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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Des Moines Art Center major exhibition, *Monument Valley*, opens to the public October 5**

*The ambitious contemporary art exhibition calls into question the complicated cultural legacy of the American West.*

**DES MOINES, IOWA (September 2019)** – On October 5, 2019, the Des Moines Art Center will open *Monument Valley*, a group exhibition that questions and deconstructs the imagery and mythology of the American West, confronting how “Wild West” concepts prevalent in our country’s past and popular culture continue to define American identity into the present day.

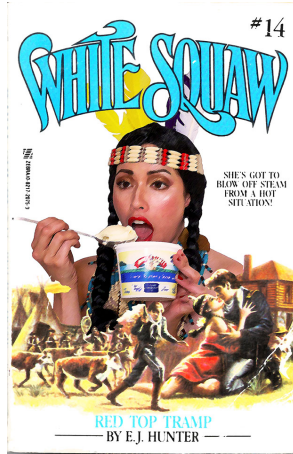
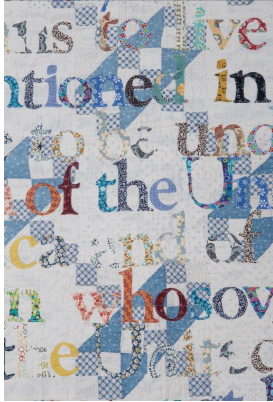
Taking its title from the geologic formation featured in many Hollywood westerns, *Monument Valley* presents the work of 12 artists from various cultural backgrounds whose work raises questions about how false histories and stereotypical tropes continue to inform the political debates and societal concerns of contemporary life. The exhibition runs through January 12, 2020 in the Art Center’s Anna K. Meredith Gallery and the Pamela Bass-Bookey and Harry Bookey Gallery. The exhibition is organized by Curator Laura Burkhalter.

“(Through my research) I started noticing a lot of contemporary artists who were playing around with Western imagery... most were women, artists of color and others who gave a new version,” Burkhalter said. “This exhibition challenges the image many of us grew up with.”

While Burkhalter acknowledges that some things in the show will potentially make people uncomfortable, “more importantly, the art is wonderful, and these artists have a lot to say. It’s about broadening the story, making sure the art was challenging, and not just glamorizing or demonizing what has gone before.”

The artists brought together for *Monument Valley* are Indigenous, Black, white, Latinx, and multiracial, from multiple regions of North America, and represent various cultural backgrounds and identities. This exhibition aspires to make room in the museum for narratives other than those of the dominant culture with new stories and new ways to see history.

A wide range of media will be represented, including painting, photography, fiber work, and video. Artists featured in the exhibition include Gina Adams, Doug Aitken, Jeremiah Ariaz, Angela Ellsworth, Kahlil Joseph, John Jota Leñños, Kent Monkman, Anja Niemi, Catherine Opie, Sarah Sense, Wendy Red Star, and Jordan Weber. Much of the exhibition’s programming centers around the art and experience of contemporary Indigenous artists.



Captions

Left:

Gina Adams (American/Ojibwe/Irish, Lithuanian descent, born 1965)

*Treaty with the Choctow 1786*, 2019 (detail)

Antique quilt with hand-cut calico letters

79 x 72 inches

Work and image courtesy of the artist and Accola Griefen Fine Art, Brooklyn

Photo: Aaron Paden

Center:

Wendy Red Star (Apsáalooke/Crow, born 1981)

*Red Top Tramp #14*

Digital print from the "White Squaw" Series, 2014

18 x 11 inches

Work and image courtesy of the artist

Right:

Angela Ellsworth (American, born 1964)

*Seer Bonnet XIX (Flora Ann)*, 2011

24,182 pearl corsage pins, fabric, steel, wood

60 x 13 x 16 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Lisa Sette Gallery

**RELATED PROGRAMS**

**Exhibition Opening + Celebration**

Friday, October 4 / 6 – 8 pm

Complimentary beverages and hors d'oeuvres

**\*RSVP encouraged**

Presented by the Art Center's member affiliate group, Print Club



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**Artist Residency with Gina Adams: Letter Cutting for *Broken Treaty Quilts***

Thursday, October 10 / 1 – 5 pm  
Friday, October 11 / 11 am – 4 pm (Break noon – 1 pm)  
Saturday, October 12 / 10 am – 4 pm (Break 1 – 3 pm)  
I. M. Pei building and courtyard

Guests are encouraged to drop in to speak with artist Gina Adams and cut letters for *Broken Treaty Quilts*. **This residency in the galleries is held in honor and celebration of Indigenous Peoples' Day on Monday, October 14.**

**Exhibition Talk + Artist Performance: Gina Adams, *Broken Treaty Quilts***

\*Thursday, October 10 / 6:30 pm  
\*Saturday, October 12 / 1:30 pm (repeat of October 10 event)  
Anna K. Meredith Gallery

**Western Perspectives Film + Discussion Series: Monument Valley / Levitt Auditorium**

These three films serve as a platform for questioning, history, race, and American identity in the Western genre.

