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Fenimore Art Museum and Fenimore Farm Announce Leadership Transition

Cooperstown, NY:

Dr. Paul S. D'Ambrosio, President and CEO of Fenimore Art Museum and Fenimore Farm, has announced his retirement in 2026, after more than four decades of transformative leadership, scholarship, and institutional advancement.

"On behalf of the Board, I want to extend our deepest gratitude to Paul for his remarkable service" noted Jane Clark, Chairman of Fenimore Farm Board. "His steady leadership, integrity, and care for our mission have strengthened Fenimore Farm at every turn—building lasting partnerships, elevating our visitor experience, and nurturing a culture that puts people first. His leadership has made Fenimore Farm what it is today, and his impact will be felt for years to come."

Dr. Jeff Pressman, Chairman of Fenimore Art Museum Board remarked, "Paul's tenure and dedication to the Fenimore Art Museum has been extraordinary. His vision and scholarship elevated our institution and deepened its impact on both our community and the field of American art. It has been an honor to serve alongside him, and his legacy will continue to inspire all of us for years to come."

After receiving his MA in Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program, D'Ambrosio joined Fenimore in 1983 as a Folk Art Intern, becoming Assistant Curator the following year, Associate Curator in 1987, and Chief Curator in 1996. He pursued a doctoral degree at Boston University, earning a Ph.D. in American and New England Studies in 2000. His dissertation formed the basis of the acclaimed exhibition and publication *Ralph Fasanella's America* (2001), praised by *The New York Times* and later shown at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. He has curated exhibitions nationally and internationally and authored or edited numerous books and articles on American art, from *Folk Art's Many Faces* (1987) to *America's Rome* (2009) and most recently "The Elegant Brush of Sturtevant J. Hamblin" (2024).

A dedicated educator, D'Ambrosio served as an Adjunct Professor in the Cooperstown Graduate Program from 1983 to 2021, teaching American art and American folk art for 38 years and shaping generations of museum professionals.

D'Ambrosio was named Vice President and Chief Curator in 2005 and became President & CEO in 2011. During his tenure, he strengthened the museum's position as a leading center for American art, expanded programming, and guided the institution through key strategic transformations. Among his notable accomplishments:

- Launched Fenimore Farm's *Glimmer Nights* Holiday Light Show (2023)
- Transformed the Research Library into a new Education of Regional History Center (2025)
- Worked with the Eugene and Clare Thaw Charitable Trust on a $33.8 million acquisition initiative, culminating in Fenimore Art Museum's American Masterworks Collection (2024)
- Achieved reaccreditation from the American Alliance of Museums for both Fenimore Art Museum and Fenimore Farm (2024)
- Led the rebranding of The Farmers' Museum as Fenimore Farm & Country Village (2024)
- Successfully petitioned the New York State Board of Regents to recharter the New York State Historical Association as the Fenimore Art Museum (2017)
- Built the Lucy B. Hamilton Amphitheater on Otsego Lake and launched Fenimore Art Museum's Performing Arts Program (2015)

In addition to his leadership accomplishments, Paul organized significant exhibitions such as *A Deaf Artist in Early America: The Worlds of John Brewster, Jr.*; *Grandma Moses: Grandmother to the Nation*; *America's Rome: Artists in the Eternal City, 1800–1900*; *Artist and Visionary: William Matthew Prior Revealed*; and *American Folk Art, Lovingly Collected* at the Worcester Art Museum.

When it came to identifying the future leadership of both institutions, Paul looked to his former student and mentee, Joshua Campbell Torrance, who is currently serving as the Executive Director of The Florence Griswold Museum (Old Lyme, CT). Joshua will join the Fenimore in January 2026 as Senior Vice President, working alongside the current administration until the official retirement of D'Ambrosio during the summer of 2026.

D'Ambrosio remarked, "I am extremely proud of what we have accomplished throughout my tenure. I am confident that under Joshua's leadership the future of Fenimore Art Museum and Fenimore Farm are in good hands. There is no one I trust more with the stewardship of two places that have meant so much and been such a large part of my life, for forty-two years."

"This is a homecoming for me" Torrance commented. "I graduated from the Cooperstown Graduate Program and began my career under Dr. D'Ambrosio in 1998 as a Curatorial Assistant. Paul has been a mentor and friend to me throughout my career, and I am honored to have been selected as the new President & CEO. I look forward to working alongside him and ensuring a smooth transition for all the stakeholders. I look forward to building upon what he started."

D'Ambrosio's legacy is defined by his scholarship, innovative vision, and dedication to advancing the arts and museum practice. His contributions have left an enduring impact on the Fenimore, the field of American art, and generations of museum leaders.

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About Fenimore Art Museum: located on the shores of Otsego Lake—James Fenimore Cooper's "Glimmerglass"—in historic Cooperstown, New York, presents changing exhibitions each season. Past shows have featured artists such as Keith Haring, Ansel Adams, Banksy, M.C. Escher, and many others. The museum features a wide-ranging collection of American art including folk art; important American 18th- and 19th-century landscape, genre, and portrait paintings from artists including Gilbert Stuart, Edward Hicks, Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, Mary Cassatt, William Merritt Chase, Frederic Edwin Church, Childe Hassam, Martin Johnson Heade, Robert Henri, George Inness, Eastman Johnson, Joshua Johnson, Thomas Moran, Georgia O'Keeffe, Maurice Prendergast, John Singer Sargent, Max Weber, and James McNeill Whistler; more than 125,000 historic photographs representing the technical developments made in photography and providing extensive visual documentation of the region's unique history; and the renowned Eugene and Clare Thaw Collection of American Indian Art comprised of nearly 900 art objects representative of a broad geographic range of North American Indian cultures, from the Northwest Coast, Eastern Woodlands, Plains, Southwest, Great Lakes, and Prairie regions. Visit FenimoreArt.org.

About Fenimore Farm & Country Village: the site of Fenimore Farm has deep roots in New York State's rural past. The land has been part of a working farm since 1813, when it was owned by James Fenimore Cooper. Judge Samuel Nelson, whose office is part of Fenimore Farm Village, bought the farm in 1829 and raised sheep. Fenimore Farm, as it came to be known, changed hands again in the 1870s, when it was acquired by the Clark family. In 1918, Edward Severin Clark built a showcase complex at Fenimore Farm for his prize herd of cattle. The barn, creamery, and herdsman's cottage designed by architect Frank Whiting in the Colonial Revival style and constructed of local stone still stand today and are an integral part of the museum. Today, they house museum offices, exhibition spaces, and public areas. The structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Fenimore Farm opened its doors to the public in 1944. At that time, the museum had 5,000 tools and objects, including important collections amassed by the Otsego County Historical Society; William B. Sprague, founder of the Early American Industries Association; and the Wyckoff family, one of Brooklyn's oldest farming families. Today the museum's collections number more than 23,000 artifacts. Fenimore Farm is a private, non-governmental educational organization.