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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Anne Mannix
amannix@artbma.org
Amy Pelsinsky
apelsinsky@artbma.org
410/396-6310

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART HERALDS THE GRAND REOPENING OF THE CONE COLLECTION

\$4 Million Renovation and Expansion Showcases World-Class Collection of Works by French Master Henri Matisse

BALTIMORE, MD (April 9, 2001) – In celebration of The Cone Collection's 50th anniversary, The Baltimore Museum of Art will unveil completely redesigned galleries housing this famed collection of post-Impressionist and modern art on **Sunday, April 22, 2001**. The new galleries focus on the Museum's incomparable holdings by the French master Henri Matisse and provide a breathtaking look at more than 100 paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by many of the world's most important artists. The two-year project includes expanding exhibition space by 45 percent, creating eight thematic galleries, including a Focus Exhibition Gallery for the display of changing exhibitions and an Interpretive Gallery with a virtual walk-through of the Cone Sisters' Baltimore apartments. More of the Collection will be on display—including many works never before seen by the public.

The inaugural exhibition is sponsored by Deutsche Bank and Deutsche Banc Alex. Brown. The renovation of the Cone Wing was made possible by major gifts from The Edward T. Cone Foundation, the City of Baltimore, the Middendorf Foundation, Inc., Jeanette and Stanley Kimmel, and The William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund.

The Cone Collection is distinguished by an exceptional group of 500 works by Matisse—considered the most comprehensive holding of the modern master in the world. The new installation showcases the unique depth of the BMA's collection of works by Matisse from 1895 to 1947, and centers around well-known masterpieces, such as *Blue Nude*, 1907, *Large Reclining Nude* (formerly called *The Pink Nude*), 1935, and *Purple Robe and Anemones*, 1937. The new galleries also feature major examples of his sculpture, works on paper, and groups of odalisques, interiors, and still life paintings created during the artist's Nice period.

Legendary Baltimore sisters Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone formed this monumental collection at the turn of the 20th century. Between 1898 and 1949 the Cone sisters acquired

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approximately 3,000 works of art. Etta—the surviving sister—bequeathed The Cone Collection to the BMA in 1949.

According to BMA Director Doreen Bolger, “From the moment these world-class works of art graced our doors more than 50 years ago, The Cone Collection has been considered the crown jewel of the Museum’s holdings. The grand reopening of this premier collection marks an important chapter in the BMA’s history and an exciting time for our visitors.”

Continued Bolger, “The Cone reinstallation also marks the beginning of a long-term plan to reinterpret the Museum’s rich and diverse permanent collection. From Old Master paintings to the arts of Africa to contemporary art, the Museum’s collection is our greatest asset. We’ll be using innovative interpretive tools to make these distinguished holdings come to life. On-going programs and focus exhibitions will provide opportunities for continued explorations of the collection. In the end, we want our visitors to come away from the Museum enlivened and transformed by each experience.”

The new Cone Wing has been dramatically redesigned to show the extraordinary scope of The Cone Collection. Four elegant galleries thematically survey Matisse’s development with works that span nearly his entire career—from his early compositions of the 1890s to his colorful works of the late 1940s. Visitors will be able to make visual connections as each gallery radiates from the Central Rotunda, where several of Matisse’s most important paintings and sculptures are displayed. A Focus Exhibition Gallery offers changing exhibitions, beginning with early works by Pablo Picasso. In addition to redesigning the gallery space, the two-year project included the addition of wood flooring, lighting, and decorative moldings. Previous renovations to The Cone Collection galleries occurred in 1974 and 1986. Since the 1986 renovation, the Matisse paintings had been displayed in strip metal frames. In 1998, Doreen Bolger—recently appointed as BMA Director—returned the traditional gilt frames to the Matisse paintings in The Cone Collection.

In a gallery devoted to the Cone Sisters as collectors, visitors get a glimpse of Claribel and Etta as women, world travelers, and collectors. They can peruse an intriguing selection of archival material—never before on public display—such as the sisters’ letters to each other, personal account books, travel journals, and postcards, as well as furniture and textiles that the Cones collected during their travels around the world.

In the Interpretive Gallery, visitors will be greeted by a vignette of the Cone apartments composed of the sisters’ actual paintings, sculpture, furniture, and decorative objects, as well as a cabinet filled with Etta and Claribel’s collection of jewelry, boxes, and keys that visitors can explore by pulling out the drawers. An interactive display allows visitors to step back in time to visit the sisters’ apartments through a computer-generated virtual tour that recreates the Cone apartments as they looked in archival photographs. Via a 42-inch touchscreen monitor, visitors can navigate through the richly decorated rooms once visited by Matisse and encounter the sisters’ collection of works by Matisse, Picasso, Cézanne, Gauguin, and van Gogh—now part of the BMA’s collection—hanging on the walls. The virtual tour is a dynamic, innovative, and unique experience among art museums throughout the country and was created for the BMA by University of Maryland, Baltimore County’s (UMBC) renowned Imaging Research Center.

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A series of new publications, brochures, and wall labels will deepen the visitors' experience in the galleries. Even those already familiar with the Collection will enjoy the stories behind some of Matisse's most beloved paintings and learn more about the Cone Sisters than ever before. Visitors will discover why the *Blue Nude* caused uproar when first shown in the United States and learn about the sisters' legendary visits to the studios of Matisse and Picasso.

