

news letter

Art is the Word: Text in Art
February 7 – May 17, 2026

How does one “read” a work of art? This idea takes on additional meaning in works of art that combine text and imagery. The works in this exhibition use text in myriad ways. For some artists they form a background; others play with their form and typography; some use text to hint at further symbolism; and for others, text functions as a didactic, labeling elements of the work. Each artist thoughtfully employs text in the creation of the finished work of art.

Interplay between text and imagery has existed for centuries (consider Egyptian hieroglyphics or medieval illuminated manuscripts), but it made its way into the fine art world in the early twentieth-century when modernist artists began to include carefully selected words and phrases from popular culture in their paintings and collages. These words served not just as titles or captions but as integral parts of the image itself. This idea took root and was recognized as an artistic genre with the emergence of conceptual art in the 1960s. Text and its inherent readability allowed artists to communicate ideas—whether philosophical, social, or political—and it also allowed for an aesthetic exploration of the form of letters and typography. Words are powerful tools. Artists recognized this power and utilized it within their work.

This exhibition explores the many unique ways text is incorporated into artworks drawn from the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art collection. They demonstrate the many different ways of engaging with text and its role as a form of communication, and they also consider how text might be used to actively engage the viewer.

—Julia Jessen, Curator of Collections and Exhibitions

This exhibition and accompanying educational programming have been made possible in part by a Program Support Grant from the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, members of the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, and contributors to the Museum's Annual Fund. Annual educational programming support has been provided in part by Transamerica.



Jesse James Sinclair, *Mile 198*, 2010, photograph, 29 7/8 x 34 inches, Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, museum purchase, Bertha Cowles Quarton Fund, 2011.044.



Len Davis, *A Thousand Words #9*, 2010, collage and graphite on newsprint on panel, 8 x 5 inches, Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, museum purchase, 2011.070.



Annette Lemieux, *Popular Wall Painting (after Ken)*, 1997, acrylic and tempera with graphite on graph paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches, Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, the Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection: Fifty Works for Fifty States, 2009.023.

From the Outside Looking In: Interior Spaces in Art **January 17 – May 3, 2026**

Interior space is imbued with meaning. Every day we spend much of our time in an interior space, and similarly, artists have represented these spaces for thousands of years. Beyond the details of the architecture or the physicality of the location, these works of art can also include psychological meaning and make reference to more complex concepts than the represented space may initially imply. Each of the works in this exhibition delves into the unique tension and charged atmosphere present in works of art depicting interior spaces.

Through the interiors of domestic spaces, businesses, and spiritual locations, artists explore how to create an interior space and what those spaces can reveal about those who inhabit them and the locations in which they reside. Questions of culture, identity, societal expectations, memory, and belonging may come to mind as one encounters the work in this exhibition.



Marvin D. Cone, *It Happened Here*, 1947-48, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches, Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, gift in memory of Thomas B. and Geraldine G. Powell, Anamosa, Iowa, 95.6.1.

The viewer may feel a sense of voyeurism as they peer into intimate spaces, ones in which objects indicate the details of everyday life, and inhabitants are caught mid-action or conversation. The uninhabited interior spaces can allow the viewer to imagine their own physical bodies in the space as well as their own emotional and intellectual responses to encountering the space. Each work presents a unique window into an entirely different interior space.

—Julia Jessen, Curator of Collections and Exhibitions

Elemental: Earth, Water, Air, and Fire **April 18, 2026- March 14, 2027**



The four elements—earth, water, air, and fire—have influenced culture, science, and art for centuries—at times, seen as an explanation for aspects of the material world, the forces of energy, and the attributes of human nature. From antiquity, these elements have been considered the most fundamental materials that comprised everything in the physical universe. Whether exploring the grounding pull of the earth, the fluid motion of water, the expansive movement of air, or the transformative energy of fire, artists continue to draw inspiration from these elements in their work, often reflecting an interest in both the physical and spiritual worlds.

This exhibition explores how these elements appear in works from the permanent collection of the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art. They are elements that make up the world around us, and thus, also play a huge role in many works of art. Together, these artworks demonstrate the continued power of these four basic elements.

