



VCU Brandcenter Friday Forum

Oct. 10th / 11am - 12:30pm / VCU Commons Theater / 907 Floyd Avenue

Bill Martin

Director / The Valentine



William “Bill” Martin, director of the Valentine, leads over 50 museum staff members in telling the story of Richmond lifestyle and culture. For more than 20 years, Martin has diversified the Valentine’s programming, expanded Richmond walking tours and group tours, and worked collaboratively in the community to promote city tourism initiatives. Martin holds a B.A. in Urban Studies and an M.A. in Public Administration from Virginia Tech. Following years of experience directing museums in Georgia, Florida, and Virginia, he joined the then-Valentine Museum in 1993 as Director of Marketing and Public Relations. Under his leadership, the institution has expanded civic involvement, developed more than 300 themed tours and raised millions for capital improvements, renovated historic structures and expanded programming.

Martin serves on the Board of Directors of the Richmond Business Council and Leadership Metro Richmond. He chairs the Richmond Region Museum Directors and is a member of the Richmond Mayor’s Tourism Commission. Martin has been actively involved in community conversations about societal issues and cultural enrichment and recently collaborated with many educators and scholars to create a downtown heritage walking trail, the Richmond Liberty Trail, which joins the Richmond Slave Trail.

Before joining the Valentine, Martin was Director, Tourism and Museums for the City of Petersburg, Virginia; Executive Director of the Jacksonville Museum of Arts & Science in Florida, and Executive Director of the Okefenokee Heritage Center/Southeastern Forest World in Waycross, Georgia.

Martin shared his philosophy about Richmond’s future in an interview with Richmond-based company, Ledbury in 2014:

“We can think about a future of Richmond that’s not totally embedded in what we think our past looks like. The past doesn’t define the future, it informs it. There’s this tension between how we think about our past and what our past was. There’s nothing wrong with acknowledging that tension, because that’s where our energy is. In the tension from our past is where we might find ourselves better.”

Topic / RVA Redefined

Descriptor / The connections made between events, between objects, between ideas and between ourselves define a place...and help us define our own lives. These connections are made by the stories and the powerful words that we use to tell them. To understand Richmond it is essential to first understand the changing definitions of common words that we use to describe life in the region. As the city’s oldest museum, the Valentine’s 1.6 million objects and their histories provide an unique vantage point to understand the complex and complicated stories of Richmond. How we define basic words....marriage, liberty, slavery, faith...change over time, and these changing definitions redefine how we think about ourselves. With a major renovation and rebranding (thanks Kelly and Helayne), the Valentine is redefining itself and its role in the community and in the process changing the way the city thinks about its past and future.