

PRESS RELEASE

MUSCATINE ART CENTER

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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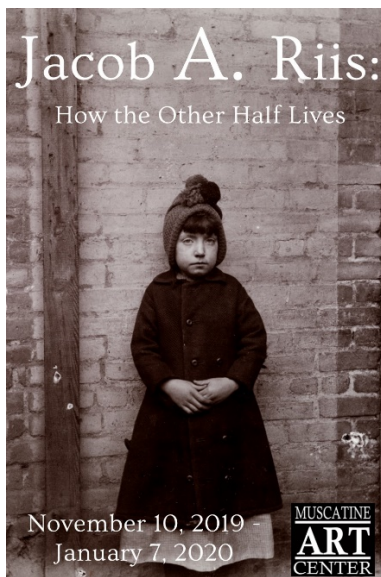
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER 12, 2019

NEW EXHIBITIONS OPEN AT MUSCATINE ART CENTER

National Endowment for the Humanities exhibition comes to Muscatine

MUSCATINE, Iowa - Photography will be featured throughout the Muscatine Art Center from November 10, 2019, through January 7, 2020 as the Center hosts the National Endowment for the Humanities “On the Road” exhibition, “Jacob A. Riis: How the Other Half Lives.”



Jacob Riis (1849–1914) was a pioneering newspaper reporter and social reformer in New York at the turn of the 20th century. His then-novel idea of using photographs of the city’s slums to illustrate the plight of impoverished residents established Riis as a forerunner of modern photojournalism. The exhibition features photographs by Riis and his contemporaries, as well as his handwritten journals and personal correspondence.

While Riis was a Danish-born immigrant using photography to capture daily life in New York City, Oscar Grossheim, who was born in Muscatine to Prussian immigrant parents, used the camera to build a successful studio photography business.

Grossheim also documented the experiences of Muscatine area families and children, sometimes taking candid images while fully staging others. The exhibition, “Perspectives on Childhood,” features nearly 80 photographs by Oscar Grossheim, primarily from the collection of Musser Public Library.



The Muscatine Art Center received a grant from Humanities Iowa to hire a consultant to assist with research and writing for the “Perspectives on Childhood” exhibition. Jill Heinrich, Professor of Education at Cornell College, contributed essays covering topics such as changes in parenting, education, and child labor. “Perspectives on Childhood” looks more closely at conditions in Iowa as compared to the experiences of growing up impoverished in New York City as captured by Jacob Riis.

In November, the Muscatine Art Center will also present, “Real and Imagined: Perspectives on Place,” a private lender’s fine art photography collection exploring the built environment. This exhibition is featured in the Central Hall on the second floor of the historic house and contains works created between 1900 and 2000 by both American and international photographers. “Real and Imagined” will be on view through March 8, 2020. In addition, the Great River Camera Club is celebrating its 40th anniversary with a display of works by 10 different local photographers.

While the photography exhibitions complement the “Jacob Riis” exhibition, a number of public programs will dive into the social concerns of the time period in which Riis lived.

Helen Lewis portrayed Jane Addams for the program, “Voicing a Cause, Voicing a Self: Jane Addams at Hull House,” on November 9 in the Music Room. Addams was a prominent reformer and advocate for the needs of impoverished immigrants, exploited laborers, youth criminals, and war victims. Through her Chicago settlement house, “Hull House,” Addams, along with her colleagues, worked to return dignity to the individuals and groups she helped. This Humanities Iowa Speakers Bureau presentation was done in period costume. Lewis teaches English and Humanities courses at Western Iowa Tech Community College and portrays Jane Addams for the Great Plains Chautauqua Society, Inc.



The American Magic Lantern Theater Company will use magic lantern “technology” to present a free holiday show for the public at 7:30 p.m. on November 22 in the Central Middle School Auditorium. The magic lantern show is appropriate for children ages six and up. Jacob Riis gave his first lantern slide lecture (a precursor to today’s digital presentations) featuring his photographs in 1888. He captivated audiences with stories of his experiences and began to tour the United States delivering lectures, often in a crusade to advocate and bring about changes for the marginalized.

Adam Lindquist will portray Teddy Roosevelt at 2:30 p.m. on December 8 at the Muscatine Art Center, following the annual Sunday with Santa event. Riis had a close friendship with Theodore Roosevelt who was once Police Commissioner of New York City. Lindquist’s costumed presentation is free of charge and is appropriate for children in elementary school and up as well as adult audiences.



The free humanities programs presented in connection with the Riis exhibition are funded in part by grants from the Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine and the Howe Foundation. The Riis exhibition is made possible by the National Endowment for the Humanities and is adapted from the exhibition, “Jacob A. Riis: Revealing New York’s Other Half,” organized by the Museum of the City of New York. The exhibition was curated by Bonnie Yochelson and co-presented by the Library of Congress. It was made possible with major grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Terra Foundation for American Arts, as well as support from D. Euan and Merete Baird, The Malkin Fund, Ronay and Richard L. Menschel, Queen Margrethe and Prince Henrick’s Foundation, C. Flemming and Judy Heilmann, Kan and Lotte Leschly, The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, and the John L. Loeb Jr. Foundation. It was adapted and toured for NEH on the Road by Mid-America Arts Alliance.



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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.