

Introduction

Welcome to the Des Moines Art Center's Papajohn's Sculpture Park. As you begin your tour, here are some instructions to help guide you along. Audio content is available for each sculpture in the park and is one to four minutes in length. To access the information, enter the stop number listed on the sculpture plaque or refer to the park brochure. Plaques are located near the sidewalks. Brochures are available in boxes to the northeast and northwest corners of the park.

If you'd like to discontinue a stop and proceed to another, press the pound key on your phone followed by the new stop number. You may stay connected or call back as many times as you'd like. To share comments about your experience, press the pound key on your phone followed by star, zero, and wait for the prompt. For more information about the Papa John Sculpture Park, please reference the brochure or visit our website at desmoinesartcenter.org.

Enjoy your visit to the Papajohn Sculpture Park and if time allows, visit the collections and special exhibitions at the Des Moines Art Center, located three miles to the west at 4700 Grand Avenue. Admission is free.

Ugo Rondinone

Stop 101

I'm Jeff Fleming, Director of the Des Moines Art Center and we're looking at two works by the Swiss born artist, Ugo Rondinone: MOONRISE. east. january from 2005 and MOONRISE. east. august from 2006.

These MOONRISE works are part of a series of 12 representing each month of the year. The first has somewhat of a threatening, grimacing face and you'll see the second moon peering from behind it with a friendlier expression. Both greet the viewer as he or she enters the park. These two works represent the man in the moon.

Rondinone is drawn to the moon as a subject because everyone, no matter what economic status they may hold, or where they live on the Earth, has equal access to the moon — it's universal. He's also interested in man's changing relationships with the moon. Throughout history, man has been much more dependent on the moon for guidance than we may be today, which I believe Rondinone is lamenting by making a series of sculptures that celebrates this mysterious, universal object.

These sculptures would have been originally sculpted in clay, as the obvious finger smears convey. The versions before you have been cast in aluminum from these clay models and have been painted an earthy, putty color.



Ugo Rondinone

Stop 102

I am Jeff Fleming, director of the Des Moines Art Center, and we are looking at another sculpture by the Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone entitled, "Air gets into everything even nothing," from 2006.

What we have before us is an aluminum sculpture of a tree, painted white. But what is really interesting is that this sculpture was cast from a living object — a 2,000 year old olive tree near Naples, Italy. The artist created the work by casting the tree in rubber. Like the moon references in his two MOONRISE works, the tree is a universal symbol. One might think about the tree of life, or a giving tree, or a family tree. The real tree has 2,000-year-old deep roots. This tree has no roots. The real tree has bark, leaves you can hear flutter in the wind, olives you can taste, a smell — this tree contains none of that. Although a rubber cast of something captures almost an exact likeness, it doesn't really come across as the real thing.

All of these refer to universal, cultural entities that man has often looked at to control or enhance or dictate our lives. Rondinone is looking at them with a very universal, spiritual, or transcendental notion that connects all human beings. This takes it out of the realm of the natural presence or simply a reproduction of reality into something much more.



Anthony Caro

Stop 103

I'm Jill Featherstone, Museum Education Director at the Des Moines Art Center. In front of us is a sculpture by Anthony Caro. Anthony Caro was born in 1924 in New Malden, Surrey, England.

An interesting story about Caro's college days goes back to when he was studying at the Royal Academy. The Royal Academy was highly polished when it came to training on technique and skill. But there was very little discussion about when an artwork could and should be abstract. It was such that art was supposed to be purely architectural decoration and highly technical. But Caro found this relatively boring and limiting and he sought out the famous sculptor Henry Moore. One day, Caro decided to arrive at Moore's home and studio. Caro ended up working with Moore for over two years and this was a very influential period in his development.

Caro eventually went on to get a teaching position at Saint Martin's School of Art in London and he had some famous students, including two of the artists who are in the park: Barry Flanagan who did the large "Thinker on a Rock" sculpture, and William Tucker.

The sculpture that we are looking at is titled "In the Morning" and was created in 1986. We actually need to go back a little bit in Caro's history in order to understand how he came about working on this piece. Anthony Caro became well-known for doing abstract sculptures from found industrial materials like rebar and metal. He would paint these sculptures in bright colors. These sculptures occupied the space of the viewer, meaning they weren't set apart from the viewer on any kind of pedestal. They were very much in our real space. And since he achieved quite a bit of success with this kind of sculpture, he was able to create a workshop titled the Triangle Workshop in New York in the early 1980s. This workshop would invite approximately 30 artists from the United States, Canada and Great Britain. One of the stipulations of being invited to this workshop was that you would be asked to work outside of your everyday practice. This included Caro himself. For him, an artist working in an abstract art form, this meant that he was going to challenge himself to go back and do something, a practice that he had learned and wanted to revisit from his college days, which meant that he was going to go back and work in clay and model the figure. And so he found a model and we actually know the model's name – it is Conchetta Branson. He really admired this model; he said that she was very statuesque and that she intuitively knew how to strike compelling poses without being coached too much. He used her not only to do drawings from, but also to use as a live model and sculpt from. This is a result of one of those sessions with the model Conchetta. This piece is titled "In the Morning" because, as you can see here, there's a woman who seems to be stepping into a U-shaped object which we can assume to be a tub. And it's of course a tub that doesn't have either side, but I think we're still meant to reference it that way.

You can tell when you look at this figure that it is modeled from a real, flesh and bones woman and not after some idealized Goddess without flaw or personality to the figure. We definitely get an idea of what this real person's figure would have been like. I also think it's interesting to compare this work to other famous bathers in art history. If you're familiar with the artist Edgar Degas, he has several bathers that he has done in sculpture. And Cezanne was very famous for his suite of paintings using bathers as subject matter.

You can think of "In the Morning" being the time of day most people are getting cleaned up for the day as a way to get into what is going to happen throughout the rest of the 15 hours they will be working and awake and enjoying some leisure time. I think it's a very unusual piece for the

park in that it's a more intimate moment than some of the other artworks in this collection, but it's a very beautiful sculpture.



Judith Shea

Stop 104

This is Jill Featherstone, Museum Education Director with the Des Moines Art Center. Here we're standing in front of Judith Shea's "Post-Balzac" from 1990. Shea was born in 1948 in Philadelphia and then studied fashion design from the Parsons School in New York.

In 1981, Judith Shea was asked to teach a class on medieval armor at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. And what she took away from that research and working with the armor collection at the MET was the idea of using clothing as armor or as a disguise. And also having the hollowness of the armor represent the figure and how that emptiness may or may not represent an individual's personality or kind of a protective coating to what a person may be.

