



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Mary Morton Parsons Foundation Awards VMFA \$600,000 for ARTshare**

Matching grant will expand digital access to VMFA collection

An important matching challenge grant of \$600,000 from the Mary Morton Parsons Foundation will support *ARTshare*, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' digital technology and education initiative. As a statewide art museum dedicated to enriching the lives of all Virginians, this project will extend the museum's impact by making its collections accessible across the commonwealth and around the world. VMFA will have one year to raise an additional \$600,000 to meet the challenge.

"Digital technology is a tremendous asset in our ongoing effort to connect people with great art each and every day," Director Alex Nyerges said. "By creating a virtual gallery online, providing richer context for individual works, and drawing connections between the diverse cultures and artistic traditions represented in the permanent collection,

*ARTshare* will enhance and expand those moments of connection. Given its promise to expand our statewide reach and enrich the experience of both onsite and virtual visitors, *ARTshare* is one of VMFA's highest institutional priorities."



A multiyear, multimillion dollar initiative, *ARTshare* encompasses both the capital projects necessary to sustain VMFA as a 21<sup>st</sup>-century museum and the development of new educational content and platforms. Its initial phase includes the implementation of a new Collections Management System and Digital Asset Management System to ultimately digitize the 33,000 objects in the permanent collection, the launch of a redesigned virtual gallery, and the creation of a new educational resource website for K-12 classrooms. These ongoing efforts have been supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), The Community Foundation *Serving Richmond & Central Virginia*, The VMFA Council, as well as several private foundations and individual donors.

*ARTshare*'s ultimate goal is to enable visitors—both in the galleries and far beyond the museum's walls—to engage with VMFA's outstanding collection in dynamic new ways. While all categories of visitors will benefit from these initiatives, the opportunity to increase VMFA's presence in Virginia's K-12 classrooms is especially exciting. Combining *ARTshare* with VMFA's existing 700-member statewide partner network will allow the museum to share its treasures with a significantly larger audience than the 1 million people currently served annually.

Mary Morton Parsons and her foundation have a long history with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts dating back to the late 1950's. During her lifetime, Mrs. Parsons made generous gifts to support the installation of the Egyptian Gallery and established an endowment to expand VMFA's holdings in American Decorative Arts. The Mary Morton Parsons Foundation has continued this legacy with major gifts to VMFA's 2010 expansion and the earlier Pauley Center renovation. With this most recent grant, Mrs. Parsons' and the foundation's contributions to the museum exceed \$3 million.

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

VMFA's permanent collection encompasses more than 33,000 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](http://www.vmfa.museum).

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