

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Draft Transcript of the Trustees Art and Collections Committee Meeting
Friday, March 26, 2021, 8:30am
Electronic Meeting

Meeting called to order at 8:31am.

Full attendance listed in the meeting minutes.

Meg Gottwald: Okay, I would like to call the meeting to order of the Art and Collections Committee. In accordance with the requirements for electronic meetings under the Freedom of Information Act, the minutes and a transcript of this meeting will be posted. In accordance with the requirements for virtual meetings, we offered a public comment period. There were no requests or no comments, so we will proceed. I would like to make a motion to approve the minutes from Wednesday, January 13. Do I have a motion?

Janet Geldzahler: Motion.

Meg Gottwald: Sorry, would you please when you do make a motion state your name?

Janet Geldzahler: It is Janet.

Meg Gottwald: Is there a second?

Suzy Szasz Palmer: Second. This is Suzy, for the record.

Meg Gottwald: Okay. Any nays? I do not think I heard any. All in favor?

Committee Members: Aye.

Meg Gottwald: I am assuming that is good. Okay, so we are approved. Now Michael is going to talk to us about the upcoming Man Ray exhibition, so take it away Michael.

Michael Taylor: Thank you, Meg, really appreciate it. Good morning, everyone. So if you go back to the beginning of the Pandemic and last March, so a year ago, the museum had to close and we had to really take a serious look at our budget and see where there were places that we could make adjustments. We looked very hard at the exhibition schedule. We had an exhibition, a blockbuster coming from the Uffizi in Italy and we decided that given the Pandemic that did not make sense anymore. It had a huge loan fee, and we could automatically just shave a million dollars off of the budget by organizing a VMFA exhibition in its place. That is how the Man Ray exhibition happened. It was originally scheduled for the Evans Court exhibition, but we also faced another challenge which is we have this wonderful exhibition of Louis Draper and that had been open for three weeks before we closed. We thought it was just hugely disappointing. The visitors would only have three weeks, so what we decided was to move Man Ray to take its place. Then, in that kind of switch, suddenly you had a place for a wonderful exhibition that would save us a million dollars, but also

would automatically give us the prestige of organizing our own exhibition. We think *Man Ray* will be just as popular. So the exhibition opens October 30 and runs through February 22. It deals with Man Ray. That, of course, was not his name. That is a pseudonym. His real name was Emmanuel Radnitzky, and he was the son of Jewish immigrants. He grew up in Brooklyn and of course his school chums called him Manny and Manny became Man and Radnitzky became Ray. That was born one of the greatest artists' names you have ever heard. Man Ray is totally unforgettable, but we would not know that name if he was not a great artist. He trained as a painter, but it was really in Paris, where he goes in 1921, that he becomes a photographer. He had taken photographs of his own paintings, but in Paris, he reinvents himself primarily as a portrait photographer. That is really what the exhibition is going to look at. So Man Ray is also a modern artist, he is not going to do a traditional portrait. I think you see that in these two images. James Joyce had a notorious sort of bad eyesight. He was he was always having operations on his eyes. I think he had 26 by the end of his life. You see here he has been sitting for Man Ray for some time under those big arc lamps. His eyes are tired, and he is looking down and that is the image that Man Ray chose because it not just shows the famous Irish writer, who this portrait was made to publicize his great novel, *Ulysses*, arguably the greatest novel of the 20th Century. It gives that psychological insight into Joyce. It is not a traditional image. A traditional image would be Joyce sitting up with a pen in his hand, looking like a famous writer like Shakespeare. This one is very introspective. It has a melancholy tinge to it, and Joyce loved it. As with many of Man Ray's portraits, the sitters always believed this was the best ever portrait made of them. Similarly Berenice Abbott, who was Man Ray's Studio Assistant. She is sitting on a trunk. She is bored. He is playing around with the lenses, and he took a photograph, not expecting it to be a great portrait, just to kind of let one off and make sure that the lens is working, probably getting ready for his next sitter. But then he loved the way that that empty space above her gives this sort of insight into who she is. I love the way she has sort of cupped her face. She is the quintessential modern woman in Paris. Look at her bobbed hair. She was very fashionable. She was a great way, I think, for Man Ray to kind of meet subjects. She brought a lot of people to the studio. She started with him. He basically had Berenice in his studio for four years. Then in 1926 she goes off on her own and becomes a photographer herself and they remain lifelong friends. This portrait of Berenice Abbott was owned by her. This is the one that Man Ray gave her and said, "Here you are. Here is your image." So one of the ways in which Man Ray was successful was he had really great patrons. I am showing the most important one is John Cocteau, who was this sort of polymath genius. He was a writer, playwright, a filmmaker a painter. There was nothing he could not do and there was no one he did not know who was interesting. In Paris, between the two World Wars, so Cocteau was so thrilled with his portrait that he started to tell friends, you know, "You, you should go and see Man Ray. Go sit for him." This was the best word-of-mouth publicity you could ever get. It is through Cocteau that you start to see famous people like Picasso and Mathias and Eric coming to the studio. Now Gertrude Stein is a different kettle of fish, because she has her Saturday salon where everyone went. It was a place for American expatriates like Ernest Hemingway or F. Scott Fitzgerald to meet their French counterparts, people like Cocteau. It would not have been great if it was not for the fact that Gertrude had one of the greatest collections of modern art. So you see behind her paintings by Cezanne and Picasso. That was another important meeting place. Man Ray got so many portrait commissions by attending those salons. This is helping him build this core. So one of the things I argue is that Man Ray really takes the place of Nadar. Nadar was the great 19th Century portrait photographer. He began as a caricature artist, and you are seeing here the Pantheon Nadar. Everyone in this image, which was made in 1854, is recognizable. These are all the great cultural luminaries of Paris in the mid-19th Century. To make these caricatures, Nadar took photographs. You are seeing on the screen here the composer Rossini. But eventually Nadar figured it out. "Why am I drawing from photographs? The photographs are the work of art." That was a big

