

Modesto Art Museum Accomplishments – 2022

Background

The Modesto Art Museum has produced several hundred events and exhibits since 2005. The exhibits brought a variety of arts to Modesto, from prints, mail art, and movies, to industrial photography and electronic art. As much as possible exhibits and events were participatory, free, and designed to inspire creativity.

The museum's community-engaging and community-building role kicked into high gear when Modesto was ranked the least livable of the nation's 373 largest cities in *Cities: Ranked and Rated*. Instead of disputing the ranking, the museum asked: What can an art museum do to improve the quality of life for the people of Modesto? In 2008, the museum launched *Building a Better Modesto*, an ongoing program using art, architecture, design, landscape, and urban design to create a more livable and vibrant city. In 2020, the museum started the *Modesto History Center* to support the well-being of the people of Modesto through research, preservation, and education about the city's history and historic built environments.



Kids and Family Day, Modesto
Architecture and Design Week

The mission of the Modesto Art Museum is to support the well-being of the people of Modesto through the arts, including architecture, design, and history. We do this in a way that is of, by, and for the people of Modesto.



Museum sponsored public lecture at the Southern Pacific Historical and Technical Society National Convention

Building a Better Modesto Program Modesto Architecture and Design Week

1. The museum co-hosted with the American Institute of Architects Sierra Valley Chapter the Modesto Architecture and Design Week (MAD Week) formerly the Modesto Architecture Festival from 2008 to 2020. In 2020 and 2021, the festival was entirely online, and more than 200 people participated from a distance.
2. The festival mission is to celebrate architecture and design as both an art and a science, and to heighten public awareness of architecture and design and the value of architects and designers in creating more livable and beautiful communities.
3. The festival includes architecture, fashion design, graphic design, interior design, landscape architecture, product design, social design, urban design, and user experience design.
4. The festival is one of the oldest in the country. As many as 5,000 have participated annually over seven to nine days in dozens of free events and activities including movies, exhibits, talks, tours, workshops, and installations.
5. In 2015, the festival received a national award of merit from the American Institute of Architects and brought Modesto positive national attention.
6. Besides introducing thousands of participants to the importance of good design in creating more livable cities, the festival offers Continuing Education Units for local AIA architects and internships for university students.
7. Between 2012 and 2019, the museum and its principle partner, the American Institute of Architects Sierra Valley Chapter raised more than \$135,000 in grants and more than \$80,000 in sponsorships so that all official festival events could be free for everyone. Another \$50,000 of in-kind gifts were donated. Almost all funds are spent locally.
8. The most popular festival event is the family workshop where between 400 and 600 children and their adults build architecture models, experiment with design, and create fun projects.

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9. The festival is a model and inspiration for new festivals in Sacramento, Stockton, and Santiago, Chile.
10. Visitors to the festival come from all over California, most within 100 miles of Modesto, many from other states, and a sprinkling from Canada and Germany. Zip code information was collected.

Guided tour of downtown
Modesto architecture



Other Architecture Aspects of Building a Better Modesto

1. Over the last 17 years, the museum has taken hundreds of people on guided walks through the architecture of downtown Modesto. The tours, offered in English and Spanish, have increased civic pride and appreciation.
2. The museum has provided speakers to a wide variety of organizations discussing Modesto's architectural heritage. The talks have heightened awareness and interest in Modesto's architecture and in urban design.
3. In 2021, the museum published the Modesto Architecture Coloring and Activity Book <https://modestoartmuseum.org/modesto-architecture-coloring-book/>
4. In 2018 and 2019, the museum published two posters of iconic Modernist architecture in Modesto <https://modestoartmuseum.org/posters-2/>
5. In 2012, the AIA Sierra Valley and the museum organized the repainting of the streamline art deco gas station on Needham Street. The paint design was chosen through a state-wide competition.
6. The museum created five self-guided art and architecture tours of the design district and other parts of Modesto for mobile devices. Two of the guides are in English and Spanish. More than 10,000 guides were downloaded in 2014.
7. The museum produced *Modesto Modernism*, a 14-minute movie about Modesto's Modernist architecture. The movie was funded by the Creative Work Fund. <https://vimeo.com/81278783>
8. In 2015, the museum provided a \$600 grant to the Stanislaus County Library for architecture books.

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Poster designed by Eric Le of the 1960 Stanislaus County Courthouse

Public Art

1. Through the Downtown Design Committee, the museum played a key role in the development and implementation of the city's first public art policy.
2. The museum funded three art bike racks as test cases for the city's public art policy. The museum hosted a state-wide design competition for the racks.
3. Meet Your Neighbor, a 2011 photo event with artist Jessica Gomula, more than 125 large portraits of Modesto residents were placed in windows downtown.

