

JULY 2021

2020- 2021 Annual Report

Museum of Neon Art



Prepared by
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and approved by MONA Executive Board of Directors

MONA

About the Museum of Neon Art

The Museum of Neon Art encourages learning, curiosity, and expression through the preservation, collection and interpretation of neon, electric and kinetic art. Neon is a gateway between scientific principles and artistic expression. Neon illumination integrates electrical technology, creative design, and fundamental concepts of physics and chemistry.

About this Report

During the global pandemic--a time of financial strain and social upheaval--MONA faced numerous existential threats. This report demonstrates how one full-time staff member, five part time MONA staff, and eight board members, not only survived but also thrived.

MONA was mandated closed for over a year. Since MONA reopened to the public in the first week of May after a special members-only preview weekend, our in-person engagement has increased significantly over 2019. MONA has been flooded with new visitors who found us through the museum's social media, virtual and in-person public programming, and free educational materials published during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Museum of Neon Art would like to thank all our supporters for helping us to keep our lights on during this difficult period. Thanks to you, we are celebrating 40 years of existence and looking forward to what we can accomplish in the years to come.

Caring for Our Collection

Early into the pandemic MONA saw an opportunity to conserve funds and protect the Museum's collection of hundreds of vernacular and fine art objects. Staff and interns carefully organized, cataloged, labeled, and safely stored historic tubes, installed and exhibited signs, and worked towards creating an inviting and functional storage space. MONA also created and refined our collections database for future research, maintenance, and study.



