



# AUTRY MUSEUM

Challenge • Discover • Celebrate  
THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE AUTRY

## TRANSFORMING THE AUTRY'S GRIFFITH PARK CAMPUS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

“What endures . . . is the work of museums like the Autry Museum of the American West. You’ve done a remarkable job . . . in broadening the scope of history. Americans for a long time have told a fairly narrow bandwidth, and what’s so impressive about this extraordinary institution is that it’s ever more inclusive.”

—Ken Burns







# A Destination to Learn and Play

Kids and families of all shapes and sizes are at the heart of our museum. Our dynamic exhibitions, arts and cultural offerings, and educational programs share the following goals: to 1) make history relevant, 2) facilitate learning for everyone who walks through our doors, and 3) celebrate the stories of the diverse families of the American West, connecting the past with the present to inspire our shared future.

With our commitment to educating present and future generations, the Autry will dramatically expand and improve its public spaces to include a **Family Play Gallery**, an **Education Center**, and a revitalized **Performing Arts Center**. This project will be the museum's most significant transformation in its 30-year history.







## Family Play Gallery

The **Family Play Gallery** will meet a tremendous demand by Autry visitors to have a space dedicated to experiential and educational activities for children.

At nearly 5,000 square feet, the new Family Play Gallery will provide an immersive, hands-on space where children and their families can play, be creative, and have fun—all while learning about the many peoples and cultures of the West. A variety of interactive activities, exploratory adventures, and learning experiences will inspire curiosity, discovery, and imaginative play.

The development of this space follows the success of the Autry's temporary *Play!* exhibition, which

attracted tens of thousands of children and their families during its run from June 2017 to January 2018. With its whimsical design and focus on activities with intergenerational appeal, this exhibition received rave reviews from children, parents, and grandparents alike—and enabled Autry staff to conduct surveys and interviews regarding future plans for programs and exhibitions designed especially for this audience. The research indicated significant interest in ongoing “drop-in” spaces and activities for children between the ages of two and ten years old.





### Visitor Comments During the Autry's *Play!* Exhibition, 2017

“Love the children’s interactive exhibit. It’s what made us become members. Please do more children-related stuff like this!”

“I brought my two-year-old this morning and we literally stayed for three hours without him getting bored.”

“With a disabled adult group—the interactive exhibits were so enjoyable for them (and us!). It was very insightful and fun.”





## Education Center

The Autry will transform its current classroom spaces into a state-of-the-art **Education Center**. The revitalized center will support the museum's many educational initiatives and enable the launch of the Autry Academy, a series of continuing education and lifelong learning programs that aims to engage existing and new audiences in fresh thinking and intergenerational dialogue about the American West.

Five multipurpose rooms will be outfitted with wireless connectivity; art-making supplies and equipment; and the capacity to conduct distance learning. The renovation and expansion of these spaces, along with existing field trips and hands-on lessons, will enable the Autry to increase the number of students it serves onsite.



The Autry's educational programs reflect the museum's commitment to engaging students and their teachers in understanding the history, peoples, and environment of the American West, while also making clear to students that such research and learning can have usable, meaningful outcomes in the fields of art, education, science, technology, and civil society. The Autry is proud to educate, inspire, and enrich its more than 200,000 visitors and program participants each year, including more than 40,000 students (of which approximately 80% come from low-income communities) and 2,000 teachers.

## Adventures in Learning: Addressing the Need for Museum Education Programs

Through its K-12 student and teacher programs the Autry encourages students to ask questions about the past, work collaboratively to solve problems, and appreciate the diversity of the people and places that make up the American West. Programs are designed to advance student critical thinking, leadership, and teamwork skills, among others. They also play a critical role in enhancing teacher resources and complementing classroom experiences. All programs follow state-mandated curricular standards, including History/Social Studies and Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) content standards. Since March 2017, following the opening of the Autry's Ethnobotanical Garden and *Human Nature* exhibition, the Autry has begun integrating STEM (science-technology-engineering-math) subject matter into more of its educational programs.

