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Contact
Jami Milne
Communications Coordinator
University Museums
515-321-7054

Four 400-pound G-Nome sculptures to be lifted by crane and placed atop Iowa State University Molecular Biology Building on Monday

Ames, IA – The sacred guardians of Iowa State University’s Molecular Biology building needed a facelift, and are now ready for lift-off. The sculptures will be installed Monday morning, July 24, beginning at 7:30am.

G-Nomes, originally made of terra cotta standing 12’ tall and weighing in at roughly 2,200 pounds apiece, were placed at each of the four corners of the Molecular Biology building nearly 27 years ago in August of 1990. Due to deterioration of the terra cotta body, new sculptures have been fabricated using aluminum and painted to match the original maidens.

The G-Nomes hold X and Y chromosome rods in each of their hands. The stylized black and white coats worn by the figures are symbolic references to the black suits worn by business people and the white lab coats worn by scientists — a nod to the collaboration between these two professions that the artist believed would lead the molecular biology program at Iowa State University.

Andrew Leicester, the G-Nomes artist, was selected from hundreds of entrants across the U.S. by an Art in State Buildings selection committee made up of faculty, staff, and one student in the late 80s. They chose Leicester as the artist who could most effectively interpret the various aspects of the discipline of molecular biology, consider the Iowa State campus with respect and design site-specific art and simultaneously deal fairly with all of these important facets of the project. According to a committee document, “Andrew Leicester was our easy and unanimous choice. He is an independent artist whose education and experience have prepared him to deal effectively with the project.”
Most recently in 2016, Leicester worked with fabricating artist Tom Stancliffe, a sculptor and professor at the University of Northern Iowa, to create an updated material to withstand the building requirements resulting in the four painted aluminum sculptures to be installed July 24.

For more information about University Museums, call 515.294.3342 or visit www.museums.iastate.edu.

Contact:
Lynette Pohlman, director, University Museums, lpohlman@iastate.edu or 515.294.3342

Images:
Top Page: G-Nomes, 1991 by Andrew Leicester (British-American, b. 1948). An Iowa Art in State Buildings Project for the Molecular Biology Building. In the Art on Campus Collection, University Museums, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Located at Iowa State University, Molecular Biology, Roof

Above Right: Two of the four painted aluminum G-Nome sculptures. Image courtesy of Dan Perry, Art Shop Technician and Instructor, University of Northern Iowa Department of Art

Additional images available upon request.