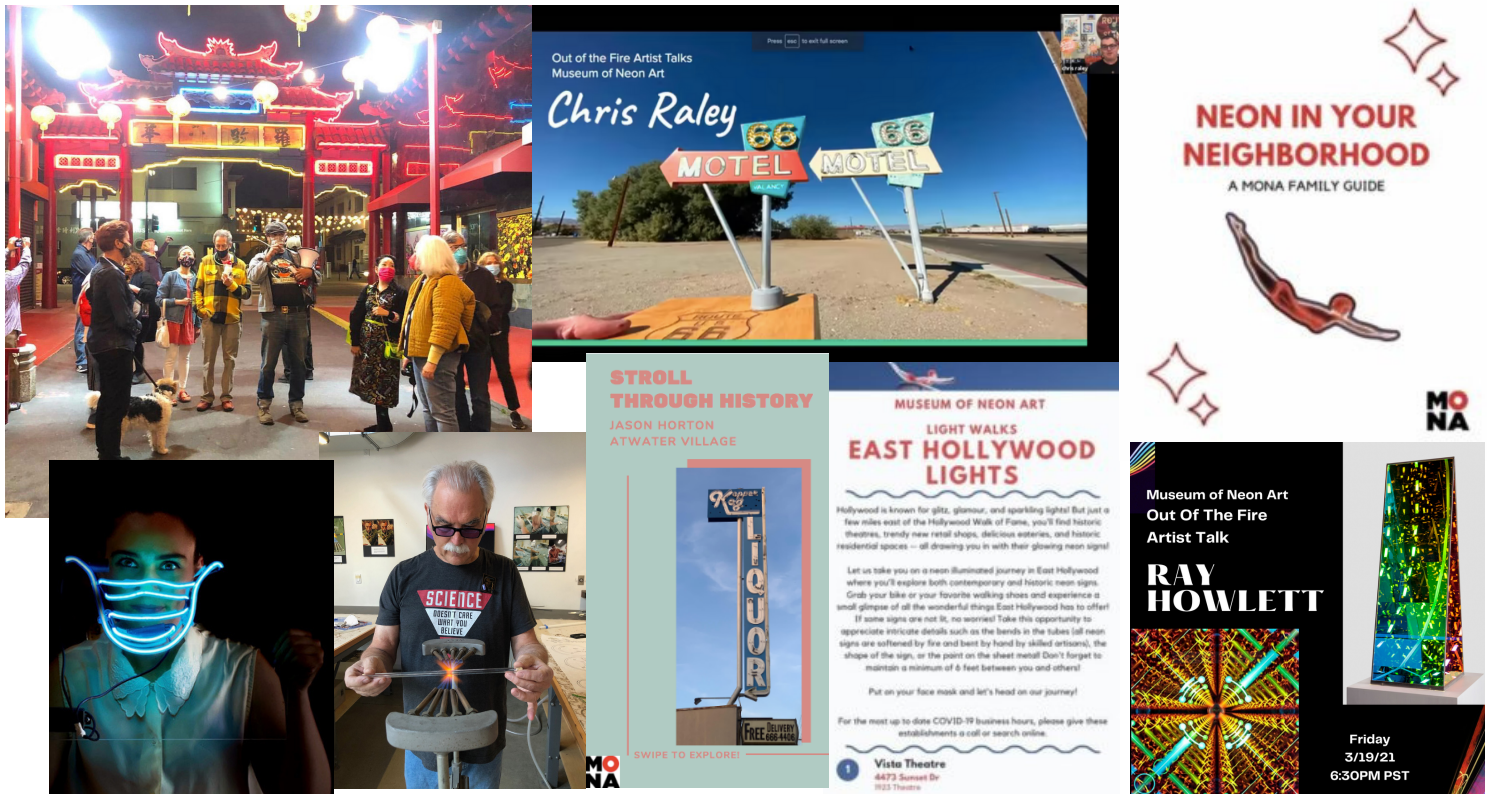
Sign Garden



After large-scale signs were added into the Museum's collection we decided to create a unique outdoor exhibition space in order to expand our exhibition potential. These signs, currently unlit, will grow into a glowing garden where guests will have the opportunity to witness the transformation of these community treasures. As a result of this initiative, our generous donors and members helped us raise over \$20,000 of our \$25,000 goal primarily in the form of small gifts. We look forward to opening the Sign Garden to community viewing very soon.

Programming

MONA shifted to predominantly virtual programs, and incorporated safe, in-person events when possible.



MONA used social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Zoom, Vimeo, and TikTok to provide free programming to guests, to collaborate with artists, historians, and organizations, and more. We were also able to introduce new initiatives and programs to MONA's offerings. Our audience grew to over 60,000 and our educational content was seen by over 2 million people. Programming included:

- 13 free online educational guides for all ages, downloaded over 950 times
- Over 6 new open-air walking tours
- 39 virtual events reaching over 25,000 households
 - 10 artist takeovers, 6 historian takeovers, 16 author interviews
- Weekly free "Out of the Fire - Artist Talks" featuring over 10 artists
- 6 visual descriptions of signs for individuals offered digitally
- Presentations for over 20 independent historic and artistic associations



Window-Based Exhibitions

Though our Museum was mandated closed, we launched window based exhibitions that encouraged discussion, reflection and engagement. Offerings included a group exhibition that examined the symbolism of the American flag, solo exhibitions of work by Brian Coleman, Kunio Ohashi, and Tessie Dong, a memorial to the Armenian Genocide, and selfie-friendly rainbow wings.



Deepening Ties to Glendale

In 2020 the museum set out to invest in community collaboration and to establish a strong foundation as a resource to the community and as a civic space in Glendale, California. MONA advocated and celebrated the city of Glendale's historic Sundown Resolution (public acknowledgement of Glendale's racially discriminatory past), demonstrating how much change this incredible city has seen over the last 100 years. MONA also initiated monthly arts organization check-ins to foster mutual support and community among Glendale art leaders. MONA collaborated with Glendale Out, The Glendale Historical Society, and Glendale Education Foundation. The Museum translated exhibition text to Armenian and Spanish to expand access for all Glendale citizens. We also created window-based exhibitions to honor specific Glendale communities, viewable for free through our windows, the only exhibition space we were allowed to share with the public over the past year.

The City of Glendale generously provided \$48,750 in rental assistance, a \$500 PPE grant, and \$5,000 in arts-grant funding during the pandemic shutdown and re-opening. This assistance, approved by the Glendale City Council, provided the Museum of Neon Art with much of the support needed to weather the extended closures.



Art Acquisitions

Over the past year MONA has acquired significant works from some of the brightest lights, thanks to the generosity of our donors.



