



MAY 2025: ART ALONG THE BYWAYS

This month, we focus on public art along each of Iowa's byways, with a particular focus on murals and sculptures. Most of this artwork is accessible year-round, every day, and at no cost for visitors. (A couple of museums have been included and admission fees vary.)

COVERED BRIDGES

Artist James Navarro and fellow designer Katie Jensen created a series of murals to line the alley on the east side of the Winterset courthouse square. The [Winterset Murals](#) are designed to be interactive, offering a unique photographic experience for visitors. The first is a Welcome to Winterset postcard. The second is the American flag with a bald eagle ready to perch on a bystander's arm. Next is a scene depicting a wooden swing (pose as if you're sitting on it) under an apple tree, commemorating the discovery of the Red Delicious Apple in Madison County. (A covered bridge is in the background.) After that, visitors can pose with angel wings - there's even a pair at a lower height for a child or good dog. In the next mural, subjects can shield themselves from a fire-breathing dragon. After that, visitors can step into a scene from Alice in Wonderland or a game of Super Mario Bros.



DELAWARE CROSSING

The public art along the Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway established through the [Byways of Iowa Public Art Initiative](#) celebrates the natural resources of the area. "[Jump In](#)," located at Delhi City Park, was created by late artist and Delhi resident, Mike Seibert, and depicts the joy of water recreation for all ages. In Maquoketa, "[Three Elements](#)" represents sun, water, and agriculture, three elements critical to Manchester's development and success in the past, present, and future.



DRIFTLESS AREA

Public art abounds on the Driftless Area Scenic Byway, with two large pieces installed as part of the [Byways of Iowa Public Art Initiative](#). "[Hometown to the World](#)" in Postville is a dynamic, mosaic globe surrounded by telescopes that represents the diversity of Postville and the beauty of all cultures and religions. In Waukon, "[Crossroads](#)" depicts Waukon's offset intersection and the past, present, and future of the community. Many other sculptures and murals can be found all along the Byway.



GLACIAL TRAIL

This month we are featuring public art on the byway. Located on Highway 10 in Sutherland, just northwest of the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway, [Bogenrief Studios](#) is an internationally acclaimed stained-glass studio located in a former school building. Over the years, Bogenrief Studios has grown from a small house in Seney, Iowa to a studio with a national reputation for exquisite works of art in stained and beveled glass. If you would like to tour Bogenrief Studios, call 712-446-2094 or stop in to see if he has time to show you his incredible studio.



GRANT WOOD

The Grant Wood Scenic Byway is built around art. In addition to many art galleries, murals, and sculptures, two pieces were installed as part of the [Byways of Iowa Public Art Initiative](#). The two large, [kinetic sculptures](#) installed along Riverview Drive in Bellevue emphasize the endless movement of the Mississippi River. Anamosa's "[Geared Up](#)" takes inspiration from Grant Wood's iconic "American Gothic" painting and the former National Motorcycle Museum.



HISTORIC HILLS

Travel the Historic Hills Scenic Byway from July through October to enjoy the annual Bale Trail. The whimsical scarecrows and bale sculptures will put a smile on the face of even the most serious traveler. During your visit be sure to take a photo in front of the angel wings painted by muralist Colette Miller in Bloomfield. The artist has painted murals around the world for her Global Angel Wings project.



IOWA VALLEY

Art is not a new concept to the [Amana Colonies](#). The creation of woolen blankets, wood carvers work, glass-blown art, and handmade furniture have always been a way of life in the Amanas. What is new to the Amana Colonies is the [Homestead Folk Art Museum](#). The Folk Art Museum in [Homestead](#) held a grand opening in April. The museum tells the cultural heritage of the Amana Colonies through objects and regular use objects. Some of the items you might see at the folk museum are antique sewing machines and tools, doll houses fashioned after typical homes, a historic wagon, paintings, rag rugs, crafted baskets, and traditional Christmas decorations. The museum is a result of the [Amana Heritage Society](#) seeking and finding new ways to display history in a meaningful and experiential way.