The sculpture in front of us is from 1990 and is entitled "Post-Balzac." Honoré de Balzac was a very important writer for the first half of the 19th century. He is credited with being the founder of realism in European literature. His most significant work was a series of almost 100 novels and plays collectively called "The Human Comedy" which were about French life after the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1815. France actually commissioned an artist named Rodin to do a sculpture honoring Balzac, and in Rodin's depiction, it shows a larger-than-life figure who is becoming abstracted in the face and in the gesture. This figure is actively wrapping himself in a heavy robe. This is a robe he would wear when he was writing his works. The monument stands as a tribute by the French government to this very important French writer.

What Judith Shea is doing is riffing on this idea of the state or of the government commissioning a work of art by another artist. She titles this piece "Post-Balzac" and it's meant to be viewed with a sense of humor. She presents us with a robe, but it's a very different robe than the robe Rodin depicted 100 years earlier. It's a static robe that harkens back to the hollow pieces of armor that would have been influential to her when she was working at the MET or seeing classical Greek sculptures. It stands stoically and it's significantly empty. She has a quote that describes this piece best. It says "I wanted to address how, at the end of the last century, there was both romance and optimism for the next century. I wanted to ask, 'Where are we a century later'? This century's technical innovations have brought horrors with the level of destruction we are able to do. The coat is hollow, a metaphor for the condition of the spirit, for emptiness."

Keep in mind with the quote I just read that she's actually referring to the 19th century from the position of the 20th century rather than the 21st century.



Louise Bourgeois

Stop 105

I'm Jeff Fleming, director of the Des Moines Art Center. We're now looking at "Spider" from 1997 by Louise Bourgeois. She was born in France in 1911 and sadly died in May, 2010.

The spider is a reoccurring theme in Louise Bourgeois' work. She refers to the spider and makes reference to her mother through the spider. Traditionally, many of us look at the spider as something frightening, something to be wary of. That, perhaps, is a part of her discussion, but her relationship with the spider is a more a positive one as it was with her mother, who she considered her best friend.

Her mother died when the artist was 21. She sees her mother as very protective, very industrious, very diligent, very clever. These are all positive attributes which she gives to her mother, and in turn, gives to the spider.

Bourgeois grew up in a family of weavers. Their business was restoring tapestries. The notion of her mother and her family as weavers also has a relationship to the spider, who of course weaves webs for a variety of purposes. These mini-relationships between the spider and her mother are apparent in this work, and also illustrate the continuing use in Bourgeois' work of the personal narrative that reference her family and her personal life, as well as a feminist point of view which is so strong in the spider.

The spider is certainly not a static form. It is resting on its eight legs and it appears to be moving and animated in the space.



Barry Flanagan

Stop 106

This is Laura Burkhalter, Associate Curator at the Des Moines Art Center, and we're talking about Barry Flanagan's "Thinker on a Rock" from 1997.

This piece is an homage in parody to Rodin's "The Thinker" which is a famous sculpture from 1880 that Rodin composed as part of a larger work entitled "The Gates of Hell." Rodin's "Thinker" was a man sitting on a rock with his chin rested on his hand and it really has become a symbol for a man involved in intellectual activity. And what Flanagan does with this work is replaces the human figure with the hare. We see the hare as a trickster or somebody who is a little bit less serious. And what Flanagan has done is put him in the ultimate serious pose. This is a very substantial sculpture, it's cast bronze, there's this huge rock and the hare is much larger than life-size of a person. There's a lot of humor and wit to this sculpture. He's taking what should be a very serious subject matter and a very serious pose and pokes fun at it by replacing the man with this long-legged, very attentive, very serious hare.

Flanagan has a couple of interesting connections to other artists in the sculpture park. Just on a technical level, Barry Flanagan was a student of Anthony Caro, whose "In the Morning" sculpture is located nearby in the park. On a more thematic level, Barry Flanagan is sort of like Deborah Butterfield who uses horses as a stand-in for the human figure. In Flanagan's case, he uses the hare.

It's important to note the figure on the rock is a hare, not a rabbit. The hare is a much wilder, less domesticated animal. The hare has interesting symbolism throughout various cultures in history; whether it's mythological symbolism in Egypt or China, or a more pop culture symbolism in American folk tales or even something like Bugs Bunny, which I think this figure resembles a little bit in the fact that he has very long arms and long legs and has a little bit of a humanoid quality. These ideas and the presence of the hare in pop culture is what drew Flanagan to that figure. And he also really liked the idea that you could use the ears as a form of expression. Humans don't have very expressive ears. But in this case, you have the ears pointed upright, they look very thoughtful and it's a whole new appendage for the artist to work with.



Deborah Butterfield

Stop 107

Hi, I'm Jill Featherstone, Museum Education Director at Des Moines Art Center. We are looking at Deborah Butterfield's sculptures. One is entitled "Juno" from 1989 and the other is entitled "Ancient Forest" – the larger piece – and that is the most recent artwork in the park, completed in 2009.

Deborah Butterfield as an artist has an interesting history. As you might guess, she is interested in horses as equine animals, and of course, she's also very interested in sculpture and in being an artist. She was torn between pursuing art and in pursuing veterinary medicine in college. When she was in college, she bought her first horse and worked on a thoroughbred farm to earn some money to get through school. In 1976, she moved to Montana and really started to get familiar with working with horses. She then went on to art school, and in 1979 she was in the Whitney Biennial Exhibition.

What you are seeing here is not actually branches, but cast bronze. Butterfield has said that it takes about 20 people 2 to 3 months to create a large horse. How she goes about creating something is that she'll find some sticks to create an armature for her work. These sticks might have a lasting result in the legs and in the main bodice of the horse. Those branches are then combined together and then taken apart and individually cast in bronze. They're then welded together and other real pieces of wood – branches or pieces of found wood from construction sites — are added to that metal armature until she gets that posture and personality of the horse that she has in her mind or wants to create. This process can take a varying amount of time. Once she achieves her final goal with this combination of some bronze elements and some wood elements, the sculpture is meticulously photographed particularly in the areas where the branches are joined together, and every branch is individually taken apart and cast in bronze, then cracked out of the ceramic shell and re-welded together. Finally a patina is applied to enhance the look of a real branch, adding to the organic quality and the natural quality of the sculpture. And the result is an amazing fool-the-eye effect that seduces us all into thinking, "Oh my gosh, how were these ever created?"

In "Juno" from 1989, we're looking at a little bit smaller than life-size sculpture of a horse. And of course, this isn't a realistic horse. What you immediately notice is the construction of this horse and possibly the personality or gesture of this sculpture. In looking at this horse and in moving around it, you notice that Juno has its head in a lowered position, almost to the ground, and is bashfully kind of looking away from the viewer.

