

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Sculpture Takes Flight at the Des Moines International Airport! ***Eight-Foot Goldfinch Sculpture Installed Above Baggage Claim Area***

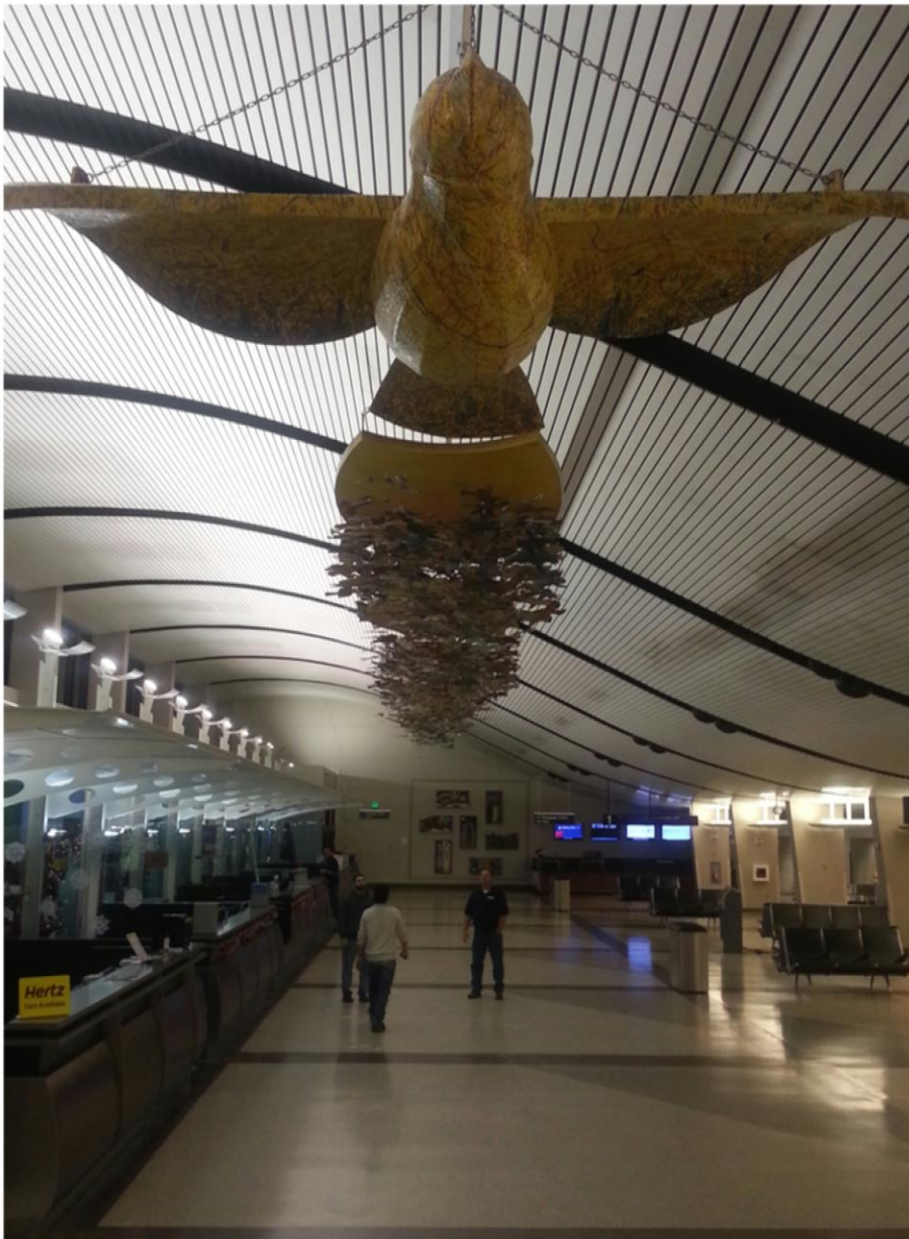
Des Moines, IA - Metro Arts Alliance of Greater Des Moines is pleased to announce the

completion and installation of a unique 220 pound, 8-foot aluminum goldfinch at the Des Moines International Airport.

Representing Iowa's official state bird, the goldfinch, this large-scale, public-contributed work of art is now being displayed above the baggage area of the Des Moines airport.

Kim Poam Logan, executive director of Metro Arts Alliance, said "with the perfect timing of the installation of this art piece, it's like a Christmas gift to Iowa. We're excited to have it premiere for the holiday and Rose Bowl-bound travelers!"

"Birds of a Feather" was commissioned by Metro Arts Alliance in honor of its 40th anniversary



and designed by artist Bounnak Thammavong of Swisher, Iowa. Working with his wife, Stephanie Sailer, and friend Michael Sneller of nearby Cedar Rapids, the artists took several months to complete the project due to the extended scope of the public's participation in this unique project. Thammavong was inspired by literature, nature as viewed through the lens of his Asian-American heritage. Bounnak Thammavong was selected to create the artwork following a 3-month selection process that started at the beginning of this year.

In 1983 and at age of 3, Thammavong and his family escaped from Communist-controlled Laos. They settled in Cedar Falls, Iowa, where Thammavong eventually studied at the University of Northern Iowa. "This work of art was a good concept made great because of the parents and children who painted alongside our art team. It was a privilege to witness their discovery of their hidden artists within. I'm very humbled to have been part of this project and feel honored to have met all the people involved. I give thanks to the Des Moines community who supported and participated on this project in ways that far exceeded expectations", said Thammavong.

Visitors to this year's Des Moines Arts Festival were able to see the initial design and added their own flourishes by drip-painting this unique goldfinch sculpture. Art Festival visitors were also able to help in the design of over 2,300 of smaller birds out of re-purposed materials that trail behind the goldfinch as it soars above travelers at the airport.

In installing the sculpture at the airport, Project Superintendent Dermot Noonan from Lang Construction Group, said "It's an incredible piece. There is no way one person can create something like this. **It's like seeing the imagination of more than 2,000 people**".



Watching the installation, passersby Abshir Mahamed (left), a supervisor with Delta Global Services, said that the sculpture livens up the space and gives the community an opportunity to connect with the airport. "It reminds me of the Seattle airport where there's a seagull sculpture that as you got closer you can see that it's made of many smaller seagulls".

This unique piece of art will be seen by the millions of travelers who use the Des Moines International Airport each year. According to Metro Arts executive director, the project would not have been possible without the generous support of its many donors, volunteers, and key partners such as the [Polk County Board of Supervisors](#), [Register Media](#), [the Iowa Arts Council](#), the [Des Moines International Airport](#), as well as the [Des Moines Arts Festival](#); and the many individuals who contributed their uniquely painted bird. Video footage of the project is available [here](#).

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[Metro Arts Alliance](#) (MAA) is an avant garde organization that is at the forefront of integrating art in the community. MAA is distinguished by its unique endeavor to bringing the arts to all areas of greater Des Moines. Focused on advancing creativity and strengthening the community in which it serves, MAA programs educate and enrich the development of children and adults through schools, organizations, senior centers, and collaborating with other community partners. Its core mission is creating opportunities that provide lifelong access and engagement in the arts for all. To get involved or to request more information about Metro Arts programs, call [515-280-3222](tel:515-280-3222) or visit metroarts.org.

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