leap. Photography was not always thought of as art and Nadar is one of the pioneers who really made it into an art form. So Man Ray, I think, is making his own Pantheon who are the great intellectuals, the cultural figures of his time. That is who you will see in the exhibition. It is people like Ernest Hemingway, I love this image. People always think that he has been injured in the war. In fact, he went to a party at Man Ray's apartment. He got a little drunk, and he goes to the bathroom and he opens a skylight which falls on his head. As Ezra Pound said in a letter, "How the dickens did a skylight fall downwards on you?" So that is his war wound in this photograph. You can see he is very proud of it. Then you see Stravinsky, you know another great cultural figure, a great composer. But notice he is actually, it is a very strange photograph. You would never think that this was the photograph that you would want you know and frame in your house. What I believe happened is Man Ray is living with a woman called Kiki Montparnasse. That of course is not her name. Her name is Alice Prim but she, like everyone in Paris, is reinventing herself. So Kiki lived upstairs. She was Man Ray's partner, and she was often making a racket. I believe that Stravinsky is looking up, noticing that there is a sound, and notice the fact that he is not wearing socks. I think this is such a great covert thing because he believes that the portrait is really going to be of his head and so, you know, like a half like portrait like Hemingway so he does not think he needs socks. So this portrait catches him in motion, and it is great because you know he is a modern composer himself. He said, "That is the image. That is the one that I want to have. I think it just captures me perfectly. I am in motion." Here is Kiki, she is very glamorous. She has got her furs on, and this is part of what Man Ray does, he really delivers the fantasy. These are people who are reinventing themselves, that sell fashion and what do they want to look like, what do they see themselves as. Kiki was a great night club performer. She was a singer and an actress, and she presents herself here like a movie star. Similarly Lee Miller, who was Man Ray's partner after Kiki moves out, about 1929. Lee moves in and again becomes his studio assistant. Lee Miller aspires to be a great photographer, but she knows she has to learn from Man Ray. That sort of shows you that there is a sort of succession of really great photographers who learn from Man Ray and go on to have their own careers. So this is like a school of photography happening in Man Ray's studio. Lee Miller was one of the most glamorous models of her age, she was a Cover Girl for Vogue, but she knew that models had a shelf life. She wanted to get on the other side of the camera and goes on to have the most astonishing career. So one of the things that is important to remember is how Man Ray is making these photographs. They look so different to his contemporaries. The typical way he worked was to make a contact print, which is a very small image. Then he would draw on it, and you see this with the painter, Brock. He has got those red lines, and then what he is going to do is he is going to enlarge it. So by cropping and enlarging a couple of things happen. It gets rid of blemishes, and you can imagine how people love that. It gives that softness to the skin. It also gives you a wonderful outline and so suddenly the portraits look very different. You know he is someone who, when he takes a photograph is about 10 feet away, then hones in by doing the enlarging and cropping. This is something I do not think many people understand. It is a great way for the public to appreciate his work. I think you see that again here with the Brazilian singer Elsie Houston, the way in which you know the original contact print, that tiny little sheet enlarges to do something so beautiful, so meaningful. He crops out one of her hands, just to give that sort of detail. He realizes that the two rings are too much. It is too distracting, but by just having the one and playing off of that earring, you can get something that is so exquisite. Just to make this point, I mean this is Miriam Hopkins, who was a great movie star of the period. She would be the equivalent of someone like Scarlett Johansen today. She was working in Hollywood in the 30s, and she was this ditzy girl who, look at her holding this telephone as if she does not know how to use it. This is how Hollywood saw her and Hollywood bet. But when she goes to Man Ray's studio, this is how she wants to be seen, and what a difference. She absolutely loved this photograph and owned it for the rest of her life.