—Julia Jessen, Curator of Collections and Exhibitions

Image Caption: Julia Kottal, *Underlit Clouds*, 2009, oil on canvas, 20 x 20 inches, Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, museum purchase, Bertha Cowles Quarton Fund with gift of the artist, 2010.071.

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Summer Camp 2026 – *Art is Elemental*



This summer our art camp is going to be so much fun! I knew it as soon as I heard our curator talking about one of the exhibitions she was planning for 2026, *Elemental: Earth, Water, Air, and Fire*. It seemed obvious: we could use watercolors for water, and clay for earth... But was there something kid-friendly that we could learn about and create that connected campers with air or—yikes!—fire? As it turns out, absolutely! And they're totally safe!

The Ancient Greeks believed everything on earth was made up of some combination of the four elements, and it turns out they were onto something. The four states of matter are essentially how they imagined the four elements—solid (earth), liquid (water), gas (air), and plasma (fire). And sure, everyday art materials like paint, glue, clay, and paper are made up of those elements, but we want to go a little farther off-script for our summer camp activities. For example, using the fire of the sun to transform chemicals in cyanotypes. Or using soil, metal, and plant samples to create our own pigments. Even using a cool scientific gizmo called a Chladni plate to translate sound into geometric sound wave patterns. There are so many curiosities to explore this summer, all inspired by an ancient concept that still connects artists today.

Summer Camp: *Art is Elemental* dates are June 22-June 26, 2026 from 9:00 AM-noon. The price is \$150 for members or \$175 for nonmembers. Camp is open to children currently in grades 2-5. Space is limited so reserve your spot early! To register, contact Education Director Erin Thomas at ethomas@crma.org or call 319-366-7503 x203.

—Erin Thomas, Education Director

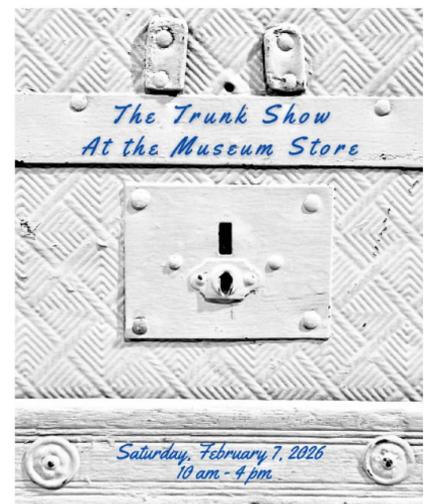
Museum Store Trunk Show

The Museum Store will be hosting a trunk show on Saturday, February 7, 2026. Local artists will be selling jewelry and other handmade wearable items in the Carnegie Library area of the Museum.

Shop for Valentines or Galentines gifts for a loved one or buy something for yourself!

Hours for the Trunk Show and the Museum are 10:00 AM-4:00 PM on Saturday, February 7.

The CRMA will also have free admission that day and all 16 galleries will be open and free so bring your friends and make it an art and shopping experience!



The Cedar Rapids Museum of Art Calendar of Events

February - May 2026

Current & Upcoming Exhibitions

- Art in Roman Life**
Ongoing
- Beyond the Prairie: Midwestern Art from the Collection**
Ongoing with periodic rotations
- Grant Wood: From Farm Boy to American Icon**
Ongoing
- Marvin Cone: An American Vision**
Ongoing
- Mauricio Lasansky: Master Printmaker**
Ongoing with periodic rotations
- Mata Ortiz: Ceramics from the Collection of Norman Sherman and Virginia Chambers Sherman**
Now-March 29, 2026
- Barnstorm: Picturing a Midwestern Icon**
Now-November 1, 2026
- From the Outside Looking In: Interior Spaces in Art**
January 17-May 3, 2026
- Art is the Word: Text in Art**
February 7-May 17, 2026
- Elemental: Earth, Water, Air and Fire**
April 18, 2026-March 14, 2027
- Out of the Box: The Art of Peter Stamats and Bill Stamats**
May 16-August 30, 2026