Examples of specific educational initiatives include the following:

- **Autry School Tours**, which reach at least 30,000 K-12 students annually (82% from low-income families and communities) across Southern California via docent-led tours of the museum and hands-on classroom lessons. Many Title I schools, which serve largely low-income student populations, are provided free bus transportation, ensuring free access for more than 10,000 underserved students annually.
- The **Autry-in-Residence program**, which sends museum educators into 3rd- through 5th-grade classrooms with collections of replica objects and grade-specific lesson plans covering history topics related to the American West.
- The **Autry Teachers Academy**, an intensive training for K-12 teachers focused on best practices in history education, project-based learning, and the Common Core curriculum.





- The **Autry Classroom Curators program**, which helps teachers design project-based learning units for their classrooms using themes related to the museum's mission. Student capstone projects are then premiered at either the museum or their schools for an invited audience of parents, teachers, museum professionals, and philanthropists. At the end of the school year, students, teachers, and community partners gather at the Autry for a **Social Action Symposium** to share their projects.
- An annual **Student Visual Arts Exhibition**, which invites students throughout California to create artworks that respond to a prompt put forth by the Autry. Students are invited to create original works of art that reflect, explain, and define the cultures of the American West.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: Citizen Journalism Project

The Autry takes seriously the need to educate students and teachers alike in sound historical education and civic

engagement. With each new exhibition, the Autry considers ways to supplement exhibitions with educational and community programming. In response to the Autry's 2017–2019 *LA RAZA* exhibition, the Autry's Education team was interested in the fact that many of the journalists and photographers who worked for the magazine were young people from East Los Angeles and other similar communities. Museum visitors who visit the Autry on field trips and participate in outreach programs are often young people from the same communities.

The Autry invited local residents to serve as citizen journalists and document their community's challenges, successes, issues, and stories. The definition of "community" was left to each participant, and their definitions included community as gender, ethnicity, religion, neighborhood, and even basketball teammates. Participants submitted 391 photographs, essays, poems, and artworks. Education staff reviewed the submissions based on newsworthiness, artistic quality, and originality, and created a series of publications distributed onsite at the museum and online via the Autry's website.









## Educational Partnerships

Collaborating with organizations similarly interested in education and empowerment is a key strategy in the work of the Autry's Education Department. In recent years, the Autry has partnered with artworxLA, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting arts education in continuation high schools. Its programming depends on partnerships with cultural institutions to train teaching artists on themes that emerge from the institution's exhibitions and programming. The artists take those themes into the classroom and work with students to create works of art that are displayed and accompanied by panel discussions and other programs. Additional partnering organizations include the LA Opera, GlobalGirl Media, WriteGirl, and Las Fotos Project, all of which are dedicated to empowering young women, especially of color, to share their opinions through a range of media.

“Professional historians taught us how to think like historians, and therefore, be able to teach our children to think like historians . . . the Autry programs have made a significant difference in my work.”

—Autry Teacher Academy Participant

“Working on a project like this is different from learning history in a history class because this project has been a lot more hands-on. We’ve been able to research and go to sites to learn from people . . . I feel really proud of this work.”

—Eighth-Grade Student Participant







## Performing Arts Center

### Film and Performing Arts at the Autry

The Autry is committed to telling the stories of all peoples of the American West—past and present. Public programs such as films and seminars stimulate the development of cultural and historical literacy, and they foster cross-cultural and cross-generational understanding and respect. Our nationally recognized resident theatre company, Native Voices at the Autry, amplifies the voices and talents of Native American, First Nations, and Alaska Native playwrights and actors. Our focus on partnerships and collaborative, community-focused programming encourages a diversity of cultures and perspectives.

The Autry's Well Fargo Theater is the main location for many public programs, including film screenings, lectures, and performances by Native Voices. Designed nearly 30 years ago, much of the 200-seat theatre's original interior, acoustics, and technology remains untouched.

The Autry will undertake a major renovation of this venue, including new state-of-the-art lighting and sound systems; new seating and a larger stage to accommodate diverse programming; essential tools that make the theatre more accessible to and enjoyable for audiences; and a modern lobby that can double as a second event space.







