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TOP STORY

## Muscatine Art Center receives \$4,200 grant from Iowa Dept. of Cultural Affairs

Andrea Grubaugh

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The Muscatine Art Center will use a \$4,200 grant to fund an upcoming exhibit on the influence of Japanese culture in the Midwest and focus on the Center's Japanese-style garden.

PHOTOS COURTESY MUSCATINE ART CENTER

Andrea Grubaugh

**M**USCATINE — The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs announced this past week it will fund 31 different projects across the state through its Humanities Project Grants.

The Muscatine Art Center was awarded \$4,200 to be put toward an upcoming exhibit on the influence of Japanese culture in the Midwest from the 1890s to the 1930s.

According to Art Center Director Melanie Alexander, the money provided through the grant will primarily be used to cover the cost to continuing to work with Beth Cody, author of the book “Iowa Gardens of the Past.”

Through Cody’s help and extended research, the Art Center staff will place a more historical context on its already established Japanese-style garden. The exhibition will highlight objects owned by Laura Musser McColm that were inspired by Japanese culture, with Cody working alongside the staff to develop interpretive text panels and other exhibition text.

“The staff is excited to continue the partnership with Cody, who has already provided eight papers exploring previously unanswered questions about Laura Musser McColm’s Japanese Garden installed in 1930 and helping us understand how Americans, including those in the Midwest, came to appreciate Japanese design in the late 1800s and early 1900s,” Alexander said.

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Alexander added that the Muscatine Art Center team had wanted to help share Cody’s research while also spotlighting its Japanese garden. The team thought that an exhibition such as this one would be able to do just that. The exhibition will also partially tie into the 2022 Historic Landscape Preservation Plan, a project that’s focused on returning the garden’s historical features through archeological work, which will begin in March 2022.

The “Influence of Japanese culture in the Midwest” exhibition will open on Sept. 3, 2022, on the top floor of the Stanley Gallery and will be on view until Oct. 23, 2022.

Through this grant, the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs focuses on supporting public humanities projects, especially those that can educate or encourage conversation or exploration. Grants such as this one are often awarded to historical sites, museums, colleges, libraries, and organizations that specifically focus on culture or the arts.

Department Director Chris Kramer said in a news release, “We’re grateful for the opportunity to award these funds for innovative programs that strengthen communities and deepen interdisciplinary learning for students across the state.”

The 31 projects selected for this year’s grant cycle span 17 different cities in Iowa. In total, the department awarded a total of \$364,769 in grants during this most recent cycle.

**Andrea Grubaugh**

Reporter