



For immediate release: January ____, 2012

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Three Museums Selected for Inaugural National Innovation Lab for Museums

Programs focus on changing demographics, youth education and participatory experiences

January 16, 2012—The Levine Museum of the New South (NC), the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (MO) and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (CA) have been selected to participate in Round 1 of the *Innovation Lab for Museums* – a unique incubation and prototyping program to foster programmatic and organizational innovation. *Innovation Lab for Museums* is presented through a partnership between the American Association of Museums' Center for the Future of Museums and EmcArts, funded by a generous \$500,000 grant from MetLife Foundation.

The *Innovation Lab for Museums* is a four-phase program over 18 to 24 months and builds on the long-standing success of the Innovation Lab model, designed and managed by EmcArts. The Lab provides museums with facilitated support in researching, prototyping, evaluating and disseminating innovative responses to organizational challenges. As part of the program, each museum is awarded a \$40,000 grant to help accelerate the prototyping of its project.

Richard Evans, President of EmcArts, comments on the first Round of the *Innovation Lab for Museums*:

"EmcArts' national Innovation Labs provide a timely response to the rapid and unprecedented change in the operating environment for the arts. Now, more than ever, adaptive change – not just tweaking business-as-usual – is essential if organizations are to remain relevant and thrive in this new era. Our approach has proven its value to the arts field, fostering the design and testing of significant innovations that otherwise would likely not have reached the public. We are grateful for the strong support of MetLife Foundation, which has recognized the urgency and importance of this work on a national scale."

Elizabeth Merritt, Director of the Center for the Future of Museums (CFM), noted:

"Museums need to innovate in order to successfully navigate the rapidly changing landscape of the 21st Century. The American Association of Museums is pleased to work with EmcArts to adapt their Innovation Lab program for museums in order to encourage experimentation and risk-taking. The lessons the Lab museums learn will benefit the museum field as a whole, and pioneer the successful strategies of the future."

Dennis White, President and CEO of MetLife Foundation, comments:

"MetLife Foundation is proud to continue its longstanding commitment to ensuring the vitality of the museum field. We are pleased to foster innovation and experimentation in museums through the Innovation Lab program and support projects that will engage community members in the rich landscape of American museums."

For questions or additional information, contact: Liz Dreyer, EmcArts, (212) 362.8541, LDreyer@EmcArts.org; Dewey Blanton, American Association of Museums, (202) 218.7704, DBlanton@aam-us.org; or Peggy Atherlay, MetLife Foundation, (212) 578.1525, matherlay@metlife.com.

Information about Round 2 of the Innovation Lab for Museums will be announced on EmcArts' website (www.EmcArts.org) in Spring 2012.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Round 1 Grantees: Project Descriptions

Levine Museum of the New South, Charlotte, NC

The **Latino New South Project** will begin to construct a "learning network" that brings together history museums in the southeastern U.S. Long known for its white and black racial landscape, Charlotte, NC, is now multiethnic and multicultural. Since 1990, the city's Latino population has increased from barely 1% of total population to over 11% in 2010. "Immigrant integration" – full and meaningful inclusion in community life – is a major nationwide challenge that is especially keen in the South. The Levine Museum will use its skilled staff, experienced board and active community partners to begin forging links with museums in Atlanta and Birmingham. The aim is for Latino communities to become full partners with museums in the work of community-building.

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA

Youth Arts: Present/Future will establish a new approach and pathway for youth education, one which goes beyond merely making art to enable young people to become "creative thinkers" and "social changemakers." It will explore unique youth talents, or "superpowers," which allow artists to think creatively; a professional artist residency model for youth; a restructuring of the community service component in youth programs; integration of new technologies, gaming, and other inspirations from fields outside of the arts; fitting successful elements of adult engagement into youth programs; and kinesthetic exercises to enhance concentration. By dramatically rethinking its youth curriculum, YBCA seeks to establish itself as one of the most adventurous and experimental museum youth arts programs in the country, one which could be replicated, in whole or in part, by other institutions.

