

ARTS

# New Art Museums For D.C., Iowa City And San Francisco Open This Fall

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Contributor

*I cover the intersection of art and travel.*

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Stanley Museum of Art Exterior.  
CHRIS BREWER

A homecoming 14 years in the making. A familiar name in a new place. Introducing a *kunsthalle*.

East, west and middle.

A trio of notable museum openings across the country are bringing more art to more people.

# Homecoming



Jackson Pollock (American, 1912–1956), *Mural*, 1943. Oil and casein on canvas 95 5/8 x 237 3/4 in. ... [+]

JUSTIN TORNER - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER - THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

PROMOTED

You'd be forgiven for not including Iowa City, IA on a shortlist of art hotspots around the U.S. The home of the University of Iowa, however, has [a prominent arts program at the school](#)—Grant Wood taught there and [Elizabeth Catlett](#) was an early graduate—along with one of the finest college art museums anywhere. Again. Finally.

Cataclysmic flooding in 2008 inundated the museum's previous building, forcing the sudden evacuation of priceless works from the permanent collection. This included, arguably, the most important painting in American Modern art: Jackson Pollock's *Mural*.

MORE FOR YOU

Commissioned by Peggy Guggenheim for her New York City home in 1943, *Mural* stretches 8-by-20-feet, every inch of it a vibrant, wriggling, fantasy. Recognizing the significance of UI's art program, when Guggenheim closed her The Art of This Century Gallery in 1947, she shortly thereafter reached out to the university's School

of Art and Art History. She had previously offered *Mural* to UI if it would pay shipping costs from Yale. Done deal. In October of 1951, the piece headed for Iowa.

With the waters rising in 2008, staff and volunteers worked around the clock to save the art collection, including *Mural*, but the building was deemed unsuitable after the flood. Unlike the way it had with other buildings on the university campus, FEMA denied funds to build an entirely new facility away from the river. Thus began the 14-year pursuit of finding a new location for the UI Museum of Art, raising funds the project and building it.

On August 26, 2022, that process came to an end and [the Stanley Museum of Art](#) opened to the public.

“The old museum of art is a late-‘60s, Brutalist building. While it was is a lovely example of that style, it could be intimidating, especially to audience members who were new to visiting museums. Also, the museum’s location across the Iowa River from the heart of campus meant that it was infrequently visited by students,” Stanley Museum of Art Director Lauren Lessing told Forbes.com. “The new Stanley is right in the middle of campus and adjacent to downtown Iowa City, and it faces a beautiful little park. The building’s elegant design emphasizes its wide, easily accessible entry plaza. When you step inside, the lobby is warm and welcoming. The scale of the interior spaces is generous but humanizing. You never feel overwhelmed.”

While awaiting a new home in Iowa, *Mural* toured the world. More than 2.75 million viewers experienced the painting. It traveled over 20,000 miles to 14 venues on trucks, cargo planes and boats. Venice, Berlin, Málaga, Spain, Bilbao, Spain, London, Kansas City, Washington, D.C, Columbia, South Carolina, Boston and New York City.

“(Guggenheim) felt that (*Mural*) could teach students here—and MFA students in particular—to innovate and take risks,” Lessing explained of Guggenheim’s donation of the piece to a college far removed from world art centers.

*Mural*, however, [isn’t the only jewel in the Stanley Museum’s crown](#). Joan Miró’s *A Drop of Dew Falling from the Wing of a Bird Awakens Rosalie Asleep in the Shade of a Cobweb* and Max Beckmann’s *Karneval* would take pride of place among any collection of

Modern Art. A donation of nearly 800 African art objects in 1984 established the UI Museum of Art as a mecca for African art studies. The collection enabled UI to institute one of the first PhD programs in this area and led to the 1989 creation of the Project for the Advanced Study of Art and Life in Africa.

[The Stanley's inaugural exhibition, "Homecoming,"](#) surrounds *Mural* with works by Joan Mitchell, Sam Gilliam, Yayoi Kusama and Lee Krasner among others.

