



**The Walt Disney Family Museum Presents
*MAGIC, COLOR, FLAIR: the world of Mary Blair***

Comprehensive Exhibition Explores one of Walt Disney's most Beloved and Influential Artists

San Francisco, December 19, 2013—The Walt Disney Family Museum is pleased to present [MAGIC, COLOR, FLAIR: the world of Mary Blair](#). On view from March 13 to September 7, 2014, this comprehensive exhibition explores the artistic process and development of one of Walt Disney's most original, beloved, and influential designer and art directors, Mary Blair (1911–1978). Blair's joyful creativity—her eye-appealing designs and exuberant color palette—endure in numerous media, including classic Disney animated films, such as *Cinderella*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Peter Pan*, and theme park attractions at Disneyland Resort and Walt Disney World Resort, most notably "*it's a small world*."

Guest curator John Canemaker—an Academy Award, Emmy Award, and Peabody Award-winning independent animator, animation historian, teacher and author—organized the exhibition to reflect the arc of Blair's career before, during, and after her years at the Walt Disney Studios through artwork, artifacts, photographs, and videos.

MAGIC, COLOR, FLAIR: the world of Mary Blair features some 200 works and explores all phases of Blair's work by examining her artistic development in three major areas: "Learning the Rules"—her student days at Los Angeles' legendary Chouinard School of Art, and her fine art regionalist watercolors exhibited in the 1930s. "Breaking the Rules"—her artistic breakthrough with boldly colored, stylized concept paintings for classic Disney animated features during the 1940s and 1950s, including *Saludos Amigos* (1942) and *Peter Pan* (1953); and "Creating New Worlds"—freelancing in the 1950s in New York where she became a popular illustrator for national advertisements, magazine articles, clothing designs, window displays, theatrical sets, and children's books.

The exhibition includes Blair's rarely exhibited student art, which was influenced by the illustrations of her mentor Pruett Carter, and her mid-to-late artworks from the 1930s as a member of the innovative California Water-Color Society which reveal an essential humanism and empathy for her subjects. The exhibition also showcases The Walt Disney Family Museum's extensive collection of Blair's

conceptual artworks in gouache and watercolor—some of which have never displayed outside The Walt Disney Studios—that reveal the artist’s inexhaustible creativity in design, staging of imagery, visual appeal, and unique color sensibility. Also featured are original illustrations from several of Blair’s beloved Golden Books including *I Can Fly* (1951).

An imaginative colorist and designer, Blair helped introduce a modernist style to Walt Disney and his studio, and for nearly 30 years, he touted her inspirational work for his films and theme parks alike. Animator Marc Davis, who put Blair’s exciting use of color on a par with Henri Matisse, recalled, “She brought modern art to Walt in a way that no one else did. He was so excited about her work.”

In the mid-1960s, Walt brought her talents to a spectacular new phase by commissioning her to design large-scale, three-dimensional projects for his theme park attractions, using Audio-animatronic characters, wall murals and tile décor.

Walt played a significant role in Blair’s creative growth. His overall vision of the world and values (optimism, humor, love of tradition, families, and an avid interest in technology) were interpreted and complimented by her creative contributions. He continually championed her in his male-dominated studio giving her free rein to explore concepts, colors, characters, and designs that were definitely out of The Walt Disney Studios’ mainstream animation style.

Born in McAlester, Oklahoma, in 1911, Blair won a scholarship to Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles. After graduation in 1933, at the height of the Depression, she took a job in the animation unit of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) rather than pursue her dream of a fine arts career. In 1940, she joined The Walt Disney Studios and worked on a number of projects, including the never-produced “Baby Ballet,” part of a proposed second version of *Fantasia*.

In 1941, she joined the Disney expedition that toured Mexico and South America for three months and painted watercolors that inspired Walt to name her as an art supervisor on *The Three Caballeros* and *Saludos Amigos*. Blair’s striking use of color and stylized graphics greatly influenced many Disney postwar productions, including *Alice in Wonderland*, *Song of the South*, *Make Mine Music*, *Melody Time*, *So Dear to My Heart*, *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*, *Cinderella*, and *Peter Pan*.

In 1964, Walt asked Blair to assist in the design of the “*it’s a small world*” attraction. Over the years, she brought her many artistic gifts to numerous exhibits, attractions, and murals at the theme parks in California and Florida, including the fanciful murals in the Grand Canyon Concourse at the Contemporary Hotel at the Walt Disney World Resort. Blair died July 26, 1978, in Soquel, California.

Thirty-five years after her death, interest in Mary Blair and her enchanting artworks continues to grow. Her early fine art watercolors and classic Disney film production concept paintings are popular

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with collectors. Contemporary artists still find inspiration in her independent spirit, and her ability to survive in traditionally male-dominated fields, her technical virtuosity, bottomless creative ingenuity, and powerful visual storytelling.

MAGIC, COLOR, FLAIR: the world of Mary Blair is organized by The Walt Disney Family Museum.

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ABOUT THE MUSEUM

The Walt Disney Family Museum presents the fascinating story and achievements of Walt Disney, the man who raised animation to an art, transformed the film industry, tirelessly pursued innovation, and created a global and distinctively American legacy. Opened in October 2009, the 40,000 square foot facility features the newest technology and historic materials and artifacts to bring Disney's achievements to life, with interactive galleries that include early drawings and animation, movies, music, listening stations, a spectacular model of Disneyland and much more.

Hours: 10am to 6pm, Wednesdays through Monday; closed on Tuesdays and the following public holidays: New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Where: The Presidio of San Francisco, 104 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, CA 94129

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