



NEWS RELEASE

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## LAUNCH OF FREE ADMISSION A RESOUNDING SUCCESS FOR BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART AND WALTERS ART MUSEUM

*Increased Baltimore City and County funding provides community greater access to two world-class museums*

**BALTIMORE, MD** (May 9, 2007)—The launch of free admission has been a resounding success for The Baltimore Museum of Art and the Walters Art Museum, with a combined attendance of 227,656 visitors from October 2006 through March 2007. During Free Fall Baltimore in October and November, the BMA had 44,700 visitors and the Walters had 39,194 visitors—both among the highest attendance recorded for those months during the past five years.

The Baltimore Museum of Art’s total museum attendance was 124,125 visitors from October 1, 2006 through March 31, 2007, an 8 percent increase over a two-year average of the same period. First-time visitors made up 37 percent of admissions. During October 2006, the first month of free admission, the BMA recorded 24,200 visitors—the highest attended October in the past five years. The BMA also had an 89 percent increase in participation of Sunday family art activities.

The Walters Art Museum’s total museum attendance was 103,531 visitors from October 1, 2006 through March 31, 2007, a 38 percent increase over the same six months of the previous year. First-time visitors made up 43 percent of admissions, an increase from a 36 percent average. The museum’s diversity in admissions rose to 18 percent persons of color, nearly doubling from spring 2005. During October 2006, the first month of free admission, the museum recorded 21,523 visitors—the second highest October attendance in the past five years and an 80 percent increase from October 2005. The museum has also experienced triple-digit growth in children and family art activities.

	<b>BMA</b>	<b>Walters</b>
Total museum attendance	124,125	103,531
Percentage increase	8%	38%
First-time visitors	37%	43%
Family program participation	89%	400%

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Free admission was launched last fall in conjunction with *Free Fall Baltimore*, an innovative citywide program under the direction of the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts that attracted over 180,000 visitors to Baltimore arts organizations in October and November 2006.

Both museums will continue to offer free general admission throughout the year. Additional funding to sustain free museum admission is being sought.

"We are incredibly pleased that we have exceeded our expectations of increased public access," said Walters Art Museum Director Gary Vikan. "*Free Fall Baltimore* was very significant in generating awareness and excitement for both the Walters and the BMA 'going free'."

"It has been very exciting to see so many new visitors and to have such widespread enthusiasm from the community," said BMA Director Doreen Bolger. "Everyone is truly grateful for the generous government and private support that has made this possible."

A lead gift of \$800,000 from Baltimore City and Baltimore County allowed both museums to eliminate admission fees and become free to the public for the first time in two decades. Additional support for free admission was received from the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, Anne Arundel County, Joseph and Harvey Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds, and T. Rowe Price Associates Foundation, Inc. Ongoing support for free admission at the BMA has been provided through a generous endowment gift from the Cohen Family Fund for Free Admission.

In addition to an increase in overall attendance, both museums have realized other benefits due to higher visitation, including increased gift amounts from upper-level donors and overwhelming positive feedback from museum visitors.

"I can't tell you how glad I am to continue my membership...BRAVO to the BMA & the Walters! You are the BEST!" – BMA Member, 10/18/06

"The Lucas collection is stunning. I feel so refreshed for having seen it. Thanks to Ms. Cohen for her generosity in providing free admission. Someone next to me at the exhibition said she has never been in a museum." – BMA Visitor, 11/15/06

"Free is my favorite four letter word. We are members—I am pleased that hopefully many other people will be able to visit." – Walters Member, 10/08/06

"I grew up in Baltimore and have been visiting the Walters for over 60 years! It's nice to be back. This is an exquisite collection." – Walters Visitor, 10/06/06

### **FREE FALL BALTIMORE**

Held October and November 2006, 77 area attractions and art institutions participated in *Free Fall Baltimore*, a new arts initiative and cultural tourism program that showcased hundreds of cultural activities throughout the city—all for free. *Free Fall Baltimore* was made possible by a grant from the City of Baltimore, Creative Baltimore Fund, and developed and administered by the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts, Inc. Visit [www.freefallbaltimore.com](http://www.freefallbaltimore.com) for more information.

### **THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART**

The Baltimore Museum of Art is home to an internationally renowned collection of 19th-century, modern, and contemporary art. Founded in 1914 with a single painting, the BMA today has 90,000 works of art—including the largest holding of works by Henri Matisse in the world—as well as outstanding collections of European and American fine and decorative arts, 15th- through 19th-century prints and drawings, contemporary art by established and emerging contemporary artists, and objects from Africa, Asia, the Ancient Americas, and Pacific Islands. Two beautifully landscaped gardens display an array of 20th-century sculpture on nearly three acres. As a major cultural destination for the greater Baltimore region, the BMA organizes and presents a variety of dynamic exhibitions and innovative programs throughout the year. The Museum is located three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor in a park-like setting in the heart of Charles Village, adjacent to the main campus of The Johns Hopkins University. The BMA Shop and celebrity chef John Shield's acclaimed restaurant, Gertrude's, are destinations unto themselves. Thanks to extraordinary government and private support, general admission to the BMA is free for everyone, every day, so that great art is accessible to all. [www.artbma.org](http://www.artbma.org).

### **THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM**

The Walters Art Museum is located in Baltimore's historic Mount Vernon Cultural District at North Charles and Centre streets and is one of only a few museums worldwide to present a comprehensive history of art from the third millennium B.C. to the early 20th century. Among its thousands of treasures, the Walters holds the finest collection of ivories, jewelry, enamels, and bronzes in America and a spectacular reserve of illuminated manuscripts and rare books. The Walters' Egyptian, Greek and Roman, Byzantine, Ethiopian, and western medieval art collections are among the best in the nation, as are the museum's holdings of Renaissance and Asian art. Every major trend in French painting during the 19th century is represented by one or more works in the Walters' collection. Peabody Court is the official hotel of the Walters Art Museum. This historic property is just around the corner from the museum and features *George's*, a full-service restaurant. [www.thewalters.org](http://www.thewalters.org)

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