It's interesting to note that all of Deborah Butterfield's horses are female horses and she also thinks of them as portraits of the horses she has once known or worked with. They all have a very distinct demeanor and personality. Butterfield uses the horses as her main subject matter. As someone would be interested in learning the anatomy and the musculature or skeletal structure of a human to make more realistic or more expressionistic sculptures of humans, that's exactly what Butterfield is doing, except with her subject being the horse.

Butterfield has spoken about her very intimate relationship with horses; she herself owns many of them. I think at last count it was around 10, and she says she knows them so well because she is literally their nurse, she's their maid, she's their dentist, she's their groomer, she's their dance partner. So she knows these horses' personalities and many different facets of their existence.

When you compare “Juno” to the larger sculpture in the park which is titled “Ancient Forest,” you see a much different personality in the horse. This is definitely larger than life — it towers above us. This horse seems much more confident. Its head is definitely not as lowered as “Juno’s,” and it seems to be directly engaging the participant in some kind of active relationship, like you could go up to the horse and almost start to feed it. It has that active presence within the space. Interestingly, this work was commissioned by John and Mary Pappajohn to be placed in the park. They originally came to Butterfield with the idea of it being a Trojan horse. The artist wasn’t necessarily interested in being that literal about a Trojan horse. But what she took from that idea was that the scale for this horse needed to be larger than some of her other works. In fact, this is the largest piece she has ever done. Reportedly, it took about 2 years for her to talk herself into starting the work.



Joel Shapiro

Stop 108

This is Gilbert Vicario, Curator of the Des Moines Art Center. Joel Shapiro's "Untitled," 1985 looks like a ballet dancer stretching, or perhaps a break dancer spinning on the pedestal.

Joel Shapiro is an American sculptor who emerged on the scene in the 1970s. His work looks figurative but also relates to abstract minimalist sculpture. Shapiro likes to think that his work is radical. It emerged during the time of the Vietnam War and he felt that enabled him to experiment as an artist.

Joel Shapiro's work can be viewed as a reaction to minimalism in that the pieces have an element of the figure and the human body in them, which allows us to relate to them in a much more immediate way. Minimalism, and minimalist sculpture in particular, was devoid of the body. The pieces were industrially manufactured and the viewer was meant to interact with them in a way that would remind them of their own bodies as they moved around the pieces. Shapiro's work begins to blur that distinction and crosses over into a more figural or gestural style, which I think has a more immediate connection with the viewer. During the '70s, a lot of artists actually reacted against minimalism, the coldness and the lack of a relationship to the human body. Shapiro's way of doing that was to play with forms that could be perceived to be minimalist: Simple 2x4 rectangular structures that were used almost like building blocks to create different gestures, different forms, different contortions that the viewer brings to the pieces. They're not actually intended to look like the human figure, but rather create a gesture towards that in the work.



Ellsworth Kelly

Stop 109

This is Jill Featherstone, Museum Education Director with the Des Moines Art Center. The sculpture we are standing in front of is called “Untitled” from 1994 by American artist Ellsworth Kelly. The sculpture is nearly 20 feet tall and is constructed from stainless steel. The piece is intentionally situated in the center of the park to be a beacon.

What I find particularly elegant and beautiful about this piece is the upward lift and the surface of the sculpture. This sculpture, like many of the other abstract pieces not only in the sculpture park but in the Des Moines Art Center’s own collection, doesn’t have a story to necessarily be discovered. The piece is about the materials, it’s about the viewer’s interaction with the sculpture, and about the viewer’s interaction with the sculpture during different times of day and at different times of year. So hopefully you’re seeing the sculpture today on a beautiful, sunny afternoon and the sun is highly reflective off of the shiny surface and you can see some of the nuances in the stainless steel.

There seems to be little horizontal brush strokes in the sculpture which hearken back to cloud formations you may see in the sky. Now if you’re seeing the piece on a darker day, those nuances might not come out. But some of the things you will always be able to see are this beautiful, elegant structure reaching towards the sky. The frontal view is a very stoic and solid structure with this beautiful curve to it. As you move around the piece in the park, it then goes down to a dimension of just over two inches wide so it almost disappears into itself. Then as you come around the backside of it, it presents itself again with this solid structure.

I would also encourage you to keep your eye on this “Untitled” sculpture as you move around during your visit to the park today. When you look at this work from different vistas, you’ll see how this artwork engages the entire space. This beautiful, uplifting form can slice through the sky and can slice through this urban context in very subtle yet poetic ways as you walk through the space.

Ellsworth Kelly was born in 1923. One particular childhood influence was his relationship with his paternal grandmother. His paternal grandmother was interested in nature and in honing his observation skills, and they did this through intense bird watching. This helped to train his eye in the physical reality of the world by focusing in on nature’s shapes, colors, gestures — things that you might only notice in a glance. There’s an interesting story an art historian named Dave Hickey tells about walking with Ellsworth Kelly in New York. Kelly suddenly stopped and exclaimed about a particular color purple that he saw in the distance. Dave Hickey didn’t understand what Kelly was looking at. All he saw was trees and a sidewalk. When they were closer to this purple color, Ellsworth Kelly was able to point out that the sun coming through the branches of these trees and the leaves of the trees combining with the grass created a beautiful purple shadow that might have only been in that particular area for a few minutes or even a few seconds. It was those kinds of encounters and his highly honed observation skills that trained his eye to be an accomplished sculptor. He’s perhaps more well known for his paintings that depend on a juxtaposition and a hard edge between complementary or supplementary colors or distinct shapes that again, emphasize the edge of something or push the idea of what the edge of a color or a shape might be. There’s a very strong relationship between what he’s doing in painting in a two-dimensional form and that bridge, it seems like a natural bridge, into what he’s going to accomplish with sculpture.



Gary Hume

Stop 110

This is Laura Burkhalter, Associate Curator at the Des Moines Art Center, and you're looking at two sculptures by British artist Gary Hume: "Back of a Snowman, White" and "Back of a Snowman, Black."

The first thing you'll notice about these works is their very richly colored, shiny surface. Every sculpture in the park has a different surface texture, but these two works have one of the most interesting textures in the park because their surface is so glossy and reflective, and really has a rich quality that can resemble a plastic toy or sort of a precious surface that can seem a little bit vulnerable in the outside space. Both works are covered in enamel and that speaks to the fact that Gary Hume is better known as a painter and so he's comfortable with these richly saturated colors.

As you look at these two sculptures, take care to walk all the way around them. You'll notice just how large and voluminous these forms are. They're bigger than human scale, so while they're playful, they're sort of overwhelming in their size. And the color paint of both sculptures, particularly the black sculpture, is very reflective. In the black sculpture you can see your reflection in the surface. And even the white sculpture is very shiny. Both of them react to sunlight in a very rich manner and you see that light enhancing the curves of the sculptures.

