

For Immediate Release

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New Yayoi Kusama sculpture takes center stage in downtown Des Moines at the John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park

Des Moines, IA (February 2018) – Philanthropists John and Mary Pappajohn have donated funds to the Des Moines Art Center for the purchase of a new sculpture, *Pumpkin (L)*, 2014, fabricated 2018, by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, soon to be installed in the John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park in downtown Des Moines.

Pumpkins are one of the artist's most beloved motifs. Both endearing and grotesque, the giant gourds have been a source of inspiration for the artist since her childhood, when she was surrounded by her family's seed nursery in prewar Japan. She sees pumpkins as representing growth, comfort, familiarity, protectiveness, nourishment, and whimsy. The element of dots, often seen in the artist's work, suggests the notion of infinity, repetition, and obsession. For the artist, pumpkins also represent a source of radiant energy. She has written, "Pumpkins bring about poetic peace in my mind. Pumpkins talk to me." Viewing the pumpkin as both humble and amusing, this whimsical vegetable comes to represent an alternative self-portrait of the artist.

Kusama is one of the most significant artists working today. At 88, she has been a working artist for 65 years. Currently, her five-city exhibition *Infinity Mirrors* is traveling North America to blockbuster attendance, and response from both the field and the public has been overwhelming. Requests for the Art Center's four Kusama works currently in the permanent collections are constantly requested for exhibitions at other institutions worldwide.



See caption below



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The Art Center is organizing a related exhibition, opening March 30, 2018, at the museum, 4700 Grand Avenue, Des Moines.

Caption:

Yayoi Kusama (Japanese, born 1929)

Pumpkin (L), 2014, fabricated 2018

Bronze

94 7/8 x 92 1/2 x 92 1/2 inches

Purchased with funds from John and Mary Pappajohn

Courtesy Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo/Singapore/Shanghai; David Zwirner, New York and Victoria Miro, London/Venice. © Yayoi Kusama.

John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park

The John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park is a 4.4-acre sculpture park in the heart of downtown Des Moines, built directly within a major crossroads of the urban grid. It is the largest such park in the United States, and features 29 works of art by internationally acclaimed artists, donated to the museum by John and Mary Pappajohn from their renowned collection of contemporary sculpture. Included in the park are works by Louise Bourgeois, Scott Burton, Deborah Butterfield, Anthony Caro, Tony Cragg, Willem de Kooning, Mark di Suvero, Olafur Eliasson, Barry Flanagan, Gary Hume, Ellsworth Kelly, Yayoi Kusama, Sol Lewitt, Yoshitomo Nara, Jaume Plensa, Martin Puryear, Ugo Rondinone, Richard Serra, Joel Shapiro, Judith Shea, Tony Smith, and William Tucker. The Pappajohns' gift is the most significant donation of artwork ever made in a single gift to the Art Center. The park is a collaboration of the Pappajohns, the City of Des Moines, the Des Moines Art Center, and numerous corporate and private donors.

The park is free and open to the public seven days a week from sunrise to midnight.

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 Velázquez'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.

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