

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEDIA ADVISORY

VMFA Celebrates *Congo Masks: Masterpieces from Central Africa* with Community Events
Mask-Making Activities and Special Performances to Be Held across Virginia



Participants at InLight 2018 create community masks inspired by Congo Masks: Masterpieces from Central Africa

WHAT

To celebrate the opening of *Congo Masks: Masterpieces from Central Africa*, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is hosting interactive pop-up art events across the state featuring mask-making activities and live performances. *Congo Masks*, which remains on view through February 24, 2019, features more than 130 rare masks from the Congo Basin and represents the creative expression of more than 40 different Congolese cultural groups.

People all over the world use masks to connect with the history of their community, traditions and collective identity. In African cultures, masks are a part of storytelling, celebrations and rituals. Since many of these ceremonies are performed to music, some of the community events will feature musical or dance components. Participants are encouraged to create masks that have a connection to their own communities by adding colors or materials that are significant to them.

SCHEDULE

Dates are subject to change and locations will be added. For a full list of events and updates, please visit vmfa.museum/exhibitions/congo-masks.

Wednesday, Nov. 28, 5:30-7 pm

Northside Club - Richmond Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Richmond
3601 Branch Ave., Richmond

Friday, Nov. 30, 6-8 pm | Afrikana Film Festival

Institute for Contemporary Art
601 W Broad St., Richmond

Saturday, Dec. 1, 12-2 pm | Featuring Afro Beta Drummers

Stony Point Fashion Park
9200 Stony Point Pkwy., Richmond

Saturday, Dec. 8, 12-2 pm | Featuring Culture4Mykids

Williamsburg Premium Outlets
5715 Richmond Rd., Williamsburg

Saturday, Dec. 15, 12-2 pm

Byrd Theater
2908 W Cary St., Richmond

Tuesday, Dec. 18, 6-8 pm

Libbie Mill Henrico County Public Library
2100 Libbie Lake E St., Richmond

Friday, Dec. 28, 4-6 pm

Short Pump Town Center
11800 W Broad St., Richmond

Saturday, Dec. 29, 2-4 pm | Featuring Culture4Mykids

Elegba Folklore Society Kwanzaa Fest

Friday, Jan. 11, 6-8 pm

Robinson Theater and Community Arts Center
2903 Q St., Richmond

Saturday, Jan. 26, 12-3 pm | Dance Showcase

Henrico High School
302 Azalea Ave., Richmond

Sunday, Feb. 3, 1-4 pm | Open Studio Sunday with Hamilton Glass

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
200 N. Boulevard, Richmond

About *Congo Masks: Masterpieces from Central Africa*

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts brings to life the fascinating and timeless sights and sounds of Africa's vast Congo region in *Congo Masks: Masterpieces from Central Africa*. The exhibition is presented by Dominion Energy and is on view through Feb. 24, 2019. This world-class collection of Congolese art features more than 130 rare and unique masks dating from the 17th to 20th centuries, with more than a dozen masks showcased in their complete ceremonial ensembles. The spectacular works of art in the exhibition represent not only the artisans and performers who created these masks and brought them to life, but also the various communities, belief systems and natural resources involved in their creation.

The masks' face coverings are made of carved wood, fiber, resin, hide, or metal. Body coverings are constructed from knitted fiber, hide, bark, leaves, grasses and feathers. Depicting humans, animals, spirits and combinations of the three, masks are active instruments in spiritual ceremony and storytelling. Some more recent masks even depict figures such as Jesus Christ and Elvis Presley. The inclusion of these masks, like so

many aspects of this groundbreaking exhibition, is designed to challenge pre-existing assumptions about African masks, thus making this an innovative, educational, once-in-a-lifetime experience for VMFA's visitors.

Tickets

Congo Masks: Masterpieces from Central Africa is free for VMFA members, children ages 6 and under, state employees, preschool and K-12 teachers (public and private), as well as active-duty military personnel and their immediate families; \$16 for adults; \$12 for seniors 65+; and \$10 for youth 7–17 and college students with ID.

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 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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