Another thing the exhibition does is it shows the context, how would these photographs would be used. Man Ray got paid twice that is why he had such a great career, because he got paid by the sitter, in this case the architect Le Corbusier. He also got paid by the magazines, so this photograph when it is reproduced in Vanity Fair, he gets a fee for that. This is one of the great things of the show. We will show the photograph, and how it was used, the magazine it appeared in, and that is expanding his fame. He is becoming known the world over. I love there is also a kind of detective work going on. I love the fact that we, when we were looking into this photograph of the Marchesa Casati, we had to figure out, what is she basing this on? We found this Winterhalter painting. This is the Empress of Austria Elizabeth who was known as Sisi, and she has got these stars in her hair. You can see that in Casati's image. This was a great ball where people came as famous works of art, so we knew that there was a reference. It took us a long time to figure out those horses. We wrote to there is actually a Sisi Museum in Vienna, and we wrote to the curator. Sure enough, she identified them as Flick and Flock. This is the painting, obviously, that Man Ray and the Marchesa had in mind. I think it is a wonderful way in which we are not just presenting Man Ray's work, we are presenting unbelievable research that is unpacking the meaning of the context. The historical references, and I am totally obsessed by Flick and Flock. I want to know everything about that painting. Look at the frame, how it is also has them in there. Unbelievable. Perhaps, I think one of the great discoveries of the show is Man Ray and his involvement with Wallis Simpson who of course was part of an international scandal. When she gets divorced and marries the King of England. Now what no one knew until we did our research is that the ruse to get Wallis out of the country so that Buckingham Palace can arrange for the King to visit with her husband Ernest and ask him to divorce her. This happened because they set up a Man Ray portrait. It is unbelievable that we will have that in the exhibition, and you can see, this portrait session continues in all these magazines around the world, in America, in London. I am showing you a Czech magazine that we found. Again, that is a story that no one knows. It is so fascinating, and this is the biggest constitutional crisis in England, since Henry VIII. For Man Ray to play a role in it is unbelievable, so more to follow on that. By the time you get to the late 1930s, Man Ray is starting to tire of this. Here is his portrait of Virginia Woolf on the cover of *Time Magazine*. What is happening now is Man Ray is beginning to feel that he is just going through the motions. He wants to go back to painting. I do love the fact that he captures Virginia Woolf with her hand raised, and again it is such an unconventional portrait for the cover of *Time*. All the other portrait covers look nothing like this. I do get the sense from Man Ray's letters, which are at the Getty and which I had the opportunity to read that he is getting bored with these assignments. He wants to paint again. The last great commission of his career, and this is how this talk ends is Ruby Richards who was brought from New York. She was a headliner at the Cotton Club, and she was going to replace Josephine Baker, who has retired as the headline act at the Folly. Ruby is a fascinating figure, and you can see, she had these over the top costumes with feathers and diamonds. In fact, here, she is. I love this kind of photo montage with double looks exposure where he is showing her looking at you but also in profile. She had a wonderful career. She released a number of studio albums under the name of Zizi de Paris, we will play that music in the show. It was Man Ray who was asked to really do the publicity around her arrival in Paris, and that is a story that connects this exhibition with the strategic plan and our emphasis on African and African American art. A great way, really, I think, to connect to new audiences, so that is the exhibition. I would love to hear your questions, and I hope you have enjoyed this presentation, thank you.