Humor and playfulness is very common in Gary Hume's work. He often uses images from childhood: snowmen, rabbits, toys have all made appearances in his work. But with the sculpture he takes the joke to a different degree. By calling the work "Back of a Snowman" it implies that there's a front of the snowman. But if you're walking around these sculptures you will never find the front of the snowman. So you're just sort of always looking at its back. That's not only playful; it also adds a sense of interaction to the sculpture and also a sense of vulnerability because you're always sneaking up on the snowman, never to find the face that you're looking for.



Scott Burton, “Seating for Eight” and “Café Table Number One”

Stop 111

This is Laura Burkhalter, Associate Curator for the Des Moines Art Center, and you are looking at, or possibly sitting on, Scott Burton’s “Seating for Eight,” designed 1985 and “Café Table Number One,” designed 1984.

Scott Burton is really known for blurring the line between furniture and art. It’s not surprising that he started out as a performance artist, since oftentimes, performance artists do their work because they want to involve an audience or want to involve a viewer in their work. While Burton moved away from performance art, he started making furniture, which really doesn’t become complete until someone uses the furniture.

There’s a quote by Scott Burton that says, “Art should place itself not in front of, but around, behind, underneath – literally – the audience.” I think that really sums up what he was trying to do. Burton understood that our physical needs can sometimes take precedence over our desire to have an ascetic experience and be walking around the park. So if you’re not already sitting in these seats, please take a seat. Notice the park around you. Notice how you see the sculptures from this space. What this work does, besides function as a work of art in and of itself, is really allow you an experience within the park. That was critical to what Burton wanted to do with his art.

These aren’t chairs that disappear into the fabric of the park. They’re definitely solid structures. Burton used very fine materials, very beautiful marble. You might notice how cold it is or how uncomfortable these chairs are to sit on, or, how comfortable they are to sit on. But you certainly don’t ignore these pieces. They’re very beautifully shaped and sculpted, very beautifully designed objects. The materials are very rich. Look at the difference between the grain of the marble on the seats versus the deep black shine of the café table. Burton was very conscious of these things and of the physical presence of them — how beautiful they look, how they feel. All of that adds to the idea that you interact with these works in a physical and visual sense as well as that you use them as a place to rest and have your own, independent art experiences that he could never control but gave you the place to have.



William Tucker

Stop 112

This is Jill Featherstone, Museum Education Director with the Des Moines Art Center. Here we are looking at William Tucker's "Gymnast III," 1985.

Tucker was inspired to make a series of sculptures after watching the 1984 Olympics that were held in Los Angeles, California. He was particularly taken with watching the athletes perform gymnastics on the parallel bars and on the rings. He was interested in how the bodies of these athletes turn into "V"s, so there would be a rigid top half from the waist to the head, and a rigid lower half from the waist to the toes. What he wanted to capture, or what he was influenced by when looking at those gymnasts, was not only the rigidity of their bodies but also the tension in the "V" fold. He thought this would be an interesting subject matter or gesture to explore in a series of works.

This is one of the earliest pieces in the series. He admitted that he was still trying to get his feet underneath him with where he was going with this series. He thought of this "V" form as a way to lift things off the ground. There is a little arch underneath the bottom of the sculpture and it really does rise in a rapid succession into the top with a little bit of an arch happening as you move around the piece. The piece isn't meant to be a literal representation of a body folded into two halves but it's more about the idea of tension and gesture. So you can think about this as when an athlete's hand hits the floor in a tumbling routine when his wrist bends and all the energy is compacted into his wrist.

Tucker created these pieces using an armature. Around this armature he would have used plaster and an aggregate called vermiculite which is a very light form of sand. This materiality allowed him to work rapidly. It would also set up hard for him so if he ever wanted to go back into the pieces, it would allow him an ability to carve. There isn't any carving done in the piece here but I think you can tell a lot of energy went into creating it.

The surface of this work is active. That is emphasized by this beautiful, rich, brown patina. A patina is a chemical that is applied to sculptures and there can be many different colors from dark brown and blacks, velvety colors, to more shimmery colors like these browns and golds to a green color.

When you're looking at a piece like this that isn't obviously narrative, imagine how the artist would have made these pieces. When there's a highly active surface like this, start to think about whether or not the artist really had a plan for what they were doing or if they were just working spontaneously. If you feel like that's the case, then you really know that there is pleasure in the process and that part of the meaning of the artwork is in the artist's active doing. These sculptures are more figural than figurative. They make a reference to the body but more in terms of sensation rather than anatomy. It's about the feel and not the physical evidence of what is there.



Willem de Kooning

Stop 113

This is Jeff Fleming, Director of the Des Moines Art Center. We are looking at “Reclining Figure” from 1969 to 1982 by Willem de Kooning. He was born in Rotterdam in 1904 and died in the United States in 1997.

Willem de Kooning is primarily known as a painter. He is one of the founders of abstract expressionism and he came to the attention of the art world with his aggressive paintings of women in the 1950s and the 1960s. He began sculpting in 1969 when he was 65 years old and he only made about 25 sculptures in his lifetime.

He first created smaller images with his hands using clay. In 1970, Henry Moore saw these small sculptures and encouraged Willem de Kooning to create them on a larger scale, which he in turn did. So we have the large, aggressive abstract figures that make reference to the human figure. Here we can see a leg kicking, or an arm, or a reclining figure as the title implies. What’s most important about these works is how he continues in a 3-D format his approach to the figure that we saw in his paintings.

This is the centerpiece of the second room of the sculpture park which looks at abstraction. These abstract works do make reference to things beyond themselves such as the figure we see here in “Reclining Figure” by Willem de Kooning.



Tony Smith

Stop 115

I'm Jeff Fleming, Director of the Des Moines Art Center. We're looking at a work by Tony Smith. He was born in New Jersey in 1912 and died in 1980.

There are actually two works in the park by Tony Smith, one is "Marriage" from 1961 and "Willy" from 1962. Tony Smith has a particularly interesting history. He was an architect and he worked in his architectural practice for nearly 20 years. At the age of 44, in 1956, he began to work in sculpture. He was actually recuperating from a car accident, as well as a subsequent blood disease, and he began to make cardboard sculptures. He was obviously frustrated that he couldn't be out in the field with his architectural practice, so he began making these 3-D models which really focused on geometry and on architectural elements such as the post and lintel that we see in every building. He then began to make these sculptures — he preferred to call them presences — and there's an interest in geometry here, but one of the most important interests of Tony Smith was how this geometry interacted with the viewer. In other words, there's a human feel. There's a human presence. There's the desire to walk through and interact with the works. That was very much in the mind of the artist. For example, with "Marriage" we have an obvious invitation to walk through it and be a part of the work. It is less obvious with "Willy" but we do have that same void as well as form as well as space which interacts with the space around it and interacts with the viewer as they engage the work. They're also black which is a reference to a silhouette, where the work is silhouetted against the sky and against the landscape in which it is found.

