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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Traveling Exhibit Explores Representation Using Art and Local History

2/11/2022 – In honor of Black History Month, the Hearst Center presents *Our Town: Reclaiming the Narrative*. The exhibition, opening to the public on Thursday, February 17 and running through March 27, is curated by Dr. Lenore Metrick-Chen, professor of art and cultural history at Drake University. The exhibition invites viewers to consider local and national histories presented through historical photographs and newspaper articles that tell stories—often unknown—of Black history in Iowa.

The Hearst invites the public to an opening reception on Friday, February 25 from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Dr. Metrick-Chen will speak at 5:30 p.m.

The show, as imagined for the Hearst Center, offers a “gallery within a gallery” of artworks on loan from the Waterloo Center for the Arts, the Grinnell College Museum of Art, and the UNI Gallery of Art, as well as several national galleries and individual artists. Artists include Kara Walker, Dread Scott, Lavern Madlock, Madai Taylor, and others. The artworks are presented to reclaim and illustrate historic narratives around race. Some artworks are shown in pairs, others are coupled with historic artifacts.

Since 2019, the exhibition has traveled to many venues across Iowa, including schools, art museums, gymnasiums and Juneteenth celebrations throughout Des Moines, Fort Dodge and Burlington, and as part of annual community events such as “I’ll Make Me a World” and the NAACP’s Kwanza celebration, both held in Des Moines. As the installation moves, it gathers stories (via recorded or filmed interviews), artwork, and ephemera from the lives of local, often unsung, community builders.

Our Town is focused on the theme of individual agency and community. “Agency is created from necessity and often motivated by frustration,” explains Metrick-Chen. “But agency signifies that there is a choice. It pertains to our ability to choose our actions—or non-actions—which is the foundation for all freedom.”

Additional exhibition-related programming announcements will be made at thehearst.org and on Facebook. *Our Town: Reclaiming the Narrative* and related programs are made possible in part through funding from the Iowa Arts Council Cultural Leadership Partners program, the Walter and Karla Goldschmidt Foundation, the Berg Fund at the Cedar Falls Community Foundation, and Friends of the Hearst.

Related Programming

Film Screening and Discussion: *Black Art in the Absence of Light*
Wednesday, March 9 at 6:00-8:00 p.m.

In collaboration with the UNI Black Student Union's 50 Year Anniversary Celebration, the Hearst will host a screening of *Black Art In the Absence of Light*, a film about the groundbreaking exhibition, *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, curated by the late African American artist and scholar David Driskell in 1976. Held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, this pioneering exhibit featured more than 200 works of art by 63 artists and cemented the essential contributions of Black artists in America in the 19th and 20th centuries. A post-screening discussion will be led by Dr. Elizabeth Sutton, professor of art history at the University of Northern Iowa.

About the Hearst Center for the Arts

The Hearst Center for the Arts is free and open to the public. We are located at 304 West Seerley Boulevard in Cedar Falls. More information and program listings, visit thehearst.org, call (319) 273-8641, or follow us on Facebook.

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