

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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14th-Century Japanese Hanging Scroll Conserved with Grant from the Sumitomo Foundation Newly Restored Ancient Scroll Returns to Public Viewing for the First Time in More Than a Decade

Richmond, Virginia — The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) is excited to announce that conservation of a 14th-century Japanese scroll painting in the museum’s collection, *Standing Arhat*, has been completed with grant support from the [Sumitomo Foundation](#) in Japan. The Sumitomo Foundation grant awarded to the museum is specifically intended for the protection, preservation and restoration of cultural properties outside Japan.

“*Standing Arhat* is one of the earliest and most important Buddhist paintings in our permanent collection. It is essential that the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts preserves such great works of art so that they can be enjoyed for generations to come,” said VMFA’s Director and CEO Alex Nyerges. “We appreciate the generous support from the Sumitomo Foundation for this conservation project.”

The painting on silk portrays an *arhat*, an enlightened follower of Shakyamuni Buddha, standing with his hands clasped in prayer, and his facial expression conveying inner spirit, sincerity and devotion. The arhat’s youthful face suggests that he represents Ananda, a great disciple of Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, who lived in India in the 6th century BC. This painting is a rare, surviving image of Ananda.

“The fine brushwork and the floral pattern on the lining of the monk’s mantle reveal the Chinese prototype of 14th-century imagery and textile design,” said Li Jian, VMFA’s E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Curator of East Asian Art. “Such depiction reflects the cross-cultural influence and exchange between Japan and China in the early 14th century.”

Standing Arhat was acquired from an art dealer in Kyoto in 1962 by Virginia architect and art collector Albert Hinckley Jr., who gifted it to VMFA ten years later, in 1972. Due to its fragile and unstable condition, this scroll has not been exhibited in the museum’s East Asian gallery for more than a decade. During the past 20 years, VMFA has invited conservators and scholars to examine the painting, document its condition and propose conservation treatment methods.

The generous funding from the Sumitomo Foundation provided for the cleaning, restoration and remounting of the painting, work performed by [Nishio Conservation Studio](#) in consultation with Debbie Linn, Interim Chief Conservator, and other conservators in VMFA’s Susan and David Goode Center for Advanced Study in Art Conservation over the past year. With the completion of the project, *Standing Arhat* has returned to the museum and is back on public view in the museum’s Japanese gallery. With the painted scroll displayed



Standing Arhat, early 14th century, Japanese, Kamakura period (1185–1333), hanging scroll; ink, color and gold on silk. Gift of Albert P. Hinckley Jr., 72.26

alongside Buddhist sculptures and objects, VMFA is able to tell a more comprehensive story of Japanese art and culture.

The digitized image of *Standing Arhat* is also available worldwide for viewing and research in [the museum's online collection archive](#) on the museum's website at www.VMFA.museum.

About the Sumitomo Foundation

To fulfill its purpose of contributing to the betterment of human society, the [Sumitomo Foundation](#) supports international exchange and research projects in a variety of fields, including culture, environment and science, whose goals are to help solve social problems and confront humanity. Grants awarded to organizations in Japan and abroad include support for the protection, preservation and restoration of old and artistically or academically valuable cultural properties, including fine art objects, to ensure that they are available to future generations.

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.



VMFA's early 14th-century scroll, *Standing Arhat*, was cleaned and conserved by Nishio Conservation Studio. Photo by Nishio Conservation Studio

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has begun its more than \$190 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.

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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