

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**VMFA Receives National Endowment for Humanities American Rescue Plan Award  
Grant Provides Support for the Museum's Virtual Programming**



*Virginia Museum of Fine Arts*, Photo by David Stover, © 2020 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

**Richmond, Virginia** — The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has awarded \$339,500 in grant funds to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) to support the delivery of virtual programming and online resources for its visitors and the public during the pandemic.

The American Rescue Act of 2021 recognizes the humanities sector as crucial to the economic and civic life in the United States. The act supports NEH's efforts to provide emergency relief to cultural institutions and organizations that have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

“The National Endowment for the Humanities’ support for virtual programming enables the museum to continue to engage with our visitors during this time of uncertainty,” said Alex Nyerges, VMFA’s Director and CEO. “Everyone can enjoy the museum’s offerings during the pandemic by connecting with VMFA through livestream events, online learning programs and virtual lectures.”

VMFA was one of 292 organizations impacted by the coronavirus pandemic that received funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The funds will support upgrades to the electronic infrastructure in the Leslie Cheek Theater to livestream events, improve the user experience on the Learn education site, and make newly created video

content more accessible and discoverable on VMFA's website. To expand online content creation, a portion of the NEH grant will fund new part-time audio-visual, video editing and education positions at the museum.

“VMFA slowly returned to providing onsite gallery programs and lectures in August 2021, though we fully understand that not all participants are comfortable returning to in-person experiences,” said Celeste Fetta Neff, VMFA's Director of Education. “Choice is very important to our visitors and thanks to the National Endowment for the Humanities, the museum is able to offer enhanced access to live streamed lectures from Cheek Theater, providing a variety of options for students and adults to learn and enjoy what VMFA has to offer. Virtual programming ensures that VMFA continues to connect with audiences outside of the metro Richmond area, throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and across the country.”

In April 2020, a few weeks after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, VMFA began producing all public programs for adult audiences virtually via Zoom and sharing them on the museum's YouTube site. Since that time, more than 40 virtual artists talks and gallery programs have been attended by 23,600 online visitors, and 43 sessions of art history classes have been viewed by 2,000 people. Online programming has also allowed the museum to reach more than 7,400 households through 39 member programs, including 20 installments of the program “Cocktails with a Curator.”

For more information about the National Endowment for the Humanities, visit [www.NEH.gov](http://www.NEH.gov) and learn more about the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts at [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum).

### **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, and 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 museum has undertaken an exciting \$190 million expansion and renovation project, anticipated to be complete in late 2025. International architectural firm SmithGroup is charged with designing a 107,000-square-foot wing for 21st century art, African art, photography, special exhibitions and events; a new 40,000-square-foot collections center to accommodate an expanded conservation department and collections storage; and 45,000 square feet of renovations to, among others, the museum's existing galleries, education spaces, and Leslie Cheek Theater.

**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, telephone 804.340.1400 or visit [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum).**

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