

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**VMFA Recipient of Major Decorative Arts Endowment**  
Gift from Elizabeth Locke and John Staelin Funds Associate Curator Position



John Staelin and Elizabeth Locke

Richmond, Virginia — The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) announced today the establishment of a significant endowment, the Elizabeth Locke Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts Fund, created by jewelry designer Elizabeth Locke and husband, John Staelin. This endowment marks the couple's single largest gift to VMFA to date.

"Elizabeth and John are longtime supporters of VMFA, having previously contributed to the Change Capital Campaign, which supported the implementation of the museum's strategic plan, and several exhibitions," said Alex Nyerges, VMFA's Director and CEO. "Their generous gift is a major investment in the museum's decorative arts department and will fund an important new position title at the museum — the Elizabeth Locke Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts."

"We have always been fascinated by beautiful objects and the craftsmanship required to create them," said the couple. "In fact, we were initially drawn to VMFA because of its excellent presentation of the decorative arts, from Fabergé to

African masks. We know that Dr. Rawles, with her deep interest in the field, will continue to expand the museum's important collections.”

Dr. Susan J. Rawles, currently VMFA's Associate Curator of American Painting and Decorative Art, will take on the newly titled position. [Dr. Rawles](#) arrived at VMFA in 1995 and in 2019 she worked with Ms. Locke to organize an exhibition focusing on the jeweler's impressive personal collection of micromosaics, [A Return to the Grand Tour: Micromosaic Jewels from the Collection of Elizabeth Locke](#), as well as the accompanying catalogue.

“I am incredibly grateful to Elizabeth and John for making this gift and honored to assume this new title,” said Dr. Rawles. “They have been strong supporters of VMFA, and our mutual appreciation for the decorative arts has reinforced the museum's historical commitment to the study and display of superior craftsmanship.”

Residents of Clarke County, Virginia, Ms. Locke and Mr. Staelin have supported several of the museum's blockbuster exhibitions. Elizabeth Locke Jewels was also the presenting sponsor for the exhibition *The Rachel Lambert Mellon Collection of Jean Schlumberger at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts*

In addition to being the Chief Financial Officer of Elizabeth Locke Jewels, Mr. Staelin served as a VMFA Trustee from 2005 to 2013 and joined the museum's Foundation Board of Directors in 2014. He also served on the Clarke County Board of Supervisors for 18 years. Prior to working with his wife, Mr. Staelin was a Vice President of Omega Performance, a San Francisco-based consulting company serving the banking and insurance industries.

The couple is also deeply involved with Save Venice, an American non-profit dedicated to preserving the art and culture of Venice, Italy. In addition, Elizabeth serves on the board of The Garden Conservancy.

### **About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts**

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass nearly 50,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris, and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting, and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan, and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its history.

**The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, call 804.340.1400 or visit [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum).**

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### **Media Contacts**

Jan Hatchette | 804.204.2721 | [jan.hatchette@VMFA.museum](mailto:jan.hatchette@VMFA.museum)  
Amy Peck | 804.773.1791 | [amy.peck@VMFA.museum](mailto:amy.peck@VMFA.museum)  
Ume Farwa | 804.204.2702 | [ume.farwa@VMFA.museum](mailto:ume.farwa@VMFA.museum)

200 N. Arthur Ashe Blvd., Richmond, VA 23220