Pamela Reynolds: My question is, Michael, how will everyone, because part of it is your description of the paintings, and how, you know, that his walking cane was actually a snake or something, but how will everyone else know what you just told us to that length?

Michael Taylor: It is a good question, so I would say in many ways. There will be an audio tour. There will be gallery labels. There is the catalog, and there is also a brochure, a free sort of takeaway that we will give out. Those stories, this is a show about storytelling, so I think, using all of those are the ways to convey that. We will also have the website, and I think what will happen, and this is kind of where I am really working closely with education, what I want is not just the story of Man Ray, which is quite well known, but the story of these sitters. No one has ever heard of Ruby Richards. She has become forgotten, but in the 1950s and 1940s, she was very well known both here and in Europe. Similarly with Miriam Hopkins. She was a huge film star of her day, so I am hoping that by the time you have seen this show, you have learned more about Man Ray. You have enjoyed the photographs, but you also learn more about the subjects. That is a great question.

Meg Gottwald: I have a little aside. Everyone should read the book *The Age of Light*, which is a novel about Man Ray and Lee Miller, which I thought was great. That is required reading for the Committee. I have just started a book called the *Paris Hours*, and it has Man Ray in there. It is set in the late 20s, so that has been interesting. I am just curious. Will we have photographs by any of his students like Lee Miller in our show or not?

Michael Taylor: Not in the show, but in the catalog we will have Lee Miller and Berenice Abbott. I think that is really important that relationship with Man Ray is so fascinating.

Meg Gottwald: It was a great book, I really enjoyed it.

Michael Taylor: You may know the story. She shows up in his studio and says “I am your next student.” He said “Well, good luck with that. I am going on vacation. I am going to the south of France.” She said, “Oh that is fine. I will come with you.” The rest is history, as you know.

David Goode: I thought you were going to write a book about this. Was this the new Michael book in the making?

Michael Taylor: Well, the catalog I have to say, and this is partly a COVID thing, it has been such a joy to write this book. I do it very early in the morning. You know, I am writing in the wee hours with my coffee, but it has been wonderful to focus on it and honestly, the research that we have been able to do has been incredible. The good news is we got to the Getty before the Pandemic, so I had access to all of his letters. I am working with a wonderful student at VCU. Her name is Madeline and what she has done, she has really been able to leave no stone unturned. We have actually tracked down many of the descendants of these people. We were working with Ruby Richards’ family. They are sending us things all the time. So my fear when we decided to make the switch from the Uffizi show was how on Earth are we going to go and see these works? How are we going to negotiate these loans? In fact, all of our colleagues at the Getty, at the Met, at the MoMA, Baltimore, everywhere, they have all said it is really important to support each other at this time and we have not had any loans turned down. We have been so thrilled. We are just thrilled. It is a great coming together in our field. We need these exhibitions to continue. What we will eventually go back to post-COVID are these kind of blockbuster shows where we bring them from places like the Uffizi. Remember, we have a strategic plan around our curators doing exhibitions with catalogs. You think of John Henry and *Awaken*, Sarah and *Kamoinge*, Valerie and *The Dirty South*. These are all building our brand and reputation internationally. I think Man Ray will do the same.

David Goode: Michael it seems to me, and this is a classic example of what I think of as exhibitions that are really from the heart. The opportunity that you are giving to our curators to do exhibitions like this, I know because of my own interests and how you feel about Man Ray. I really look forward to seeing this, because I know this is something that perhaps adds a little special meaning for you.

Michael Taylor: It does. I mean he is such an incredible artist, and he is someone I have worked on and published on really going back to the beginning of my career. I had the ingredients for success for that, in terms of the network. I knew all of the Man Ray collectors. Why I say that, but the biggest lender is actually Elton John, but he was very generous. He has the biggest collection of Man Ray in private hands. It is passion. It is from the heart. I hope that came across in my presentation. I always say, if you cannot get passionate about your projects, no one else can. You need to own it and sell it and do it from the heart. That is what I think Man Ray will do, and I think when we are all said and done, this show might have more visitors than if we had a new Uffizi show. I think it is going to be very popular. Hi Denise.

Denise Keane: Hi. I think the show is going to be fabulous, and your description was very compelling. I was wondering in the catalog, Man Ray had such a big life in New York when he was still in more of the painting phase, do you cover anything about that?