CONE COLLECTION BACKGROUND

In 1898, Etta Cone began The Cone Collection with the purchase of five paintings by American Impressionist Theodore Robinson to decorate their Baltimore home. Soon after, the sisters began to make annual trips to Paris where—often accompanied by Gertrude Stein and her brother Leo—they visited museums, salons, and the studios of emerging artists. Following a pivotal visit to the Salon d'Automne in 1905, Etta purchased her first work by Matisse during a visit with the artist arranged by Gertrude's sister-in-law, Sarah Stein, in 1906. Claribel and Etta were, in fact, among Matisse's first patrons and collected works throughout his entire career. Over a period of more than 40 years, the Cone Sisters, Etta in particular, collaborated closely with Matisse to form the most unique and comprehensive collection of his work in the world. Matisse even visited Etta in Baltimore to extend his condolences following Claribel's death in 1929.

The Cone Sisters also acquired major paintings, sculpture, works on paper, and illustrated books by Pablo Picasso—numbering 113 in all—as well as paintings by Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir. Additionally, The Cone Collection features textiles ranging from Coptic fragments to Middle-Eastern silk; jewelry; furniture; Oriental rugs; African art; Japanese prints; and antique ivories and bronzes. While ambitious in their choices of adventurous art, the sisters mainly acquired small-scale works that could be displayed in their Baltimore apartments.

The art historical significance of The Cone Collection was widely recognized as early as 1940. Accompanying its growing prestige was intense competition for its custodianship, led by The Museum of Modern Art's then-Director, Alfred Barr. However, in her will, Claribel offered her collection to The Baltimore Museum of Art only if “the spirit of appreciation for modern art in Baltimore became improved.” For the next two decades, The Baltimore Museum of Art endeavored to create a climate of appreciation for modern art in Baltimore. In the end, Etta gave the sisters' combined collections to the BMA upon her death in 1949.

PROJECT TEAM

The Reinstallation Project Team for the 6,600-square-foot space was led by Doreen Bolger, Director, The Baltimore Museum of Art; Jay Fisher, Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs and Senior Curator of Prints, Drawings & Photographs; Katy Rothkopf, Curator of Painting & Sculpture; and Karen Nielsen, Director of Installation & Design. David Harvey designed the new gallery layout. Internationally recognized for his consulting work for art museums, Harvey is Vice-President for Exhibitions at the American Museum of Natural History, New York. Richard C. Donkervoet, FAIA, chairman of Cochran, Stephenson & Donkervoet, Inc. and a BMA Trustee since 1972, oversaw the architectural changes in the gallery.

Gordon Anson, lighting consultant for the Cone reinstallation, is the Chief Lighting Designer for the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

CATALOGUE

The grand reopening of The Cone Collection is accompanied by a 120-page illustrated catalogue with an extended essay by Jack Flam, one of the world's leading Matisse scholars. *Matisse in The Cone Collection: The Poetics of Vision* is an exploration of the artist's work through the holdings of The Baltimore Museum of Art. The goal of this publication is to convey how the BMA's Cone Collection vividly represents Matisse's development as an artist, particularly during his Nice period, in an unparalleled way. *Matisse in The Cone Collection: The Poetics of Vision* is the first in a series of publications designed to explore the Museum's distinguished permanent collection.

TRAVELING EXHIBITION

The BMA organized a traveling exhibition of more than 60 works by Matisse while the Cone Wing underwent renovation. Featuring 35 paintings, 16 sculptures, and 16 works on paper, *Matisse from The Baltimore Museum of Art* marks the largest and most comprehensive U.S. tour of Matisse works from The Cone Collection in more than 20 years. Among the most celebrated paintings included in the exhibition were *Large Reclining Nude* (formerly called *The Pink Nude*), 1935, *Blue Nude*, 1907, and *Purple Robe and Anemones*, 1937. *Matisse from The Baltimore Museum of Art* was seen at the Denver Art Museum, the Birmingham Museum of Art, and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

BMA BACKGROUND

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is Maryland's largest art museum. With a full-time staff of 150 and an annual budget of \$11 million, the BMA features an internationally renowned collection of more than 85,000 objects ranging from ancient mosaics to contemporary art. In addition to The Cone Collection of post-Impressionist and modern art, major areas of strength include: contemporary art, the arts of Africa, Old Master paintings and sculpture, European and American decorative arts, textiles, and works on paper from the Renaissance to the present day.

PRESS INQUIRIES

Members of the media are invited to the Press Preview on Tuesday April 17, 2001, from 9-11a.m. Curator interviews are available by appointment by calling BMA Public Relations at 410/396-6310.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Baltimore Museum of Art is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m. until 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. until 6 p.m.; and during **FREESTYLE**, the first Thursday of every month (except major holidays), 5 until 9 p.m. The Museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Admission is free for BMA Members and ages 18 and under; \$5 for seniors ages 65 and over and college students with ID; and \$7 for adults. Admission is free on the first Thursday of every month. Admission to **FREESTYLE** and all related **FREESTYLE** activities is free. The BMA is located on Art Museum Drive at North Charles and 31st Streets, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. To obtain general Museum information, call 410/396-7100 or visit the BMA's website at www.artbma.org.

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