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## Cochrane Gift Endows Painting Conservatorship

*Donation reflects full cycle of support for VMFA*

A final, long-planned gift from Louise B. and J. Harwood Cochrane has brought the couple's support of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts full circle. As the result of a charitable annuity and trust benefiting the museum, \$8.4 million was added to the VMFA endowment this year.

During the past five decades, the Cochranes generously supported VMFA with more than \$40 million, through an endowment funded with outright gifts, 220 parcels of real estate in Manchester, and their long-time family home and farm in Hanover County. Proceeds from the sales of the real estate were added to the Cochrane endowment principal. J. Harwood Cochrane founded Overnite Transportation, and Louise Cochrane, a painter, served as a docent and member of The Council of VMFA. Each served on the museum's Board of Trustees at different times.

A portion of this trust distribution has funded the Louise B. and J. Harwood Cochrane Associate Conservator of Paintings position, complementing their long-time support for the American Art collection and the Cochrane Curator of American Art.

“With this last generous donation, the Cochranes ensured that the museum is positioned to be a strong steward of paintings in our permanent collection,” VMFA Director Alex Nyerges said. “In creating the curator and collection endowments, they recognized the value in building our strategic holdings, and this newly endowed conservator position will ensure that those works remain protected under our care for a long time. This gift reflects their ultimate commitment as art patrons.”



*Bruce Suffield, Louise B. and J. Harwood Cochrane Associate Conservator of Paintings at VMFA. (Photo by David Stover © VMFA.)*

Bruce Suffield, who first joined the VMFA as a painting conservation fellow in 1994, has been named the inaugural Cochrane Associate Conservator of Paintings. Suffield advanced to assistant conservator in 1994 and associate conservator in 2004. A member of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works and other conservation organizations, Suffield has written and lectured on such topics as materials and restoration approaches in 15<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century paintings, and modern painting materials. He earned his undergraduate degree in studio art and museum studies at the University of Texas at Austin and his master's and certificate of advanced study in conservation at the State University of New York's Buffalo State College.

“We continue to raise the profile of our conservation team and their work, and the Cochrane Associate Conservator of Painting will further highlight our commitment to becoming a vibrant center for conservation,” said Stephen Bonadies, VMFA's Senior Deputy Director for Conservation and Collections and Chief Conservator. “Bruce is a skilled conservator, and we are delighted that this endowed position reflects his important contributions.”

“Every time I walk through the VMFA’s American galleries, I remember the Cochranes and their outstanding support of building the American collection,” Suffield said. “It is an honor for conservation to receive this generous endowment, which will allow for continued advances in our endeavors in preservation, treatment, and research.”

The Cochrane gift reinforces VMFA’s strategic investment in the Susan and David Goode Center for Advanced Study in Art Conservation—the largest of its kind in the Southeast—to increase new knowledge about its collection, ensure best practices for treating and preserving cultural properties under its care, and support professional development. The center generates cutting-edge scholarship relevant to multiple fields.

The remainder of the \$8.4 million final distribution will provide additional support for the American art collections and the Cochrane Curator of American Art.

Since 1988, the J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art has provided support for the acquisition of historic American paintings, sculpture, works on paper, and decorative arts, ca. 1700-1945, including those native to Virginia. The endowment has underwritten 79 important American acquisitions, including *Prince William and His Elder Sister, Princess Sophia* by Benjamin West; *The Wounded Hound* by William Ranney; *Quince Blossoms* by Charles Caryl Coleman; and *Brideship (Colonial Brides)* by Thomas Hart Benton, as well as William Wetmore Story’s sculpture of Cleopatra and dozens of other exquisite objects and paintings.

In 2016, Dr. Leo G. Mazow joined VMFA as the Louise B. and J. Harwood Cochrane Curator and Head of the Department of American Art. The department is playing a key role in the implementation of VMFA’s strategic plan, which includes a major initiative to acquire important works by African American artists in line with the museum’s efforts to reach diverse audiences. The initiative complements the department’s ongoing effort to develop a comprehensive collection of American art from the colonial period to 1950.

In recognition of their outstanding philanthropy, the museum named the Cochrane Court—adjacent to the Ancient Art and East Asian galleries—and the Cochrane Atrium for the couple.

### **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 40,000 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 80-year 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](http://www.vmfa.museum).

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