

For Immediate Release

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Des Moines Art Center examines historic and cultural values placed on gold in *Alchemy: Transformations in Gold*

DES MOINES, IA (November 2016) On Saturday, February 11, 2017, the Des Moines Art Center will open *Alchemy: Transformations in Gold*, which runs through May 5, 2017.

Alchemy brings together a group of international artists whose work incorporates gold (or another metal disguised as gold). In each case, this precious material not only brings a sense of luxury to the work, but also ushers in connotations of the historic and cultural value various societies have placed on this rare element. As glamorous and sought after as gold may be, it is capable of suggesting complicated politics and potent symbolism. The works in *Alchemy* embrace both dark and light readings of this glittering metal. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalog.

The artists in the show are at the forefront of contemporary practice. **Teresa Margolles**, whose gilded fragment of a building destroyed in a catastrophic earthquake comments on commemoration and monuments of grief. **Zarina** constructs minimalist shapes in gold leaf, referencing architecture and contemplative spirituality. **Danh Vo** gilds cardboard refuse, reimagining a simple box as wall sculpture, with marks of use as well as golden reminders of Mexican history. **Luis Gisbert** combines gold chains and glittering stone into sparkling abstractions, referencing the decadence of rock 'n' roll culture as well as post-war abstract painting. **Lalla Essaydi** uses glittering bullet castings to create garments and backdrops that refer to Islamic visual culture, which she then works into large-scale staged photographs. **Rachel Sussman** will create a site-specific work for the Art Center's presentation of *Alchemy* filling a crack in the floor with gold resin in homage to the Japanese tradition of "Kintsukuroi" in which ceramics are repaired with gold. Related photographs by Sussman will also be in the exhibition. Also included in the show are **Olga de Amaral**, **James Lee Byars**, **Dorothy Cross**, **Don & Era Farnsworth**, **Laurent Grasso**, **Charles Lindsay**, **Los Carpinteros**, and **Shinji Turner-Yamamoto**.



See captions below



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Captions

Left:

Rachel Sussman (American, born 1975)
Study for Sidewalk Kintsukuroi, 2015
Photographs hand painted with enamel and gold dust
8 ½ x 11 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Center:

Danh Vo (Vietnamese, active Germany, born 1976)
Cuauhtémoc Moctezuma, 2013
Cardboard boxes with gold leaf
39 1/16 x 49 inches
Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections;
Purchased with funds from the Edmundson Art Foundation, Inc., 2016.4

Right:

Lalla Essaydi (Moroccan, born 1956)
Bullets Revisited #22, 2013
Chromogenic print mounted to aluminum with a UV protective laminate
48 x 60 inches
Courtesy of Edwynn Houk Gallery

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 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 have provided funding for and donated 28 sculptures by internationally acclaimed contemporary artists to the Des Moines Art Center. The collection of sculptures by such artists as Louise Bourgeois, Deborah Butterfield, Willem de Kooning, Olafur Eliasson, Keith Haring, Ellsworth Kelly, Jaume Plensa, Richard Serra, Joel Shapiro, and Mark di Suvero, 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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