Michael Taylor: Yes. That is important to understand, because I do think another reason why he is so different from his contemporaries is he is really approaching it like paintings. In fact, reading his letters it really brought home to me his inspiration for how to make these portraits really comes from the old masters. He is looking a lot at Rembrandt, and you think about the light, the way the light can hit the face of a sitter and give it that wonderful sort of modeling. He has never mentioned Picasso, he is mentioning the old masters. New York is a great formational moment for him. He meets Marcel Duchamp who is his great friend and collaborator. I think also it is interesting that he could not be a photographer there. One of his great friends and mentors was Alfred Stieglitz, and Stieglitz is saying to him, you know you have an eye for portraiture. One of the things that I am really fascinated by is right before he goes to Paris, he wins a competition. He wins a portrait competition that Stieglitz enters his work into. He was ready to be a photographer in New York, but it took being in Paris and not knowing anyone to really reinvent himself. That is really the show. It is all about how all of these people want to leave the past behind. I would say Emmanuel Radnitzky lived in Brooklyn. Man Ray lived in Paris. We should probably move on to our next speaker. I think Stephen, you are going to introduce Debbie.

Stephen Bonadies: Thank you Michael, I am pleased to be able to introduce one of our newer staff members, Debbie Linn who is the Assistant Chief Conservator at the museum. Prior to joining the museum in September of 2019, Debbie worked as an exhibitions and loans conservator at the Field Museum in Chicago. She has also held positions at the Chicago History Museum, the Newberry Library, and Harvard University. Debbie trained as a paper conservator, but also has extensive experience in project management, exhibitions, preventive conservation, and disaster recovery. I know you will enjoy her presentation this morning on a project that she is currently working on in the conservation studio. So Debbie welcome.

Debbie Linn: Thank you so much Stephen. I appreciate that introduction. Thanks to all of you for the opportunity to present this magnificent scroll. I am really excited to meet all of you and delighted to be with you this morning and look forward to meeting you in-person at some point.

Today I am going to share a little bit about the history of the scroll. I will go over our plans for display and give you a first glance at our initial investigations. *The Picture Scroll Depicting the Legendary History of the Gauda Caste* was brought into the collection in 2009 with the generous support of the Robert A. and Ruth W. Fisher fund and the Kathleen Boone Samuels Memorial Fund. The scroll is from the Andhra region of South East India. The scroll is about two feet wide and 50 feet long. Here, you can see it unrolled in its entirety in the conservation lab. The inscription on the far end of the scroll is written in Telugu and has a date that can be translated either to 1711, 1781, or 1831. We are not sure, right now, which is the accurate date. The scroll was commissioned by someone to illustrate the history of their people in a truly magnificent way. This caste is known for the production of a fermented beverage known as toddy which is produced from the sap of palm trees. On the scroll you can actually see individuals climbing up the trees and harvesting the sap. In this detail, foreign individuals are enjoying their beverage perhaps a little bit too much. The fellow in the middle seems to have overindulged. What I really want to draw your attention to in this detail is the figure on the bottom in the center. The gentleman that is sitting there and the pots. I had not noticed this until John Henry Rice, the curator of this piece was up in the conservation lab and pointed this out to me. This is them actually showing the process of distillation were in the blue pot the liquid is being heated up. Then it is being distilled down into the brown pots on either side of it. Really a fun detail. Next slide In addition to illustrating the production and the consumption of the toddy, the scroll also shows a wide array of stories from mythology. Gods and goddesses, creatures, and dramatic hunting scenes like this one, with all these fantastic animals. You can see one of the several fierce battles that are also shown. This poor gentleman in front of the elephant's trunk on the left side has even lost his head in the melee. He is not the only one. One of the most remarkable things about the scroll is how exquisitely and lavishly painted it is with gold and brightly colored pigments. This detail is actually only about five inches high, and you can see how delicately and finely painted these lines are. This is one of the largest and most extravagantly painted of the ones that we know, and it is just absolutely beautiful. Plans are underway. They have been underway for a little while now to finally put this extraordinary piece on display. This is a drawing of how the scroll will look in the late Indian gallery. We are going to display about nine feet of the scroll unrolled at a time as part of a series of rotations planned for the next five to seven years. We are doing this, not only because the scroll is 50 feet long and that would be quite the endeavor to be able to display the entire thing, but also to protect the scroll from light damage over the long term. Here we can see a schematic of the case drawing. Because we need to access the scroll and roll it and unroll it over the course of the next many years, this case is no ordinary case. This shows the view of the case from the side looking through the wall, so on the right side. We had the window opening of the scroll and up at the top, we have space for the lights. You can see in this highlighted area the platform that the scroll will be sitting on. To access the scroll the entire front of the case will be able to be removed, and this platform, which is on wheels will be able to be rolled out away from the wall. Now the top of the platform normally will be at an angle while the scroll is on display, but it will actually lift up into a flat position in order to allow us to safely do the unrolling and rolling that we will have to do during our rotations. This is an ingenious design. It is very clever. Hats off to Lee Bowles and Mike Kanasink in Exhibitions Design and Jim Heitchue, our Senior Mountmaker, for their creativity and their expertise in this. So next slide. Before the scroll goes out on display, we are taking the opportunity to study it in order to better understand the materials used in its manufacture, how it was created, and perhaps we will even be able to zero in on one of those three dates that I mentioned earlier. One of the pieces of analytical equipment that we have, that we are fortunate to have in house, is the Bruker CRONO X-Ray Fluorescence Scanning Spectrometer. Quite a mouthful. Here you can see Meredith Watson, our Assistant Paintings Conservator, and Josh Summer, our new Cochrane Assistant Conservator of Paintings, helping to position the CRONO in

