



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Minneapolis Institute of Art and National Museums of Kenya Create Youth Exchanges Focused on Environmental and Social Change**

***Mia awarded Museums Connect Grant from U.S. Department of State, American Alliance of Museums.***

Minneapolis, October 21, 2015—The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) and the National Museums of Kenya (NMK), Nairobi, are partnering to build a cross-cultural exchange and stimulate dialogue around youth empowerment, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion. The program—called “Girls Design the World: Supporting Green Communities with STEAM”—is part of Museums Connect, a joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), which awarded seven grants to 15 museum partners globally earlier this year. STEAM stands for science, technology, engineering, art, and math.

Participating students from Minneapolis and Nairobi will research environmental challenges in their cities, and then address these challenges through a process of design thinking, a tool for brainstorming and prototyping creative solutions to practical problems. Their results will be exhibited in their communities. Participants from the Twin Cities include 22 high school girls from Washburn High School, South High School, FAIR Downtown, Patrick Henry, Twin Cities Academy, St. Paul Central High School, Park Center Senior High School, Mounds Park Academy, Great River School, School of Environmental Studies, Robbinsdale Armstrong High School, Mound Westonka High School, and Minnetonka High School.

“I am thrilled that Mia has received a grant to implement this exciting project. It not only advances our goal of connecting global cultures, but also raises awareness of East African culture in Minneapolis, whose residents include many new Americans from East Africa,” said Kaywin Feldman, Duncan and Nivin MacMillan Director and President of Mia. “Not least, it encourages young women in both Minneapolis and Nairobi to develop skills in STEAM.”

The two teams were introduced to one another and to the concept of design thinking at an inaugural web conference held in mid-October. The Minneapolis girls spent the night at Mia in order to communicate with the Nairobi girls while it was daytime in Kenya. The Minneapolis girls slept in the atrium of Mia's Target Wing under *6EQUJ5* (2012-2013), a digital projection of asteroids moving through space by artist Jennifer Steinkamp, who conferenced with the Minneapolis girls to discuss her creative process and her interest in science.

Following the kick-off, the girls will meet with representatives from local conservation groups, who will assist them in identifying environmental challenges in their communities and the people most impacted by them. Prepared by these briefings, the girls will conduct interviews with community members affected by environmental issues, such as those working in industries producing toxins; people fishing in polluted water for food; those living near garbage dumps; and people with asthma.

Once the interviews are complete, the girls will use design-thinking strategies to translate their ideas into physical prototypes, such as charts, maps, or models, using simple, low-impact materials, including cardboard, paper, foil, wire, and other recyclables. During this phase, four women scientists, artists, or designers in each city will make guest appearances at the museums to guide and encourage the girls' creative activity.

Assisted by museum staff, the girls will organize exhibitions of their notes, sketches, design prototypes, and documentation; exhibitions will be held February 2016. The museums will also host a community event where guests can tour the exhibitions, attend presentations by the girls, and participate in discussions and a short survey about the project.

In the spring, five girls from each city will exchange visits to see each other's exhibitions and meet their counterparts in person. The students will tour studios and labs of the role models involved as well as environmental organizations and major cultural institutions in Minneapolis and Nairobi.

***“Girls Design the World: Supporting Green Communities with STEAM” is a Museums Connect<sup>SM</sup> project. Museums Connect is an initiative of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs that is administered by the American Alliance of Museums.***

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## **About the Minneapolis Institute of Arts**

Home to over 89,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest wide-ranging art collections in the country—Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African—the MIA links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to the MIA is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

Museum hours: Sunday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thursday and Friday 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; Monday closed. For more information, call (612) 870-3000 or visit [artsmia.org](http://artsmia.org).