

StudioNews



Photos: Charlie Simokaitis

MUSEUMS

American Writers Museum Opens on Michigan Avenue

Chicago Scenic worked closely with Andy Anway, founder and principal at Amaze Design in Boston for more than 12 months to develop his design concepts and bring them to life at The American Writers Museum, the nation's newest museum, now open and located on Chicago's celebrated Michigan Avenue.

The 11,000 sq. ft. museum's objective is to engage visitors (and readers) of all ages and at many different levels, to enrich and deepen their appreciation for writers and writing in all forms.

Many interactives that Chicago Scenic developed invite that engagement, such as the "American Voices" timeline in the "Writer's Hall", explains Jim Mallerdino, Chicago Scenic's Senior Project Manager for the AWM project.

"American Voices" is an 80-foot, multilayered interactive that features 100 American writers from the 1700's through the early 1960's. Visitors flip displays, view video screens and absorb brief capsules of information. The "Surprise Bookshelf", also located in Writer's Hall, features boxes that slide open to disclose a hidden tidbit about the writer's life and work, delivered through words, graphics, video clips, or the occasional surprise artifact.

Nestled into the end of the Writer's Hall long hallway is a restful and hypnotic digital "Word Waterfall".

Seemingly random letters assemble as brief quotes from writers—Kurt Vonnegut to Langston Hughes—then slide away in a cascade of water with an accompanying soundtrack provided by nature.

Other museum highlights include a children's area that features an original mural painted by Paul O. Zelinsky that will entertain children with its whimsical collection of squirrels reading or snoozing in treetops. In the Readers Hall, visitors have an opportunity to lounge and read or linger for a moment and begin to write their own masterpiece on authentic clattering typewriters. That space serves double-duty, also acting as a gathering place during the Museum's planned social and learning events.

Visitors can also currently view beat-generation writer Jack Kerouac's typewritten paper scroll, brown with



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American Writers Museum Opens in Chicago *continued*

age, of “On the Road”. The scroll is on temporary loan, and will be followed by a rotation of other future temporary exhibits.

One of the major highlights of the project, Mallerdino adds, was managing the large team of specialty subcontractors who contributed to the Museum’s success, while still maintaining the fabrication schedule. “The graphics alone—nearly 1,000 of them—created an organizational challenge.”

The large team of specialty subcontractors and specialists who contributed to the Museum’s inviting, technological interactives was invaluable. Those partners include Northern Light Productions out of Boston, who created the software for four large Ideum touchscreen table interactives, Silver Oaks Communications in Moline, IL, who developed the media for additional interactives and Media Dynamics Inc. in Milwaukee, who developed the Anatomy of a Masterwork interactive. Supporting the interactive and media development, Creative Technology provided AV system design, integration, hardware and installation. Protolight provided additional system and lighting integration and control to the exhibits.

The Museum was the brainchild of Malcolm E. O’Hagen, a retired executive from Washington, D.C. and a current member of the museum’s Board of Directors. Carey Cranston is the institution’s inaugural President.



Photo: Denise Riesen

Customer Experience Focus for McDonald’s Gallery Walk

Chicago Scenic Studios, under the direction of Kindle Communications, recently constructed a unique meeting space for McDonald’s. Between the months of February and May, owner/operators, corporate employees, partners, and senior leadership of McDonald’s traveled to Chicago from all over the world.

The objective was to attend presentations on McDonald’s long-term growth strategy and learn about the company’s innovations focusing on the customer experience. Attendees spent time in small group rotations and gathered together in the centralized meeting area that Chicago Scenic created.

For that meeting area, Chicago Scenic built a light and sound booth under a set of stairs and created a 24-foot-tall LED wall that curved into the presentation stage. Designed by Johnienn Papandreas, the curved screen was a free standing structure. Because of that, custom supports were built to adequately brace the LED screens and the curved portion of the back drop.

In addition to the items built, CSSI dressed the meeting area with seating for 120 people, decorated the windows with custom vinyl prints, and coordinated lighting effects with lighting design firm Lightswitch.





Photo: Chicago Scenic Studios, Inc.

ENVIRONMENTS

Indian Trails Public Library Kid Zone

Northwest suburban Wheeling's new Indian Trails Public Library now also features a new Kid Zone that opened this spring and was an instant hit. The Kid Zone was part of the district's \$14.4 million renovations and brings the one-of-a-kind experience to Wheeling residents since the nearest public children's interactive space is 30 minutes away.

The new library was designed by Product Architecture and Design and the 2,500 sq. ft. play area was engineered and fabricated by Chicago Scenic Studios.

One of the Kid Zone's main structures is a Lego house where children can build Lego structures on one side of the house that reach all the way to the house's roof. Another feature is a giant light-brite wall where children place colored, translucent sticks into a light board. On another side is a dry-erase-magnet wall with gear magnets that lock together and spin. The house's interior features an art station where craft classes are held with a sink area for easy cleanup.

Included in the Kid Zone is an interactive overhead ball run. The ball run is highlighted by a custom-made auger which lifts balls 10 feet and sends them through various tubes, of which are over 50 feet long which connect the three other Kid Zone's areas. The balls exit at 2 locations where the kids can collect them and place them back into the system.

The various areas where balls travel include a velcro wall where children can create different shapes with foam pieces, a doll house, a toy kitchen and a Plinko board. The ball run includes several switch mechanisms which turn the ball from one area to another allowing for a varied user experience as the balls travel through the ball run.

Development of this one of a kind interactive was a long process and involved several iterations of mockups, prototypes and hours of testing. The auger has several built in safety features including a custom draw entry mechanism which prevents children from accessing the actual mechanics, variable motor speed for fine tuning the ball travel and safety fault which shuts down the auger if there is a problem.

In between the Lego house and toy kitchen area is a table-top train and puzzle station.

This is the second opportunity Chicago Scenic has had to work with Production Architecture and Design. In March of 2015, Chicago Scenic completed the architectural firm's design for a different children's library area, this one in Wauconda. (See Vol. 24, No. 1, Winter 2015 Studio News)

EVENTS

Blackhawks Jersey



This spring, Chicago Scenic Studios dressed the brachiosaurus at The Field Museum in a custom made Chicago Blackhawks jersey to celebrate the Chicago Blackhawks entering the end-of-season playoffs. While this isn't the first time the brachiosaurus has donned a Blackhawks jersey, this year's jersey was brand new and a perfect fit. According to Project Director Gary Heitz, the old jersey was weather worn, and the museum requested a replacement.

In addition to constructing the Chicago Blackhawks jersey, Chicago Scenic has also created a Chicago Bears jersey and Chicago Cubs jersey for the brachiosaurus.

ENVIRONMENTS

James Beard Awards



Photo: Marc Fiorito/Gamma Nina Photography / Produced by Bowen & Co.

For the third year in a row, Chicago Scenic Studios has built and installed the custom staging elements for the James Beard Awards, an annual award ceremony presented by the James Beard Foundation for excellence in cuisine, culinary writing, and culinary education in the United States.

Designed by Urma Hardjakusumah, the simple yet beautiful design featured seven floor to ceiling set pieces. The ladder and window shade like structures were created from wire and long, tubular pieces made from Polygal, the same material that is used to build green houses.

Chicago Scenic was also responsible for creating several break out areas behind the scenes.

NEWS

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