



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Terry McAuliffe

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Forbidden City: Imperial Treasures from the Palace Museum, Beijing

Cultural exchange includes first U.S. art museum's permanent collection in the Palace Museum

VMFA is the first art museum in the United States to establish an extensive collaborative project with the Palace Museum in Beijing. The two museums are in the midst of a series of projects between 2010 and 2016 that include exhibition exchanges and staff site visits in the areas of administration, curatorial, conservation, education, and security.

Key to this historic collaboration will be the exchange of treasures exhibitions in 2014 and 2016. Exclusive to VMFA, *Forbidden City: Imperial Treasures from the Palace Museum, Beijing* will be on view October 18, 2014 - January 11, 2015. In May 2016, VMFA will be the first museum in the United States to exhibit works from its permanent collection at the Palace Museum when its world-renowned Fabergé collection will travel to Beijing and be exhibited in the historic Meridian Gate.



Three Great Halls Palace. Forbidden City in Beijing, China.
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In making the announcement, Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe said, "Our administration places a high priority on fostering further business investment and export trade relations with China and certainly knowledge through cultural exchanges will only serve to further solidify those relationships. After taking office, I was pleased to learn that the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts shares these same values and had already invested more than five years of planning and raising funds for this extraordinary exhibition. These efforts will serve the entire Commonwealth in many direct and indirect ways."

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Director Alex Nyerges said: "This project is a true relationship between our museums and reflects the vitality of engagement with China throughout Virginia from cultural and economic development initiatives. The exhibition is exceptional because it features nearly 50 paintings by court officials and court artists, including magnificent silk paintings depicting important historic events in monumental scale. Virginia is a leader in many ways, and we are honored to provide a dimensional focus on this important culture, including a catalogue written by U.S. and Chinese scholars. We are equally pleased to share our Fabergé collection with the people of China."

More

Forbidden City: Imperial Treasures from the Palace Museum, Beijing will present nearly 200 works of art drawn from the collection of the Palace Museum. Featured works include paintings, sculptures, costumes, furniture, gold and silver, jade, lacquer, and other decorative arts. These artworks represent the imperial collection from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties with a focus on the mid-Qing dynasty. In addition, the exhibition features a number of works drawn from VMFA's collection. *Forbidden City* addresses how Qing rulers incorporated their Manchu nomadic traditions, adopted cultural elements from ethnic groups, and endeavored to create a diverse government and maintain societal harmony.

Based on the layout of the Forbidden City, the exhibition is organized into four sections:

- I. ***Rituals of the Qing Court*** features 90 objects including paintings depicting historic events and life-size horses, ritual musical instruments, and a setting of throne room furniture. The exhibition addresses the function of the outer court, and the important roles of various rituals.
- II. ***Court Arts in the Inner Court*** illustrates about 60 artworks, including portraits of emperors and empresses, furniture, and decorative objects. The exhibition explores how the prestige of the emperors, cultural exchange, and trade with the West influenced the distinctive art forms and styles developed by imperial workshops.
- III. ***Court Paintings*** offers 20 court paintings that depict animals, figures in landscapes, and botanical scenes. The exhibition explores symbolism in these works and addresses how Qing rulers reinstated court painters in the 18th century, in keeping with their Ming predecessors.
- IV. ***Religion in the Palace*** features 30 works ranging from sculpture and *thangkas* to sutras, pagodas, and offerings. The exhibition reveals the Buddhist and Daoist activities in the palace and provides a glimpse into spiritual life in the inner court.

The exhibition offers a broad perspective of imperial China through evocative gallery design, graphic materials, architectural models, and video. Dramatic images of the palace and amazing architectural scale will take visitors on a simulated journey into the buildings and grounds, once forbidden to the general public. A number of interior designs modeled after the inner quarters of the palace will provide a unique experience for visitors. VMFA will be the first American museum to use 3D printing technology to create a scaled model of the Forbidden City. One model will be on display in the exhibition and another will be output during the exhibition in VMFA's Atrium.

About the Forbidden City

The Palace Museum is located in the center of Beijing on the site of what was once the imperial palace, known as the Forbidden City. The residence was home to 24 emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties from 1420 until the last emperor in 1924. The Palace Museum is the largest art museum in China and the largest palace in the world. Established in 1925, the Palace Museum holds more than 1.8 million works of art and artifacts, many of which are either on view in the palace halls or featured in special exhibitions in the palace. In 1987, the Palace Museum was listed as a World Cultural Heritage Site by UNESCO, and it attracted more than 14 million visitors from China and abroad in 2013.

- **TITLE:** Forbidden City: Imperial Treasures from Palace Museum, Beijing
- **DATES:** October 18, 2014-January 11, 2015
- **ORGANIZERS:** The exhibition is organized by The Palace Museum and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.
- **CURATOR:** Li Jian, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Curator of East Asian Art at VMFA.
- **TICKETS:** \$20; \$16 for seniors 65+ and adult groups of 10+; and \$10 for students with ID and youth ages 7 – 17. Free for members and children 6 and younger.
- **CATALOGUE:** A catalogue will be published in conjunction with the exhibition. The catalogue contains 250 pages and full-color illustrations of all art works featured in the exhibition. It also includes maps, a list of artists, a bibliography, and an index. Essays and entries in the catalogue are contributed by Li Jian, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Curator of East Asian Art, VMFA; He Li, Associate Curator of Chinese Art, Asian Art Museum in San Francisco; Hou-mei Sung, Curator of Asian Art, Cincinnati Museum of Art; and Ma Shengnan, Research Associate, the Palace Museum. \$39.95.
- **PACKAGES:** The Jefferson Hotel will offer a special Forbidden City Package to include a choice of accommodations, traditional Southern breakfast for two and gratuity, two tickets to the exhibition, valet parking and complimentary transportation to and from VMFA. Go to www.jeffersonhotel.com for more information. For other lodging and transportation packages, go to www.visitRichmond.com/ForbiddenCity.
- **SPONSORS:** Presented by Altria Group and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation. Educational programming is sponsored by the MeadWestvaco Foundation. The Banner Exhibition Program at VMFA is supported by the Julia Louise Reynolds Fund.

Additional institutional sponsors include: the National Endowment for the Arts, The Richard S. Reynolds Foundation, The Anne Carter and Walter R. Robins, Jr. Foundation, the Ellen Bayard Weedon Foundation, The Community Foundation *Serving Richmond & Central Virginia*, Evergreen Enterprises, Leapfrog 3D Printers, the Memorial Foundation for Children, Norfolk Southern Corporation, and The Jeanann Gray Dunlap Foundation.

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About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

VMFA's permanent collection encompasses more than 33,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years of world history. Its collections of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, English silver, Fabergé, and the art of South Asia are among the finest in the nation. With acclaimed holdings in American, British Sporting, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist, and Modern and Contemporary art – and additional strengths in African, Ancient, East Asian, and European – VMFA ranks as one of the top comprehensive art museums in the United States. Programs include educational activities and studio classes for all ages, plus lively after-hours events. VMFA's Statewide Partnership program includes traveling exhibitions, artist and teacher workshops, and lectures across the Commonwealth. *VMFA is open 365 days a year and general admission is always free.* For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfamuseum.com.