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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LASM Receives \$15,000 Louisiana Culture Cares Fund Grant from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities

BATON ROUGE, LA –The Louisiana Art & Science Museum (LASM) has received a Louisiana Culture Cares Fund Grant in the amount of \$15,000 from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities for emergency funding. This funding has injected much-needed revenue toward sustaining museum services at a time when many of the nation’s museums are shutting down permanently as a result of canceled events, programs, and admissions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“When the COVID-19 pandemic hit our region, we quickly saw that we needed to reduce the Museum’s overhead costs yet remain relevant and in service to our community’s cultural, educational, and economic development needs,” shares LASM President & Executive Director Serena Pandos. “Due to an overnight 100% drop in earned revenues, which comprises about 30% of our annual operating budget, as a result of canceled cultural events, educational programs, school group programming, outreach, and admissions, we were forced to make the heart-wrenching decision to lay-off 41 staff members—72% of the museum’s staff at that time. Despite a successful PPP application, full re-employment is unfortunately not tenable without the Museum’s ability to earn revenues at full capacity.”

“Limitations on attendance, along with school closures and recommendations to socially distance in order to reduce the risk to public health, have had a devastating impact on our ability to earn revenue and serve large groups on-site at the LASM,” Pandos continues. “Notwithstanding these challenges, and with much thanks to the LEH and so many others in our community who have given so generously to the LASM COVID-19 emergency relief fund, the incredibly talented and nimble staff members still remaining at LASM have met unprecedented challenges with unprecedented innovation and creativity. Despite the challenges of working with significantly reduced human and financial resources, we responded promptly to the public health crisis, quickly pivoting our operations toward providing virtual museum experiences and developing a multigenerational digital learning platform hosted at virtual-lasm.org. The digital learning platform has received local, national, and international attention for the quality of its

programming, which is designed to safely engage isolated and quarantined audiences. We have received positive responses about our digital learning platform's capacity to reduce summer learning regress for children, help families with children enjoy time at home productively, and help those in hospitals and senior centers, along with their caregivers, cope, heal, and recover."

LASM is now providing regular on-site hours of operation Wednesday-Saturday, 10 AM-2 PM. The Louisiana Culture Cares Fund Grant from LEH has helped to offset costs of PPE equipment, cleaning supplies, and safety shields, while supporting the availability of on-site services to the public. This funding has also supported LASM's free-access virtual content.

Pandos continues, "I cannot think of a finer community to go through this crisis with. Louisianans are resilient, good neighbors, and value what museums do to advance our community's development. We are exceedingly grateful, humbled, and honored to be able to serve, and we thank all those who have contributed to the LASM's COVID-19 emergency relief fund. With community support, we can continue to serve, recover, and recruit additional staff members as we are able. We remain hopeful that we will reach the 60th anniversary of LASM's founding in 2022."

Funding for Louisiana Culture Care Fund grants has been provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and administered by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (LEH) as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act economic stabilization plan.

LASM's operating hours are subject to change at this time. Patrons will be notified on lasm.org, on LASM's Facebook (@theLASM) and Instagram (@lasnbr) accounts, and through email newsletters if there is a change to hours. LASM's hands-on galleries Discovery Depot and Science Station will remain closed until at least Phase 3.

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Image: LASM visitors enjoying the sculpture *Sequence of Life* by renowned African American sculptor Frank Hayden, whose work is on view in *Frank Hayden: Lift Every Voice*, in the Louisiana Art & Science Museum's Bert S. Turner Family Atrium.

Frank Hayden: Lift Every Voice is funded thanks to a grant from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, the state affiliate of the National Endowment of the Humanities, with matching funds provided by Michael D. Robinson & Donald J. Boutté. Additional support has been provided by Ava & Cordell Haymon and Bennet Rhodes & Meg Guidroz. Media support has been provided by 64 Parishes Magazine and ESO/pop.

About the Louisiana Art & Science Museum

Housed on the banks of the Mississippi River in a historic railway station in downtown Baton Rouge, the Louisiana Art & Science Museum believes that art and science shape each other, our

lives, and the world. The Museum is open for modified operating hours in response to the COVID-19 pandemic Wednesday–Saturday, 10 AM – 2 PM. Regular admission fees (\$12 for adults, \$10 for children ages 3-12 and senior adults 65+, and free for members) apply. Active duty military members, first responders, and their families receive free admission with ID as part of the Blue Star Museums program, sponsored by Special Risk Insurance, Inc. VFIS of Mississippi/Louisiana.

The Museum, founded in 1962 and accredited by the American of Museums since 1972, is home to the Irene W. Pennington Planetarium, the largest and most advanced planetarium in Louisiana and one of the largest in the southeastern United States; a permanent collection including over 4,000 objects; one of the only permanent ancient Egypt galleries in the southeastern United States, housing an authentic, Ptolemaic-era mummy; and displays changing art exhibitions of local and international acclaim. Access to the Museum’s digital learning platform for at-home art and science experiences is available at **virtual-lasm.org**.

A 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, the Museum relies on the support of donations to operate; support the Museum’s COVID-19 relief fund at **lasm.org**. Stay in touch at **lasm.org** and on social media!