



For Immediate Release

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**VERONICA ATKINS TO FUND
UFFIZI GALLERY RESTORATION PROJECT**

Major gift given to Friends of the Uffizi Gallery

PALM BEACH, FL (October 15, 2013) – Veronica Atkins, a resident of Palm Beach, has made a \$25,000 gift to Friends of the Uffizi Gallery to restore the “Apollo with Lyre” sculpture found in the collection of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy. Mrs. Atkins is the current chair and co-founder, with her late husband, of the Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Foundation, which funds independent scientific research that examines the role of metabolism in diseases linked to obesity.

Mrs. Atkins was born in Russia and has lived in eight European countries. She committed to the restoration project after learning about the mission of Friends of the Uffizi Gallery. The organization is chaired by Diann Scaravilli and was created in 2006 in Palm Beach as the sister organization to Italy’s Amici degli Uffizi. Both organizations are presided over by Contessa Maria Vittoria Colonna Rimbotti. Their joint mission is to raise awareness of the Uffizi Gallery through educational outreach and by providing resources for acquisition, preservation and restoration. To date, members, many who reside in Palm Beach, have funded nearly 30 important restoration projects, including the Michelangelo Room, which opened earlier this year.

Mrs. Scaravilli said, “The Uffizi Gallery is considered to be a universal museum. It was the world’s first public museum and has played an important role in inspiring artists around the world over the centuries. The art works found there continue to inspire artists today, even in the realms of more modern and contemporary art.”

The Uffizi Gallery was designed by Giorgio Vasari and completed in 1581. The building was originally funded by Cosimo I de’ Medici to house his government’s administrative offices. The museum contains

the world's most important collection of Renaissance art, with significant paintings and sculptures by old masters including Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Botticelli.

"I knew immediately that I wanted to take on this project," Mrs. Atkins explained. "The Uffizi Gallery houses a collection of art that is not just aesthetically pleasing, but an important part of the history of Western art. I'm very proud to be a part of this project."

The marble "Apollo and Lyre" sculpture is unique because it was constructed in 1565 around the partial remnant of a sculpture that dates to 79 AD. The work is based on the story in Greek mythology of a contest between Pan playing his flute and Apollo playing his lyre, in which Apollo was pronounced the victor. Due to the dual nature of the work, this restoration is particularly sensitive. The first phase of restoration involves significant cleaning of dirt ingrained in the pores of the marble. Then, the putty that bonds the older sculpture to the newer one will need to be strengthened. During all of this, great care must be taken not to remove the natural coloring of the diverse marbles.

Lisa Marie Browne, executive director of Friends of the Uffizi Gallery, remarked, "Donors like Veronica Atkins are integral to our mission, but what we appreciate equally is her deep love for the art and culture of Europe and her commitment to its preservation. We are extremely grateful for her involvement."

Mrs. Atkins is an internationally recognized philanthropist, particularly in the field of medicine where her foundation has awarded over \$1.5 billion in grants to global organizations. She's been listed alongside Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey and Michael J. Fox as one of the world's top philanthropists in many publications, including *Newsweek*, *Business Week* and *The New York Times*. In 2006, she was among a select group invited to join the Clinton Global Initiative.

The restoration of "Apollo with Lyre" is expected to be completed early next year.

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Friends of the Uffizi Gallery was founded in Palm Beach, Florida in 2006 as the sister organization to Italy's *Amici degli Uffizi*. That organization was created in 1993 in Florence, Italy to raise funds to aid the museum after a terrorist bombing caused significant structural damage to the building and badly damaged or destroyed a number of irreplaceable artworks. Today, under the direction of president Contessa Maria Vittoria Colonna Rimbotti, the two organizations together raise awareness about the Uffizi's historical significance and raise funds for restorations through educational outreach and special events. In 2013, the Uffizi Gallery was named the, "world's greatest gallery" by *The Times of London* and is listed as one of the world's top 10 museums in *National Geographic*. For more, please visit: <http://www.friendsoftheuffizigallery.org>