

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**VMFA Continues Support of Virginia Artists with \$162,000**

Fellowship grants awarded to 27 artists

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' Fellowship Program continues its 76-year tradition supporting Virginia's art community by giving grants to students and professional artists. With this year's awards, fellowship grants will reach nearly \$5.5 million with more than 1,275 awards to Virginia artists since the program's inception in 1940. VMFA awarded 27 fellowships to Virginia art students and professional artists in 2016-17 for a total of \$162,000.

"None of this would be possible without the generous endowment established by the late John Lee Pratt and all the supporters of this mission-based objective throughout the past 76 years." Director Alex Nyerges said. "The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' Fellowship Program is committed to about nurturing artists throughout the Commonwealth."



Paul Ryan (Professional, painting, Staunton)  
*See If You Agree*, 2015  
Oil and acrylic on canvas, 64x90"

Twelve professional fellowships, each worth \$8,000, were awarded. The recipients are (in alphabetical order by hometown): Moaz Elemam, film/video, **Alexandria**; Tyrone Turner, photography, **Arlington**; Lee Anne Chambers, painting, **Courtland**; Kristin Skees, mixed media, **Hampton**; Matthew Parker, drawing, **Portsmouth**; Cynthia Henebry, photography, **Richmond**; Valerie Molnar, mixed media (collab. with Matt Spahr), **Richmond**; Matt Spahr, mixed media (collab. with Valerie Molnar), **Richmond**; Stephen Vitiello, new/emerging media, **Richmond**; Jack Wax, crafts, **Richmond**; Paul Ryan, painting, **Staunton**; Martha Jones, painting, **Williamsburg**; Charlie Brouwer, sculpture, **Willis**.

The juror for the professional awards was Valerie Cassel Oliver, senior curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.

Four graduate students won awards worth \$6,000 each. They are: Paul Norton, film/video, **Arlington**; Kathryn Mayes, photography, **Mechanicsville**; Corey Piper, art history, **Richmond**; Abbesi Akhamie, film/video, **Woodbridge**.



Kathryn Mayes (Graduate, photography, Mechanicsville)  
*Ella and her baby doll*, 2014  
Film scan, 24x30"

Ten undergraduate students won awards worth \$4,000 each. They are: Natalie Abernethy, new/emerging media, **Ashburn**; Isabel Lee, sculpture, **Charlottesville**; Donald Boose, new/emerging media, **Falls Church**; Madeleine Hardy, painting, **Falls Church**; Emily White, photography, **Fork Union**; James Heyes, new/emerging media,

**Newport News**; Cassie Williamson, mixed media, **Powhatan**; John DiJulio, photography, **Richmond**; Monica Escamilla, photography, **Richmond**; Kyle Falzone, mixed media, **Richmond**.

In addition, undergraduate student Rachel McGovern, crafts, of McLean was awarded a fellowship worth \$2,000 for her final semester.

The juror for the undergraduate and graduate awards was Amy Moorefield, museum deputy director of exhibitions at the Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke, Va.

Of this year's winners, seven artists have received fellowships in the past:

- Jack Wax – 2007 Professional fellowship winner
- Valerie Molnar – 2007 Graduate fellowship winner
- Stephen Vitiello – 2010 Professional fellowship winner
- Martha Jones – 2011 Professional fellowship winner
- Paul Ryan – 2010 Professional fellowship winner
- Corey Piper – two-time art history winner
- Paul Norton – 2014 Professional fellowship winner



Rachel McGovern (Undergraduate, crafts, McLean)  
*Thoracic Coffee Table*, 2014  
White oak, poplar and milk paint, 21x34"

The fellowship funds come from a privately-endowed fund administered by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. The Fellowship Program was established in 1940 through a generous contribution made by the late John Lee Pratt of Fredericksburg (the husband of Lillian Pratt, donor of the museum's Fabergé collection). Offered through the VMFA Art and Education Division, fellowships are still largely funded through the Pratt endowment and supplemented by gifts from the Lettie Pate Whitehead Foundation and the J. Warwick McClintic Jr. Scholarship Fund.

### **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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