UI Museum of Art sets all-time record for participation

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The University of Iowa Museum of Art (UIMA) has set a museum record for participation and attendance at events during the 2015–16 academic year. The UIMA drew 627,672 visitors, surpassing the previous record of 538,260 set in 2013–14.

The Jackson Pollock’s Mural: Energy Made Visible exhibition at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Italy played a major part in the success. The Guardian called it “a knockout Venice show that busts all the myths (of Pollock),” and, after it reached 253,590 visitors, an average of 1,448 people per day viewed the exhibition during the Venice Arts Biennale, according to The Art Newspaper. A further 71,408 attended the UIMA-organized Pollock exhibition when it travelled to the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle in Berlin, Germany.

Since the UIMA lost its building in the floods of 2008—the museum’s former Riverside Drive home was deemed unsuitable for the return of artwork—it has had to reach out to its audiences in new ways. Exhibitions in temporary locations across the University of Iowa campus, including the third floor of the Iowa Memorial Union, as well as in the Figge Art Museum in Davenport, Iowa, have allowed portions of the museum’s permanent collection to remain on display for students, visitors, and researchers. The UIMA has also worked to put art in the hands of more Iowans. In 2015–16, the museum’s education programs traveled across the state bringing art directly to 65,347 K–12 students, up from 25,505 in 2013–14.

The UIMA further expanded its outreach efforts with museum partnerships in Waverley and Mason City, Iowa, where a total of 2,160 visited UIMA exhibitions at Wartburg College and the Charles H. MacNider Art Museum. In addition, 103,918 visitors viewed the UIMA permanent collection and temporary exhibitions at the Figge. Other visitors and participants in the UIMA’s various programs and offerings included 2,619 in UI college tours/classes, 172 in non-UI college tours/classes, 7,941 in public programs, and 318 at senior living communities across the state.

In accordance with standard industry practice, the museum totals include website traffic: 71,119 visitors accessed the UIMA’s Art & Life in Africa website, and the main UIMA website received 41,172 visits. “The UI Museum of Art is one of the most successful art and education organizations in the state of Iowa, and it has proven to be an outstanding cultural ambassador outside the state for the university and for Iowa’s citizens,” says Sean O’Harrow, director of the UIMA. “More people around the world associate Iowa with cultural sophistication than ever before. This year’s record-breaking attendance demonstrates why the UIMA is so important to the mission of the university, to public higher education, and to economic development in Iowa.”

Visit the UI Museum of Art website for more information about the UIMA’s collections, exhibitions, and educational programming. Temporary UIMA venues include:
• UIMA@IMU Visual Classroom, Iowa Memorial Union, Room 376, 125 N. Madison St., Iowa City, Iowa
• Black Box Theater, Iowa Memorial Union, third floor, 125 N. Madison St., Iowa City, Iowa
• Figge Art Museum, 225 W. Second St., Davenport, Iowa