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO

Shifts in popular culture challenge museums today to move from a position of 'museum as expert' to one of 'museum as learning partner.' Art museums, in particular, are struggling with moving beyond bursts of participatory acts, to an institutional goal of engagement that values visitor participation as an essential part of the museum experience. The challenge is to create an overall experience that combines online and on-site engagement – that closes the loop when visitors communicate, and extends the conversation. The voice of the museum has traditionally been a singular one – that of the expert curator. For visitors to feel deeply connected to the institution, the Nelson-Atkins believes they need to see themselves here: in the voices of the non-expert enthusiast. The Museum's ambition is that its learning in this area will translate broadly to a field struggling with these issues.

The Museum Lab Selection Panel also recognized the following six proposals as “Innovation Projects of Excellence”:

- **Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center: ARTeries: Creatively connecting teenagers and the arts, Los Angeles, CA**
- **Birmingham Museum of Art: Making the Traditional Arts Museum Relevant, Birmingham, AL**
- **deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum: deCordova/Lincoln Nursery School Partnership, Lincoln MA**
- **Oakland Museum of California: Applying Participatory Practices to Audience Development, Oakland, CA**
- **Tucson Museum of Art: The Museum as Sanctuary: Expanding Museum Communities with Programming for Refugee Populations, Tucson, AZ**
- **Valentine-Richmond History Center: Community Galleries Exhibit and Program Development, Richmond, VA**

The American Association of Museums wishes to recognize the ambition and creativity embodied in their presentations, and will work with them in coming months to share their visions for the future through the CFM Blog and other avenues. “It is our hope that these projects may still be implemented in some form, albeit outside the Lab format,” says CFM’s Elizabeth Merritt.

Selection Panel for Round 1

Museums are selected to participate in the *Innovation Lab* via a competitive national RFP process. EmcArts received 31 applications to the Lab for Round 1.

Round 1 applications were reviewed and applicants selected by an expert panel, recruited and convened by the American Association for Museums. Panelists were:

- Marian Godfrey, senior director, Culture Initiatives, Pew Charitable Trusts, Philadelphia
- Richard Koshalek, director, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
- Kathy McLean, principal, Independent Exhibitions, Berkeley, Calif.
- Maria Mortati, founder, San Francisco Mobile Museum and museum consultant
- Dan Spock, director, Minnesota History Center Museum, Saint Paul



About EmcArts

Recognized as the leading not-for-profit provider of innovation services to the arts and culture sector nationwide, EmcArts (www.EmcArts.org) serves as an intermediary partner for arts and culture funders, and as a re-granting agency and service organization for the arts and culture field around innovation. Our innovation programs support the development and implementation of mission-centered new strategies by cultural organizations of all sizes. The programs range from directly incubating specific innovation projects to introductory programs that enable new thinking and build a culture of innovation across local cultural communities. EmcArts is a 501(c)(3) organization.

About AAM’s Center for the Future of Museums

The Center for the Future of Museums (CFM) helps museums explore the cultural, political and economic challenges facing society and devise strategies to shape a better tomorrow. CFM is a think-tank and research and design lab for fostering creativity and helping museums transcend traditional boundaries to serve society in new ways. For more information, visit www.futureofmuseums.org.

About AAM

The American Association of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. With more than 18,000 individual, 3,000 institutional and 300 corporate members, AAM is dedicated to ensuring that museums remain a vital part of the American landscape, connecting people with the greatest achievements of the human experience, past, present and future. For more information, visit www.aam-us.org.

About MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 to carry on MetLife's longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation is committed to building a secure future for individuals and communities worldwide. Through programs focusing on empowering older adults, preparing young people and building livable communities, MetLife Foundation increases access and opportunities for people of all ages. Since it was established, MetLife Foundation has made more than \$500 million in grants and \$75 million in program related investments. For more information visit www.metlife.org.