



Hollins, Virginia Museum Of Fine Arts Announce Partnership

Roanoke, Va. – Hollins University’s Richard Wetherill Visual Arts Center has been named a Museum Partner by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA), a designation that will help bring world-class exhibitions and other arts programming to the Roanoke Valley when the center opens in 2004.

“Hollins’ new visual arts center will be very unique,” said Jeffrey Allison, Paul Mellon Collection Educator for Statewide Programs at the VMFA. “It’s remarkable to have a high-quality facility on a college campus that will offer the same attributes as any major art museum in the country.”

According to Allison, the partnership means Hollins will in essence become an offsite location for the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. “Hollins will be able to offer its campus and the community at large access to as many as 60 different art exhibitions coordinated each year by the VMFA - at a fraction of the normal cost.”

Included annually are one or two exhibitions that are classified as “high security,” which means only those museums meeting certain requirements will be eligible to host them. Using VMFA guidelines, the Visual Arts Center is working towards becoming one of only eight such facilities in the state to achieve this status, joining such prestigious venues as Norfolk’s Chrysler Museum.

“A number of factors contribute to earning a high-security ranking,” explained Allison. “A museum must be able to offer an environment that provides constant temperature and humidity and the proper lighting. Of course, it must also be physically

secure so that valuable works of art are well-protected. In addition, a high-security museum must be able to accommodate large pieces of art. High ceilings and spacious loading dock areas are a must.

“The Visual Arts Center is being constructed with all of these features and is well on its way to having a high security designation when it opens.”

Bill White, chair of the art department at Hollins, credited the university’s approach to the center’s planning for making it so exceptional.

“From the beginning, the art department faculty had great input into the project, helping ensure there would be no major problems to be solved later,” White said. “We also made a wise decision in seeking guidance from the VMFA, which led to our formal partnership.”

“In the past seven years, the VMFA has worked more closely with Hollins than any other college or university in the state,” added Allison. “It was a wonderful experience working with Bill and his entire staff. He really knows what he is doing.”

In addition to accessing a wide array of exhibitions, Hollins’ partnership with the VMFA has other advantages. “Hollins will be listed in VMFA publications, which means the exhibitions they present will be publicized all over the country,” Allison said. “Many people come from other states to visit the VMFA as well as Virginia’s other museums, and likely they will make Hollins part of their itinerary.

“Plus, the VMFA can help Hollins go out-of-state and get increased access to national and international exhibits.”

Allison is excited about what the Visual Arts Center will mean to the local community. “Roanoke is incredibly important to the VMFA,” he said. “The new center

creates another wonderful space for arts programming in this area. I can foresee Hollins and the Art Museum of Western Virginia, for example, working as companions to bring exhibitions, lectures and workshops to the Valley at the same time and people going to both sites.”

The Richard Wetherill Visual Arts Center will centralize Hollins’ programs in studio art, art history, and film and photography into one building. The 58,000 square foot renovation and addition will feature five galleries for student works and outside exhibitions; an outdoor sculpture garden; filmmaking and editing classrooms; studios for painting, drawing, printmaking, papermaking and sculpting; large photography darkrooms; a roof terrace for painting and drawing; a 125-seat film theatre; and art history facilities with digital data projection and a fully wired classroom – students can “plug in” and follow a power point presentation or pull images or data from a website, all while class is happening.

#

Press Contact (Hollins University): Jeff Hodges, director of media relations
(540) 362-6503
jhodges@hollins.edu

Press Contact (Va. Museum of Fine Arts): Jeffrey Allison, Paul Mellon Collection
Educator for Statewide Programs
(804) 204-2675
jallison@vmfa.state.va.us

September 15, 2003