

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE: Upon Receipt
October 3, 2001

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Albright-Knox Art Gallery Unveils Bold Plan to Create Stronger and More Vibrant Institution

*Two Years in Development, Plan Will Guide Direction and Vision
Through 150th Anniversary in 2012 and Beyond*

*Goals Are to Enhance Prominent International Reputation and
Role as Community Destination and Contributor to Regional Economy*

Buffalo, N.Y. – October 3, 2001 – The Albright-Knox Art Gallery today unveiled a strategic plan aimed at bolstering its reputation as one of the world's most dynamic modern and contemporary art institutions while enhancing its role as a vital cultural, educational, and economic asset in the region.

The plan will be implemented in phases over the next decade to position the Gallery for its 150th anniversary in 2012 and on into the new century.

"Our vision will help us build a stronger and more vibrant Gallery and heighten our already prominent position in the national and international art world," Gallery Director Douglas G. Schultz said. "We will be known as one of the most energetic and innovative centers for modern and contemporary art."

The Gallery will also seek to increase its role in the Buffalo Niagara region as a vital community asset by serving larger and more diverse audiences and by attracting an increasing number of visitors from outside the region.

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interviews by a national consultant with community representatives, national art experts, and the Gallery board and staff. It is being presented to The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, the parent organization of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, this evening at its 139th annual meeting. The academy's board of directors has already approved the plan.

"This process was the right way for a well-run institution such as the Gallery to realize its dream for the future," said Charles E. Balbach, president of the academy. "We are proud to have developed a plan that so clearly articulates our future direction and vision. The Gallery has the commitment and leadership that will be needed for us to accomplish these goals and achieve this vision."

The new vision seeks to position the Gallery to be:

- One of the world's most dynamic and contemporary art institutions because of its outstanding collections, programs, creative collaborations, and unique facilities.
- A vital cultural gathering place for Western New Yorkers and an indispensable community educational resource.
- A major contributor to the Buffalo Niagara economy by serving as a magnet attraction for a growing regional, national, and international audience.

Schultz said the Gallery will continue its tradition of exhibiting and acquiring works of contemporary artists with the hope that they become the "old masters of tomorrow." This tradition is demonstrated in the Gallery's current exhibition, *Fresh*, a presentation of recently acquired works on view through October 21.

The plan also calls for the Gallery to become more accessible by periodically re-installing its permanent collection on a thematic basis and presenting and reinterpreting it in various fresh and imaginative ways. The permanent collection will also feature a random access audio guide that is free of charge with Gallery admission.

The Gallery will commit its exhibition program to annually include one banner show, such as the upcoming *Triumph of French Painting* (November 3, 2001 to January 6, 2002).

These banner shows, as well as other more contemporary exhibitions, will be increasingly organized by the Gallery itself and will travel to other venues worldwide, Schultz said, which will help promote the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and the Buffalo Niagara region.

Enhancing the Albright-Knox experience and reputation will translate into increased economic benefits to Buffalo Niagara, Schultz said. The Gallery will continue to serve as a magnet attraction for the area's growing cultural tourism market. Its 1999 exhibition of works by Claude Monet had an \$11.3 million economic impact on the local community.

Under the plan, the Gallery will invest in developing an extensive three- to five-year marketing and public relations program to enhance visibility for the Gallery, as well as our area, on a regional, national, and international scale.

The plan also calls for future collaboration with other local cultural institutions – such as was done for the "Summer of Monet" campaign and is being done for the *Triumph of French Painting* exhibition with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and Studio Arena Theater.

Another important component of the strategic plan is the Gallery's commitment to address the interests and needs of various underserved and diverse communities and to help promote the Gallery within those communities.

"We want the Albright-Knox Art Gallery to be a destination for the entire community, where people of all ages from all backgrounds and ethnic groups feel welcome," Schultz said.

Based on the experience with its nationally recognized community education program, ART ATTACK!, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery will expand this program to more students in Buffalo Niagara. To help develop these types of outreach efforts, the Gallery will hire a community liaison officer who will serve as part of the Gallery's senior management team.

The planned growth of the Gallery's programs and the need to accommodate an increasing audience will require creatively addressing current and future space needs, including possibly building an addition to the Gallery's current facilities, Schultz said.

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He said planning for a new building will be one of the last phases of the plan's implementation. At that point, with major elements of the plan already implemented, the Gallery would be in a position to enlist a world-class architect to design a building that meets the Gallery's needs and is also a tourist attraction in the great tradition of Buffalo architecture, Schultz said.

He said the Gallery will follow its history of being fiscally responsible by pursuing all of the plan's initiatives only when funding is in place. That approach was used when the 1905 and 1962 buildings were built, as well as for the major renovations to those buildings in 1998-99.

"The board and staff believe this is a very realistic plan for us to achieve since we have the history, experience, and commitment to do so," Schultz said.

The strategic planning consultant that facilitated the development of the plan, Nancy L. Pressly & Associates, has developed strategic plans for a number of prominent art museums, including The Philadelphia Museum of Art and The Phillips Collection, The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, The Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

Pressly's firm conducted interviews with more than 100 members of the community, including civic and cultural leaders, public officials, African-American community leaders, corporate executives, academicians and scholars, artists, and parents of students who participate in the ART ATTACK! program. In addition, Pressly interviewed 12 museum directors and curators from across the country on the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, its collection, its work, and its place in the national art arena.

An executive summary of the strategic plan is available for public review and comment online on the Gallery's Web site, www.albrightknox.org. Additional information about the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and the upcoming *Triumph of French Painting* exhibition is also available there.

The Albright-Knox Art Gallery enjoys a worldwide reputation as an outstanding center of modern and contemporary art. Its permanent collection, which includes works by all of the great artists of the late 19th and the 20th centuries, has been cited as "one of the world's top international surveys of contemporary painting and sculpture."

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