

"SO... WHAT'S NEW?"

A question never more relevant in the evolution of MONA.

As many of you know, MONA came to life in 1976, a birthday fortuitously shared with the nation's bicentennial. The modest collection began with fewer than 30 pieces, humbly housed on the Kearney State College campus, now the

University of Nebraska, Kearney. In a relatively short span of 10 years through the efforts of a core group of volunteers and community supporters, the collection expanded and was moved to the magnificent and historic former Kearney Post Office.

Today, the seeds of MONA have grown into a nationally-recognized institution housing over 5,000 works of art, dedicated to community both home and abroad.

Flash-forward to 2022: In response to our growing collection, and in a bid to host more participatory programs and events that serve our burgeoning membership, we launched a major campaign to restore and expand the Museum. This was the start of an exciting new chapter for MONA, and we were overwhelmed by the support we have received. While we continue to secure additional lead gifts, we are currently at just over 75% of the \$36.5 million goal! We are now close to moving into the public phase, which is certain to create the kind of excitement that will push us towards the finish line.

When I reflect on the answer to "What's new?" in the new year, I am in awe of what lies ahead for MONA. Kicking off 2023, our passionate staff and tireless volunteers are "all hands on deck" and eager to introduce new offsite ARTreach exhibitions; multi-media online shows; an interactive demonstration series; and of course, helping usher the new construction and renovations through to our 2024 completion.

In addition, we are thrilled to introduce a bold rebrand of MONA's logo. This fresh identity aligns with the transformation of MONA, as we present ourselves as a vital destination, while marking another major milestone in the Museum's history. The new logo is a dramatic change that is designed to evoke curiosity and innovation. I feel confident that this is an enduring and suitable symbol that will serve the organization for decades - we hope you do too!

We are thankful to all those who have believed in the importance of investing in the Museum and the art of Nebraska. Our gratitude for our humble beginnings and enthusiasm for the future is unmeasurable. We look forward to celebrating more MONA with you soon.

Cheers to an exciting 2023!

Executive Director



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WINTER 2023

CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

As we experienced the progression of the project from planning to drawings, a scale model to digital walkthroughs - we are now starting to see it all come together!

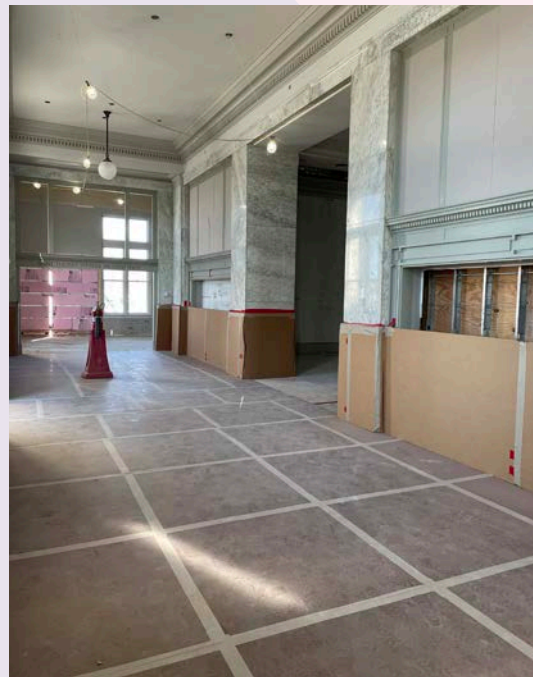
The expansion, restoration, and renovation of the Museum is on-track for a 2024 reopening. This past fall, Phase One of construction began with the removal of both the parking lot and Sculpture Garden, in order to make way for the new addition. Geo-thermal wells were installed, a major improvement that will keep the buildings temperature-controlled throughout the seasons. Shoring of the existing building's foundation has recently begun, and the "big dig" for the new footings is next in line.

The next major milestone will be to excavate roughly 9,000 square feet for the two-story expansion. In preparation, surrounding ground water is being removed, pumping about 1,300 gallons-per-minute of water over the course of 4 months.



At this point, roughly 600-800 cubic yards of concrete will be poured, creating the three-foot foundation. Following the foundation pour, steel members will be installed to bolster the mass wood timbers that will serve in support of the new structure.

MONA selected Timberlyne - an award-winning Wayne, Nebraska timber manufacturer - to pre-fabricate the structural timbers. Timberlyne's specialized machinery is designed specifically for this type of material and will precut all connections with extreme precision, greatly reducing the amount of work and time on the job site, resulting in lower costs. The timber offers a combination of aesthetics and sustainability, structural integrity, and design flexibility. In the Museum's commitment to implementing renewable,



reusable and sustainable practices, we're confident that wood is the most long-lasting, low-carbon alternative to steel, concrete, and masonry.

In addition to construction of the new addition, we're pleased to share that the historic building's renovation has made steady progress. Walls have been removed, and one can finally get a sense of the reimagined spaces. It's fun to note that there have been little "discoveries" along the way, revealing hidden features behind the walls. Where possible, the Museum will include these revelations in the final design, honoring the original structure's rich history and beauty.

If you find yourself in the neighborhood, feel free to take a peek! You can also follow us on social media for construction updates.

PROGRAMMING

As a new year begins, we are excited for the opportunity to reconnect! A variety of learning and engagement opportunities are in the works, and we look forward to sharing more about those in the upcoming months.

Not only are we creating great experiences for you, we are also reengaging our Outreach program. Once again, our MONA Docents will be able to provide onsite visits to senior living facilities and area classrooms. Does this opportunity interest you? If so, we would love your help! The MONA Docent program is an essential part of the Museum's educational programming and performs one of the most important and far-reaching functions: breathing life into the experience of the exhibitions and artwork for groups of all ages. If you would like more information, please contact the Museum at (308) 865-8559.

We invite you to become a member by going to mona.unk.edu. Want to be sure you don't miss more MONA? Follow the Museum of Nebraska Art on Facebook and Instagram.

COLLECTION SPOTLIGHT

Juan Hamilton's abstract sculptures offer little clues about what inspired them, what they are made of, and how they are made—which is precisely the artist's intriguing intention. His organic sculptures are, in his own words, searching for "a space that exists out there that transcends time and transcends context that is very real and has to do with something everybody is looking for and can't find."

Hamilton's professional art career began in 1964 when he arrived in Nebraska to study at Hastings College. After a brief stint in New York in 1966, he returned to Nebraska, graduating from Hastings College in 1968. Hamilton then spent the next five years traveling, teaching, studying, and refining his style before moving to New Mexico in 1973.

Chance (or perhaps, fate?) introduced Hamilton and the famed American painter Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986), which proved to be a pivotal moment in the artist's life. He became her assistant and friend for the remainder of her life and was invited to set up a kiln and studio at her Ghost Ranch property outside Abiquiu, New Mexico. With O'Keeffe's support and

encouragement, Hamilton built up a substantial body of work and was given a series of solo shows in New York, Houston, and Los Angeles. The quiet mysteries of his simplistic forms also earned museum attention. His work has since been collected by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Art Institute of Chicago, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Saint Louis Art Museum, Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.



After O'Keeffe's death in 1986, Hamilton became the object of much gossip when he was named a primary beneficiary of O'Keeffe's estate. Although Hamilton has described their relationship as platonic, professional, and grounded in mutual respect,

speculation has followed the artist throughout his career. His artistic legacy appears to be inextricably linked to O'Keeffe, but the ambiguity and precision of his forms beg for careful and independent consideration.

Juan Hamilton, *Sal* ceramic, glaze; 1988, Museum Purchase made possible by Cliff & Mary Hillegass Trusts Museum of Nebraska Art Collection