In particular, the estate of Janine Smith donated works by Ed Kirshner, Candice Gawne, Michael Flechtner, and Lili Lakich. Candice Gawne donated pedestals, her signature wands and plasma artworks as well as a work by Kathy Foley-Meyer. Dani Bonett donated an argon mercury mask she created during the early days of the pandemic for a MONA instagram studio takeover.

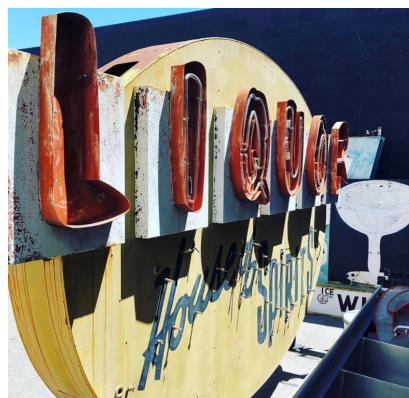
Historic Sign Acquisitions

Signs are not just indicative of a business; they are important markers of community identity. Thanks to our team of preservationists and passionate sign preservation advocates who are always on alert for signs at risk, we were able to acquire signs that have made a significant impact on their communities. We are honored to have such fine icons of craftsmanship and history in our ever-growing collection.



Acquisition Highlights:

- House of Spirits
- Circus of Books
- Cafe Vita Coffee Roasters
- MacIntosh Sign



Advocacy Work



MONA considers neon to be culturally, aesthetically, and historically important. We advocate to keep signs in the built environment when possible considering them integral to community.

In addition to other neon preservation activities such as our neon bus tours, MONA has used its resources, team of historians, and social media to raise awareness of the danger facing beloved signs. It has served as an advocate for their proper protection, preservation, and reuse. For instance, together with other preservationists, MONA advocated for the Alhambra neon from the 1930s, so that other signs nearby would not distract from this historic and newly restored neon. After hearing public comment from MONA and other activists, the City Council unanimously voted to install other signs elsewhere.

MONA also consulted with Howlin' Rays, a popular restaurant chain, on how properly conserve the 1920s-era Adhor Milk Farms neon sign which was uncovered on the building they were moving into.

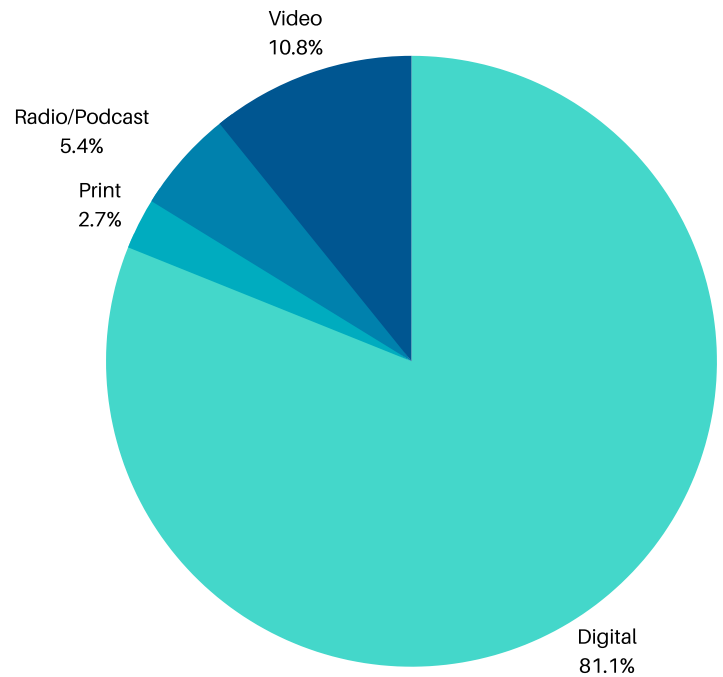
Photo Credit: Alhambra Neon Signs, Esotouric

MONA Media Highlights

MONA was featured in the press over 60 times since the COVID-19 "Safer at Home" orders were implemented, including digital and print articles, podcasts, live local news segments, radio interviews, and more.

WE WERE FEATURED BY:

- KTLA
- HYPERALLERGIC
- NBCLA
- LA TIMES
- GLENDALE NEWS PRESS
- ART DAILY
- KCRW
- ASBAREZ
- SPECTRUM NEWS
- KCET
- VOYAGELA
- AND MORE !



