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Governor Northam and VMFA Announce Virginia Visual Artist Relief Program
Grant Applications Now Being Accepted

Richmond, Virginia — Virginia Governor Ralph Northam, First Lady Pamela Northam and Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) Director and CEO Alex Nyerges today announced a special program to assist visual artists impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic: the Virginia Artist Relief Fellowship Program.

“The arts are critically important—particularly in times of collective struggle and hardship,” **Governor Ralph Northam**. “Pam and I are proud to stand alongside VMFA in supporting Virginia’s artists during their time of need.”

Forty (40) visual artists from the Commonwealth will be selected to each receive a \$5,000 grant. To be eligible, applicants must live and work in Virginia, be 21 years of age or older and derive a significant part of their income from their artwork including sales and lectures. Applications must be received online between June 16, 2020 and July 10, 2020. Recipients will be notified of grant awards on July 24, 2020. Complete eligibility requirements and the application can be found on the museum’s website at www.VMFA.museum.

The Virginia Artist Relief Fellowship Program is funded by the museum’s existing Artist Fellowship Endowment established in 1941 through a generous gift made by the late John Lee Pratt of Fredericksburg, VA. Pratt stipulated that the funds be used to support professional artists in the Commonwealth and not for other purposes. Through this endowment, VMFA has awarded nearly \$5.8 million to Virginia artists in the Commonwealth over the past 80 years.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a devastating impact on the art world. “Museums and galleries have had to close their doors, lay off employees and cancel exhibitions. Full-time artists, many of whom work without health insurance or other benefits, are in a particularly fragile situation,” said Nyerges. “The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has carefully invested Mr. Pratt’s gift – the accrued excess balance of which is being used to aid our state’s visual artists during this historic crisis.”

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, telephone 804.340.1400 or visit www.VMFA.museum.

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