

Parks Library

title

Boy and Girl

artist

Christian Petersen

Location:
**East wing of Library,
Ground floor lobby**
Size:
(each) 6 feet high
Material:
Bedford limestone
Date:
1944



About the Sculptures

These sculptures, placed in Parks Library, appear to depict a boy and girl studying. Upon closer inspection, however, their shy glances, the nervousness of the boy's feet, and the slight smile on the girl's lips all hint to the actual flirtatious goings-on. At the time these sculptures were created, classes at Iowa State were segregated and a strict 7:30 p.m. curfew was enforced. The library was one of the only places students were allowed to get together and stay out later. The sculptures reveal Petersen's gentle sense of humor and provide a lasting representation of Iowa State's social and academic student life.

Petersen's limestone boy and girl stand at the base of the stairway leading between the upper and lower lobbies of the east wing. The travertine marble pedestals were originally intended for lighting fixtures, but sat dormant for several years. Christian Petersen developed and proposed the idea of installing statues on them.

Another Petersen sculpture, *Old Woman in Prayer*, is on display in Parks Library. This limestone bust is located near the entrance of the Reserve Reading Room on the ground floor.

BOY AND GIRL STATUES

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Additional information about the Christian Petersen sculptures, 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/>

This information sheet is intended to be used in addition to viewing the Art on Campus. At no time should this sheet be used as a substitute for experiencing the art in person!

About the Artist

Christian Petersen's career advanced during a transitional stage in American sculpture when styles moved from heroic to realistic. He emigrated to America from Denmark with his family in 1894. After attending several different art schools, beginning a die-cutting career, and receiving some sculpture commissions, Petersen moved to the Midwest. There he was invited to join the Iowa Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) 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 1934-1955 Petersen served as Iowa State's sculptor-in-residence. At the time, he was the only sculptor-in-residence at any college or university in the United States, for which he earned \$25 per week. Petersen created numerous works, including twelve major public art sculptures, which can be viewed throughout the campus.

University Museums Art on Campus Program

What is Public Art?

This contemporary term represents ancient to contemporary objects, landscapes, and architecture located in places accessible to the public. The Pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, the St. Louis Arch, the Statue of Liberty, and the ISU Campanile are examples of architectural public art. The White House's Rose Garden, New York City's Central Park, ISU's Central Campus, and ISU's new Rieman Gardens are examples of public art as landscape. Lady Liberty on the Capitol Dome in Washington DC, the Umbrella in Des Moines, and Left-Sided Angel at Parks Library are examples of aesthetic objects as public art.

Public Art:

- defines a specific and unique place
- expresses diverse qualities, beliefs and values of various cultures and artists
- is physically and intellectually accessible
- serves as a vehicle for inspiring and understanding change as presented in our contemporary society

What is Art on Campus?

Iowa State's Art on Campus Collection (public art collection) spans over a century, beginning with the design of Central Campus by Adonijah Welch, Iowa State's first president. Through the years Iowa State has commissioned, purchased, and received gifts of art that form the Art on Campus Collection. The traditional public art program began in the 1930s. At the height of the Depression, ISC President Raymond Hughes envisioned that the "arts would enrich and provide substantial intellectual exploration into our college curricula." Hughes invited Grant Wood to create the Library's agricultural murals that speak to the founding of Iowa and Iowa State College and Model Farm. Hughes then offered Christian Petersen a one-semester sculpture residency to create the fountain and bas-reliefs at the Dairy Industry Building. In 1955, 21 years later, Petersen retired having created 12 major sculptures for the campus, including the *Fountain of the Four Seasons*, *The Gentle Doctor*, the *Wedding Ring*, and *Conversations*.

There were lean years for public art at Iowa State and, indeed, the country, from 1955 to 1978. However, following the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts and Art in Public Places programs, public art gained nation-wide momentum. In 1978 Iowa passed the Iowa Art in State Buildings legislation, which today allows for the acquisition of public works of art for the campus. Private and class gifts also continue to be used for public art acquisition.