicholson announced two new additions to the special exhibition portfolio. The first addition is the very first North American retrospective of Tom Wesselmann, a key figure in the Pop Art movement, scheduled for March through July of 2013. The second addition is the exhibition *Hollywood Costumes*, 100 years of Hollywood costumes, exploring how costume is a central art form in the making of classic movies. This will run from November 2013 until February 2014 and is organized by the Victoria and Albert Museum.

He went on to remind the group of the other exhibitions in the portfolio: *Flower Painting in France*, focusing on floral still life as an art form; *Treasures from the Forbidden City*, where we are the only US venue; *American Colonial*, exploring every aspect of the Colonial revival in America including French,

English and Hispanic influences; *Samurai Warriors*, a private collection of arms and armor never before toured in North America; and *Caligula*, homegrown and organized by our curator of Ancient Art, Dr. Peter Schertz. Mr. Nicholson fielded questions from the group.

### **Sustainable funding for exhibitions – Linda Lipscomb and Alex Nyerges**

Fern Spencer and Alex Nyerges spoke about the need for long term sustainability. Linda Lipscomb, Deputy Director for Advancement, said sustainable exhibition support is central to the immediate past and future success and growth of VMFA. Exhibitions deliver significant economic impact, drive membership, both new and renewals, and broaden audiences – visitors to the area and around the state, and first-time museum visitors. We need to move away from reliance upon traveling exhibitions to a mix of VMFA-organized and traveling exhibitions. She explained that the challenge is balancing the immediate funding needs with the longer term critical need to build endowment for exhibition funding. Building a pool of funds available for exhibitions planning would allow us to move beyond relying on annual funding by exhibition. She recommends building an exhibition endowment to support the ambitions of a robust exhibition budget and creating a bridge fund of \$500,000 to \$750,000 a year over the next five years. To launch the efforts we could ask individuals for an increase in annual support for the exhibition program, secure multi-year pledges, and use the framework of the *1936 Giving Society* (\$50,000 annual contribution). Within the five to six year period the bridge funding expires and distributions from the endowment would provide a permanent source of funding for exhibitions.

Director, Alex Nyerges, noted that a key element of our strategic plan is to create a campaign exclusively focused on endowment growth. He said exhibitions should have an endowment similar to the Glasgow endowment for acquisitions, so the curators can be more ambitious in their planning. For example we would have the ability to send our Fabergé collection out on the road while we are redoing the gallery. Charging \$500,000 for the exhibition fee not counting shipping charges would pay for renovating the Fabergé galleries.

The following motion was proposed.

**Motion:** proposed by Mrs. Mastracco and seconded by Dr. Smith that the Art & Audience Committee approves the staff moving forward with the planning of the 2013-15 Banner Exhibition Schedule. Motion carried.

#### IV. OTHER BUSINESS/ADJOURNMENT

No further business was brought before the Committee, and the Acting Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:09 pm.

Suzanne Broyles  
Secretary of the Museum