Events In February

- 4 Art Bites, *From the Outside Looking In: Interior Spaces in Art*, with Curator of Collections and Exhibitions Julia Jessen, 12:15 PM, Free
- 5 Reception for *Art is the Word* and *From the Outside Looking In* 5:00-6:30 PM, Free
- 7 Museum Store Trunk Show, 10-4:00 PM
- 7 Free Admission Day, 10-4:00 PM, Free
- 14 Family Fun Day, *What's the Word*, 12-3:00 PM, Free
- 14 Free Admission Day, 10-4:00 PM, Free
- 17 One Night Stand with the CRMA via Zoom, 7:00 PM, Free
- 19 Art Lovers Book Club, *Your Brain on Art: How the Arts Transform Us* by Ivy Ross and Susan Magsamen, 4:00 PM, Free
- 19 Art Journal Jam with artist Dori Patrick, 5-8:30 PM, Fee: \$10
- 23 Doodlebugs at the North Liberty Community Library, *Color Words*, 10:30 AM, Free
- 24 Doodlebugs at the Marion Public Library, *Color Words*, 10:30 AM, Free
- 27 Doodlebugs at the Hiawatha Public Library, *Color Words*, 10:30 AM, Free
- 27 Dementia Friendly Tour, 2:00 PM, Free
- 28 Trevor Monnier playing Classical Guitar in the Galleries, 10-11:00 AM, Free

Events In March

- 4 Art Bites, *Art is the Word: Text in Art* with Curator of Collections and Exhibitions Julia Jessen, 12:15 PM, Free
- 10 One Night Stand with the CRMA via Zoom, 7:00 PM, Free

Events In March

- 19 Art Lovers Book Club, *The Madonnas of Leningrad* by Debra Dean, 4:00 PM, Free
- 19 Art Journal Jam with artist Dori Patrick, 5-8:30 PM, Fee: \$10
- 22 Grant Wood in Focus via Zoom with Curator of Collections and Exhibitions Julia Jessen, 2:00 PM, Free
- 27 Doodlebugs at the Hiawatha Public Library, *Sounds Like Art*, 10:30 AM, Free
- 27 Dementia Friendly Tour, 2:00 PM, Free
- 28 Trevor Monnier playing Classical Guitar in the Galleries, 10-11:00 AM, Free
- 30 Doodlebugs at the North Liberty Library, *Sounds Like Art*, 10:30 AM, Free
- 31 Doodlebugs at the Marion Public Library, *Sounds Like Art*, 10:30 AM, Free

Events In April

- 1 Art Bites: Director's Choice with Executive Director Sean Ulmer, 12:15 PM, Free
- 16 Art Lovers Book Club, *The Art Spirit* by Robert Henri, 4:00 PM, Free
- 16 Art Journal Jam with artist Dori Patrick, 5-8:30 PM, Fee: \$10
- 21 One Night Stand with the CRMA via Zoom, 7:00 PM, Free
- 24 Doodlebugs at the Hiawatha Public Library, *Nonsense!*, 10:30 AM, Free
- 24 Dementia Friendly Tour, 2-4:00 PM, Free
- 25 Trevor Monnier playing Classical Guitar in the Galleries, 10-11:00 AM, Free
- 27 Doodlebugs at the North Liberty Library, *Nonsense!*, 10:30 AM, Free
- 28 Doodlebugs at the Marion Public Library, *Nonsense!*, 10:30 AM, Free

Events In May

- 3 Art Bites: *Elemental* with Curator of Collections and Exhibitions Julia Jessen, 12:15 PM, Free
- 18 Doodlebugs at the North Liberty Library, *Channel Islands National Park*, 10:30 AM, Free
- 19 One Night Stand with the CRMA via Zoom, 7:00 PM, Free
- 21 Art Lovers Book Club, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* by Edmund de Waal, 4:00 PM, Free
- 26 Doodlebugs at the Marion Public Library, *Channel Islands National Park*, 10:30 AM, Free
- 29 Doodlebugs at the Hiawatha Public Library, *Channel Islands National Park*, 10:30 AM, Free
- 29 Dementia Friendly Tour, 2-4:00 PM, Free
- 30 Trevor Monnier playing Classical Guitar in the Galleries, 10-11:00 AM, Free

Check www.crma.org or Facebook for the most current event and programming information as well as links for our Zoom presentations.

The CRMA is FREE EVERY Thursday evening from 5-10:00 PM, generously sponsored by Collins Aerospace.