VIRTUAL TOURS

The Museum of Neon Art Glows Online for Night-Bright Tours

Take an after-sundown look at some of the dazzling signage of Glendale and Chinatown, and help support MONA, too.

By Alysia Gray Painter • Published January 21, 2021 • Updated on January 21, 2021 at 10:57 am

Silver Lake 'Circus of Books' sign finds a new home in a neon museum

By Barry Lank • Jun 17, 2020 • 0

Glendale's Museum of Neon Art celebrates June Pride Month

Community
Jun 2



MONA's Neon Wings Prompt Glowful Poses in Glendale

Strolling by the Museum of Neon Art? Pause and snap a picture of the upbeat installation, which brings a message of hope and connection.

By Alysia Gray Painter • Published November 5, 2020 • Updated on November 5, 2020 at 10:06 am



Museum rescues House of Spirits sign from Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles

KTLA Giving Tuesday: The Museums- Museum of Neon Art



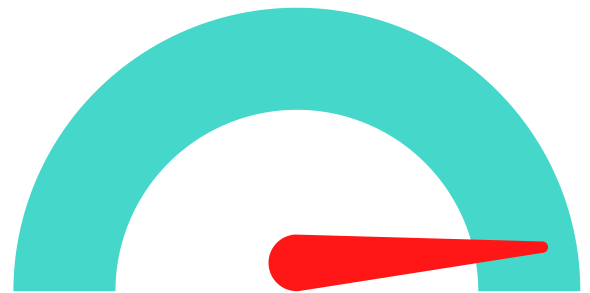
Increase in Membership

This year, we saw an increase in membership, from local and international supporters.

Memberships allow us to share our unique programs, events, and engagement opportunities with neon enthusiasts. When people sign up for a MONA membership, they not only receive discounts and access to members-only content, but also become parts of the MONA community.

+58%

*New or renewed
members since April 2020*



Increase in Donations

The generous individual and institutional support shown to MONA during the pandemic shutdown is unparalleled. Through large and small donations, we were able to maintain job security while providing innovative opportunities for engagement.

+282%



Pandemic closures put MONA at risk of shuttering forever, MONA applied for numerous grants and government and privately funded assistance programs to help protect the museum, collection, and staff; however, aside from the grant assistance that helped keep MONA afloat, MONA's supporters, members, and community came together and selflessly donated to help protect the museum.

40 Years Of Light



When MONA was founded in Los Angeles in 1981, it was the only museum dedicated to preserving neon, electric, and kinetic art. At a time when the city was losing its glow and neon sign shops were losing their customers, the Museum aimed to protect neon as a form of both vernacular and fine art. In part due to the Museum's advocacy, neon is seeing a renaissance. Contemporary artists, glass benders, craftspeople, and enthusiasts see the light and honor the skill, craftpersonship, and historic legacy of this unique art form.

Our current exhibition showcases artworks from the 1980s through 2020 and honors a range of approaches toward light. Artwork by community members who continue to shape MONA's vision and push toward experimentation are exhibited alongside works from the Museum's permanent collection. The exhibition illustrates neon's dynamic and varied legacy as well as the ways that MONA itself represents a sum of the contributions of its vibrant community. MONA continues to exist as an artist-run museum strengthened by artists who have shared tof their unique vision and paved a bright path forward for critical thought, experimentation, and artistic innovation.

Grants



MONA received \$125,000 in contributions from government, community, and individual grantors, large and small. Large donors included the Payment Protection Program, The Getty Foundation, The California Community Foundation, Los Angeles County Arts and Culture, the City of Glendale, the Anders Foundation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation. MONA also received a pledge of \$154,000 from the LA Arts Recovery Fund to be dispersed over the next 2 years.

