



BMA RECEIVES THREE MAJOR GIFTS IN SUPPORT OF ITS DIVERSITY AND EQUITY INITIATIVES

\$1 million lead gift from philanthropist-collector Eileen Harris Norton funds establishment of broad plan ensuring inclusiveness and access for the museum's audiences and staff

Gifts from The Rouse Company Foundation and Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Legum also support the BMA's Endowment for the Future

BALTIMORE, MD (February 25, 2021)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) announced today that it has received three major gifts in support of its ambitious diversity and equity priorities. Among the gifts is \$1 million from philanthropist **Eileen Harris Norton** to support the museum's near and long-term diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) initiatives. The BMA also received \$350,000 from **The Rouse Company Foundation**, which will be used to establish evening hours, and \$110,000 from philanthropists **Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Legum** to implement immediate pay increases for hourly workers. Together, these generous contributions provide essential support toward the BMA's *Endowment for the Future*, an expansive financial plan to enact structural change within the institution and to increase community access to exhibitions and programs.

"The BMA is committed to integrating diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion fully into the cultural fabric of the museum. This includes asking critical questions about the systems that underpin our institution and taking tangible steps to modify, enhance, and reimagine those structures to meet the demands and needs of our communities," said Christopher Bedford, the BMA's Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. "We are deeply honored that Eileen, Jeff, and the leadership at The Rouse Company Foundation share in our vision and are grateful for their incredible generosity. Their support provides the resources necessary to take our commitment from the realm of words to critical action."

Eileen Harris Norton Gives \$1 Million Toward DEAI Initiatives

Philanthropist Eileen Harris Norton's \$1 million contribution serves as the lead gift in the BMA's \$3 million fundraising campaign to establish and endow funds for its DEAI initiatives. The gift will allow the museum to begin immediately enacting its DEAI activities, with half committed as a spend down fund to be used over the course of three years and the other half serving as the foundation of an endowment to ensure that DEAI efforts can continue into the future and evolve as necessary. The BMA will be working with consultants from [The Empathetic Museum](#) to conduct an external diagnostic survey of the institution, establish an internal cross-departmental task force, and conduct virtual and in-person staff trainings, as part of an effort to create an institution-wide equity roadmap.

"I am pleased to support such a transformative initiative at the BMA, and it's particularly meaningful to me that this announcement is taking place during Black History Month," said Eileen Harris Norton. "I grew up in Watts, in South L.A., where museums and other cultural institutions were not easily accessible. We had to leave our community to see plays and experience art. Today my philanthropy is influenced by those childhood memories. The BMA is a gem of a museum within the predominantly African American city of Baltimore, and I can see that as the museum moves ahead with its expansive plans to diversify its audiences and staff, it will surely become more reflective of that vibrant community. I have always considered it important to make art and education as accessible as possible, and this initiative will help open those doors to everyone."

Eileen Harris Norton's philanthropy and art collecting reflect her long-standing interests in contemporary art, early childhood education, parenting, child welfare, and women's issues. She is President of The Eileen Harris Norton Foundation, which she founded in 2009, focusing on education, family, and the environment, with an emphasis on low-income children of color. She is also a dedicated art collector with strong interest in work by artists of color.

(particularly artists of the African diaspora), women artists, and artists of Southern California. Her extensive art-lending program has sent works of art from the collection on loan to museum exhibitions around the world. Harris Norton co-founded Art + Practice in Los Angeles with artist Mark Bradford and activist Allan DiCastro in 2014. The organization hosts a robust program of exhibitions and events and also supports the needs of foster youth (ages 18-24) through paid internships, scholarships, and other vital programs and opportunities. She has also served on the boards of the Hammer Museum at UCLA, the Studio Museum in Harlem, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art.

\$350,000 from The Rouse Company Foundation Supports Evening Access

In developing its *Endowment for the Future*, the BMA identified late night access to the museum as essential to increasing and diversifying its audience. This effort recognizes that the museum's hours need to reflect and embrace the realities of working individuals and families and the need for available leisure activity during weekday evenings. The \$350,000 gift from The Rouse Company Foundation provides the start-up funds for the BMA to extend its public hours to 9 p.m. one weekday per week when the museum is able to fully reopen. This important initiative increases access for the community by providing additional hours for visitors to engage with the museum's exhibitions and programs. The funds will cover costs for evening hours for approximately 16 months, and the BMA plans to continue fundraising to maintain access into the future. The Rouse Company Foundation is in the process of spending down their assets and this support for the BMA is one of their last gifts to the community.

