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**Dr. Ndubuisi C. Ezeoluomba Named VMFA's New Curator of African Art**  
Curator Will Lead Efforts to Reimagine Display of Museum's African Art Collection



Dr. Ndubuisi C. Ezeoluomba, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' New Curator of African Art

**Richmond, Virginia** — Following an international search, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) announced today the appointment of Dr. Ndubuisi C. Ezeoluomba to the position of Curator of African Art beginning May 25, 2022. Ezeoluomba, better known as Endy, was most recently the Françoise Billion Richardson Curator of African Art at the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) from 2018 to 2022. He returns to VMFA where he previously held the position of Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Research Specialist in African Art from 2016 to 2018.

“We are delighted to have Endy rejoining the curatorial team at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts,” said Alex Nyerges, VMFA’s Director and CEO. “He will advance the vision for the museum’s renowned African art collection, an invaluable resource for Virginians who wish to learn more about African art and culture.”

Ezeoluomba will be charged with the development, interpretation and stewardship of VMFA’s African art collection, regarded as one of the most comprehensive in the United States. Comprising more than 1,200 works of art, including ceramics, figures, masks, paintings, photographs, ritual objects and textiles from more than 100 cultures throughout the continent, the collection offers a comprehensive survey of African art and cultural history dating from the first millennium BC to the 21st century.

“I am excited to return to VMFA during such a transformative time for the museum,” Ezeoluomba said. “African art and culture are relevant to the history and people of Virginia. Through my work at VMFA, including curating the galleries for African art in the new wing as part of the museum’s upcoming expansion project, I hope to inspire an appreciation for and a deeper understanding of African art for all of our visitors.”

In June 2021, VMFA announced that the museum has undertaken an exciting expansion and renovation, estimated at more than \$200 million. Slated for completion in 2027, the expansion will include a new 170,000-square-foot wing to exhibit more works from its growing African, American, contemporary and photography collections, in addition to expanding special exhibition space.

As curator, Ezeluomba will head the installation and interpretation of works from the museum's African art collection in the new wing, with a focus on exhibition development. A thought-leader and widely published authority on the restitution of African art, Ezeluomba will lead VMFA's efforts through thorough research of provenance and title records of the African objects in the museum's collection, returning works that were stolen or looted during the colonial era.

"We are absolutely thrilled to welcome Ndubuisi Ezeluomba as the new Curator of African Art at VMFA," said Dr. Michael Taylor, VMFA's Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Art and Education. "Endy's exemplary scholarship in the field, as well as his firsthand knowledge of the museum's collection and his visionary approach to exhibitions and collection displays, made him an outstanding candidate for this position. We can't wait for Endy to work with our expansion architects, SmithGroup, on the design and content of the African art galleries in the new wing."

Prior to his work at VMFA, Ezeluomba served as a consultant for the installation *Elusive Spirits: African Masquerades* (2015) at the Harn Museum of Art at the University of Florida. Ezeluomba also worked with the Harn Museum's curatorial team to produce *Kongo Across the Waters* (2013), a major traveling exhibition which used an interdisciplinary approach to explore the art of the Kongo peoples of Central Africa and the transmission of their culture through the transatlantic slave trade into American art.

Raised in Benin City, Nigeria, where he initially trained as an artist, Ezeluomba received his Ph.D. in art history from the University of Florida, Gainesville. In 2017, he earned the University of Florida Graduate School Doctoral Dissertation Award for his dissertation, *Olokun Shrines: Their Functions in the Culture of the Benin Speaking People of Southern Nigeria*. Ezeluomba graduated from the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, completing his master's thesis focused on the contemporary Nigerian sculptor Obi Ekwenchi. He received his bachelor's degree in fine and applied arts from the University of Benin.

Internationally recognized as one of the leading curators and scholars in his field, Ezeluomba has contributed to numerous publications including *Black Art Quarterly*; *African Arts* journal; *Hyperallergic*; *Routledge Encyclopedia of African Studies*; *African Artists: From 1882 to Now* (Phaidon) and *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*. His essay *Cultural Patrimony and Discussion of the 1897 Invasion of Benin Kingdom: Some Questions for Arts Management* will appear in the forthcoming publication *Art Management and Cultural Policy across the African Diaspora*. Ezeluomba was also a co-author of *The Arts of Africa: Studying and Conserving the Collection* (2021), the product of a groundbreaking collaboration between VMFA curators and conservators, supported by a major grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Other recent published works include *Benin Art: Changes through Time and Space in The Literature and Arts of the Niger Delta* (2021); and *The Development of the Exhibition of African Art in American Museums: Strategy for Engaging the Recent Repatriation Debate About the Cultural Property of Benin* *Museum Innovation: Building More Equitable, Relevant and Impactful Museums* (2020).

For more information about the African art collection at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, visit [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum).

### **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 more than \$200 million expansion and renovation project led by the international architecture firm SmithGroup. Tentatively scheduled for completion in 2027, 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 four acres 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](http://www.VMFA.museum).**

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