The enhanced theatre will serve as a gathering space for dialogue and discovery about the history, art, and cultures of the American West, as well as enable the Autry to expand its performing arts programs.







## Native Voices at the Autry

As the country's only Equity theatre company dedicated exclusively to producing new works by Native American, Alaska Native, and First Nations playwrights, **Native Voices at the Autry** has been hailed by critics as "a virtual Who's Who of American Indian theatre artists," "a hotbed for contemporary Native theatre," "deeply compelling," and "a powerful and eloquent voice." Native Voices provides a supportive, collaborative setting for Native theatre artists from across North America. Founded in 1994, it became the resident theatre company at the Autry in 1999. It is widely respected in both the Native American and theatre communities for its breakthrough

plays and diverse programming, through which Native playwrights develop their work, gain confidence, and contribute to the national dialogue..

Native Voices has staged more than 30 plays since its founding. *Bingo Hall* (2018) by Dillon Chitto (Mississippi Choctaw) was developed during a Native Voices Playwrights Retreat, performed at the subsequent Festival of New Plays, and then staged in the Wells Fargo Theater for a total of more than 1,000 audience members. Many plays developed and produced by Native Voices have gone on to theatres around the country. *Off the Rails*, adapted by Randy Reinholz (Choctaw) from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, premiered at Native Voices in 2015 and was the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's first play by a Native American playwright when it opened there in 2017.





## About the Native Voices Artists Ensemble

The Native Voices Artists Ensemble is a member group composed of Native American actors, writers, directors, and other theatre artists who are eager to grow professionally and advance the mission of the organization. The Ensemble develops and presents new works inspired by the Autry's collections and exhibitions. Its members benefit from year-round professional development and performance opportunities, as well as connections to theatres and film/television companies seeking Native talent.





## Film at the Autry

With its various film and media offerings, the Autry aims to provide an educational viewing experience. Visitors not only watch the film but also participate in prescreening introductions with filmmakers and experts who facilitate the context of the film. They may learn about historical events, people, and/or traditions previously unknown to them. Los Angeles residents and visitors experience a diverse array of theatrical motion pictures, often screened in 35mm to enhance the audience experience.

Until recently, the film programs have focused primarily on classic Westerns. **Gene Autry Double Features** are shown on a bimonthly basis and the ongoing series **What Is a Western?** explores the context in which Western movies were made, while expanding the genre to include films such as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Glory*, and *Cars*. But parallel to the evolution of the museum's galleries—which interpret Western cultural history to include exhibitions from *Route 66* to *LA RAZA*—our growing film program seeks to more fully achieve a portrayal of the West that extends far beyond its legendary genre.

In the recent past, the museum has screened the pathbreaking Native American film *Smoke Signals*; the animated film *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West*; the new documentary *Beyond Standing Rock*; and the original documentary on Native Californians and the environment (co-produced by the Autry and KCETLink) *Tending*

*the Wild*. Classic Westerns also get a fresh look: for instance, a screening of the epic film *Giant* took on new dimension with a Latino/a studies scholar's introduction that connects the film to the experience of real Mexican American farmworkers.

Most recently, the Autry has collaborated with studios to host **advance screenings** of films such as *Hostiles* and *The Ballad of Lefty Brown*; established a partnership with the long-running silent movie series **The Silent Treatment** to highlight early cinema; expanded kid-friendly **Members' Movie Nights**, including pint-sized curatorial introductions; and ventured farther into art and experimental film through a collaboration with Los Angeles Filmforum. Cowboy hats and horses will continue to screen, while continually raising new questions about a rich American genre.

Museums of the 21st century reimagine how they tell their stories, how they reach their audiences, and ultimately how they fulfill their imperative missions. The Autry is no exception, and uses film and television as a primary medium to do so. Through strategic partnerships with preeminent local and national organizations, the Autry successfully amplifies its mission to telling the stories of all peoples of the American West—past and present.





