

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

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**MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG DRAMATICALLY TRANSFORMS
ORIGINAL 1965 GALLERIES WITH MAJOR RENOVATION**

*18 Galleries Showcase Collection of St. Petersburg's Largest Art Museum and Enhance
Visitor Experience*

ST. PETERSBURG, FL (October 19, 2020) — Beyond the arched doorway and slim, double doors that house the MFA Collection, a big change awaits museum visitors. The original 12,000-square-foot Collection galleries have been fully renovated as part of a major project to enhance the presentation of the Museum's encyclopedic collection that spans 5,000 years of art history.

The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg is scheduled to reopen its collection galleries to all visitors starting **October 27**. MFA Members will receive exclusive first access Oct. 24-25.

MFA Executive Director and CEO Kristen A. Shepherd said the last update to the collection galleries occurred in 2013, but did not include substantial changes to the layout or placement of artworks. After months of discussions and planning with the museum's curators about the objects within the collection, the collection's nature, the history of the building and its galleries, and the opportunities to engage in new ways with our communities, the MFA commenced the interior construction work in Spring 2020. The project coincides with the museum's 55th anniversary.

The dramatic, new interior design enables the MFA to achieve a goal of Shepherd's since she first arrived at the museum: to exhibit the diverse collection in deeper contexts of both art and history, and to create a beautiful space where connections can be made across time and cultures around the globe. The renovation fully showcases the depth and diversity of the state's largest encyclopedic museum, with a new flow that reinvents the original 1965 galleries while enhancing how visitors experience the MFA.

“We are tremendously excited for visitors to rediscover the Museum of Fine Arts,” Shepherd said. “With major acquisitions in recent years, it was the right moment for us to showcase our important and evolving collection, which has been completely reinstalled to reimagine how we tell the story of art. It’s a thrilling moment in our history, and a step forward for the MFA, for the arts, and for the Tampa Bay region.”

The project was originally planned to occur starting in Summer 2020. However, when the MFA temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 crisis, it was decided to accelerate the renovation schedule and do the work concurrently rather than in phases.

“The gallery spaces have all been completely transformed,” said MFA Board Chairman Fred Razook. “Every change was so thoughtful, with a focus on both scholarship and visitor experience. It will transform how our guests explore the Museum. It has been a thrill to be a part of this moment, as we continue to fulfill our responsibility to our collection and our community.”

MFA COLLECTION

As the heart of the MFA, the dynamic and diverse collection is comprised of nearly 19,000 works of art from ancient to contemporary art. As part of the reinstallation, over 100 works will now be displayed that were previously not in the galleries when the MFA temporarily closed in March. Many are on view for the first time, or returning after several years in art storage. Also, recent acquisitions, extraordinary loans, and world-class donations are making their debut in the galleries, as well as exquisite pieces that have been remarkably restored due to generous individual donors and the philanthropy of the Collectors Circle, the MFA’s premier support group that raises funds for significant acquisitions and conservation projects. One is a late 19th-century stained glass window by artist John LaFarge (American, 1835—1910), and the other a splendid early 17th century *pietre dure*, or hard stone, panel depicting a vase of flowers. This panel was commissioned by the Medici family, the legendary banking family of Florence, Italy, and is one of only six known in the world.

MUSIC IN THE GALLERIES

Visitors will not only see, but also hear a dramatic difference in the Collection galleries. The MFA is launching *Resonance*, a new program that explores the relationship between sound and visual art. This season the Museum continues its collaboration with The Florida Orchestra by inviting TFO to curate archival recorded music selections to be played in specific galleries throughout the day, bringing an aural context to works in the collection. Encompassing the scope of the Collection, the selected pieces will range from trio sonatas by the 17th century composer Antonio Vivaldi in the galleries dedicated to the Baroque Period to the sounds of George Gershwin celebrating works of American Modernism from the 20th century. *Resonance* will later include spoken word and other auditory experiences to include poetry, classic prose, and artists’ writings.

COLLECTION EXHIBITIONS

When the galleries reopen, there will be two gallery spaces dedicated to special exhibitions curated from the MFA Collection: [Explore the Vaults: Abstraction and the American Scene](#) and [Working Point: Contemporary Glass from the MFA Collection](#). *Explore the Vaults* is an ongoing exhibition series that celebrates rarely seen and light-sensitive works from the Collection. In this second iteration, the works featured were predominately created between 1900 and 1950 by artists, such as renowned painters Jacob Lawrence (American 1917—2000), Grant Wood (American 1891—1942), and Marguerite Zorach (American, 1887—1968). *Working Point* features contemporary glass from the Collection in a range of techniques that include cast and blown processes, and the practice of adding other materials into glass. Artists featured in the show include Dale Chihuly (American, b. 1941), Ann Robinson (New Zealander, b. 1944), and Flora Mace (American, b. 1949).

For a sneak peek of the Collection galleries renovation, [watch this video](#).

Admission tickets must be [reserved online for timed entry](#) in accordance with the Museum's COVID-19 safety measures.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive NE is St. Petersburg's first art museum, and houses the largest encyclopedic art collection in Florida. The collection includes works of art from ancient times to the present day and from around the world, including ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, Native American, European, American, and contemporary art. The photography collection is one of the largest and finest in the Southeast. Kristen A. Shepherd is the Executive Director and CEO. For more information, please visit mfastpete.org.

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