The works certainly house a component of a minimalist aesthetic and they are minimal in form, but they do have a narrative relationship. The title "Marriage" and the title "Willy" do carry with them a relationship to things outside of themselves. So although the appearance of the forms have a relationship to minimalism, their relationship to narrative, to landscape, to human presence very much take them beyond a strictly minimalist point of view.



Sol LeWitt

Stop 116

This is Laura Burkhalter, Associate Curator of the Des Moines Art Center, and you're looking at Sol LeWitt's "Modular Piece" from 1969.

LeWitt made a lot of sculptures similar to this in the 1960s and they emphasize line, grid, cube and an overall system of putting these things together. LeWitt preferred that they be called "structures" as opposed to sculptures and I think that really gets at what he was trying to do. These works aren't supposed to have a grand, emotional content. They're really about the formal qualities. And the idea that he called them structures shows how much he was influenced by architecture and how grids, cubes, and lines are what make up architecture. Structure is a much more architectural word than sculpture.

As you walk around this sculpture, you'll notice the simplicity of it. It's basically cubes made up of white lines and they're perfect. They line up together in exact measurements. But as you move around it, you'll notice how those lines interact with one another. As you glance at it, they cross cut one another and the shadows can cross cut those lines or repeat that cube pattern on the ground. While it's simple, it's complex at the same time. There's a lot of tension between these perfectly laid-out volumes.

This work falls into the category of minimalism and the minimalists were very interested in making work that was self-referential. It's about the elements of the work itself. It's about the white cubes. It's about the lines. It's about the shadows that the work creates rather some sort of emotional content that you're bringing in from the outside world. This really is a self-contained universe in and of itself, but yet it matches up beautifully with this outdoor, urban environment that we've put it in.

One of the great ways to look at this piece is to think of it as a structure. So step back and look at it and notice how it not only fills the space, but lines up against the Des Moines skyline around you. And these repeated cubes, which in theory you could keep repeating as high as you want to, or as far left and right as you want to, and not really change the basic essence of the sculpture, have a great relationship with the city around them. You see buildings that are repeated floors over and over again. Within those buildings there are cubicles or offices that repeat over and over again. LeWitt's sculpture has a great play with that idea that a city is really just a repetition of buildings and a repetition of space within those buildings and the relationship between those buildings repeating against one another.

Mark di Suvero

Stop 117

This is Jill Featherstone, Museum Education Director of the Des Moines Art Center. Here we are standing in front of a very large sculpture entitled "T8," created by Mark di Suvero in 1985.

The sculpture is painted steel and is definitely one that needs to be experienced from walking around it in its entirety. The sculpture completely changes its composition as you move through the space of the sculpture park. At one view, you'll look at the piece and you'll see these four legs or appendages that seem very solidly planted on the ground. Then, as you follow these diagonals into the central node area, there seems to be this area of activity and confusion that gets twisted up in these rounded, organic shapes. Then there's an explosion of these other appendages that come out of the top of the sculpture. This creates a life-like element to these industrial, weighty and heavy materials. I think this is the interesting element in di Suvero's work. He can work with these rigid construction materials and yet view them with such liveliness.

I think this liveliness is enhanced by the way that he paints his sculptures. Of course, one will notice almost immediately a big, bright orange and red color that has been applied to the entirety of this sculpture. And he of course does this purposefully to create a maximum contrast with the blue sky that this sculpture will be silhouetted against. And it also affirms that he wants to control every element of his sculpture — that he's not going to leave these steel beams to nature to rust — he wants to have a hand in how this piece is going to look not only when this piece was created in 1985 and how it looks today, but also how it looks 25 years from now.

Mark di Suvero unfortunately was involved in a very serious accident in 1960 when he was moving lumber around at the top of an elevator and his spine was crushed. He used a wheelchair for a while and he now walks with the aid of crutches. While he was in rehab after the accident in 1960, he learned to use an arc welder. This would be influential in how he would continue his artistic career. After he learned to use that piece of machinery, he went on to experiment with more industrial materials. He says that drawing is very important to his work. "They are the seeds of his ideas," he said and he thinks of his sculptures like drawings in space. He doesn't, like many other artists who work in large scale, build models. What he does, is once he has an idea for a gesture of a piece, is to experiment with the materials themselves. So he will begin to maneuver these steel beams himself until he gets an overall result that he's interested in, or an overall shape that he's interested in, or an overall dynamism. So he, from beginning to end, is the sole architect for these sculptures. Of course, he has people who are helping him, but he really knows how to manipulate these materials and kind of playfully moves the pieces around until it achieves the effect he's looking for.



Keith Haring

Stop 118

This is Gilbert Vicario, Curator of the Des Moines Art Center, and we're standing in front of Keith Haring's "Untitled (Three Dancing Figures)" from 1989. Keith Haring was born in Reading, Pennsylvania in 1958. He moved to New York City in 1979 where he went to school at the School of Visual Arts.

Haring was known in the early eighties for his chalk drawings, most of which took place in the underground subways of New York City. He believed that most art was far-removed from everyday life, so one of the reasons why he enjoyed painting in the subways and painting in different clubs around the world was to connect art to people's everyday experiences.

Haring was associated with the graffiti movement in the 1980s even though his work really didn't look like graffiti — it appeared more to be simple, schematic drawings of reoccurring characters, including the humanoid figure, the radiating baby, and the barking dog. Keith Haring was also associated with many famous artists in the 1980s including Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Kenny Scharf. Keith Haring loved music and dancing and a lot of the figures in the works reflected that. The humanoid figures sometimes had radiating points coming out of them, indicating that they weren't dead, that they were in movement or that they were dancing.

"Untitled (Three Dancing Figures)" from 1989 were conceived a year before his death. The sculpture is part of a group of three sculptures. There is a Version A, a Version B and a Version C. Version C is the one that is now in the Pappajohn Sculpture Park. The sculpture is done in primary colors yellow, red and blue.

"Untitled (Three Dancing Figures)" is a tribute to Keith Haring's love of music and the club culture of the 1980's. The imposing aluminum sculpture, although very different from the ephemeral, quickly-rendered wall murals that he was known for, celebrate his love of dancing, and are intended to have a sense of permanence for people to enjoy in the years to come.



