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**For Immediate Release**

**Contact: Anne McLuckie**

**Tel: 515.271.0320**

**E-mail: [amcluckie@desmoinesartcenter.org](mailto:amcluckie@desmoinesartcenter.org)**

## **Des Moines Art Center “Recuerdos” celebrates Day of the Dead/Día de los Muertos in new ways in 2021**

**DES MOINES, IA (October 2021)** The Des Moines Art Center is proud to continue their 21-year-tradition of celebrating Day of the Dead. While preserving the safety of visitors due to COVID-19 means the event, which can attract up to 3,000 visitors, will not be held in-person for 2021, the Art Center strongly believes in the importance of respecting and commemorating loved ones who have passed, as well as finding new ways to connect with and celebrate the Latino/Latinx community of Des Moines, work that is more vital than ever.

One new way the Art Center is fostering this commitment is by inviting a local Latinx artist to create the traditional ofrenda in the museum’s lobby, a job that had been historically taken on by the Day of the Dead committee and Art Center staff. This year, artist and Executive Director of *Al Éxito* Dawn Martinez Oropeza will be creating an ofrenda inspired by the *tlilpapatl* (monarch butterfly) and their significance to the indigenous Nahuatl people native to Southern Mexico and Central America.

*“It is an honor to participate in the DSM Art Center Dia de Los Muertos altar creation for another year. I am so grateful for being selected as the lead artist during this difficult time. The preparation and creation of altars brings so much healing, I hope that by incorporating the memory of metro residents that have passed due to COVID-19, others will find healing as they honor loved ones. Each community member will be celebrated on individual mariposas/ butterflies. It is through recognition and celebration that we keep our loved ones alive in our hearts.” - Dawn Martinez Oropeza*

Also, this year the Art Center is remembering the names, faces, and stories of Iowans who have lost their lives with the title “Recuerdos”. Recognizing the loss created by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted the Latinx community, as well as other communities of color. In support of the community and in the spirit of honoring this international tradition, the Art Center’s Day of the Dead website, [desmoinesartcenter.org/day-of-the-dead](http://desmoinesartcenter.org/day-of-the-dead), will offer links to multiple resources and activities that include:

- **Ofrenda** created by artist Dawn Martinez Oropeza will be on view in the lobby of the Des Moines Art Center October 19 – November 4.
- **Honoring lives lost to COVID-19** this year instead of celebrating one honoree, the Des Moines Art Center will be sharing a series of short videos created by Vince Valdez featuring several members of the Latinx community who have passed due to COVID-19. A memorial slide show of names of loved ones submitted to the Des Moines Art Center will also be on view at [desmoinesartcenter.org/day-of-the-dead](http://desmoinesartcenter.org/day-of-the-dead)



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- **Free Day of the Dead Activity Kits** will be available for families wishing to learn more about the tradition of honoring loved ones who have passed. Kits will be available at local Des Moines Public Library branches (Central, East, Forest, Franklin, North, and South) October 25 – 31. Limited supplies. Visit [dmpl.org/events](http://dmpl.org/events) to learn more.
- **Storytime and Activity** in-person storytime featuring children’s books written by Latinx authors and Day of the Dead bookmark art activity will be held at the Des Moines Art Center Saturday, October 9 with story times at 10:30 am, 11:30 am, and 2 pm.
- **Virtual Celebrations** [desmoinesartcenter.org/day-of-the-dead](http://desmoinesartcenter.org/day-of-the-dead) and the Art Center’s Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube channels will offer additional ways to learn and celebrate Day of the Dead throughout October and the first week of November, including a virtual performance with Mariachi Los Aguilares, ofrenda reveal, and more!

Stay tuned to for additional updates. Support for the Day of the Dead is provided by Homesteaders Life Company and Iles Funeral Homes.



Iles Funeral Homes

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### Des Moines Art Center

Recognized by international art critics as a world-class museum in the heart of the Midwest, the Des Moines Art Center, an AAM-accredited institution, has amassed an important collection of art from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present, with a major emphasis on contemporary art. Focused on quality and global in scope, it includes major works by Henry Ossawa Tanner, Edward Hopper, Georgia O’Keeffe, Francis Bacon, Andy Goldsworthy, Henri Matisse, Wangechi Mutu, Ai Wei Wei, and Kara Walker, among hundreds of others. The collection is housed in three major buildings, each designed by a renowned architect—Eliel Saarinen, I. M. Pei, and Richard Meier. With the exception of special events, admission to the museum is free.



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In September 2009, the John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park opened in Des Moines' Western Gateway Park. Philanthropists John and Mary Pappajohn provided funding for and donated 31 sculptures by internationally acclaimed contemporary artists to the Des Moines Art Center. The collection of sculptures by such artists as Martin Puryear, Louise Bourgeois, Deborah Butterfield, Willem de Kooning, Mark di Suvero, Olafur Eliasson, Keith Haring, Robert Indiana, Ellsworth Kelly, Yayoi Kusama, Jaume Plensa, and Richard Serra, and Joel Shapiro is the most significant donation of artwork to the Art Center in a single gift in the museum's history. The Pappajohn Sculpture Park is a collaboration of the Pappajohns, the City of Des Moines, the Des Moines Art Center, and numerous corporate and private donors.

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