

## **'The Clubhouse for All Who Need It'**

The above idea comes from Elaine Heumann Gurian, the museum visionary, who says, "My dream is that the museum will become the clubhouse for all who need it. The museum at long last will become central and the community that surrounds it will be strengthened by it." This idea is central to the direction the Albany Museum of Art is heading.

I would like to share a few ideas from the new five-year strategic plan the Albany Museum of Art is planning to launch this winter. The plan will culminate with the AMA's move to its new downtown location around 2025.

At the AMA, we stand by the conviction that the positive experience of art and culture is essential and fundamental to life. Further, the AMA is a gathering space where all can share, enjoy, and feel at home around art and culture. On behalf of the museum, I am thrilled to invite you to explore our bold plans we have made for the next crucial period of the life of the Museum. We are energized to dedicate this path forward to provide all visitors from our local community and beyond with a place to create, experience, and share all the arts have to offer. We shall continue to embrace diverse artistic expression in our exhibitions and public programs, to serve as a haven for courageous conversation, and to break down barriers between people and understandings that keep us separate.

It is our vision to be the hub of artistic and cultural energy and the premier arts destination for the South Georgia region. With innovative approaches to engaging people, the AMA is a convening space to provide substantive experiences with phenomenal works of art. We will accomplish this through authentic engagement with our communities, and by fostering a workplace that uplifts a dedicated and talented team which delivers on its goals of excellence in all our departments and projects.

We will continue to recognize and empower our community while celebrating its diversity, cultures and uniqueness through art. We recognize the economic struggles many in our community face and dedicate ourselves to make art experiences accessible to everyone through free admission. It is crucial that all members of our community feel welcome, safe and inspired at the AMA, regardless of financial status, physical or mental ability, or age.

The AMA shall continue to serve as a center for community members and leaders to gather and learn about social issues through art. We aim to provide all families, school children and adults a place to participate in hands-on art activities while facilitating opportunities for teens and young professionals to serve in leadership roles while promoting the work of the museum.

Setting the AMA's mission to support the accessibility to and enjoyment of the global history of art, from the traditional to the contemporary, our exhibitions and public programs fulfill the ethos of "bringing the art of the South to the World, and the art of the world to the South."

Our next destination is a new gathering place in downtown Albany, into the former Belk Department Store building on West Broad Avenue, made possible after the Robert N. Brooks, Sr. family agreed to donate the property in 2019.

Believing in the essential value of art to the community, this is a real opportunity to imagine and create the next version of the Albany Museum of Art that will benefit future generations in Albany and

Southwest Georgia, reaching our diverse audience through world-class exhibitions, education programming, collections development, and preservation.

With public and private support, this empty building shall transform into an inclusive, dynamic and technologically advanced arts destination. But, with a new location comes new meaning and greater responsibilities to be more relevant to our communities than ever before. At our new home, the AMA can continue to serve as the anchor of a new, intentional, and meaningful arts district.

Above all, realizing this vision to become a center for learning, inspiration, creativity, and trust will ensure that the arts shall be made accessible to all for South Georgia residents and visitors to our fine city.

*Andrew J. "Andy" Wulf is executive director of the Albany Museum of Art. A native of Los Angeles, he has a Ph.D. from the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, United Kingdom, and an M.A. in Art History and Museum Studies from the University of Southern California. Before coming to the AMA in October 2019, he was executive director of the New Mexico History Museum and the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, N.M. (2015-19) and supervisory museum curator for the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum (2010-15). Contact him at [andrew.wulf@albanymuseum.com](mailto:andrew.wulf@albanymuseum.com).*

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Annie Vanoteghem, director of education and public programming at the Albany Museum of Art, leads a group of 4-H Club members from Terrell County on an Oct 12 tour of *European Splendors: Old Master Paintings from the Kress Collection*. (Photo: Albany Museum of Art/Jim Hendricks)