Jaume Plensa

Stop 119

This is Gilbert Vicario, Curator of the Des Moines Art Center. We're looking at Jaume Plensa's "Nomade."

Jaume Plensa is a contemporary sculptor and artist. He was born in Barcelona, Spain in 1955. Jaume Plensa's sculpture "Nomade" is a figurative representation of a human body that appears to be in a meditative state or in a moment of repose. The sculpture is comprised of white letters that make the form of a human body.

Plensa uses letters of the alphabet to create building blocks, like cells are the building blocks of the human body. The use of letters to create a sculpture refers back to how letters are the building blocks of language and of culture. A letter on its own means nothing, but when you combine it with other letters, it forms words which form sentences which form thoughts which give an indication of a particular culture.

Jaume Plensa's sculpture has a relationship to architecture as well as to sculpture. The viewer enters through an opening and walks inside and suddenly becomes surrounded by the sculpture. This creates an almost womb-like feeling of being protected by this structure.

The title of Jaume Plensa's piece "Nomade" also refers to the fact that the artist conceived of the piece being shown in multiple contexts. So far, it has been shown in three places in the United States: Miami, Michigan, and in downtown Des Moines. It was originally situated outside of the Pappajohn Education Center. Now in its final site, part of the Pappajohn Sculpture Park.



The following recording is by artist Jaume Plensa about his sculpture, *Nomade*.

Jaume Plensa

Stop 19

The piece was made in 2007. I did that piece for a show I was invited to do at the Picasso Museum in Antibes. The title was *Nomade* because it was already in my mind that after the show the piece was traveling to Miami and probably through other places in the states because I had several invitations for shows. It's made with stainless steel, painted in white, and the piece is about 8 meters tall.

I'd been working for several years in similar family of works, which is mainly the human body made out with letters. I'm doing a model of that human form and then I cover it completely with letters that shape like a second skin, when the piece is ready I take out the first model and it becomes completely transparent and almost flatten. In the case of *Nomade*, it was my intention to try to do the piece as weak as necessary to invite people to penetrate inside the piece, like, well the metaphor of our body as an architecture. And invite people to go inside us, lovers our dreaming as the maximum ideal when the person that you love disappear inside you. That is a little bit idea. If you pay a little bit more attention about the shape inside, the piece is not complete. It has not face. It has not the legs and hands. That means the piece frontally, like a big gate. But inside the negative shape of the arms, it's like a big mother embracing those people and protecting them.

My main visual information was text not art or whatever—images. It was in my family, books were something very normal and I grew up surrounded by text. I decided one day to use the text, as let's say, as material in my sculpture and, in the way to use letters as cells. Letters, that they have a beautiful personality, like a cell. They have an amazing memory and but, alone it seems nothing and mixing it together they have this enormous capacity to do words, to do text, to do ideas. In the last times, I'm mixing also alphabets, different alphabets, as a, well, as a homage to this concept of lovality, but the positive one, which means that we can be together, but keeping our own personality. It means to exchange information between cultures. And it's very beautiful when you see the calligraphy from Hindi, nearby Arabic, or nearby Hebrew, and you see that they are so different, but at the same time they work so well together. And it creates a very dynamic rhythm of shapes. In *Nomade*, I was using only Latin letters anduh, and it creates a certain mesh, like in construction. I remember talking with an structural engineer, and he said: "Well that is the most strong way to do any structure in architecture." To, to do a mesh like that, that all the longs are going to many directions and it's very resistant. I love it that image as a poetical metaphor. That, probably language, it's the best structure to hold us up.

Richard Serra

Stop 120

I'm Jeff Fleming, director of the Des Moines Art Center. We are looking at the work "Five Plate Pentagon" from 1986 by the American artist Richard Serra.

Richard Serra worked at U.S. Steel when he was in college and I think this experience really informed his later work. His works have a very minimalist quality to them, but they are a celebration of the materials, they are a celebration of the weight of this material, the gravity of this material. In addition to this materiality, there's a psychological tension in his work that is apparent particularly here in the "Five Plate Pentagon," where we see five plates of steel resting upon one another like a house of cards that might at any moment collapse upon itself simply because of its own weight and the balance in which they are seemingly formed.

Part of the psychological tension in this work is the relationship between the work and the viewer. We have, obviously, five rooms or areas in which the viewer can enter the work and interact with the work as they surround and walk around the space.

As in many minimalist works, and many post-minimalist works, there's not a narrative with this work. This work is a celebration of the materiality: the weight, the impact that these materials have on the viewer, and have on the viewer's space.



Martin Puryear

Stop 121

This is Laura Burkhalter, Associate Curator of the Des Moines Art Center, and you're standing in front of Martin Puryear's "Decoy."

Martin Puryear is one of the foremost sculpturists working in America today and he's well-known for his work with wood. He has trained in woodworking techniques all over the world, including Africa, Asia and Europe. This work, even though it's bronze, still had the beginning of its life in a wood sculpture. He carved the wood sculpture and then cast it in bronze. You can see that if you look along the top of the large disc on the ground. You can see the grain of wood of the original sculpture before it was cast in bronze.

"Decoy" was made in 1990 and the title of the work has many layers of meaning. It can imply a decoy like hunters would use a duck decoy that they would put in the water. And the work has a shape that resembles a duck floating in the water, particularly if you view it from a distance. "Decoy" also references interior space. We walk up to it and we feel this manhole shape, that if we pulled it back that there would be something hidden in there. But it draws us in and it's a decoy to get our attention.

Puryear's work often plays on the tension between interior and exterior space. The form of this sculpture implies that there's a hidden space underneath the round disc. We see this small form coming up out of the disc that can be read as a periscope or that also can be seen as a playful head or eye peeking out of the disc. But either way, there's an implication that not only is there is there space under this disc and it's just sort of floating on the surface of the grass, but also that there's someone or something in this space that's peeking up out at us.



Yoshitomo Nara

Stop 122

I'm Gilbert Vicario, senior curator at the Des Moines Art Center and this is Yoshitomo Nara's *White Ghost*, made in 2010.

Yoshitomo Nara was born in Japan in 1959 and has been influenced by popular imagery from both East and West – anime and manga from Japan, and Disney animation and popular comic books from the United States. Nara gained international prominence during the 1990s, when Japanese Pop art gained worldwide notice along with the work of Japanese contemporary artists Takashi Murakami and Chiho Aoshima.

