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Introduction of Emily Rafferty
Met Museum Women's History Month Event
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As Manhattan Borough President, I get around a lot in this name-dropping capital of the world. Every day I meet with people in the top tiers of what they do. But whenever you have a gathering of creative and decisive people—from finance to the arts—no one is spoken of with more affection and respect than Emily Rafferty.

A friend recently went to the head of a large foundation in hopes of getting support for his nonprofit. He named several key supporters whom he thought might help before he and the foundation head discovered that Emily was a mutual acquaintance. Almost immediately the foundation head demanded, “Why in the world are you bothering me with those nobodies if you know Emily Rafferty?”

Superlatives fail when trying to describe how important she is, and not only to the Met. Most of us here know about her leadership and superb management of the Museum, but NYC & Company is also in her good hands, as are the September 11th Memorial and Museum and—I was not surprised to hear—the chairmanship of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Any one of those constituencies could fill a room like this, as could the Sacred Heart School, Blue Hill Troupe, or any number of other places she has shaped through a lifetime of commitment.

There is a famous story about Emily Rafferty and Lady Gaga. Both are West Siders and both went to Convent of the Sacred Heart School. When Lady Gaga was hesitant to go onstage at a Met Museum gala, it was Emily who went backstage and had the inspiration to reminisce with her about Sacred Heart, and the show went on!

Despite Emily's many leadership roles, a résumé alone cannot really capture what makes her so special—nor does a string of superlatives. We all know what I mean. She brings something uncanny to the art of working with people, managing them—and their expectations—and figuring out how to leverage what each has to offer in this very difficult business of moving the world. It was that innate intelligence that David Rockefeller, Jr. spotted back in the seventies and recalled at dinner recently, and she hasn't lost a thing.

Well . . . almost. There *was* that development conference in Indianapolis where she misplaced a check for millions— a life-altering moment for most of us, but, really, not much of a deal next to the \$1.2 billion she’s raised for this Museum.

Even there, like the résumé and superlatives, numbers don’t come close to the wit and sparkle, the way she can make you believe, or how when it comes to handling people there is no high or low. These are the unlearnable things, and I have little doubt that in trying to replace her, the Metropolitan Museum will discover just how rare she is.

Emily, not only have you been one of the best friends this Museum and City have ever had, but in my 45 years of service to New York, I have not met anyone like you—anyone able to successfully lead a major institution with the ups and downs of its boards and colleagues while being equally at ease with the professional and security staffs and adored by friends. She makes time for all of them, and for her wonderful husband and two children!

The Met Museum has held two recent events for Emily Rafferty, and it was inspiring to listen to people praise her. However, her own speeches, when she thanked individuals— lots of them—were typical of Emily: truly awesome. No notes. She remembered so many names, never missing a beat, being professional and tough but also warm and welcoming.

For those who don’t know Emily Kernan Rafferty, after I have given these glowing remarks, she is retiring as president of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

She was elected to the post by the Metropolitan’s Board of Trustees in 2005 after a 29-year career at the institution, where she rose through the ranks in development and external affairs.

As the Metropolitan’s chief administrative officer, she oversaw some 1,500 full- and part-time museum employees in the areas of finance, technology, legal affairs, development, membership, communications, construction and facilities management, merchandising, human resources, security, and government relations.

She was born and raised in New York City, earned her B.A. cum laude from Boston University. In 2015 she received its College of Arts & Sciences Distinguished Alumni Award, the highest honor bestowed upon alumni to recognize extraordinary accomplishments in their professions or communities.

Emily, I wish you every best opportunity, whether in the U.S. or in an international sphere, where, after travels for the Met, you also know people who admire and adore you. As Borough President, I look forward to working with you in every way I can on behalf of the city that we love.