

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VMFA's Fabergé collection is first U.S. exhibition to be displayed at Palace Museum, Beijing

Nearly 200 objects from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' renowned Fabergé collection have traveled to China, and will be on view at the Palace Museum in Beijing from April 15 to July 17, 2016. This exhibition is part of an unprecedented seven-year partnership between the two museums, which began in 2011. The Palace Museum has already shared its treasures with VMFA during the exhibition *Forbidden City: Imperial Treasures from the Palace Museum* in 2014. In addition to the exchange of art, Virginia and China also have a strong cultural exchange that includes staff exchanges in the areas of administration, curatorial, conservation, education, and security.

"The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is honored to share its Fabergé treasures with Beijing," VMFA Director Alex Nyerges said, "and to be the first U.S. museum to exhibit works from our permanent collection at the Palace Museum."

VMFA owns the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, including 195 objects crafted by the Russian jewelry firm. The collection also boasts five of the 43 known Easter eggs created for the Russian imperial family. The majority of these treasures, including the imperial Easter eggs, frames, animals, flowers, and cane and parasol handles, are from the bequest of Lillian Thomas Pratt, which was made to the museum in 1947.

Michael Taylor, PhD., chief curator and deputy director for art and education, said: "Mrs. Pratt spent a large sum of money on the five imperial Easter eggs that she owned, four of which are included in this exhibition. The star-shaped frame with the portrait of a grand duchess, which is also part of the exhibition in Beijing, is thought to be the only possession still in existence that accompanied the imperial family to their Siberian exile, where they were eventually murdered."

Since October 2012, VMFA's Fabergé collection has traveled to the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.: June 22 – Sept. 29, 2013; Detroit Institute of Arts: Oct. 14, 2012 – Jan. 21, 2013; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts: June 14 – Oct. 5, 2014; Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art, Las Vegas, Nev.: Nov. 15, 2014 – May 25, 2015; and the Oklahoma City Museum of Art: June 20 – September 27, 2015. After traveling for nearly four years, this exhibition will culminate with one final stop at the Palace Museum in Beijing.



Karl Fabergé (1846-1920) *Imperial Tsesarevich Easter Egg*, 1912, lapis lazuli, gold, diamonds, 4 15/16" x 3 1/2" Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. Bequest of Lillian Thomas Pratt. Photo: Katherine Wetzel © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

About the Palace Museum

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 attracts more than 15 million annual visitors.

About the Lillian Thomas Pratt Collection

VMFA has nearly 200 objects by and attributed to the Fabergé firm and five of the 13 Imperial Easter Eggs that are in the United States. A large majority of these treasures are from the bequest of Lillian Thomas Pratt that was made in 1947. The full name of the collection is Lillian Thomas Pratt Collection of Fabergé and Russian Decorative Arts and the collection includes the largest public assemblage of Fabergé Imperial Easter Eggs outside Russia. The collection was formed between 1933 and 1946 by Lillian Thomas Pratt of Fredericksburg, Va., the wife of General Motors executive John Lee Pratt. In 1947, she bequeathed more than 400 pieces of Russian decorative arts, many from the Fabergé workshops, to VMFA.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

VMFA's permanent collection encompasses more than 35,000 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, a certified Virginia Green attraction, is open 365 days a year and general admission is always free. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.

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