Grant Wood Art Colony Press Kit

Program Mission
The mission of the Grant Wood Art Colony is to nurture creative work and teaching in disciplines relevant to the art and life of Grant Wood—studio art and art history, and eventually expanding to a variety of disciplines. The program exemplifies the University of Iowa’s historic commitment to creative work and pioneering of the MFA degree. The Grant Wood Art Colony will further embody the "Iowa Idea" of bringing artists and scholars together in an academic context, as first formulated in the 1920s by President Walter Jessup and Graduate Dean Carl Seashore. The long-term goal is to create a vibrant colony and cultural center, woven together by gardens and studio space.

The Grant Wood Art Colony celebrates the life and legacy of Iowa’s most famous artist, Grant Wood. After painting one of the most recognizable images in the world, American Gothic, Wood joined The University of Iowa faculty. Each year, the Colony provides three Fellowships in Painting, Printmaking, and Interdisciplinary Performance. Fellows teach courses, engage Iowans, and pursue their artistic endeavors. The Colony also hosts a biennial symposium and other public lectures to perpetuate Wood’s legacy as an artist and advocate of contemporary art.

Brief History
Local lawyer, Jim Hayes, purchased the house that Grant Wood live in while teaching at The University of Iowa; the home that Wood affectionately called “1142.” In the early 2000s, Hayes signed a gift agreement promising to bequeath the property to The University upon his death. Over time, Hayes collected four parcels—1131, 1137, 1205, and 1211 East Burlington Street. This expansion led to the expansion of his posthumous vision for 1142 to include a rotating community of artists modeled after the colonies that Wood tried to establish in his lifetime.

Rather than awaiting his own death to see this vision to fruition, Hayes began discussions with The University of Iowa in 2009. Hayes hosted the first Grant Wood Symposium on May 7, 2009 at 1142. In 2011, the first Grant Wood Fellow was hosted in the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies. Since that year, the Grant Wood Art Colony has held several symposia focusing on the life, times, and legacy of Grant Wood and annually hosted Grant Wood Fellows in painting and drawing, printmaking, and interdisciplinary performance.

Having transferred from the Obermann Center to the School of Art & Art History, the breadth of scope led the program to again move. In 2015, the Grant Wood Art Colony joined the Provost’s Office of Outreach and Engagement.

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