



Joe and Suzanne Seipel with Tony Matelli's sculpture, *Josh*, 2010, at the exhibition opening of *you, your sun and shadow*, January 20, 2012. Photograph by Tim Chumley.

Foreword

VCUarts Dean JOSEPH H. SEIPEL

For the 38 years that I've been part of Virginia Commonwealth University's School of the Arts, the Anderson Gallery existed as a hub of creativity—a place of deep inquiry, experimental exploration, and art that engaged and enriched our community.

Looking at the 45-year history—and legacy—of the Anderson Gallery, I can't help but think that VCUarts and the gallery grew up together, influencing and shaping each other and contributing to the larger conversation about the importance of art in our city, in our community, and in our world. From its humble beginnings as a stable for Lewis Ginter's mansion, the Anderson Gallery evolved into one of the most influential and important arts venues in the Mid-Atlantic region.

The first exhibition at the A. A. Anderson Gallery of Art, as it was known in the early 1930s before becoming the school's library, featured the paintings of its namesake. Colonel Anderson was a visionary; he saw the potential for Richmond, VCU (known then as Richmond Professional Institute), and the School of the Arts to use the gallery as a springboard for national prominence. In a prescient moment, he wrote, "I vision a wonderful future for Richmond as an art center: the cities of the country will soon look to her with pride."

The gallery's directors—three of whom we hear from in this book—each contributed his or her own vision to the Anderson Gallery, shaping the trajectory of a curatorial program that can only be described as stellar. The works shown in this hallowed, if sometimes challenging, space ranged from feisty, exuberant, and fearless art by students, to emerging artists whose fresh and exciting work received early public exposure, to those artists who came to exhibit at the pinnacle of their success.

If these walls could talk, they would speak to the energy and commitment of all of those artists who enriched the cultural community of Richmond; they would speak of the hard work and dedication of the gallery's staff; and they would speak about the students and faculty of the School of the Arts—who all contributed to the discourse about the art of the times. What an important and vital institution the Anderson Gallery has been.

As you move through this book chapter by chapter, decade after decade, those of you who had the good fortune to be part of the legend will have fond memories of the Anderson Gallery's amazing scene. For nearly half a century, this stable turned artistic citadel was the gathering spot to see the reverent, the irreverent, the beautiful, and the art that made you shake your head and ask many questions. For those of you who did not have that firsthand experience, this book will give you a glimpse of a venue that changed the artistic fortunes of so many and made an indelible mark on the evolution of our city and our culture.