Central Campus Walking Tour

About the Art on Campus Collection

Iowa State University is home to one of the largest campus public art programs in the United States. Over 2,500 public works of art make up the Art on Campus Collection and are located across campus in buildings, courtyards, open spaces, and classrooms. The Art on Campus Collection and Program, formalized in 1980, includes acquisition, care, and maintenance in addition to scholarship and educational programming.

Christian Petersen, pictured above, was a Danish-born American sculptor and professor at Iowa State 1934–1955. He was the first permanent artist-in–residence at a U.S. college or university and is known for his large collection of sculptures, bronzes and bas reliefs. Today, Morrill Hall holds the Christian Petersen Art Museum, and his work can be found all over Iowa State University’s campus. museums.iastate.edu

10) Marston Muses, Proudfoot and Bird
Each of the four Muses represents a division of engineering study offered in the early 1900’s. The first Muse, representing mining engineering, carries a lantern with a large block of ore and a pick at her feet. The second Muse signifies civil engineering by holding a level and sextant. The third Muse bears the tools needed for mechanical engineers. The final Muse is a representation of electrical engineering with a static producing ball in her right hand.

Commissioned by Iowa State College. In the Art on Campus Collection, University Museums, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. U.2011.472a-d

13) George Washington Carver, Christian Petersen
In 1949, Christian Petersen, Iowa State’s artist-in–residence, created a plaster sculpture of George Washington Carver. It depicts the scientist contemplating the peanut, for which he discovered many uses. Carver was the first African American to enroll at Iowa State College, becoming one of its most distinguished graduates.

The bronze casting was commissioned by the University Museums, and is a gift of John and Linda Dasher. In the Christian Petersen Art Collection, Art on Campus Collection, University Museums, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. U.99.18
1) The Zodiac, by William T. Proudfoot

Original to the building, which opened in September 1928, The Zodiac is one of the best-known traditions at Iowa State University. For nearly 100 years, students have been stepping around The Zodiac to avoid bad luck and the possibility of flunking their next test.

3) History of Dairying Mural, Christian Petersen

This mural, composed of six bas relief panels flanking a central fountain, depicts the history of the dairy industry in Iowa and America. The design is influenced by Grant Wood's Regionalist style, depicting images as flattened and simplistic, almost folk-like.

6) Marriage Ring, Christian Petersen

The circular basin of the pool represents a wedding ring and the valuable gems of the ring are symbolized by the three children, which Petersen considered the jewels of a marriage.

8) Left-Sided Angel, Stephen DeStaebler

Left-Sided Angel speaks of the potential of students and all of humanity, despite the ravages of time. His tribute is one of strength and hope, as well as a call to accountability. The sculpture reminds students that knowledge gained during their university experience is to be used responsibly.

12) Carom, Bruce White*

Commissioned by University Museums with funds from the College of Family and Consumer Sciences Alumni Association. In the Art on Campus Collection, University Museums, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. U2011.187

1) The Zodiac, by William T. Proudfoot

2) Bravo III, Bill Barrett*

3) History of Dairying Mural, Christian Petersen

4) Farm House Museum

5) Janus Agri Altar, Beverly Pepper*

6) Marriage Ring, Christian Petersen

7) Forward, William King*

8) Left-Sided Angel, Stephen DeStaebler

9) Morrill Hall

10) Marston Muses, Proudfoot and Bird

11) Jack Trice, Christopher Bennett*

12) Carom, Bruce White*

13) George Washington Carver, Christian Petersen

*Go to museums.iastate.edu to learn more