Urban Design and Landscape

1. The museum and its partners participated in the world-wide Park(ing) Day, introducing Modesto to the concept of parklets. The museum was actively involved in the designing of new parklets for the city.
2. The museum partnered with CSU Stanislaus in 2012 when the university opened the Building Imagination Center bringing video art and movie production to downtown Modesto. Visual art exhibits were provided by the museum. Several thousand people participated in center events over 18 months.
3. Through the Downtown Design Committee, the museum played a major role in the design of the streetscape on 10th Street between I and J, in the creation of the parklets at 10th and J, in the process of designing J Street from 9th to 17th Street, and in the creation of the bike corral at 11th and J.
4. January through March 2013, the exhibit *Modesto: the Next 100 Years* explored several development projects in the city including the new passenger rail station and the popular downtown parklets. Through maps, drawings, and photos, many provided by the city planning department, visitors attained an understanding of the complexity of these projects and how they will change the urban fabric of Modesto.
5. Working with civic groups, the museum branded and promoted a portion of the downtown as the Modesto Design District. As part of the process, the museum worked

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with merchants and the Modesto Downtown Improvement District to produce Modesto Design Week, 9 days of events in the design district.

6. The museum hosted two design exhibits, *Modern Art Kimono* (1,875 visitors) and *Modesto Design* (2,160 visitors). Modesto Design explored 100 patent designs of Modesto residents from a 1902 car to cutting edge contemporary furniture.
7. From 2018 to 2020, the museum was host to Mo.De, the Modesto Design Collective, a community of designers, innovators, makers, and creative visionaries celebrates and supports design and the broader creative community.



Annual gathering of the Modesto Design Collective at the E & J Gallo Winery

Major Grants for Building a Better Modesto:

ArtPlace America, \$101,600

Creative Work Fund, \$16,950

Covid Relief, \$50,000

Target Foundation, \$10,000

Teichert Foundation, \$7,400

Building a Better Modesto project partners have included:

American Institute of Architects, Sierra Valley Chapter

American Society of Landscape Architects

Anderson Gallery

California State University Stanislaus

Central California Art Association

Chartreuse Muse Gallery

City of Modesto

Crow Trading Company

Downtown Design Committee

Downtown Modesto Partnership

Deva Café

McHenry Museum

Modesto Film Society

Picasso's Gallery and Deli

Modesto Convention and Visitors Bureau

Modesto Downtown Improvement District

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Modesto Improvement Partnership
Modesto Film Society
Modesto Stanislaus Poetry Center
Modesto City Schools teachers and students
Peer Recovery Gallery
Picasso's Café
Stanislaus Community Foundation
Stanislaus County Library
State Theatre
Sylvan Union School District teachers and students

Poster designed by Kevin Miller
to celebrate the renovation of the
1915 Modesto Southern Pacific
Railroad Depot



Modesto History Center Program

The mission of the Modesto History Center is to support the well-being of the people of Modesto through research, preservation, and education about the city's history and built environments. We do this in a way that builds community relationships, explores contemporary issues, and supports planning for a better future, and is of, by, and for the people of Modesto.

Research: Conduct and facilitate research into the history of Modesto and its built environments and how they can support the well-being of the people of the city.

Preservation: Encourage and facilitate the preservation of history, documents, cultural belongings, heritage buildings, and historic landscapes that individuals and communities find valuable and significant including adaptive, suitable, and creative reuse in a way that supports well-being.

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Education: Teach about Modesto's history and built environments, the value of historic preservation, how to do historic research, and about the role of history and preservation in supporting the well-being of the community.

1. In early 2020, the Modesto History Center educated the public and fostered community participation in city hosted public meetings to discuss the renovation and reuse of the 1915 Southern Pacific Railroad Depot.
2. In 2020, the Modesto History Center published three editions of the Modesto History Center Newsletter covering many aspects of Modesto's history that had been forgotten. Subjects included the building of the railroad to Modesto by Chinese men, the Modesto Coffee Club, and Modesto's racial segregation. Two editions are in English and Spanish. <https://modestoartmuseum.org/modesto-history-center-newsletter/>
3. The Modesto House History Workshop is now online as a Vimeo video available for anyone to use freely. <https://modestoartmuseum.org/modesto-house-history-workshop/>
4. Through the Modesto History Center, the museum provides historic architectural information to the city of Modesto and property owners considering façade improvements or historic preservation designation. In 2018, the museum provided historic information for the renovation of the Southern Pacific depot.
5. In September 2022, the Modesto History Center hosted a public lecture, part of the national convention of the Southern Pacific Historical and Technical Society in Modesto. The lecture covered the history of Southern Pacific Railroad depots in the San Joaquin Valley with particular attention to Modesto. About 80 people attended.
6. In summer 2022, the Modesto History Center commissioned local artist Kevin Miller to design a poster celebrating the renovation of the 1915 Southern Pacific Railroad Depot. 250 posters were printed and are free to anyone who would like one.