INCLUSION, INSPIRATION, EXCELLENCE

A Strategic Vision for The Ringling, 2019–2023

Adopted October 11, 2018
Thank you to the following for making this strategic plan possible:
The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art Foundation Board of Trustees
The Ringling's staff and volunteers
The Ringling's community of visitors, members, and supporters

Credits
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IDENTITY
The Ringling is the State Art Museum of Florida and is administered by Florida State University. It features a historic mansion, art museum, circus museum, historic theater, conservation center, arboretum, and reference library, situated on 66 acres of spectacular bayfront property in Sarasota.

MISSION
The Ringling serves as the legacy of John and Mable Ringling—a place of art, architecture, and circus in an environment that inspires, educates, and entertains.

VISION
The Ringling is an extraordinary center of art and culture that engages the local, state, and global communities and is accessible to and inclusive of all.
Over the last five years, The Ringling has been dramatically transformed: beautifully designed new and restored facilities, expanded engagement with its communities, reignited focus on Asian art and contemporary practices, and the launch of exciting new academic programs.

The Ringling’s robust success in reaching and broadening its visitorship over the last strategic plan period and its corresponding $100 million comprehensive campaign can be measured in several ways: its operating budget has increased from $15 million to over $20 million; annual visitors have grown from 300,000 to over 400,000, with local audiences now making up 35% of that total (up from 16% five years ago); membership has expanded from 6,500 to 10,000; and low-cost and free public programming has increased significantly.

Perhaps the most lasting and intuitive metric is the activation of every corner of The Ringling campus. Moving forward, the institution is committing itself to being an inspiring forum for creative ideas, championing inclusion, and fostering excellence in all its endeavors.

As we look to enhance the future relevance and vitality of The Ringling and build on the visionary legacy of John and Mable Ringling, we are guided by our new 2019–2023 strategic plan. Its three overarching themes—Inclusion, Inspiration, and Excellence—and related goals articulate how The Ringling will deliver on its promise as a cultural, educational, and civic leader.

Through this ambitious plan, we intend to realize a number of key strategic initiatives in the coming years, from capital improvements and conservation, to improved collections interpretation and innovative offerings that celebrate the diverse cultures of Florida and the world.

Devoting resources to teaching and learning is paramount at The Ringling. As part of a world-class research university, The Ringling is dedicated to fulfilling its educational mission by building meaningful bridges that connect with diverse audiences of all ages and being an active site for hands-on learning at the university level.

We look forward to working together to usher in this dynamic new era for The Ringling and what it will make possible for our growing visitorship across Florida and around the globe.

Steven High
Executive Director
The Ringling

John Thrasher
President
Florida State University

Sally McRorie
Provost
Florida State University
In The Ringling’s new strategic plan for 2019–2023, we look ahead to determine how the institution at this stage of its evolution can make the broadest impact, break down even more barriers, and offer a welcoming, educational, and rewarding experience for all.

The plan’s signature platforms—Inclusion, Inspiration, Excellence—were identified and developed by The Ringling staff, board members representing a wide swath of the community, and key stakeholders during a series of highly inclusive and intensive planning sessions. They correspond to The Ringling’s external and operational plans and aspirations for its arts and circus holdings and programs.

Over the next five years, these three thematic platforms and corresponding initiatives will be woven throughout the entire Ringling enterprise, across campus and in every office, informing decisions large and small in order for this great institution to meet the needs and exceed the expectations of its audiences for the 21st century and beyond.

Since John Ringling’s bequest of his home and collections to the people of Florida in 1936, The Ringling has been committed to the values of excellence and accessibility and to serving as the heart of a thriving Sarasota cultural community. As we embark on this next exciting chapter of The Ringling, we look forward to honoring our founder’s vision of the impact and importance of the arts; reinvesting in our renowned collections, campus, and staff; serving as a forum for creativity, collaboration, innovation, and learning; and preserving the far-reaching legacy of John and Mable Ringling for generations to come.

Nancy Parrish
Board Chair

Frank Fergusson
Strategic Planning Committee Chair
Every family has their special place. A place where adventures are embarked upon and priceless memories are made to be stored in the banks of our hearts forever. Ringling is our special family place.

– Cynthia Gaeta
The Ringling WEB Family Member
INCLUSION:
Be Accessible to and Inclusive of All

Following The Ringling’s recent achievements in vastly broadening its public programming to reach a wide range of communities, it is looking to deepen its commitment to making its campus as widely inclusive and accessible as possible for all visitors. To that end, The Ringling staff, working with leaders in the field of access and inclusion, will create a two-pronged approach in developing programming to welcome all visitors: community engagement programs to create a welcoming and representative environment for visitors of all cultural backgrounds; and access programming to create a hospitable experience for visitors of all physical and cognitive abilities.

