
PRESS RELEASE

MUSCATINE ART CENTER

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SEVERAL INFORMATIVE EXHIBITS ON DISPLAY AT ART CENTER

*“Till Death: Wedding and Mourning Traditions” among opening exhibits;
visitors asked to follow specific guidelines while visiting the Art Center*

MUSCATINE, Iowa - The opening of the exhibition, *“Till Death: Wedding and Mourning Traditions,”* has been anticipated by Muscatine Art Center insiders for the last several years. Now, the exhibition will be the first on view following the closure of the Muscatine Art Center for the past several months, and the staff hopes that the stunning historic gowns will bring visitors back to the Art Center.

The exhibition spotlights how lowans exchanged vows and laid to rest their loved ones, and how those customs changed over time. Visitors may be surprised to discover wedding dresses made in a variety of colors and fabrics such as wool, crepe, silk, satin, and even cotton. Some are heavily embellished while others are plain – both styles dictated by the trends of the day and the wearer’s wealth and status.

“The last few months have made us question what happens if we cannot gather together to celebrate a marriage or mark the passing of someone we cherish,” Melanie Alexander, Muscatine Art Center Director, said. “The traditions evolved over time, as did the fashion, but connecting with others, especially during times of great joy and deep sorrow, is part of our humanity.”



The earliest dress in the exhibition was worn by Sarah Filbert when she wed Richard Musser on September 11, 1849. The two-piece dress consists of a green silk-satin bodice and skirt that accommodates a bustle. Another early gown is a 'half-mourning' dress of orange and blue, iridescent, silk jacquard worn by a member of the Marion Vance Family.

In addition to dress descriptions, information is provided on the wearers such as the bride and groom or mourner.

One highlight of the exhibit is the Stevens collection of wedding gowns that weaves together the stories of five couples. Gowns in this collection date from 1869, 1884, 1917, 1918, and 1943. The 1943 gown was worn by Lorraine Willis when she wed John Clay Stevens on November 6, 1943, at Trinity Episcopal Church in Muscatine. The marriage took place shortly before John's deployment on Christmas Eve of 1943. John wore his military jacket for the ceremony, and the jacket is on view in the exhibition.

Other exhibitions at the Muscatine Art Center include a display of pearl button artifacts in the local history room, the metal artwork of Jeff Weikert, and the traveling exhibition, "*Artists of Fairfield and Southeast Iowa.*"

Weikert's "*A Walk in the Marsh*" exhibition will be on view through August 16, 2020. Weikert's family owned a scrapyard where he worked for over 20 years. He also lives above a public hunting marsh and has been a longtime volunteer at Port Louisa Wildlife Refuge. He combined his experience with metal and his love of the outdoors to create the sculptures that will be on view at the Muscatine Art Center.

Those who plan to visit the Muscatine Art Center in June should be aware of the reduced hours and guidelines. Once the facility





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reopens on Tuesday, June 9, visitor hours will be from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and from 1 to 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Reduced hours will provide staff with time to thoroughly sanitize the building.

Visitors are asked to wear a mask, sanitize their hands upon entering the building (hand sanitizer) is provided, practice physical distancing of six feet, and follow instructions given by staff who monitor the number of visitors in each space and restrict movement into spaces that have reached capacity.

The main entrance (from Mulberry Avenue under the porte-cochere) is to be used by all visitors except those in wheelchairs or with mobility concerns. Those with mobility concerns may contact the Muscatine Art Center at 563-263-8282 to be admitted through the Stanley Gallery from the lower level parking lot (off of Cedar Street).

The Muscatine Art Center is located at 1314 Mulberry Avenue in Muscatine, Iowa. Call 563-263-8282 for up-to-date details or visit www.muscatineartcenter.org for more information about programs and events.