



For immediate release:

Anne Buckley, APR
University Public Affairs
Virginia Commonwealth University
[\(804\) 828-6052](tel:(804)828-6052)
albuckley@vcu.edu

For media outside of Richmond:

Isabel Sinistore / Ilana Simon Rubin
Resnicow Schroeder Associates
[\(720\) 746-9552](tel:(720)746-9552) / [\(212\) 671-5175](tel:(212)671-5175)
isinistore@resnicowschroeder.com / irubin@resnicowschroeder.com

**Virginia Commonwealth University will break ground on new
Institute for Contemporary Art this summer**

The multidisciplinary institution will serve as catalyst for exhibitions, research and collaboration, working with the VCU School of the Arts, the top public university graduate arts & design program in the U.S.

Richmond, Va. (May 9, 2014) – Virginia Commonwealth University announced today that it will break ground in June on the Institute for Contemporary Art, a combination exhibition and performance space, laboratory and incubator for the presentation of visual art, theater, music, dance and film by nationally and internationally recognized artists.

The ICA, anticipated to open in 2016, is being built at the prominent corner of Broad and Belvidere streets within Richmond's newly designated Downtown Arts District. Designed by Steven Holl Architects, the ICA will be a non-collecting institution that will present an array of different media and practices, mirroring the cross-disciplinary approach at the VCU School of the Arts.

"The ICA will be vital to the creative ecology of VCU and the community," said VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D. "Creative problem-solving skills are essential in our world today and this institution will bring new resources to our students and faculty working across the university, the nation and the globe.

"This institute will also be a significant beacon in Richmond in terms of economic and cultural development and bringing the arts community from around the world to our great city," Rao said. "The ICA will help put Richmond on the global map as an arts destination."

The ICA has raised nearly \$31 million to date toward its \$35 million goal for construction. A \$20 million endowment campaign is also ongoing. In recognition of an important gift from Markel Corporation, the VCU Board of Visitors approved naming the new building the Markel Center. Additionally, leadership gifts to the ICA have been received from ICA Campaign co-chairs Steve and Kathie Markel and Pam and Bill Royall and donors True and Charlie Luck, Meg and John Gottwald, Abby W. Moore, the NewMarket Corporation, the Mary Morton Parsons Foundation, the VCU Real Estate Foundation and Carolyn K. and John W. Snow.

"This great university – and its considerable art resources – are essential to the vitality of our city," said Steve Markel, vice chairman at Markel Corporation. "We are proud to have Markel

Corporation associated with such an important institution and work of architecture, intended to welcome diverse communities and serve as a hub of creativity for our city.”

ICA Director Lisa Freiman said, “We are humbled and inspired by the generosity of our founding supporters. The ICA is an extraordinary gift to this and future generations, and we look forward to bringing this institution to life with the continued support of our community.”

The VCU School of the Arts is one of the nation’s leading arts schools, with distinguished alumni and noted artists at campuses in Richmond and Qatar, and has long been the top public university graduate arts and design program in the country according to U.S. News & World Report.

The ICA will complement and enhance the offerings of VCU while also serving as a new destination for contemporary arts and culture in the region and a cornerstone of Richmond’s already vibrant arts community — joining the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Science Museum of Virginia, the Virginia Opera, Virginia Repertory Theatre, Richmond Ballet and the Richmond Symphony.

Located directly off Interstate 95 and at one of Richmond’s busiest intersections, the ICA will form a gateway to the university and the city. The ICA will feature dual entrances — one facing Richmond and the other fronting VCU’s campus. At the heart of the building will be an inviting, double-height “forum,” a flexible space for both spontaneous encounters and planned events that connects to the ground-floor performance space and opens to the garden and cafe.

The galleries radiate out from the forum in forked arms, shaping the space of the garden. The open circulation serves to remove the formal protocols associated with entering traditional arts facilities. The three levels of galleries are linked through the open forum, allowing artists to create works that extend across, and visitors to circulate through, the spaces via a variety of paths. The ICA’s exterior walls of pre-weathered, satin-finish zinc will complement its urban setting. Additional clear and translucent glass walls will create transparency, bringing natural light into the building during the day and radiating light at night, signaling the activities taking place within.

For more information on the ICA, please visit: ica.vcu.edu.

###

About VCU and the VCU Medical Center

Virginia Commonwealth University is a major, urban public research university with national and international rankings in sponsored research. Located in downtown Richmond, VCU enrolls more than 31,000 students in 222 degree and certificate programs in the arts, sciences and humanities. Sixty-seven of the programs are unique in Virginia, many of them crossing the disciplines of VCU’s 13 schools and one college. MCV Hospitals and the health sciences schools of Virginia Commonwealth University comprise the VCU Medical Center, one of the nation’s leading academic medical centers. For more, see www.vcu.edu.

About Markel Corporation

Markel Corporation is a diverse financial holding company serving a variety of niche markets. The Company’s principal business markets and underwrites specialty insurance products. Markel Corporation also owns interests in various industrial and service businesses that operate outside the specialty insurance marketplace. In each of the Company’s businesses, it seeks to provide quality products and excellent customer service so that it can be a market leader. The financial goals of the Company are to earn consistent underwriting and operating profits and superior investment returns to build shareholder value. Markel is headquartered in Richmond, VA and was

founded in 1930. Philanthropy is one of the core values of the Company, and Markel seeks to support the communities in which it operates. Markel is proud to support the Institute for Contemporary Art at VCU. Richmond is a better community due to VCU's and Markel's commitment to a better quality of life through an exploration of the arts. Visit Markel Corporation on the web at markelcorp.com.