

# Palmer Building

**title**

*Joy*

**artist**

**Christian Petersen**

Location:  
**Palmer Human  
Development Family  
Studies Playground**  
Material:  
**Bronze**  
Casting Date:  
**2000**  
Size:  
**29 inches high  
23 ½ inches dia.**  
Made possible by:  
**Iowa Art in State  
BuildingsProgram\***



## About the Work of Art

A chain of children dance and play around the periphery, decorating this bronze drinking fountain cast by J.A.M. Studios in Blaine, Minnesota. Created in 1938, Petersen placed his youngest daughter, Mary, as a curly headed, playful two-year-old, dancing among the other children. The sculpture was made using a bas relief technique, which results in a raised surface decoration.

## About the Artist

Christian Petersen, (American, 1885-1961) practiced his art during a transitional stage in American sculpture when styles moved from heroic to realistic. He immigrated to America from Denmark with his family in 1894, and eventually made his way to Chicago in 1929. It was there that he married his second wife, Charlotte Garvey, in 1931, and soon after was invited to join the Iowa Public Works of Art Project under the direction of Grant Wood in Iowa City. In 1934, Iowa State President Raymond Hughes offered Petersen a one-semester residency to create the fountain and bas-reliefs in the Dairy Industry Building courtyard. One semester turned into 21 years, and from 1934 to 1955, Petersen served as Iowa State's sculptor-in-residence. For \$25 per week, Petersen taught students and sculpted in his studio in the Veterinary Quadrangle, now Lagomarcino Hall. Petersen created 12 major public art sculptures on the Iowa State campus, over 300 studio sculptures and hundreds of drawings and sketches. Petersen found his inspiration from the men, women and children that surrounded him. Petersen enjoyed the company of children and often sculpted their actions and personalities into terra cotta and stone.

**University Museums Art on Campus Program  
Iowa State University Ames, Iowa**

## The Dedication Ceremony

On June 8, 2001, University Museums staff members along with Curators Associates, Iowa State Alumni from the Class of 1951, and the College of Family and Consumer Sciences dedicated the *Joy* fountain. Remarks were given by Dean Carol Meeks of Family and Consumer Sciences; Lynette Pohlman, University Museums Director; Carol Grant, Curators Associate; Beverly Madden, Curator Associate; and ISU President designate Gregory Geoffroy. Beverly Madden told the story of how she volunteered to search through the third floor storage room of the WOI building, for the plaster mold of *Joy*:

*"I literally stepped over models of fallen soldiers to get to the fountain. I was struck by the artist's distress with war and its casualties...and there, in stark contrast, was a symbol of hope for the future--children playing, and so eloquently portrayed on the children's fountain I was seeking..."*



## About the Fountain

This fountain was originally proposed by Petersen to be a drinking fountain at Brookside Park, but the fountain was never bronzed. The fountain was located in Petersen's studio throughout his career at Iowa State; but after his death, and after it failed to be sold in a 1964 public sale of his sculpture, the fountain was placed in storage at the WOI building. In the 1980s, Beverly Madden helped the College of Family and Consumer Sciences locate and purchase the plaster fountain from Petersen's daughter, Mary. In 1999, the crate was opened and the decision was made to cast the plaster in bronze for the new Palmer Human Development and Family Studies building.

The plaster mold was badly damaged over the years; the top portion was broken into two pieces and left unrepaired. During a visit to Iowa State to conserve several other Petersen sculptures, conservator Francis Miller, from Conservation Technical Associates, repaired the sculpture in preparation for bronze casting. In May of 2000 two separate bronze fountains were cast at J.A.M. Studios in Blaine, Minnesota to be placed in two locations on the Iowa State University campus. This fountain near the Palmer HDFS playground functions as a drinking fountain, while the other will be installed at Reiman Gardens at a later date as a decorative fountain.

### \*Art in State Buildings Program

The Iowa Art in State Buildings Program was enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa (Chapter 304A, Code 1979. Sections 8-14) to provide for the inclusions of fine arts projects in state building construction projects in cooperation with the Iowa Arts Council.

*Joy*

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Additional information about the Art on Campus Program, other Art on Campus information sheets and Art on Campus maps are available at the University Museums office, 290 Scheman Building (2nd floor) 515/294/3342, or visit us online at <http://www.museums.iastate.edu/>.