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EDITOR'S PICK

\$25M renovation, expansion planned for Kearney's Museum of Nebraska Art

Kearney Hub
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KEARNEY — The Museum of Nebraska Art in Kearney will close Nov. 1 for a renovation, restoration and expansion project.

The MONA board has started a capital campaign to raise \$25 million for the project, and an additional \$5 million for an operating endowment to ensure relevant programming that pays attention to the needs of present and future Nebraskans.

“We are passionately committed to showcasing the Nebraska Art Collection. The need to expand, restore and renovate MONA’s current facilities to meet future needs has been evident for more than a decade,” said Tom Gallagher, newly elected president of the MONA Board of Directors. “A transformed MONA will be a source of discovery and delight through educational programming and events in addition to offering more inviting galleries, exhibits and indoor/outdoor public spaces.”

The project will include a 23,000-square-foot expansion that will showcase exhibits in light-filled galleries, along with spaces open to the public, according to a MONA news release.

Established by the Nebraska Legislature in 1979, MONA is the home of the Nebraska Art Collection, which celebrates Nebraska’s artistic culture and heritage by collecting and preserving, exhibiting and interpreting the art of Nebraska. The permanent

collection of nearly 6,000 works reflects nearly 200 years of history by artists with local, national or international acclaim.

The design advances the goals of expanded and enhanced art and public spaces, while increasing accessibility throughout the museum.

Elements of the museum's transformation include:

- Welcoming new entrances allowing ease of access for visitors of all ages and abilities.
- Additional galleries embracing new technology and allowing more extensive display of the museum's permanent collection and special exhibitions.
- A community studio stocked with supplies and tools for daily use and special programming.
- A more expansive outdoor space featuring native Nebraska plants and foliage in addition to sculpture and dedicated areas for outdoor programming and events.
- An expanded Gary E. Zaruba Library and Research Center will accommodate the growing collection of books, reference materials and ephemera.
- A centrally located open commons area and Anne Thorne Weaver Museum Shop. The commons area will include comfortable lounge seating and a coffee bar.
- Increased square footage for artwork storage and exhibition preparation.
- Fully updated mechanical systems with special attention to collection safety.

During the construction period and leading up to MONA's reopening, the museum's staff members will be relocated and offer ways to stay connected to MONA and its collection through online and off-site initiatives. In addition, MONA will team with other cultural partners to offer programs, according to the news release.

Gerry and Bruce Lauritzen, honorary campaign co-chairs for the campaign for MONA and the Future of Nebraska Art, commented: “As stewards of the Nebraska Art Collection, MONA’s leadership has diversified the museum’s programming, expanded the collection and made art accessible to individuals across Nebraska through programs like ARTreach and Miles to MONA. The renovation, restoration and expansion of MONA will prepare the museum for the future — and the future of Nebraska art.”

“This exciting transformation of MONA will anchor this institution as an innovative and collaborative community partner,” said Nicole Herden, executive director of MONA. “With new and improved spaces for visitors to gather and participate, the mission of MONA will be evident beyond simply our wonderful collection in even more spacious galleries.

“When the museum reopens, visitors will enjoy welcoming areas in and outside the museum, from natural light-filled lounge spaces inside the museum to outdoor terraces with seating among an enhanced sculpture garden and beautiful landscapes,” she added.

MONA’s ARTreach program will continue to provide exhibitions to communities throughout Nebraska. Since 2000, more than 350 ARTreach exhibitions have been sent to communities throughout the state.