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Three Museums Selected for Second Round of National Innovation Lab for Museums

Programs focus on changing demographics, youth education and participatory experiences

July 9, 2012—**The Madison Children’s Museum (WI), the Mississippi Museum of Art (MS) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (Washington DC)** have been selected to participate in Round 2 of the *Innovation Lab for Museums* – a unique incubation and prototyping program to foster programmatic and organizational innovation in the museum field. The *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 \$550,000 grant from MetLife Foundation.

The *Innovation Lab for Museums* is a four-phase program of up to 24 months and builds on the long-standing success of the Innovation Lab model, designed and managed by EmcArts. The Lab provides each museum with sustained process facilitation to research, prototype, evaluate and disseminate an innovative response to a major adaptive challenge. 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 second 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 continuing 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 continue work with MetLife Foundation to make EmcArts Innovation Lab program accessible to 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 pleased to continue its longstanding commitment to ensuring the vitality of the museum field. We are glad 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 3 of the Innovation Lab for Museums will be announced on EmcArts’ website (www.EmcArts.org) in early 2013.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Round 2 Grantees: Project Descriptions

Madison Children’s Museum, Madison, WI

Madison Children’s Museum has always been a museum built by, for, and about children. Unlike most children’s museums, at MCM children are routinely and actively involved in all aspects of exhibit development: as researchers, designers, content experts, prototype testers, makers, and occasionally builders. This commitment to featuring children as the authors of the museum’s content has produced deeply immersive learning opportunities and award-winning exhibits and programs that resonate more powerfully with the museum’s young audience. After all, who better to create exhibits that really work for children than children themselves? **KidShare: Collecting, Presenting, and Preserving Children’s Culture and Creativity** will conduct local research by children and collecting their stories of culture in oral, written, and graphic formats; present children’s creative research and expressions to the general public; and preserve these primary source materials for future generations.

Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS

The traditional model for translating individual museum participation to financial benefit is the membership program. With incentives like free admission year-round, discounts in museum stores, and other perks, museums convince individual patrons that membership is a smart investment, in addition to providing members with the emotional added value of supporting a worthy institution. Around this concept of membership, the museum field has built software systems and staff organizational charts. This deeply ingrained system works well for traditional members, people who are 50+ years old and are seasoned museum-goers. This model, however, does not sync with changing behaviors by museum participants, who are younger, more mobile and new to museums. **Unpacking Museum Membership: A new model for participation** will work with colleagues from other museums, the performing arts, and the community arts fields to test business models that will lead to a new model for financial participation in museums. The Museum will research existing models, from retail to on-line and social media to other non-profit work, models that could have applications for cultural non-profits. The implications of such work could be sector-wide, and have widespread applications in technology, market research, organizational structure, and public programming models.

National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, DC

Historic house museums constitute one of the largest segments of museums in the United States. Over the last decade, the National Trust for Historic Preservation convened two conferences on the stewardship and sustainability of these institutions. The recommendations from both conferences urged the National Trust to fully embrace its role as a leader in developing new models for house museums within its own collection of 29 historic sites. In late 2011, the National Trust adopted a new strategic plan and one of its primary goals is "Reimagining Historic Sites" that is to be implemented by "moving the portfolio of Trust-owned sites to higher levels of programmatic quality, structural integrity, and financial sustainability."

Within this broader emphasis on historic sites, the "**Re-imagining Historic House Museums**" project seeks to innovate the house museum model at National Trust Historic Sites by developing experiences that are still about what is core in a museum--memory--but that engage the public in dynamic new ways, ensuring both the intellectual and financial sustainability of the entire site. "Re-imagining Historic House Museums" embodies a fundamental institutional shift for the National Trust. By abandoning traditional house museum precepts (static objects, contrived period rooms, guided tours), our objective is to create house museums that inform, illuminate, and inspire. The re-imagined house museum will utilize architecture, collections, and landscape to tell a broader range of stories that reflect the diversity of American history. It will anchor and guide new development and uses throughout the site.

The Museum Lab Selection Panel also recognized the following proposal as an "Innovation Project of Excellence":

- **McKissick Museum: *The University Museum as Social Entrepreneur, Columbia, SC***
McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina proposes exploring the potential role of the 21st-century university museum as a social entrepreneur. Leveraging the strengths of its food-related Southeastern material culture collections along with the expertise of inter-disciplinary faculty, McKissick Museum is studying the feasibility of launching a cluster of heritage agriculture and pottery projects to tackle the region's pressing economic and health challenges.

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 2

Museums are selected to participate in the *Innovation Lab* via a competitive national RFP process. EmcArts received 31 applications to the Lab for Round 2.

Round 2 applications were reviewed and applicants selected by an expert panel, recruited and convened by the American Association for Museums. Panelists were:

- Sebastian Chan, director of digital & emerging media, Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum, New York
- Karen Coltrane, president & CEO, Children's Museum of Richmond, Va.
- Georgina Bath Goodlander, interpretive programs manager, Luce Foundation Center for American Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
- Scott Kratz, vice president for education, National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.
- Maria Mortati, founder, San Francisco Mobile Museum

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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 continue MetLife's longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation's commitment to building a secure future for individuals and communities worldwide is reflected in its dedication to empowering older adults, preparing young people and building livable communities. Since it was established, MetLife Foundation has provided more than \$530 million in grants and \$70 million in program-related investments to nonprofit organizations addressing issues that have a positive impact in their communities. For more information visit www.metlife.org