

INDIANAPOLIS MUSEUM OF ART TO ESTABLISH ART CONSERVATION SCIENCE LABORATORY

LILLY ENDOWMENT GRANT OF \$2.6 MILLION BEGINS CAMPAIGN TO ESTABLISH A NATIONALLY LEADING FACILITY

INDIANAPOLIS — October 14, 2008 — The Indianapolis Museum of Art has announced plans to establish a state-of-the-art conservation science laboratory to complement its existing expertise in the care and treatment of the works of art in its collection. Through the addition of this laboratory, the IMA aims to create an internationally recognized conservation center, which will enhance the IMA's capability to conduct art historical research through science technologies. The laboratory also will augment the IMA's potential as a resource for training and professional development, and it will help the IMA to foster partnerships with universities and corporations involved in central Indiana's growing role as a hub of the life sciences industry. In recognition of these efforts, Lilly Endowment Inc. has awarded a \$2,613,450 grant to the Indianapolis Museum of Art toward the creation of the laboratory.

The IMA's newly expanded conservation resources will support research and publication by museum conservators, scientists and curators to continue to build the IMA's reputation as an industry leader through contributions to the fields of conservation, collections care and art history. Once equipped and fully staffed, the lab will join an esteemed group of labs at four other leading art institutions in the United States: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the National Gallery of Art; the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Getty Conservation Institute. The IMA will appoint a Scientific Advisory Committee including leaders from Indiana's growing life sciences industry. This committee will act as a resource for fostering collaboration and community involvement.

"We are grateful to Lilly Endowment for its support of this endeavor, which is a fitting way to leave a lasting legacy as a part of the IMA's 125th Anniversary. This center will allow for research activities in support of the IMA's permanent collection of some 54,000 objects, as well as the opportunity to pursue and build upon opportunities for collaborative research with cultural, academic and industrial partners," said Dr. Maxwell L. Anderson, the Melvin & Bren Simon Director and CEO of the IMA.

The variety of objects and materials in the IMA's collections requires a comprehensive conservation approach. Recent acquisitions composed of modern synthetic materials, fueled by a new Design Arts Department, an ongoing focus on contemporary art commissions and active collecting of 1960s to 1990s couture garments by the Textile and Fashion Arts Department are prime examples of acquisition trends expanding the range of materials entering the collection. Research on these emerging materials will allow the IMA to position itself as a leader in this area of conservation. The IMA's significant collection of African art provides many opportunities to explore the ethnobotanical origins of resins, dyes and other natural products used in their making, thereby making possible a significant contribution to a little-studied aspect of African art. The IMA's extensive Asian ceramics collection allows for the in-depth study of historical glaze and ceramic technology. Additionally, IMA conservation scientists will likely pursue the identification of ephemeral inks and paints employed by many artists, the binding media of experimental contemporary prints, and degradation mechanisms of modern art glass.

A thorough understanding of materials used in these artworks, how these component materials degrade, and methods for preventing this degradation is essential for continued research in the field of museum conservation. Likewise, traditional paintings, sculpture, works on paper and decorative arts provide many instances where interpretation, conservation and collections care can be better informed through the availability of in-house scientific research and analysis. The IMA will assume a leading role nationally in understanding and developing protocols for mitigating degradation processes in outdoor environments with ongoing, temporary installations in 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, which opens to the public in September 2009.

“Programs that build on the intellectual capital of our community and its institutions are attractive to us,” said Lilly Endowment president, N. Clay Robbins. “The establishment of this conservation laboratory should more firmly gel the IMA’s international reputation as a leading museum that approaches its mission and the collections in its care with creativity and a true sense of stewardship. Such a reputation can only bolster Indianapolis’ image as a culturally vibrant community.”

Pending additional funding, the IMA plans to conduct an international search starting in January 2009 for a senior conservation scientist. Once the scientist is in place, a comprehensive plan for outfitting the center with instrumentation funded through the Lilly Endowment grant will commence. Longer-term goals include hiring a second scientist and implementing a fellowship program.

History of IMA Conservation

Earlier in its history and in recent years, the IMA has been a leader in museum conservation. In 2007, the IMA became the first U.S. art museum to acquire a digital x-ray unit, which has led to a discovery about the internal structure of African Songye figures that was previously unknown to specialists working in this field. The museum’s professional conservation efforts started in the 1940s with the museum contracting well-known first-generation American conservators such as Sheldon Keck, James Roth, and Louis Pomerantz to preserve some of the museum’s finest paintings. The museum became a charter member of the Intermuseum Laboratory in 1952 and incorporated a small, custom-designed conservation laboratory into the new Indianapolis Museum of Art in 1970. In 1975, the appointment of a Chief Conservator led to the implementation of the American Institute for the Conservation of Artistic and Historic Works ethics and standards for practice and a preventative program for collections care.

The conservation department, now occupying 7,700 square feet, currently has a staff of seven conservators (in paintings, paper, objects and textiles), two conservation technicians, and a half-time digital imaging technician to care for the museum’s collections. Additionally, since 1977, more than 220 institutions or public collections and more than 300 individual collectors have been clients of the Regional Services Program at the IMA, which works to help conserve artworks that are not a part of the Museum’s collection. IMA conservators have done other work, such as facility surveys, collection surveys or on-site mural conservation including the Thomas Hart Benton mural cycle at Indiana University.

Indianapolis Museum of Art

The Indianapolis Museum of Art connects visitors to an expansive view of creativity through its collection of more than 54,000 works of art that span 5,000 years of history from across the world's continents. Encompassing 152 acres of gardens and grounds, the IMA is among the 10 largest encyclopedic art museums in the United States, and it features significant collections of African, American, Asian, European, and contemporary art, as well as a newly established collection of design arts. The collections include paintings, sculpture, furniture and design objects, prints, drawings and photographs, as well as textiles and costumes.

Through its new articulation of the interconnectedness of art, design and nature, the IMA welcomes its visitors to experiences at the Museum, in 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, which will be the largest contemporary art park in the United States when it opens in 2009, and at Oldfields–Lilly House & Gardens, an historic Country Place Era estate on the IMA's grounds.

The IMA completed a \$74 million expansion project in May 2005. The construction added 164,000 square feet to the Museum and includes renovation of 90,000 square feet of existing space. In order to present major exhibitions of its own and to accommodate major traveling exhibitions, the expanded Museum was outfitted with new 10,000-plus-square-foot Clowes Special Exhibition Gallery on the Museum's first level. In November 2008, the IMA will open the renovated 600-seat Tobias Theater. Nicknamed, "The Toby," the theater is a venue for talks, performances and films, and includes an 80-foot fly-loft, and a concert stage on a three-story lift.

Located at 4000 Michigan Road, the IMA and Lilly House are open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The IMA is closed Mondays and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's days. For more information, call 317-923-1331 or visit www.imamuseum.org.

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