Nara's art seems to be populated with playful and innocent looking children and animals, yet upon closer inspection reveals a darker complexity and loneliness to the characters. This simultaneity of cuteness and menacing has been a key factor in Nara's work and is demonstrated effectively *White Ghost*. At over 12 feet tall, this young girl with dog-like facial features towers above us and acts as a symbolic guard to the sculpture park. This is due in part by Nara's intentional referencing of the traditional Japanese figures known as Komainu, mythical lion-like animal statues that are commonly placed at entrances to Buddhist temples, nobility residences, and private homes to ward off evil spirits.

Yoshitomo Nara's work was first presented to Des Moines in the Art Center's exhibition *Almost Warm and Fuzzy: Childhood and Contemporary Art* in 2001. Since then, he has had nearly 40 solo exhibitions around the world. The addition of this work to the Pappajohn Sculpture Park in the spring of 2011 is the first piece by the artist to join the Art Center's collection.

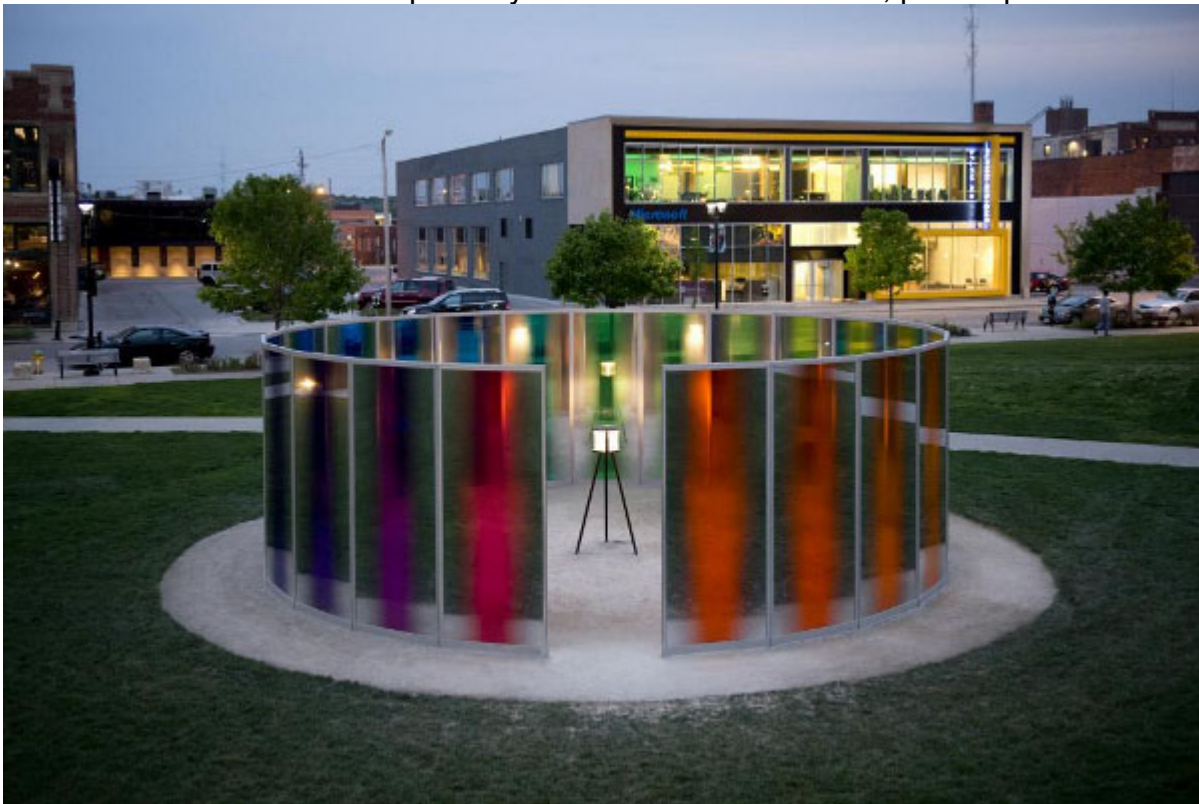


Olafur Eliasson

Stop 123

Jeff Fleming: Commissioned for the Pappajohn Sculpture Park in downtown Des Moines, Olafur Eliasson's *panoramic awareness pavilion* is a circle of colored glass illuminated by a lantern in the center. In this work, like his body of work as a whole, the artist uses the elements that make up our physical world and our perception of it, such as light, air, and space, to provide a contemplative and sensory experience for the viewer. The pavilion brings together a number of ideas in Eliasson's art that he has wanted to connect for a long time. It is a light sculpture, simple and poetic, and that would be enough, but perhaps most significantly, the lantern also functions as a positioning light, guiding the viewer through the park like a lighthouse by the ocean.

To hear more about this sculpture by the artist Olafur Eliasson, please press 23.



The following recording is by artist Olafur Eliasson about his sculpture, *panoramic awareness pavilion*.
Stop 23

My name is Olafur Eliasson. The *panoramic awareness pavilion* was made in the same sense that you put a garden pavilion or folie inside of a park or park-like green area. In the traditional English gardens, you would have tucked away or hidden away these pavilions in which a different type of behavior was encouraged. You typically in the main house. In the front end of the garden, you would have a structured or cultivated behavior that the bourgeoisie and how they would have parties and so on, but in the back of the garden you would have a little fun house or lust house or pavilion.

The word folie really comes from la folie in France meaning the fool. This was a place in which you could maybe consider yourself somebody who could act a little bit like a fool or reconsider the rules under which we constantly organize our behavior. So, thinking about how we do things, what does it mean to do things in certain ways. Maybe something to do is to reconsider the rules, the contracts, the social contracts, the social control in which we also live.

So, a sculpture garden and walking through a park is also a way of reinvestigating what is my life based on, what is the qualities in my life, what is the qualities in our society, what type of space cater for reconsidering and upgrading the qualities in the action, not just in theory or not just as an idea or dogma, but something that we can actually feel, something we can experience, something emotional, something which is about the relationship with other people.

So a pavilion is a space in which people can go in and experience colors, reflections, almost like a little kaleidoscope, or a little lighthouse, or a structure that encourages your fantasy is as much a pavilion to celebrate the fact that we should also see that our behavior, our experiences, our ways of seeing things could use a little reconsideration. Maybe we should see the world in other ways. Maybe we should see our self in the world in another way. This has great potential I think. It has potential for liberating yourself, or reconsidering how you live, reconsidering what is actually the way you want to execute the values you have in your life into the way you are living.

Yayoi Kusama

Stop 124

I'm Des Moines Art Center Curator Laura Burkhalter here to talk about Yayoi Kusama's *Pumpkin L*, a bronze made in 2014.

Pumpkins have appeared in Kusama's art since she was a child in 1940s Japan. Her family owned a seed farm, and grew pumpkins and other gourds as crops. Since then she has made them in paintings and sculpture, and in various sized and colors. All of them are covered in her signature polka dots, an obsessive pattern that appears in almost all of her art.