“It was devastating to lose our campus museum for three generations of UI students. There was a deep desire here—both on campus and in the broader community—to bring our art collection home,” Lessing said. “You could feel the palpable joy in the crowds as roughly 6,000 people—from students to alumni to faculty to community members—gathered over the course of our opening weekend to celebrate the museum’s opening. People were crying in the galleries.”

One unique design feature of the new museum: a custom-made freight elevator purpose-built to meet the size requirements of *Mural*.

## **An ICA for San Francisco**



Institute of Contemporary Art San Francisco exterior.

The brand-new [Institute of Contemporary Art San Francisco](#) opens its doors on October 1, 2022. The Bay Area is a renowned hotspot of art and culture, so why the need for a new museum?

“What makes great ecosystems in the wonderful cities for contemporary art (are) a broad spectrum of different kinds of art institutions. You see great civic collecting institutions, you see small, locally focused art nonprofits, and you often see mid-sized *kunsthalle*s, non-collecting contemporary arts museums,” ICA SF Director Alison Gass told [Forbes.com](#). *Kunsthalle* is a German word merging *kunst* (art) with *halle* (hall). “In the last year and a half when I came back to the Bay Area, a variety of different people—collectors and artists and I—were saying to each other, ‘San Francisco has wonderful collecting institutions and wonderful smaller institutions, but it doesn't have what other great cities have. It doesn't have—in America, *Kunsthalle*s are often called an ICA—wouldn't it be great if there were an ICA San Francisco.’ Could there be one? What would it look like if there were one? That's how we got started.”

Gass served as the ICA San José's Executive Director and Chief Curator prior to assuming this position. She also worked at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Stanford University's Cantor Arts Center in Palo Alto, CA along with being director at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago.

“When you start something from scratch you have this unique opportunity to not be burdened by a legacy or a history so you're not being burdened by having to be a change agent,” Gass said. “To have the great privilege to not be doing course correction, but put some values front and center, put some ideas front and center, and really chart a course starting with those, that's an exciting way to move forward.”

ICA SF's initial exhibitions reveal a part of those values and ideas. Artists featured are a mix of international hotshots—[Jeffrey Gibson](#)—and those chosen by guest co-curators Tahirah Rasheed and Autumn Breon. The artists, too, represent the values Gass sees shared across the arts community the new museum will be serving.

“San Francisco collectors and art supporters are incredibly willing and excited to take risks, excited to see the intersection between contemporary art and social and political and civic progress and values,” she said.

## Familiar name in a new place



Keith Haring, *Untitled (Against All Odds)*, 1989. Sumi ink and gouache on handmade linen paper 25 x ... [+]

RUBELL MUSEUM DC

Don and Mera Rubell began collecting art in 1965. Their focus has always been underrepresented artists, particularly Black artists. Their keen eye and unwavering commitment has resulted in one of the largest and best contemporary art collections in the world.

The collection became accessible to the public in 1993, when the Rubell Family Collection/Contemporary Art Foundation was opened in Miami, Florida.

In 2019, the Rubell Family Collection expanded to a larger building and was renamed [the Rubell Museum](#) to emphasize its mission to share the extensive collection of contemporary art with the public. The Rubell Museum has spawned 48 special exhibitions drawn entirely from works in its collection, including “[30 Americans](#)” [which has now traveled across the U.S. for over 15 years](#).

The Rubell’s latest venture comes to life in Washington, D.C. on October 29. Dedicated exclusively to contemporary art, [the Rubell Museum DC](#) will reinvigorate the 1906 building of the former Randall Junior High School, a historically Black public school in Southwest D.C. that ceased operations in 1978. Totalling 32,000 square feet, the museum preserves the original layout of the historic school. What were once classrooms and teachers’ offices will instead serve as galleries.

The debut exhibition, “What’s Going On” draws its title from the groundbreaking 1971 album by Randall Junior High School alumnus Marvin Gaye that provided a powerful condemnation of the Vietnam War and the destructive realities of social injustice, drug abuse, and environmental negligence. It also references the cornerstone of the exhibition: Keith Haring’s *Untitled (Against All Odds)*, (1989), a series of 20 works inspired by Gaye’s revolutionary lyrics.

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