

## Report of The President

The past year began with enormous enthusiasm and great momentum fueled by a highly-successful and dynamic year of transition, remarkable success in all areas of our operations, and the opening of *Fragile Earth: The Naturalist Impulse in Contemporary Art*, one of the most innovative and highly-acclaimed exhibitions in our history.

In July we cut the ribbon on the ecologically-sensitive and engaging Robert F. Schumann Artists' Trail, the centerpiece of our \$1 million landscape masterplan to fulfill our mission of uniting art, history, and landscape. The fall and winter months saw the successful launch of our strategic planning process exploring the expansive possibilities for our future, and brought another landmark exhibition, *Nothing More American: Immigration, Sanctuary, and Community*. Early spring focused on the promise of new ideas and a new vision for the museum as our comprehensive strategic planning process moved into high gear, inviting active participation from our stakeholders in the future of our museum.

But just as our Trustees were to engage in an intensive retreat to assess our research and progress to date, the international Covid-19 pandemic brought the planning process to an abrupt halt. And yet, with hardly a pause, our decisive Director and dedicated staff and Trustees shifted focus, implementing carefully-considered policies and developing contingency plans. Undaunted, our stalwart staff and Trustees have continued to work and meet remotely. Our staff creatively refocused on a diverse program of on-line exhibitions and an extensive array of imaginative on-line learning opportunities for all ages and interests, and are strategically planning for our phased reopening of the museum. As usual, Becky's adept leadership in responding to the Covid crisis has been a model for the museum profession at both regional and national levels.

Tonight we were eagerly anticipating the opening of an exhibition examining our permanent collection from new and innovative perspectives, *Fresh Fields: American Impressionist Landscapes from the Florence Griswold Museum*. Stay tuned - the exhibition WILL open as soon as it is safe to welcome you to our galleries once again, perhaps with a socially-distanced lunch at Cafe Flo, which will be celebrating its 10th anniversary this summer!

Despite the dire state of our nation and the world beyond, the Florence Griswold Museum remains an oasis of inspiration and reassurance. We are indeed poised for continued success as we chart our course into the next chapter of our history through rigorous strategic planning leading to prudent and practical strategies to achieve our ambitious goals. We will thoughtfully assess our current strengths, define the range of future possibilities, and determine our capacity to expand both our facilities and our programs as we create a compelling vision for institutional development in the years ahead. The uniting of the best of the old with the best of the

new offers countless opportunities as we reclaim and reinterpret our historic landscape, add to our superb permanent collection, and provide programs to make our museum one of America's most innovative and engaging museums of art and history.

It has been a huge honor to serve as a Trustee and President of the Florence Griswold Museum, and I want to express my great thanks to our dedicated Board of Trustees, to our highly-esteemed staff, and to the entire Florence Griswold family for entrusting me with this richly rewarding responsibility.

Over the span of my 33 years as a Trustee of this remarkable museum, it has been a privilege to actively participate in the museum's growth - from a single historic house on half an acre offering scholarly but modest exhibitions of Old Lyme art and history in upstairs bedchambers, to our present 12 acre campus of nine buildings - restored, transported, converted, recreated, and newly-built - all surrounded by a landscape of wondrous natural beauty with lovingly-tended gardens and riverfront access. The landscape that attracted artists to Old Lyme 100 years ago still attracts and inspires us all today.

23 years ago the Trustees adopted the Centennial Masterplan and began to "buy back the farm" with the transformative acquisition of Marshfield and commitment to build a new-state-of- the art exhibition gallery. As we look to the future I am reminded of words I quoted at the opening ceremony for the Krieble Gallery in 2002. They resonate just as appropriately today as they did 18 years ago. Daniel Burnham, one of the foremost American architects of the 19th-century wrote:

*"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons and our grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty. Think big."*

Under the leadership of Becky Beaulieu, our dynamic Director, in partnership with Deborah Moore, our talented and energetic new Trustee President, I know that we will indeed "Think big". I am confident that we will not only survive this current crisis, but certain that we will emerge stronger and more emboldened to take the Florence Griswold Museum into the next chapter of its extraordinary history of preserving the past, inspiring the present, and leading the museum field into the future. And I am certain that we will sustain our momentum, attain our goals, and maintain the highest standards of the museum profession in all we do to preserve and protect the exquisite landscape, historic buildings, and superb collections entrusted to our care, always striving to share them with an ever-expanding audience of visitors from around the corner and throughout the world.

Thank you.