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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ART CENTER TO DEDICATE SCULPTURE ON SEPTEMBER 9

Stanley legacy to the arts and dance to be honored during ceremony



MUSCATINE, Iowa - Monitoring the progress of the sculpture installation and landscape project at the Muscatine Art Center has become a minor pastime this summer for those who regularly drive down Mulberry Avenue. Site preparation began in May but the creation of the sculpture itself dates back to summer of 2018. That is when sculptor David Zahn shared his images for the piece titled “Expressive Spirit.”

With the project nearly complete, a dedication ceremony for the sculpture has been scheduled for September 9 with a ribbon cutting at 4:15 p.m. followed by a performance from *Step Afrika!* at 4:30 p.m.

The Board of Trustees and staff of the Muscatine Art Center was interested in making use of the property at 1402 Mulberry that was purchased by the Art Center in October 2008, and was the



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site of the Henry and Ella Jayne home. That home was moved to Iowa Avenue in 2010. The grassy area in the front portion of the property was in rough condition, and two large beech trees that guarded the entrance to the property were removed in 2018 ... one due to storm damage and the other for safety reasons.

The staff and board also wanted a project that would help draw attention to the museum since the historic Musser-McColm house that is part of the Art Center complex blends in with the other homes in the residential neighborhood.

A bequest from the Mary Jo Stanley estate provided the necessary funds to move forward with a project that would honor Mary Jo and Richard “Dick” Stanley, and highlight the historic nature of the Art Center complex.

Muscatine Art Center staff had been familiar with Zahn’s work for several years, and his maquette (a small preliminary model or sketch) of the dancing figure struck a chord with many. The staff, board, members of the Advisory Commission for the Muscatine Art Center Support Foundation Fund, and Stanley family members felt the piece connected Mary Jo’s love for visual arts with her love for performing arts.

Mary Jo Stanley served as the chairperson for the Muscatine Art Center Support Foundation for 26 years, and all involved in the development of the project wanted to recognize not just the financial gift but also her leadership through the decades. The plaque for the sculpture describes Mary Jo as “an enthusiastic celebrator of the arts and their creators.”

Both Mary Jo, and her husband, Richard “Dick” Stanley, passed away in 2017.

“Together, the two worked to improve the lives of others, whether through the arts, humanitarian efforts, or social service,” Muscatine Art Center Director Melanie Alexander said. “Mary Jo and Dick, like his parents, Max and Betty Stanley, have left a lasting legacy to the State of Iowa and the citizens of Muscatine.”



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Zahn made use of both abstract and realistic elements in designing the piece around the theme of celebrating the arts. Abstract forms are at the bottom, and, as your eye is drawn upwards, the human figure emerges becoming more realistic.

“My goal was to create an image that was dynamic, thought provoking, and interesting to look at from all angles,” Zahn explained. “I feel that the finished sculpture is positive, hopeful, and forward looking. I am so glad the Muscatine Art Center gave me the chance to create this sculpture.”

The University of Iowa’s Hancher Auditorium arranged the *Step Afrika!* performance that will be held on the grounds of the Muscatine Art Center. *Step Afrika!* blends percussive dance styles practiced by historically African American fraternities and sororities, traditional African dances, and an array of contemporary dance and art forms.

Mary Jo, as a lover of dance, would have enjoyed this short performance.

“Mary Jo Stanley was a very special friend who loved the performing and visual arts,” Chuck Swanson, Executive Director of Hancher Auditorium, said. “She personally enjoyed the arts, but she also valued the impact that the arts have on transforming the lives of other people. *Step Afrika!* is a company Mary Jo would have embraced, and I am so excited they will be helping to celebrate her memory.”

The ribbon cutting and *Step Afrika!* performance is free of charge. Guests are welcome to bring a blanket or lawn chairs and are encouraged to wear a mask. Following the performance, guests may visit with sculptor, David Zahn.

The Muscatine Art Center is located at 1314 Mulberry Avenue in Muscatine, Iowa. Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and 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.



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