## Talks, Workshops, and Discussions

Throughout the year, the Autry also hosts educational seminars, workshops, and discussions for a variety of audiences in the Wells Fargo Theater. Programs include panel discussions related to current exhibitions; artist presentations; workshops for local teachers; discussions with authors of recently published books; and other events that bring art and history to life. Furthermore, the Autry partners with civic, community, and educational organizations to extend its role as a community gathering place and location for conversations about important issues of today. In recent years, the Autry has hosted the convening of school principals with the Los Angeles Unified School District; community meetings with the Los Feliz Improvement Association; and gatherings of local Native American community members with organizations such as First Nations Experience and the Los Angeles Native American Indian Commission.





**Pp. 2–3:** Danielle Klebanow Photography • **P. 4:** Rendering of Family Play Gallery by Chu+Gooding • **P. 5:** Danielle Klebanow Photography • **P. 6, Top left:** Rendering of Education Center by Chu+Gooding; **Top right and bottom:** Danielle Klebanow Photography • **Pp. 7–9:** Danielle Klebanow Photography • **P. 10, Top:** Rendering of Performing Arts Center by Chu+Gooding; **Bottom:** Michaela Escarcega (Azteca-Rarémuri, Totonac), Kholan Studi (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma), Duane Minard (Yurok, Paiute), Kenny Ramos (Barona Band of Mission Indians–Diegueño lipay/Kumeyaay), Rainy Fields (Muskogee Creek, Cherokee), Allison Hudson Hicks (Prairie Band Potawatomi, Choctaw), and Jennifer Bobiwash (Ojibway) in the Native Voices staged production of *Bingo Hall* by Dillon Chitto (Mississippi Choctaw, Laguna, Isleta Pueblo). Craig Schwartz Photography • **P. 11, Top:** Laura Purdy, Matthew Crotty, Tima Lotah Link (Chumash), and Juan Devis. Discussion and screening of *Tending the Wild*. Photo by Ed Krieger; **Center:** Donald Sutherland, Director Jon Cassar, and Kiefer Sutherland. Discussion and screening of *Forsaken* (2015). Danielle Klebanow Photography; **Bottom:** John Nielson, Jennifer Bobiwash (Ojibway), Shyla Marlin (Choctaw), Kinsale Hueston (Navajo-Diné), Jason Grasl (Blackfeet), and Kyla Garcia (Taíno) in the Native Voices staged production of *Fairly Traceable* by Mary Kathryn Nagle (Cherokee). Craig Schwartz Photography • **P. 12, Top:** Kalani Queypo (Blackfeet, Hawaiian), Hong Lei, and Tonantzín Carmelo (Tongva, Kumeyaay) in the Native Voices staged reading of *Standoff at Hwy #37*. Photo by Vivian Lin; **Bottom:** Brian Pagaq Wescott (Athabascan, Yup'ik), Román Zaragoza (Pima), and Shaun Taylor-Corbett (Blackfeet) • **P. 13:** Taro McArthur (Nakota/Saulteaux), Diane Benson (Tlingit), Clarissa Thibeaux, Kalani Queypo (Blackfeet, Hawaiian), Tonantzín Carmelo (Tongva, Kumeyaay), Christopher Sweeney, and Hong Lei in the Native Voices staged reading of *Standoff at Hwy #37*. Photo by Vivian Lin • **P. 14:** Scott Cooper, Q'orianka Kilcher, Christian Bale, Wes Studi, and Chris Eyre. Panel discussion at the advance screening of *Hostiles*. Danielle Klebanow Photography • **P. 15, From top:** Chief Justice Claudette White from the San Manuel Tribal Court and Quechan Tribal Court, Yurok Chief Justice Abby Abinanti (Yurok), filmmaker Anne Makepeace, and W. Richard West, Jr., at the screening and discussion of *Tribal Justice*, 2018. Danielle Klebanow Photography; Film critic Claudia Puig and Bill Pullman (post-screening Q&A for *The Ballad of Lefty Brown*); Photo by Josh Tousey; Danielle Klebanow Photography

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