The Rouse Company Foundation was founded in 1963 to invest in the community in ways that will help sustain the best among Greater Baltimore and Howard County institutions that focus on human services and education, affordable housing, and fine and performing arts, as well as supporting promising new programs that address community issues. The Baltimore Museum of Art, Columbia Festival of the Arts, Hippodrome Foundation, Howard Community College, Johns Hopkins University, and Maryland Film Festival are among the many recipients of the foundation's generous support. The Rouse Company's former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Anthony Deering led the Foundation, and concurrently served as a BMA Trustee for many years, including a tenure as BMA Board Chair from 1997 to 2000 and Honorary Vice Chair of the Campaign Committee.

Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Legum Give \$110,000 for Immediate Pay Increases

The BMA has increased the base wages of all its hourly workers from \$13.50 to \$15.00 thanks to a \$110,000 gift from philanthropists Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Legum. The change went into effect on February 1, 2021 and the increase will now be incorporated into the BMA's operating budget, making it the new baseline wage for all hourly employees moving forward. More than 50 employees at the museum are benefitting from the Legum's support.

Securing, and in many cases, increasing staff salaries is the most expansive focus area of the BMA's *Endowment for the Future*. Once fully realized, every staff position will be evaluated through the lens of pay equity and increases will be rolled out incrementally to achieve competitive market rates, including further raises for hourly workers. The BMA is aiming to raise nearly \$40 million during the next 24-30-months for this effort. Prioritizing this frequently overlooked aspect of museum finance recognizes the contributions of the BMA's existing staff and will also allow the museum to attract and retain a diverse workforce into the future.

"I've participated on the BMA's Board of Trustees for many years and as a former treasurer, I am very aware of how hard the museum works to balance its operating budget. I knew the BMA was unable to accommodate an increase in the minimum wage this year so I decided to help them until they could afford it," said Legum. "I am glad that so many people on the staff will immediately benefit from this gift."

Jeffrey A. Legum is a philanthropist, investor, and former automobile dealer. He is in the third generation of his family to be involved with the BMA, has served as a Trustee for 23 years, and is currently an Honorary Trustee. He has been a keen steward of the museum's financial resources while serving as the treasurer, as well as on the Executive Committee and Finance Committee, and chairing the Investment Committee. Legum currently serves on the board's Investment Committee and Marketing & Audience Development Committees and previously chaired the Pre-Modern Fine Arts Committee. He and his wife have also given generously to a range of other organizations and causes, including several major gifts to Johns Hopkins University, John Hopkins Hospital, the Kennedy Krieger Institute, and Park School.

About the Endowment for the Future

The Baltimore Museum of Art believes unequivocally that museums exist to serve their communities through experiences with art and artists. This is the core tenant upon which it has built the *Endowment for the Future*, an ambitious financial plan to enact a robust diversity and equity agenda and to create real and lasting cultural change within the museum. As part of the plan, the BMA will focus on four key areas: to maintain and increase salaries for staff throughout the museum; to establish dedicated funds for DEAI programs; to eliminate admission fees for special exhibitions; and begin offering evening hours. This vision emerged during the BMA's temporary COVID-related shutdown, in alignment with the ongoing calls for radical thinking and change across the arts and culture sector. The BMA plans to fundraise and enact the plan incrementally over the course of the next three years. The artworks that were slated for deaccession in fall 2020 to help generate funds toward the *Endowment for the Future* have been reentered into the BMA's collection and will not be offered for sale in the foreseeable future.

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is a major cultural destination recognized for engaging diverse audiences through dynamic exhibitions and innovative educational and community outreach programs. The BMA's internationally renowned collection of 95,000 objects encompasses more than 1,000 works by Henri Matisse anchored by the famed Cone Collection of modern art, as well as one of the nation's finest holdings of prints, drawings, and photographs. The galleries showcase an exceptional collection of art from Africa; important works by established and emerging contemporary artists; outstanding European and American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts; significant artworks from China; ancient Antioch mosaics; and exquisite textiles from around the world. The 210,000-square-foot museum is also distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of 20th-century sculpture. The BMA is located in Charles Village, three miles north of the Inner Harbor, and is adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University. General admission to the BMA is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The BMA's galleries are closed to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The BMA's Sculpture Gardens are open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to dusk, weather permitting. For general museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit artbma.org. Connect with us online at artbma.org and through social media. #ARTBMA • [Stories](#) • [Facebook](#) • [Twitter](#) • [Instagram](#) • [YouTube](#)

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