



Media Contact: Chrissy Kruger-Gruendyke, APR
Director of Marketing and Public Relations
Phone: 941.359.5700 ext. 2801
Cell: 941.961.3117
Fax: 941.359.7704
Email: chrissy.kruger@ringling.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Dr. Helga Wall-Apelt Funds Asian Art Center At Ringling Museum Of Art,
Largest Gift In Florida State University's History***

SARASOTA, Fla. - Jan. 17, 2006 – Noted Sarasota art collector and philanthropist Dr. Helga Wall-Apelt will fund the creation of the “Dr. Helga Wall-Apelt Gallery of Asian Art” at The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, part of a gift to Florida State University (FSU) that is expected to exceed a total value of \$50 million.

Wall-Apelt’s multi-tiered gift is the largest yet received by the Ringling and the largest single gift to FSU. It includes four million dollars for Museum expansion, an additional four million dollars for the Ringling endowment, a promised gift of her Asian art collection and planned financial gifts for on-going support of the center.

“This extraordinary gift greatly expands the range of art that will be shown at the Ringling,” said Executive Director Dr. John Wetenhall. “It is more than an philanthropic act; it is gift of great passion and vision.”

FSU President Dr. T.K. Wetherell said, “Dr. Wall-Apelt’s gift not only enhances the Museum’s holdings of non-Western art, but it fulfills the Ringling’s pledge to build a \$50 million endowment by the year 2007.”

Central to the Wall-Apelt gift is her extensive collection of Asian art that includes a large and exquisite collection of Chinese jades, bronze Southeast Asian sculptures of the 18th and 19th centuries and Cambodian stone figures dating to the 12th and 13th centuries. She developed the collection over nearly half a century, “not for the

-more-

pretentiousness of it,” she said, “but for peace of mind and a search for truth.”



To showcase the artifacts, an extensive renovation of the Ringling's West Galleries (constructed in 1966) will include the addition of a pavilion to serve as an entrance to the Center and the creation of an Asian tea garden across a lake from the facility. The venue will also house the Koger Collection of Chinese ceramics, acquired by the Museum in 2002. With this gift, the Museum will immediately begin a national search for a Curator of Asian Art, a position expected to be filled within the next six months.

Wall-Apelt's gift enables the Museum to create a museum wing for the display and study of Asian Art. Renovation and new construction will provide over 10,000 square feet of display area, as well as new storage for the Museum's small objects and works on paper collections, a seminar room for the study of objects, and generous support space for museum activities. The Dr. Wall-Apelt Endowment for Asian Art will support curatorial staff, lectures, seminars, scholarly research, visits by guest scholars, internships, publications, exhibitions, acquisitions, public programs and other activities related to Asian art and culture.

Dr. Wall-Apelt is the founder of Sarasota's Museum of Asian Art. This gift facilitates the transfer of programs formerly offered by the Museum of Asian Art, as well as its extensive collection, to The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the State Art Museum of Florida.

The Wall-Apelt gift came less than 24 hours after the Gala Grand Opening of the Ringling Circus Museum's Tibbals Learning Center, the first of four new buildings scheduled to open at the Museum complex within the next year. The new Visitors Pavilion partially opened its admissions center and Museum Store earlier this month. When completed in the spring, the facility will also house the restored Historic Asolo Theater, a new restaurant, a video orientation gallery and a reception area for school groups. The Education and Conservation complex, scheduled for completion in the fall of this year, will house administrative offices, conservation laboratories, classrooms and a greatly expanded library and archives.

The winter of 2007 will mark the opening of the Arthur F. and Ulla R. Searing Galleries, a 30,000 square-foot addition to the Museum of Art. In addition to this

-more-

expansion, the Art Museum Building and the *Ca d'Zan* Ringling Mansion, both originally built in the 1920's, were fully restored during the past four years. New construction will double the size of the Ringling Museum, adding over 175,000 square feet at a cost of approximately \$85 million (including renovations).

In 2000, the governance of the Ringling Museum was transferred to Florida State University, a partnership that is widely credited with the radical transformation of the Museum.

The funds from Wall-Apelt's gift will be received and administered for the university through the FSU Foundation.

#