place. For this scroll, we are using this piece of equipment to help us identify the pigments in a completely non-destructive way. In the next slide. So grab your coffee and to understand how this works, oh I am sorry, let us fast forward to the next slide, Yes, there we go. To understand how this works, let us put on our science hats, grab your coffee and I am going to explain this as briefly as possible. It is a fairly straightforward principle actually. So when a beam of x-ray, x-ray radiation or photon, is directed at a sample, the atom absorbs that x-ray photon and in the process an electron gets kicked out, leaving a vacancy behind. In the illustration in the middle, you can see there is that empty hole where the electron used to be, but atoms do not like this vacancy so other electrons drop down from the other layers to fill that void. When they drop down, they emit a radiation or fluorescence. This fluorescence can be measured and is characteristic of that element. So once we have identified that element, then we can use that information to help us identify the pigments. Let us go back one slide, just so you can see a close up of what the head of the machine looks like. So the CRONO, once we get it in place, it will it shoot x-ray beams at the scroll and scan over the entire surface of the scanning area. Let us go ahead two slides. There we go. Thank you. Once we get everything set, we monitor the CRONO from a safe distance. This does have x-rays so safety is important for us to keep in mind. Then we can actually start to watch the scan come up on the computer screen. These scans take between two and eight hours to conduct, depending on how much detail we are looking for. So next slide. In the end what is produced is a map that shows you where a specific element has been detected or not. On the left is the area of the scroll that was scanned and then on the right, the white areas show where calcium was detected by the CRONO. This map closely corresponds to the white paint on the scroll, indicating that there was a calcium carbonate chalk kind of pigment that was used. You can see on the right the white ghost elephant that you can clearly see in the image on the left. Next slide. In the second example, the green areas on the map on the right correspond to iron, which is present in Earth-based mineral pigments such as umber and ochre. Indeed, the this map of iron closely follows the areas on the scroll that are painted brown, such as the tree trunks, the skin of the figures, and the brown pots that are on the lower left side. Next slide, thank you. Red pigment was used a great deal over the entire scroll. For red pigments, we have a couple of options that it could have been. We have vermilion, which is a red pigment that contains mercury, realgar is a red pigment that contains arsenic, and red lead is a pigment that contains lead. So this map of mercury clearly indicates, points in the direction of this pigment being vermilion. In the next slide, particularly when you compare the maps of mercury that I showed you, that is mercury on the bottom and arsenic on the top. We can clearly see a difference between the arsenic and the mercury. The map of arsenic on the top corresponds to the yellow paint on the scroll, which is indicative of a pigment called orpiment, which is also an arsenic containing pigment. The next slide. We still have a lot more work to do to interpret our XRF scans. There is a lot of nuances that we have yet to look at. But we also have other tools that we can use to help unlock the mysteries of this piece, including examination under magnification and multi-spectral imaging. One of the things I am really hoping to discover is the presence of under drawings and any changes in compositions that might have been made. In this detail of this moon, you can actually see a tantalizing bit of under drawing in the detail of the moon. If you look closely, you can see some black lines that show perhaps that the moon was initially a crescent moon instead of being a full moon. There is lots, lots more to discover and to learn about this piece and I am really excited about it. We can go ahead to the last slide. I want to express my deep gratitude to all my colleagues who are working on this project with me. John Henry Rice, Lee Bowles, Mike Kanasink, Dan Linder all up in Exhibitions and my colleagues here in Conservation, Jim, Josh and Meredith. Thank you, I look forward to sharing more with you and taking any of your questions.

