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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Muscatine Art Center | Melanie Alexander, Director | 563-263-8282 | muscatineartcenter.org

HISTORIC MUSSER-McCOLM HOME RENOVATION COMPLETED

Public reopening celebration is planned for June 1 at Muscatine Art Center



MUSCATINE, Iowa – After more than a year of renovations, the historic Musser-McColm House at the Muscatine Art Center is reopening, and the public is invited to celebrate from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 1. A ribbon cutting will take place at 3:30 p.m. on the second floor of the historic house.

While contractors replaced HVAC equipment, installed a geothermal field, repaired and replaced windows, and upgraded electrical systems during the renovations, the staff at the Muscatine Art Center was busy introducing several new features into the historic home. Visitors to the mansion will now be able to learn about the history of the house and the family through a touchscreen video and explore the collection with two new touchscreen kiosks.

“Visitors often want details about the artwork and artifacts on view in the historic house, but the look of the historic house is lessened by covering the walls in labels,” Melanie Alexander,



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Muscatine Art Center director, said. “Technology is putting information at the fingertips of visitors who can pick and choose the objects that are of the most interest to them.”

Changes on the second floor of the historic house include new art installations in the central hall.

“The current installation features portraits from the permanent collection,” Alexander said. “We put in a wall hanging system which will enable us to more regularly rotate artwork while minimalizing damage to the plaster walls.”

Three rooms on the second floor feature a collection of spring motor phonographs on loan from Brian Walter. Exhibitions in these rooms will change with the phonograph exhibition on view through July 30, 2017.

MUSCATINE

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The former master bedroom has been transformed into a display room for the pattern and art glass collection. A series of cases designed by Pearl City Woodworks features top to bottom displays of the glass collection. Be sure to come back often as the individual glass objects will also rotate periodically.

“One of the most significant changes in the historic house is the addition of the ‘Learn to Look’ family gallery,” Alexander said. “For many years, the staff and board has discussed ways to make the facility more family-friendly.”

The gallery features a wide variety of hands-on activities, children’s books, games, and toys. Muscatine Art Center Program Coordinator Teresa Stenstrup describes the room as “a space where children can experience the collection in a fun and inviting way.”

“Kids can be kids in the room, and their parents or grandparents can use the activities to engage in play and spark conversation,” Stenstrup said.

The Muscatine Art Center received many grants to make the 2016-2017 projects possible. The Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust awarded \$360,000 to cover a portion of the HVAC upgrades and to fund many of the improvements to the historic house, including the addition of the “Learn to



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Look” family gallery. The State Historical Society of Iowa awarded a Historic Resource Development grant of \$9,375 for the touchscreen kiosks, the Early American Pattern Glass Society provided a grant of \$2,500 for the display cases that are home to the glass collection, and the Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine granted \$1,800 to enable repair work in the organ pipe room. The City of Muscatine’s 2016 bond issue covered the largest portion of the HVAC project.

The project is expected to go before City Council in June 2017 for closeout of the renovation process.

The celebration on June 1 is a family-friendly event. Free art projects for the children will be offered as well as free hot dogs and other treats. Brian Walter will also be on hand to provide demonstrations of his historic phonographs. All are invited to explore the new installations, new technology features, and new hands-on activities, as well as the exhibitions and historic Japanese Garden.

The Muscatine Art Center is located at 1314 Mulberry Avenue in Muscatine, Iowa. Hours are Tuesday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Thursday evenings until 7:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Admission is free. Donations are appreciated. Visit www.muscatineartcenter.org for more information about programs and events and to download a class brochure.