Thursday, October 17 / 7 pm  
*The Rider, 2017*  
1 hour 44 minutes / Rated R  
Selected by Laura Burkhalter, Curator

Thursday, November 7 / 7 pm  
*100 Rifles, 1969*  
1 hour 50 minutes / Rated R  
Selected by Jordan Weber, Artist and Activist

Sunday, November 10 / 1:30 pm  
*The Searchers, 1956*  
1 hour 56 minutes / Rated PG  
Selected by Paul Albert Lacson, Associate Professor of History, Grinnell College

**Fingerman Lecture**

"Why Americans Should Unlearn Their History"  
Kevin Gover, Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian  
\*Sunday, October 27 / 1:30 pm / Levitt Auditorium

Americans have been taught a simple narrative of the history of Native Americans and our country. Contemporary scholarship shows that a richer and more inclusive story is ours for the taking, yet that bigger story has not entered the popular consciousness. Gover's lecture will implore us to fearlessly embrace the larger, messier, more complex truths of our history.

**Tandem Gallery Talk: "Contemporary Art and Public Lands"**

Laura Burkhalter, Curator and Abby Hade Terpstra, Donor Relations Director, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation  
Thursday, November 14 / 6:30 pm / Anna K. Meredith Gallery

### Panel Discussion

“Active Voice: Contemporary Art, Storytelling, and Advocacy”

Wendy Red Star, Artist; Ryan McMahon, Writer/Comedian/Activist; and Dr. Jordan Amirkhani, Art Historian/Critic

Moderated by Laura Burkhalter, Exhibition Curator

\*Thursday, November 21 / 7 pm / Levitt Auditorium

This program will explore identity, activism, storytelling and aesthetics in the work of contemporary Indigenous creators. Wendy Red Star will discuss her conceptual photography. Ryan McMahon will offer insight into creating a podcast that respectfully handles tragedy and turbulent social political issues. Dr. Jordan Amirkhani will discuss her writing on Red Star’s work as well as reflect on broader issues of intersectional feminism in contemporary art.

**Activism & Art Teen Weekend Workshop: Art & Racial Justice** / Guest Instructor: Wendy Red Star

\*November 22 - 24

**\*FREE reservations and RSVPs can be made at [desmoinesartcenter.org/calendar](http://desmoinesartcenter.org/calendar). An email confirmation will be sent shortly after a successful reservation.**

### Des Moines Art Center

Recognized by international art critics as a world-class museum in the heart of the Midwest, the Des Moines Art Center, an AAM-accredited institution, has amassed an important collection with a major emphasis on contemporary art. The collection’s overriding principle is a representation of artists from the 19th century to the present, each through a seminal work. This accounts for an impressive collection that ranges from Edward Hopper’s *Automat* to Jasper Johns’ *Tennyson*, Henri Matisse’s *Woman in White*, Georgia O’Keeffe’s *From the Lake No. 1*, Francis Bacon’s *Study after Velásquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, Bill Viola’s *Ascension*, and Cecily Brown’s *Half-Bind*.

The Art Center’s physical complex marries with the collection for a totally integrated experience. The collection is housed in three major buildings, each designed by a world-renowned architect—Eliel Saarinen, I. M. Pei, and Richard Meier. With the exception of special events, admission to the museum is free.

In September 2009, the John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park opened in Des Moines’ Western Gateway Park. Philanthropists John and Mary Pappajohn provided funding for and donated 31 sculptures by internationally acclaimed contemporary artists to the Des Moines Art Center. The collection of sculptures by such artists as Ai Weiwei, Louise Bourgeois, Deborah Butterfield, Willem de Kooning, Mark di Suvero, Olafur Eliasson, Keith Haring, Robert Indiana, Ellsworth Kelly, Yayoi Kusama, Jaume Plensa, Richard Serra, and Joel Shapiro is the most significant donation of artwork to the Art Center in a single gift in the museum’s history. The Pappajohn Sculpture Park is a collaboration of the Pappajohns, the City of Des Moines, the Des Moines Art Center, and numerous corporate and private donors.

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