David Goode: Is the scroll unrolled in the lab at the moment?

Debbie Linn: It is partially enrolled in the lab at the moment. It had to be rolled up a bit on the ends to make space for other projects in the lab and make it a little bit easier for people to work around, but it is out right now.

David Goode: So any of us that can get there should probably come and see it in its full, or almost full, expanse.

Debbie Linn: I would love to, I would be delighted to share that with everybody.

Alex Nyerges: Anybody coming to the Building Committee meeting next week, we can have we can make that happen.

Debbie Linn: Yes, absolutely.

Meg Gottwald: I would like to see it.

Alex Nyerges: Good.

David Goode: There will not be many opportunities to see it unrolled in the future, will they?

Alex Nyerges: It is a pretty massive table.

Debbie Linn: Yes, we had to get a lot of tables all lined up.

David Goode: I am surprised the lab is big enough.

Debbie Linn: What? You have seen the labs.

Alex Nyerges: You know what? It is the advantage of having no business for Special Events. Special Events are not using the tables so there is something good coming out of the Corona virus, I guess.

Debbie Linn: That is exactly it.

Alex Nyerges: You will not hear the same story for Fiscal Oversight.

Monroe Harris: Alex, my compliments on being versatile with the equipment that we have there at the museum. That is good.

Debbie Linn: Thank you, thank you. We are so lucky to have the equipment that we have in-house. Thanks to the Commonwealth of Virginia for their support for that. We are one of the few institutions in the in the country and particularly in the southeast, that have all of the pieces of equipment that we have. We really are on the forefront of science here. We have a lot to learn to ramp up our expertise but we are very fortunate.

Birch Douglass: What day next week is the Building Committee?

Monroe Harris: Tuesday and Wednesday, right?

Alex Nyerges: Thank you.

Unknown Speaker: Okay.

Alex Nyerges: You know, Monroe, your point about the conservation equipment is really good. Stephen gets much of the credit and creating the strategic plan, the last strategic plan from 2015-2020, but then also this 2020-2025 strategic plan because it is in that that we have laid out the plan for building our Conservation program, which includes equipment and staffing. It includes creating positions and I am pointing it at Debbie, an Assistant Chief Conservator position, which was a new position when Debbie came onboard. This is all part of this master plan to make sure that we are one of the largest and the best Conservation departments of any art museum in the country. I am talking about, we always talk about top 10, I am talking about getting rid of one of the hands and keeping it down to one hand, and quantifying it in the top five, which we are well on the way to.

Monroe Harris: Well I am not surprised. I mean the amount of, the talent and the expertise that we have as museum is just really amazing. We just have to continue to get the word out so that people know how amazing we really are. It is great.

Pamela Reynolds: I was just going to say thank you to Susan and David Goode for their wonderful contribution and the naming of the Observation Gallery.

Debbie Linn: Absolutely. Here, here.

Cindy Conner: I had a quick question for Debbie.

Debbie Linn: Yes?

Cindy Conner: The display case, which I found fascinating.

Debbie Linn: Yes, absolutely.

Cindy Conner: Is that a technique that has been used before or is that something original to the Virginia museum, that particular case?

Debbie Linn: Well it is a VMFA design. It has taken elements from other ideas, other institutions, and other experiences folks have had but it really problem solves our particular need to be able to access it, to pull it out, to get it leveled. The hinge on the back so that the front top, front edge of the scroll lifts up, that is ingenious. I have seen other situations and other examples that on a much smaller scale because this is the biggest that I have ever seen where the top is actually taken off. But because this is so big, we could not take the top off. We had to come up with another way so it really took a lot of minds coming together to come up with this. One of the other things I did not mention with the light levels and the concern about light exposure over time, is we are actually going to have visitor activated lights for this case. So it will be very dimly lit when there is no one in the gallery but as people approach, the lights will come up. That is going to really help us to preserve this piece.

Cindy Conner: Great, thank you.