Organizational Donors

California Community Foundation (2)
Anders Foundation (2)
LA County Arts Grant (2)
City of Glendale PPE Grant Reimbursement
City of Glendale, Support the Arts Program
LA Regional Covid-19 Recovery Fund
CA Relief Grant for Arts and Cultural Program
Los Angeles Breakfast Club
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Sydney Stern Memorial Trust
Northern Advertising Neon LLC
Amazon Smile

Thank You

Sustaining Donors

*The following individuals were the top donors to MONA in the past year. * indicates MONA membership*

Ann Agan	Emily Heyer	Chris Naito*	Clifton Stubblefield
Ren Ridolfi &	Dee Iacopelli*	Louis Nastro*	Shion Svenson*
Monica Y. Almanza*	Tom Jacobsmeyer*	Dani Novack	Tod Swormstedt
Valerie + William Anders*	Chris Jaszowski	Glen Norman*	Justin Taber
Tim Anderson*	Joseph Jurca	Eric Norris	Mark Title
Patrick Arit	Catherine Jurca*	Vivian-Lee Nyitray*	Leslie Tokunaga
Lorena Barrett	Darren Kameya	Rui Ogura-Lalli*	Martin Treu
Richard Beltran	Charlie Kim*	Chris Pahl*	Dennis Trombley
Dana Blatt	Edward Kirshner*	Vic Pallos*	Domenic Valentino
Nena S Cassidy	Laura Kittrell	Emilie Pallos*	Frank Varnell
Andrea Cavanaugh	John Knuth	Steven Papkin	Arlene Vidor*
Mark Chiolis	Kim Koga	Gary Parks	Ken Wagar*
Richelle + Thomas Cliché*	Carol Kopf*	Arlt Patrick	Paul Walker-Lanz
Connie Conway*	Nagi Koyama	Julio Perez	Julie Wheeler
Omar Cordes	Ashleyann Krigbaum	Sue Piccard	Glen Whitney
John Covey*	Erich Lazar*	Babette &	Amber Wierenga
Brandee B Cox	Harper Leblanc*	Steven Pinsky	William &
Allison Deegan	Craig Lechowicz*	Gumball Poodle	Elaine Wilkerson
Dydia DeLyser*	Craig Leff	Curt Porterfield*	Pat Williams*
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Tali & Ru Epstein-Santoyo	Toni Livingston*	Linda Sue Price*	Diane Wong
Mitchell Farmer	Diana Lloyd	Valentina Quezada	Adam Yakira
Michael Flechtner*	Marjorie Lucas*	Dave Quick	Stuart Ziff*
Teresa Flint	William Lynch	Vivian Quintana	
Irving + Kathie Foley-Meyer*	J. Eric Lynxwiler*	Chris Raley	
Ginger & Carmer Fowler	Carolyn McDemas*	Paul Rayton*	
Scott Fraser	Lori McDonald	Audrey Riechers	
Fred Frey*	Brian McGlasson	Albert Rodriguez	
Rosalie Friis-Ross*	Charles Tuggle &	Tracy Royce	
Raymond Fujioka	Catherine McIntosh*	Guy & Leah Sappington*	
Michelle & Steve Gerdes*	Ferdinand Metz*	Stephen Saunders	
Charles Getzoff*	Corrina Miller	Ted Schundler	
Lisa Godfrey*	Corey Miller*	John Schuning	
Anita & Tom Goswami*	Jackie Mitchell*	Laura Scott Sellers*	
Greg Grammer	Charlotte Mooij	Becky Asato Seo	
Trudy & Victor Green	Linda Morris*	Jerry & Diane Siegel	
Paul Greenstein*	Peter Moruzzi*	David Smith	
Adam Hall	Adam Muto	Steven Spiegel*	
Kathy Hanks	Bob and Ann Myers	Lida Strong	
Karen Hayes			

Thank You Individual Donors

Individual donors helped us make it through the challenges we faced as a small non-profit museum. Even the smallest donation contributed to the survival of MONA. We would like to thank each of our donors for helping us.



THANK YOU!

We would not be here without you!



Your dedication and commitment to MONA helped keep our staff of six employed throughout the pandemic. Although our doors were closed, we were able to push through with new programming and digital outreach because of the generous support of donors, members, and private and public organizations.

We are grateful that after such a difficult year, we have the opportunity to open our doors, and celebrate our 40th anniversary of sharing the light, preserving and advocating for the protection of neon signs and art in the built environment and in our collection.