

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 26, 2020

VMFA Mourns the Passing of William A. Royall, Jr.
Royall Helped Expand and Diversify Museum's Modern and Contemporary Art Collections



William A. Royall, Jr.

Richmond, Virginia — The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) community is mourning the loss of museum Board of Trustees member William A. Royall, Jr., who died on June 25, 2020. A past president of the VMFA board, Royall—along with his wife, Pam Kiecker Royall—donated more than 100 works of modern and contemporary art to the museum over the past decade. Through the Pamela K. and William A. Royall, Jr. Fund for 21st-Century Art, they supported the acquisition of dozens more exciting works, many by emerging young global artists.

“Bill and Pam have been enormously generous donors of contemporary art and significant funds to allow us to buy works by emerging artists from around the world,” said Alex Nyerges, VMFA’s Director and CEO. “Bill also served as a Board of Trustees member for two, five-year terms, giving of his time, his energy and his ideas. He will be greatly missed.”

As private collectors, the Royalls have also loaned numerous works of art to VMFA exhibitions such as *Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic* in 2016 and *Ryan McGinness: Studio Visit* in 2014. The couple were major supporters of VMFA’s acquisition of Wiley’s sculpture *Rumors of War*, which was installed on the museum’s campus last December. Other recent gifts have bolstered VMFA’s efforts to expand its holding of works by African and African American artists and includes paintings and sculptures by Radcliffe Bailey, Thornton Dial, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Theaster Gates, Rashid Johnson, Charles McGill, Mickalene Thomas and Jack Whitten.

“As with many museums, collections are built upon the vision of patrons. Bill and Pam have been that bedrock for the VMFA’s 21st-Century collection,” said Valerie Cassel Oliver, the Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern

and Contemporary Art. “The diverse practices, voices and expressions in the galleries are seeded by their deep appreciation of evolving traditions and voices. We owe a debt of gratitude to their advocacy in contemporary art and belief in its capacity to change the world.” Oliver is also planning a memorial installation of gifts of contemporary art from Bill and Pam Royall's collection that will go on display in the museum's 21st-Century gallery in July.

Royall's support for the arts extends to the entire Richmond community. In 2009, he and his wife opened Try-me, an art gallery in the city's Main Street gallery district, which houses much of their collection and provides support and space for local artists and art education programs. An alumnus of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), he was a former vice rector and member of the school's board of visitors and a member of the advisory board for VCU's Institute for Contemporary Art. Prior to the institute's opening in 2018, he co-chaired its campaign fund.

Royall and his wife have received numerous honors for their passionate support of the arts and were named Individual Philanthropists of the Year by the Central Virginia Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals in 2016. For his generous patronage, Royall was the 2018 recipient of VMFA's John Barton Payne Patron of the Arts Award. Earlier this year the Royalls were honored by the Visual Arts Center of Richmond with its Distinguished Service Award.

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 50,000 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, 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.

#

Media Contacts

Jan Hatchette | 804.204.2721 | jan.hatchette@VMFA.museum
Amy Peck | 804.204.2680 | amy.peck@VMFA.museum
Ume Farwa | 804.204.2702 | ume.farwa@VMFA.museum

200 N. Arthur Ashe Blvd., Richmond, VA 23220