Suzy Szasz Palmer: I have a question for Debbie. This is Suzy. This is such a fascinating process. I think we have all seen that. It would be fabulous, particularly in light of all the things that the museum is doing virtually, to have some kind of video done of what you are doing with this in the lab. Everything from the x-ray process to showing of that case and having that, certainly put on the website, but I am not you know and probably distributed in some other ways that would help with the exposure of what is happening in the Conservation lab and help with some education things. I think it has a wide use that could be done why you are in the process of doing this work?

Debbie Linn: Absolutely. We are on the same page with that. That is partly why I take a lot of the images. I have been taking a lot of pictures and documenting every step of the way so that we can do that exact thing. Yes, this is such a spectacular piece and project that is important. One of the things I wanted to mention, John Henry, who is here, he has connected me with folks up at Harvard. There is a project called Mapping with Color that is using, that is connecting, scientists are connecting with all sorts of institutions across the country to basically map the history of pigments through Asian paintings over time. So we are going to connect with them and be able to share our results of our investigations and our study with them and be a part of this larger project. So that is a project that has just recently been launched. We are excited to connect and be involved with that.

Birch Douglass: Because this Committee meeting is being recorded, I wonder if it possible to cut out the segment you just presented and post that on the museum's YouTube channel.

Debbie Linn: Maybe.

Birch Douglass: Something, you know, maybe quick and easy to do. Then you can do follow ups, you and John Henry, explaining certain aspects in more detail and add that to the YouTube channel.

Debbie Linn: That is an excellent idea.

Stephen Bonadies: Birch, just building on that, I think it would be a great opportunity for joint presentation. Instead of Cocktails with just a Curator, turn Cocktails with a Curator into Conservator to talk about this incredible piece and really just sort of reinforce the incredible curator conservator collaboration that we are really focusing on with projects in the Conservation Center. I think it is a great idea.

Meg Gottwald: I would like to shout out to John Henry. I mean that is just a beautiful work of art. Debbie, your team, I just cannot imagine working on such a beautiful piece. I know you are all doing a great job. It was a great presentation. Will we, do we share our equipment with anyone if another institution and comes in and says we have got this work we want to know about?

Stephen Bonadies: We did recently. We worked with a conservator, who was a graduate student at the University of Delaware Winterthur Program, and examined a piece over at the history museum. We were able to examine it and document. She had done a whole series of studies of related works by this particular artist, whose name escapes me right at the moment. It was really a wonderful opportunity for us to collaborate. Again, we are very, very open to do that.

Meg Gottwald: That is wonderful. Do we have any more questions or comments or observations?

Deborah Valentine: I have one question. Is there a plan to sort of advertise each new section as it unrolls? That make any sense?

Debbie Linn: That does make sense. That is a good question. I am not sure of that also is.

Deborah Valentine: When I say advertise it, I do not necessarily mean advertisement. You know, make it...

Debbie Linn: Promote it? Yes, I think that would be a wonderful opportunity and because we actually can move the scroll out from the case and the end the CRONO equipment, we can move that as well. I think that there are opportunities to be able to share information about the equipment and the scanning. Perhaps there is a public programming or a conservation on display that we can do, where we have the equipment out there with the scroll and can talk with people about what we can do with it. I think there are some really good opportunities to do things like that. We cannot obviously shoot, have the equipment scanning with the x-rays while the public is there, but we could certainly do some show and tell. That would be really wonderful.

Michael Taylor: I agree. I think it would be almost like an exciting thing where people are waiting for the next part to be unveiled. We can talk to Jan and her colleagues in Communications about that it.

Deborah Valentine: It is better than Netflix.

Michael Taylor: Yes, I would say it could be as easy as just social media posts. I do go back to Stephen's point. I do think that, you see the excitement on this screen, I think this has great outreach potential for our members. I think it will make a great members program and also the general public. Birch, we can also talk to Jan about your idea of sharing this presentation. Debbie, that was wonderful. Thank you.

Debbie Linn: Thank you, thank you.

Meg Gottwald: Alright, if there is no more business, I think once again we have had incredible presentations. Thank you to Michael, thank you to Debbie, and thank you all for your participation and good questions. Anybody have anything else to say? All right, well, I think it is time to adjourn our meeting, go grab something to eat real quick, and on to our next ones. Thanks so much everyone.

Meeting adjourned at 9:27am.

Transcribed by: Kay Baker
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