

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 28, 2019

**VMFA Extends Confederate Memorial Chapel Hours for Visitors to
Experience Donald Moffett's *IMPEACH***

Sound Installation Features Speech by Congressman John Lewis, Calling Americans to Come Together as “One Family”



L: Exterior view of Confederate Memorial Chapel on the grounds of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; R: Congressman John Lewis visits the Confederate Memorial Chapel with VMFA's Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Valerie Cassel Oliver to hear Donald Moffett's *IMPEACH*

Richmond, Virginia—The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is pleased to announce that the Confederate Memorial Chapel will be open until 7 pm today, to allow visitors that are attending Summer Breeze in the Sculpture Garden additional time to experience [Donald Moffett's *IMPEACH*](#). The chapel is free to visit and open daily from 10 am–4 pm. *IMPEACH* will be installed through Sept. 8, 2019.

The sound installation is a recording of Congressman John Lewis' speech from the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives during President Bill Clinton's impeachment hearings in 1998. In his speech, the congressman metaphorically argued against the impeachment of President Clinton and issued a plea for the American family to “stay together” as “one house and as one family.” The legendary civil rights icon provides a meditative moment to consider the political issues that have attempted to divide this country and calls for unity. On the matter of Clinton's impeachment, Rep. Lewis slowed the congressional proceedings for approximately one minute before the vote was called and the matter lost.

Moffett describes the word “impeach” as a polysyllabic epic poem. The artist uses the cultural, social and political landscape as raw material to be distilled and represented to audiences using strategies of formalism and immersive encounter. *IMPEACH* was acquired by VMFA and the Brooklyn Museum in 2018 and installed in the Confederate Memorial Chapel earlier this year. VMFA was honored to have Rep. Lewis visit the installation on Saturday, June 22, following the Arthur Ashe Boulevard dedication ceremony, for which he was the keynote speaker.

“Installing this sound work in the Confederate Memorial Chapel allows the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts to frame Rep. Lewis' speech in the arc of American history,” says VMFA's Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art Valerie Cassel Oliver. “Divisive cultural, social and political events have pulled our country apart throughout its existence—including the Civil War and the Clinton impeachment hearings in the 1990s—which are represented through the content and location of this work. It is a powerful work—I am beyond

thrilled that we have this in our collection and that we have the distinction of situating this work in a context that elucidates the deep need for unification in such a beautiful and monumental way.”

VMFA takes seriously its stewardship of the historic buildings and grounds on its 15-acre campus, which includes the Confederate Memorial Chapel. Dedicated in 1887 to the Confederate war dead, the nondenominational chapel—on the southwestern corner of the museum grounds—served as a place of worship for the residents of the R.E. Lee Camp Confederate Soldiers’ Home. The Confederate Memorial Chapel was built with funding from the North and the South. Situating *IMPEACH* within this space speaks to the long history of divisive politics in America and the power of reconciliation. The installation consists of speakers and an audio player and required no physical alteration to the Confederate Memorial Chapel.

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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