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Seventh Public Art Bus Features Work of Drake University Associate Professor Benjamin Gardner

Des Moines, IA — The Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation is proud to partner with the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) and Drake University to unveil the seventh art bus. The Public Art Foundation commissioned Benjamin Gardner, associate professor and department chair of art and design at Drake University, to create the new art bus wrap, which explores a theme of conflict resolution. The project is part of the Public Art Foundation's Project Spaces initiative, which places compelling, temporary works of art in highly accessible and visible public spaces. The bus can be viewed as it travels on several of DART's fixed routes throughout Greater Des Moines.



"It's an honor to partner with DART for the seventh time to commission work by talented artists such as Benjamin Gardner," said M. Jessica Rowe, director of the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation. "We continue to strive to enrich lives across the region by bringing art into the lives of people in our communities. Working with DART allows us to spread our influence and helps to fulfill both our and DART's missions to enrich lives all over central Iowa."

Benjamin Gardner is an artist and associate professor and department chair of art and design at Drake University. His work explores the issues of culture and human existence, which he finds to be a potent platform for discovering a common ground during times of conflict and disagreement.

In talking about his design for the art bus, Gardner said, "Disagreement is a part of our culture and how we choose to seek resolution constitutes the basis of our morals. My design is an abstract representation of this part of humanity: something that appears dualistic (conflict and disagreement) but that is, in actuality, much more complex than what we originally perceive and can recognize, especially if we are a part of the conflict."

Gardner teaches in the honors program at Drake University, and has co-taught travel seminars to Cyprus and Cuba. He received his Master of Fine Arts from Illinois State University and B.F.A. from Millikin University. Gardner has exhibited his work nationally and internationally. One of his short experimental films was screened at CICA in South Korea in the fall of 2017. As a multi-disciplinary artists, Gardner's studio work involves research in mythology, ontology and visual culture.

"DART's art bus program is a valuable community initiative that closely aligns with the priorities of central Iowa's Regional Cultural Assessment, which calls for the creation of more spontaneous artistic experiences in the region," said Drake University President Marty Martin. "We are proud of Ben's inclusion in the project, and appreciate that he has chosen conflict resolution as a theme for his design—at Drake we believe that art and higher education enhance quality of life, foster economic development, and elevate respect and civility in our communities."

"We are proud to continue this partnership that allows us to bring public art into areas of our member communities where it typically isn't seen," said Elizabeth Presutti, Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority Chief Executive Officer. "It's especially wonderful to be able to feature the design of an artist from Drake University, which is one of DART's Unlimited Access partners. This partnership allows all Drake students and faculty to travel around our region using DART at no cost to them."

The bus wrap project began with an open call, which generated a response from 45 artists across 21 states. A team of art professionals reviewed more than 325 images and finalists were commissioned to create concept proposals. This is the seventh art bus in a series of DART buses that have been wrapped with unique and colorful compositions. The first design by artist Alex Brown was unveiled in November 2014. Since then, a design by Jay Vigon was unveiled in June 2015. The third design by Susan Chrysler White was unveiled in March 2016. A fourth design by Larassa Kabel was unveiled in June 2016. The fifth art bus design by artist Brent Holland was unveiled in October 2016. The sixth art bus was designed by artist Jordan Weber and was unveiled in June 2017.

ABOUT THE GREATER DES MOINES PUBLIC ART FOUNDATION

The Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation, established in 2004, recognizes that art belongs not just in galleries and museums, but also in streetscapes, parks, buildings and infrastructures of

a thriving community. Dedicated to envisioning, developing, advancing and promoting public art projects, the Public Art Foundation collaborates with local entities and artists to engage, inspire and enrich the lives of residents and visitors to the community. The goal is to increase awareness of our community as a world-class destination for public art. For more information about the Public Art Foundation, visit www.dsmpublicartfoundation.org.

ABOUT DART

The Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) is the public transportation provider in and around Polk County. DART operates a family of transportation services that connects thousands of people every day to jobs, school, medical appointments, entertainment and more. For more information about DART services, schedules, route changes, or directions to the nearest DART stop, visit the website at ridedart.com or call 515-283-8100.

ABOUT DRAKE UNIVERSITY

Drake University is a midsize, private university in Des Moines, Iowa, enrolling more than 3,300 undergraduate and 1,700 graduate students from 40 states and approximately 40 countries. Students choose from over 70 majors, minors, and concentrations and 20 graduate degrees offered through six colleges and schools. Drake students, faculty, and staff take advantage of the wealth of cultural, recreational, and business opportunities found in Iowa's capital city. In return, Drake enriches the city through its own cultural offerings, considerable economic impact, and many service-learning endeavors, which channel the talent and energy of the Drake students toward meeting the needs of the community.

PHOTO CAPTION: Leaders of DART, Drake University and the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation pose with artist Benjamin Gardner in front of the latest public art bus. The Drake University professor's design was unveiled during a special event on Monday, Dec. 11.

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