

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 3, 2022

***VMFA on the Road* Artmobile Exhibition Coming to a Location Near You**
Newly Installed Exhibition Features Portraits from the Museum's Permanent Art Collection



Forgive Me (Portrait of Keith McDaniel) 1984, Jerry Torn (American, 1933–2018), color lithograph on paper. Gift of Jerry Torn

Richmond, Virginia — The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is pleased to announce that *VMFA on the Road: An Artmobile for the 21st Century* is kicking off 2022 with a new exhibition, *Revealing and Obscuring Identity: Portraits from the Permanent Collection*. This exciting exhibition of paintings, photographs and prints from the museum's permanent collection explores portraiture through a variety of periods, cultures and styles.

The Artmobile travels across the Commonwealth, from the Eastern Shore to the mountains of the Southwest, where it can be found at fairs, schools, libraries and other community centers in rural and underserved parts of the state. In March, *VMFA on the Road* is scheduled to make its first stop at Piedmont Arts in Martinsville. Other stops have already been scheduled throughout the state including Ashland, Bristol, Farmville, Lynchburg, Madison, Rustburg, Surry, the town of Cape Charles, Tazewell County and West Point.

“In addition to welcoming visitors to our Richmond campus, where they can enjoy our collections and educational programming 365 days a year, the museum is committed to making art accessible to all Virginians,” said Alex Nyerges, VMFA's Director and CEO. “We encourage everyone to see this insightful new exhibition of portraiture when *VMFA on the Road* visits a location near them.”

Throughout history, traditional portraits have typically been reserved for the elite of society, to signify the sitter's wealth, power, attractiveness and intelligence. Over time, the genre has become more expressive and many of the works in this exhibition explore themes about the nature of art, the perception of beauty and the cultural influences on identity. Viewers of *Revealing and Obscuring Identity: Portraits from the Permanent Collection* will experience the shift that occurred in portraiture over the decades.

“Traditional portraiture typically glorifies the sitter, idealizing the subject's appearance and stature within the context of stylized presentation, symbolism and careful composition. Expressionist portraiture is different in that the works distort reality to evoke mood and emotion,” said Jeffrey Allison, VMFA's Director of Statewide Programs and Exhibitions and Paul Mellon Collection Educator. “This *VMFA on the Road* exhibition considers how the sitter's identity is portrayed — whether through attributes like race, occupation or status — and reveals the artist's own core identity through works of art.”

Diverse works by more than 10 artists, including Kitagawa Utamaro (Japan), Gordon Stettinius (American), André L'Hôte (French) and S. Ross Browne (American), are featured in the exhibition.

Admission to *VMFA on the Road* is free. For the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Artmobile gallery can accommodate up to 15 people, students and adults included, for 15-minute visits. All staff and visitors are required to wear masks. More information about *VMFA on the Road* can be found at www.VMFA.museum.

About *VMFA on the Road*

In 1953, VMFA became one of the first museums in the world to have an Artmobile. For four decades as many as four Artmobiles toured 59 exhibitions and served more than 2.5 million Virginians. Due to conservation concerns and the fragility of traveling works of art, VMFA replaced the program in the early 1990s with a strategy to develop stronger partnerships with schools, community centers and museums around the state.

VMFA relaunched its state-of-the-art traveling museum and art studio called *VMFA on the Road* in October 2018. The climate-controlled 53-foot Volvo trailer includes Wi-Fi to connect visitors with VMFA educators and interactive components to meet their 21st-century expectations. The main attraction of *VMFA on the Road*, however, is the opportunity for residents of the Commonwealth to see and experience authentic works of art from VMFA's collection up close. *VMFA on the Road* is traveling to remote corners of Virginia by way of the museum's Statewide Partners program, which includes 1,000 locations — from community centers and small museums to colleges and universities.

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, 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 has begun its \$190 million expansion and renovation project led by the international architecture firm SmithGroup. Tentatively scheduled for completion in 2026, the project consists of adding a new wing of nearly 170,000 square feet and renovating 45,000 square feet of existing spaces, while maintaining 150,000 square feet of green space in the Sculpture Garden. Visitors will experience a seamless journey through the collections in the new wing, which will house contemporary art, African art, American art, a new suite of galleries for rotating special exhibitions, and a special-events space. The expansion and renovation will enable the museum to display more art, welcome more visitors, and provide more enjoyment.

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 | 804.773.1791 | amy.peck@VMFA.museum

Kyla Coleman | 804.204.2702 | kyla.coleman@vmfa.museum

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