To serve new and diverse audiences, The Ringling will expand Art After 5 programming, offer printed materials in multiple languages, and ensure multilingual staff and volunteers are always available. The exhibitions, collections, and staff at The Ringling will increasingly represent communities of color, and a more inclusive social media presence will be developed. In addition, all talks and lectures will be uploaded to The Ringling website and YouTube site. These initiatives will be supplemented by free admission for all K-12 school students, student discounts to all performances, and the expansion of the Where Everyone Belongs program, which provides free annual membership to underserved families.

In order to be a more welcoming, barrier-free place for visitors of all physical and cognitive abilities, The Ringling plans to enhance accessibility in a number of ways, including developing standing programs and tours for visitors with cognitive and physical disabilities, providing listening devices in all venues, launching a more comprehensive tram system to link our campus venues, and increasing our collaboration with assisted living communities and community centers to provide customized programming.

In addition, The Ringling is dedicated to ensuring that the perspectives and voices of global creative artists working today are comfortably represented in the galleries and on our stages. The Ringling’s philosophy of moving beyond the silos of traditional museums and presenting departments that embrace a truly cross-disciplinary ethos means all visitors can find themselves and their experiences reflected in the works of art on view and on stage.
INSPIRATION:
Be a Forum for Creative Ideas

With its historic and contemporary collections and pathbreaking performance series, The Ringling is a natural site for cultivating courageous risk-taking, provocative conversations, and meaningful discourse about the most pressing issues of its time.

Among the many strategies for fostering this kind of active dialogue will be to create new partnerships and learning adjacencies with a variety of disciplines such as archaeology, forensic science, and marine biology; host symposiums for circus historians and the general public to exchange expertise and experiences around this premier art form; collaborate with visiting performing artists to develop workshops and master classes; and provide rich opportunities for creative expression, including a designated space for a community gallery, studio space, and in-gallery and pop-up performances by local artists.

Regional, national, and international visual and performing artists, as well as scholars, will live and work on campus through formal residencies and commissions funded by The Ringling. The majority of this work will respond to The Ringling’s wide-ranging and renowned collections, architecture, and grounds, or inspire creative alliances and ideas forged onsite, including projects based on scholarly research using resources such as its circus archives or art library.

As part of its steadfast support of new work across disciplines, genres, and media, The Ringling will focus over the next five years on fostering the development and growth of its legendary circus holdings and facilities.

"We ask so much of art. The support that The Ringling community provides to artists is nothing short of inspiring."

– Anne Patterson, artist
The Ringling's commitment in offering diverse cultural and multi-dimensional exhibitions and programs organized by expert curators and staff in order to inspire, educate, and entertain global audiences is worthy of our support."

- Dorothy Jenkins
EXCELLENCE: Broden Our Impact

As it celebrates the legacy of John and Mable Ringling’s farsighted collecting and philanthropy, The Ringling plans to leverage Sarasota’s and Florida’s cultural heritage as a touchstone for a range of future programmatic offerings. The Ringling will be a model of the museum of the future where inclusion is a central component of excellence, and excellence is defined through the lens of the many cultures and communities shaping our future.

Building on the success of recent projects such as the joint exhibition Skyway: A Contemporary Collaboration, which showcased the work of regional artists in three partner venues, The Ringling will continue creating new ways to support state and local visual, circus, and performance artists. This will include greater commissioning of new work by The Ringling, underscoring Sarasota’s reputation as a major arts generator.

An important part of The Ringling’s role as the State Art Museum of Florida is an obligation to be as visible and relevant to its state constituencies as possible. Fostering enhanced partnerships with The Ringling’s sister Florida-based institutions is critical. The Ringling will act as a resource for conservation care and professional development training and will lend objects and circulate exhibitions that celebrate Florida history and culture to smaller arts communities across the state. In addition, The Ringling plans to offer targeted workshops and tours that tell the story of the Ringling family, the circus, and the grounds and gardens (with an emphasis on Florida flora and fauna).

Broadening The Ringling’s impact also refers to representing and serving its local audiences through strategic partnerships and collaboration, including developing programs that explore and address issues relevant to the community and dedicating staff resources to local community projects.

On the world stage, The Ringling will foster deeper curatorial partnerships and sustained scholarly exchange with national and international partners with the goal of increasing cultural understanding and cooperation.
"The Ringling is more than a museum. It is a life-affirming, ever-changing embrace of the very best of global arts and Florida culture. Over the coming years, The Ringling will continue to open its doors as wide as possible, inviting as many as possible to the table to be astounded and challenged, while underlining its commitment to excellence in art in all its forms."

- Steven High, Executive Director