JEFFERSON HIGHWAY

[Art Farm Iowa](#) is located just outside Northwood on ten acres and is a nonprofit arts organization that features indoor galleries, vibrant murals, sculptures, and repurposed grain bins transformed into studios for ceramics and glasswork. Visitors can enjoy artist residencies, farm-to-table dinners, and interactive exhibits that celebrate both local heritage and global artistic perspectives.

Nearby [Mason City](#) boasts a vibrant art scene. The River City Sculptures on Parade features a 1.7-mile self-guided tour of nearly 100 rotating and permanent outdoor sculptures. The Charles H. MacNider Art Museum offers free admission to its extensive collection of American art, including works by Dale Chihuly and the famous Bil Baird puppets from *The Sound of Music*. [Rancho Deluxe](#), an ever-evolving garden of recycled art, adds a touch of whimsy to the local art landscape. Frank Lloyd Wright's influence permeates the city, evident in the Wright-inspired murals adorning downtown buildings. The city's architectural crown jewel is the Historic Park Inn Hotel, the only remaining hotel designed by Wright.

Stop in Iowa Falls for [the Pat Clark Art Collection](#). (Guided tours available by appointment.) Then wind your way down to Ames for the [31 Cy Sculptures](#) around town. [Des Moines Art Center](#) offers art experiences as well as the [Pappajohn Sculpture Park](#) and other locations in the state's capital. Osceola has a welcoming mural spelling out the town's name. Stop in Lamoni to see the Jefferson Highway mural downtown and the metal cow sculptures at the Iowa Welcome Center.



LINCOLN HIGHWAY

Unique murals and roadside art can be found in almost every small town along the highway. The city of Jefferson recently won the coveted [Great American Main Street Award](#) for their significant investment in public art. The view from the top of the [Mahanay Bell Tower](#) includes a series of rooftop murals as well as murals along the alleyways. Congratulations to [Jefferson Matters](#).



LOESS HILLS

From metal dinosaurs in Plymouth County to cowboy boots in Fremont County, public art is abundant on the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway. While driving through Akron, don't miss the Stegosaurus of Akron along Highway 12. Downtown Sioux City has several murals and the annual [Alley Art Festival](#). As you continue south through the Loess Hills, stop at the beautiful town square of Glenwood. Take a selfie in front of Emily McQueen's mural, then try to find Bigfoot in the colorful Loess Hills landscape.



RIVER BLUFFS

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway has three public art pieces established through the [Byways of Iowa Public Art Initiative](#), and is also home to the [public art piece](#) that inspired the statewide project. Travel the byway and you can look for the map of Guttenberg hidden within "[The Deepest Pattern](#)," enjoy the soft ringing of the interactive "[Three Bells](#)" in Elkader, or admire the view beyond the [artistic fence](#) at Goeken Park in El Dorado.



WESTERN SKIES

"Listen to the Wind" as you are traveling the Western Skies Scenic Byway! "Listen to the Wind" is a public art installation by Artist Hilde DeBruyne, commissioned by the Iowa Byways Project, Public Art Committee of Guthrie Center and the Western Skies Scenic Byways. It is located on Main Street in Guthrie Center. Continue west on Highway 44 to the Danish village of Kimballton to see a copy of The Little Mermaid (the original is in Copenhagen, Denmark). The park has several art pieces related to the fairytales of Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen. Visit Kimballton during Tivoli Fest for an authentic Danish heritage experience!



WHITE POLE ROAD

White Pole Road is home to two public art tributes created by Iowa artist Ray "Bubba" Sorensen that honor the sacrifices of America's service members. Just north of Greenfield along Highway 25 stands the original Freedom Rock—Sorensen's first patriotic mural painted on a massive boulder in 1999 as a tribute to veterans. Each year, he repaints the rock with new artwork depicting military history, local heroes, and national pride. This iconic landmark sparked Sorensen's mission to paint a unique Freedom Rock in every Iowa county. Further along the byway, in Casey's Veterans Memorial Park, visitors can view Sorensen's vivid patriotic murals on the Veterans Wall, which honor the courage and service from all military branches. Together, these two sites showcase the region's deep respect for its heroes and highlight Sorensen's lasting artistic legacy, making both must-see stops for travelers visiting White Pole Road.