Kusama sees the pumpkin as having a radiant energy, and a symbol of growth and fertility. This is close to our American associations with pumpkins, making us think of fall and Halloween. These thoughts make this work seem familiar and safe, but like many of Kusama's works *Pumpkin L* also has a surreal quality that is a little menacing. Standing in front of one 8ft pumpkin may be fine, but if you found yourself in a patch of them it would likely be terrifying - like Alice in Wonderland or being in a land of giants. This mix of playful and dark is common in Kusama's work, and I think part of what makes it so fascinating.



Ai Weiwei

Stop 125

I am Jeff Fleming, director of the Des Moines Art Center. You are looking at *Iron Tree Trunk* by Ai Weiwei. Ai is considered by many to be one of the most significant artists working today. Ai draws on current global politics, Chinese culture, human rights, and more to push the definition of art into new realms. He is committed, as an artist, to effecting social change.

This work is a huge, life-sized cast of a tree from the Jiangxi province of China. It refers to the tradition of contemplating rock and landscapes in Chinese culture. Ai's use of iron also refers to the tumultuous period in Chinese history called "The Great Leap Forward," when families were encouraged to make steel in their homes to help industrialize the country. Most of it became unusable "pig iron" as the ability to make iron in a home setting was problematic. The trees were used as fuel for the backyard furnaces to meet government quotas and resulted in a treeless landscape. This tree exemplifies then the tension between industrial and cultural China, a recurring theme in Ai's work.

He constantly highlights the relationship between nature and the man-made. He explores the idea of art as an active principle of the possible transformation of things.

This work is sited near the natural trees now in the park and in relationship to two other sculptures of steel and cast iron nearby.



Robert Indiana

Stop 126

Jill Featherstone: The following audio was produced by Lu Olkowski has been shared with the Des Moines Art Center courtesy of the Association for Public Art, Philadelphia. It was recorded in 2010 as part of their Museum Without Walls AUDIO program and features an edited conversation with the artist himself, Robert Indiana who died in 2018, speaking with writer Adrian Dannatt about Indiana's LOVE body of work. Listeners will note that the color described in the Philadelphia version, which was created in 1976 and is owned by the City of Philadelphia, is different from the version in the Pappajohn Sculpture Park, which doesn't include green. While this variation in color has a slightly different aesthetic, the point is for listeners to carry forward the graphic and pop culture influences on this project as a whole.

Robert Indiana: All my work is autobiographical. In some way it is connected with my, with my, own life you see.

RI: I am Robert Indiana and this is my LOVE sculpture.

Adrian Dannatt: And I'm Adrian Dannatt, and I'm a writer who's written a great deal about Robert Indiana, obviously about the LOVE sculpture, or the LOVE project as one should really call it, because there is so much more than a sculpture.

AD: The sculpture that we're looking at here in Philadelphia is part of a worldwide project in a whole variety of media. From the poem that he wrote as a young man, through paintings.

RI: And there are thousands of them.

AD: Through t-shirts. Through prints. And through sculptures in every different language.

RI: All over the world.

RI: I used to work for the *Indianapolis Star*, a newspaper, and I was very close to the composing room. I set my poems in lead type myself, so that my work is very typographic.

AD: And of course the great innovation, it was the tilting of the letter O onto this diagonal.

RI: It gives four letters a little bit of dynamism.

AD: It was this diagonal that turns the word into really what is a perfect square.

RI: Only a hundred times more dynamic. There's nothing as dumb as an O at attention, I mean, you know.

AD: Although many things from his childhood, as with many artists, things from their childhood that artists are hardly aware of, which then later emerge.

RI: The LOVES all come from the fact that my father worked for Phillips 66.

AD: The gas company.

RI: My mother would drive my father to work and pick him up. We would pass the Phillips 66 station with a huge circular sign in the sky. The gas pumps were red and green. The uniforms were red and green. The oil cans were red and green. And so it's the red and green of the Phillips 66 sign against the blue sky, why the first LOVE was red, blue, and green.

AD: He realized the potency and the power of colors, especially colors put together clashing and combining. So it has this great drama to it. The snap, the crack, and the pop of a classic pop icon.

AD: The poem that he wrote in 1955, which is really the inspiration for this work that comes a more than a decade later, which is quite straightforwardly entitled, *When the Word is Love*.

RI: Give it feeling. Give it feeling.

AD: And it goes like this.

RI: Do it slowly.

AD: Dent the head
With the word.
See the lettered scar
On the skull.
On the bone
(in the beginning)
The straight line,
Wherefrom the rounding
Circle is beget,
But on our tongues (audio fades out, but poem actually continues)

AD: It's almost a description of the geometrical elements that make up the physical composition of the word love. It's very curious because it's almost he's unconscious of the fact this idea was germinating. That he expressed it as a young man, in a poem of all things.

RI: I consider LOVE a one sentence poem.

AD: And his dream is to have these LOVE sculptures in every city in the world. He wants this message to be absolutely universal.

RI: It would be my intention that, ah, everybody should have love. And there are a lot of people in the work, you know.

<laughter>



Huma Bhabha

Stop 127

This is Jeff Fleming retired John and Mary Pappajohn Director of the Des Moines Arts Center. You are looking at Huma Bhabha's *Even Stones Have Eyes*, a 12-foot-tall bronze sculpture created for this park in 2023. Huma Bhabha is a Pakistani American artist and she draws from her home region; she speaks of displacement and disillusionment. She even has referred to the cities in her region as looking like archaeological digs because of war, and that's apparent when you see this figure. It is a monumentalized giant, it has a missing arm, it has a peg leg, it is very rough and ready and she draws from a variety of sources both ancient and contemporary—for example, she looks at perhaps anime and manga, she speaks to the film *The Day the Earth Stood Still* from 1951 in the aesthetics that that presented. But she also looks at ancient Greek sculptures perhaps Egyptian sculptures, paleolithic sculptures and that form of movement or lack of movement that is apparent in this work. You'll also notice it has two or three faces facing forward and facing back which references the Roman God Janus. And the Roman God Janus was a God of dualities, of coming and going, of life and death and I think that's particularly apparent and appropriate for this work because we don't know if this work is the victim or is the aggressor.



Conclusion

Stop 1001

Whether you've joined us for the entire tour or just a few stops, I hope you've gained an enhanced appreciation for the artwork that comprises the Pappajohn Sculpture Park.

If you'd like to learn more about the Des Moines Art Center, the Pappajohn Sculpture Park, and unique art events, please visit our website at www.desmoinesartcenter.org.