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NEWS RELEASE

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World-renowned Pelli Clarke Pelli selected to design expanded Muscarelle Museum of Art at William & Mary

Pelli Clarke Pelli, recognized as one of the top arts architecture design firms in the world, has been selected to design expansion of the Muscarelle Museum of Art at William & Mary, museum and university officials announced.

The expanded and renovated Muscarelle Museum of Art will be part of the new, multimillion-dollar, state-of-the-art facility to be called The Martha Wren Briggs Center for the Visual Arts. That facility along with new construction and renovations at the front of campus will form the William & Mary Arts Quarter.

Richmond-based Odell Associates Inc., known for innovative and lasting designs, will be the Virginia firm contracting with Pelli for the Muscarelle work. Stemmann/Pease Architecture of Williamsburg, drawing on the experience with the museum of W&M adjunct instructor of Art & Art History Edwin Pease, will be consulting.

“The Muscarelle has made amazing progress on many fronts in recent years,” said W&M President Taylor Reveley. “The Martha Wren Briggs Center will be a significant addition to the campus, and we look forward to working with Pelli Clarke Pelli.”

Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects is an acclaimed international design architecture firm that has designed many of the world’s most recognizable and memorable buildings, each emblematic of its city. Notable examples include the Petronas Twin Towers of Kuala Lumpur, the International Finance Centre of Hong Kong, and the World Financial Center of New York. In addition, the firm has designed more than 10 museums, showcasing collections ranging from 20th-century art to archeological specimens.

César Pelli, the founder of the firm, started his career in the New Haven, Connecticut, offices of architect Eero Saarinen and later became dean of the School of Architecture at Yale University. In Pelli Clarke Pelli design of cultural institutions, the architects are known for recognizing the value of art for bringing renewed life and excitement to a campus setting. According to the firm, the architects believe that museum design should be compelling, elegant and functional, creating an atmosphere for the user to enjoy the collections on display. They also believe that relationships between art and architecture succeeds best when a consistent and coherent language is apparent throughout.

“I am honored to be designing the Muscarelle Museum at William & Mary,” Pelli said. “I want to create a beautiful home for the outstanding collection and the entire W&M community.”

William & Mary has a long history of promoting the arts. At the behest of alumnus Thomas Jefferson (class of 1762), William & Mary was the first university in the United States to include the fine arts in its curriculum and to begin collecting art in the 1700s. In 1779, Reverend Robert Andrews (ca. 1747--1804) was appointed to the professorship to instruct in "Sculpture, Painting, Gardening, Music, Architecture, Poetry, Oratory and Criticism." Much later, in 1938, William & Mary and Wheaton College in Massachusetts held national architectural competitions for fine arts buildings on their campuses. Eero Saarinen, founder of the architecture firm where Pelli began his career, was among those who placed first in that 1938 competition, which attracted many of the world's greatest architects.

"It is more than poetic that in 1938 the greatest architects in the world vied in competition for an inspired arts facility on the campus of our historic and prestigious university, and that it is only today that that dream is becoming a reality," said Aaron H. De Groft '88, director of the Muscarelle. "It is so befitting, then and now for William & Mary, that a distinctive 'Public Ivy' will again have one of the greatest living architects to design our Briggs Center for the Visual Arts."

The Muscarelle Museum was established with the mission of advancing art and artists, building a dynamic and vibrant community, promoting thought-provoking dialogue and encouraging diverse and creative thinking. The Martha Wren Briggs Center for the Visual Arts was named in honor of one of the Museum's greatest benefactors, Martha Wren Briggs '55, and its expansive space will house world-class exhibitions featuring interactive technologies and a Teaching Center for research and engaged learning, including the study of tangible works of art. It will have a modern auditorium and gathering spaces and will be home to the Muscarelle Museum of Art.

About the Muscarelle Museum of Art

Opened in 1983, the Muscarelle Museum of Art increasingly attracts national and international recognition for its balanced menu of important and noteworthy international exhibitions and meaningful, experimental and scholarly shows of diverse media from various historical time periods, as well as a commitment to modern and cutting-edge contemporary art, Asian art, Native American art and photography.

Recently such exhibitions include loans from the Medici Collections, landscape paintings from the Uffizi, Golden Age Dutch landscapes from Dulwich Picture Gallery, Michelangelo drawings from the Casa Buonarroti and Caravaggio paintings from Italian collections. In 2015 the Muscarelle organized the major exhibition *Leonardo: The Idea of Beauty*. Earlier this year, the Muscarelle hosted the largest and most important international loan exhibition of Botticelli's works in this country, *Botticelli and the Search for the Divine: Florentine Painting from the Medici to the Bonfires of the Vanities*.