

March 29, 2024

Jason Gross, President  
Board of Trustees  
Des Moines Art Center  
4700 Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50312

Dear Board President Jason Gross and Members of the Board of Trustees,

**My July 10, 2012, letter** to former Des Moines Art Center Director Jeff Fleming **has been grossly distorted** in current director Kelly Baum's February 3, 2024, public ["open letter"](#) on the Art Center's website **and is being weaponized** in the unseemly effort to destroy *Greenwood Pond: Double Site*.

For those Board members who have not seen the letter, a copy is [linked here](#) and attached. My 2012 letter concerns the restoration of the work and it closes: "I hope this provides a road map for moving forward with the restoration work. I really appreciate your interest in having the work whole again and I am happy to work with you to explore possible solutions." That is the language, spirit, and intent of my July 10, 2012, letter. My one conditional remark about removal, made in the context of a possible partial disassembly, is being mischaracterized.

**Let me be clear, that remark is not a "green light" from me that gives the Board of Trustees cover for the current proposed demolition. The claim otherwise is dishonest and manipulative.**

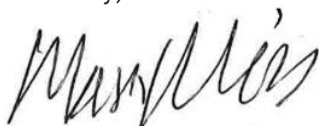
Moreover, that remark does not represent a change to my 1994 contract with the Art Center, the terms of which, specifically Section 8.2, are still in place and enforceable:

- i. "Art Center agrees that it will not intentionally damage, alter, relocate, modify or change the work without the prior written approval of the Artist."
- ii. "Art Center shall notify the Artist of any proposed alteration of the Site that would affect the intended character and appearance of the Work and shall consult with the Artist in the planning and execution of any such alteration and shall make a reasonable effort to maintain the integrity of the Work."

**The Des Moines Art Center does not have my written permission to "intentionally damage, alter, relocate, modify or change" *Greenwood Pond: Double Site*.**

Let's start anew and find a solution of which we can all be proud.

Sincerely,



Mary Miss

cc:

Kelly Baum, Director, Des Moines Art Center

# MARY MISS

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July 10, 2012

Jeff Fleming  
Director  
Edmundson Art Foundation, Inc.  
4700 Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50312-2099  
P. 515-277-4405  
F. 515-255-1006

Dear Jeff,

I am glad I was able to come out to see the pond project and discuss how we might proceed. As I mentioned since it is one of the few large scale permanent public project I have and the only large outdoor work I have at a museum space (the Indy Art and Nature Park project has a limited installation period) I am particularly interested in seeing it restored. I do recognize the obstacles in doing this I would like to outline some thoughts I have had.

After our meeting I spoke with a scientist I have worked closely with in Indianapolis to see if he was aware of any grants that he thought might be appropriate. He suggested that grants distributed through the Clean Water Act would be worth checking out. State 319 funds are allocated for 'best management practices' and are intended to address the maintenance of clean water and education on the subject. The way they are distributed varies from state to state but in Indiana they are for substantial amounts of money, up to a couple of million dollars for projects addressing the improvement of the water system and education. I am paraphrasing what I was told and may not have all this right.

I think it would be worth checking into this to see how they are handled in Iowa. My friend thought it may be hard to ask for funds to restore the derelict walkways around the pond but it might be possible to get funds to clean and upgrade the basins leading from Grand Ave to the pond. We might be able to add a content layer to the pond to address the educational component the grant offers. You can check out the website we did for the project in Indy (<http://flowcanyouseetheriver.org>) to see how content was handled there. I would presume that we would need to apply for such funds with the city and a science person or organization. Is there someone in the city, Department of Natural Resources or the US Geological Survey (USGS) who could help check this out? It may be worth mentioning my work in Indy to any 'water' people and that we received a NOAA grant to do the project as well as an award from the Association of State Floodplain Managers for it (just to give this suggestion some credibility).

If we were able to get funds to address part of the upgrade of the pond perhaps it would be possible to piece together funding from different sources. Also, if funds were received from a

grant it might inspire the city or others to want to see the work repaired.

There are priorities I have in the restoration of the project. For one thing I feel that it is imperative that a notice be put up that the project is in a state of restoration with an image of the original work so that people won't be misled by what they see on site. It is my preference that all damaged elements and walkways be removed. I would rather see a section of walkway removed with appropriate guard rails installed than a buckling walkway.

The 'heart' of the project and the greatest priority for replacement for me is the recessed walkway in the pond. Without that element I have always felt the work was totally incomplete.

I think there should be investigation of the use of ipe or some other certified sustainable hard wood for the walkways to give a longer life span for the wood portions of the project as they are replaced.

If it is possible to restore the project it needs to be recognized that a maintenance program (which of course implies funding) needs to be in place. A bridge, a house--any built outdoor structure, particularly in a place like Iowa, will need ongoing maintenance.

Finally I think there should be a time limit for this all to happen and that we would agree to remove the entire work if the funding for repairs is not forthcoming. It would be unacceptable for portions of the work to remain on the site.

I hope this provides a road map for moving forward with the restoration work. I really appreciate your interest in having the work whole again and I am happy to work with you to explore possible solutions.

Best wishes,

Mary

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "y".