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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Des Moines Art Center introduces Free Little Art Gallery**

**DES MOINES, IA (January, 2022)** – The Des Moines Art Center has unveiled the city’s first Free Little Art Gallery, otherwise known as FLAG. The Free Little Art Gallery is a concept born out of the Little Free Library movement, inviting communities to create and share small works of art with one another. This new addition to the museum is an interactive way to extend access outside of the museum walls. Visitors are encouraged to leave something, take something, or both! The exhibit will be ever-changing as artists of all ages and abilities contribute to the revolving gallery space.

Museum Educator Mia Buch was instrumental in bringing the FLAG concept to Des Moines. “Art is for everyone. That’s a big reason why I work at the Des Moines Art Center, because along with free admission, the Art Center works every day to make art as accessible as possible. This FLAG is a playful extension of that mission and I hope it inspires members of our community to create, view, and value artwork in new ways, and more often.”

To kick off the project, students from the Art Center’s Teen Clay Academy designed the first mini exhibition complete with miniature paintings, drawings, and sculptures. Now that the FLAG has launched, everyone is invited to participate. Whether you are a professional artist, a dabbler, a doodler, or a finger-painter, the Art Center encourages you to share your work with others. The only requirement is that each piece be no more than five inches tall to fit the gallery space.

The FLAG is a piece of artwork itself. Created by volunteer Kenneth Claypool, an engineer in the millwork industry, the FLAG is a miniature reproduction of the I.M. Pei wing of the Art Center. “I’ve been a friend of the Des Moines Art Center for a long time. As I was researching this project, it was fascinating to learn about the extraordinary architects who have left a piece of their legacy at the Art Center. The I.M. Pei addition challenged my understanding of architecture. Beyond concrete and steel Pei also relied on the landscape to complete the overall impression for the viewer.”

Always accessible, The Art Center’s FLAG is located on the east side of the museum near the pathway to the Rose Garden. The hashtag #ArtCenterFLAG is being used to foster a sense of community and to share artwork with people who can’t visit in person. Follow along on Instagram to see what’s new and be inspired by other artists.

For additional information, contact Director of External Affairs Amy Day at 515.612.0775 or [aday@desmoinesartcenter.org](mailto:aday@desmoinesartcenter.org).

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About the Des Moines Art Center + John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park

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.

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, 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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