

The Walt Disney Family Museum presents

Happiest Place on Earth: The Disneyland Story

A new special exhibition exploring the conception and creation of Walt Disney's original theme park with guest curator and Disney Legend Don Hahn

On view November 14, 2025 – May 2026

San Francisco, October 17, 2025—The Walt Disney Family Museum continues its celebration of the 70th anniversary of Disneyland with the debut of *Happiest Place on Earth: The Disneyland Story*, an original special exhibition curated by award-winning producer and Disney Legend Don Hahn with museum Director of Collections and Exhibitions Marina Villar Delgado. Inspired by the 2025 book, *The Happiest Place on Earth: The Incredible Story of Walt Disney's Disneyland*, published by Disney Editions and written by Hahn and historian Christopher Merritt, this treasure trove of Disney history will take guests behind the scenes of one of the most groundbreaking endeavors of the 20th century—the creation and opening of Disneyland Park in Anaheim, California. *Happiest Place on Earth: The Disneyland Story* will be on view beginning Friday, November 14 in the museum's Lower Lobby and Theater Gallery.

"There's a Disneyland that we experience as a child, with our eyes full of wonder at the stories it tells," says Hahn. "But as we peeled back those layers, we found another Disneyland story—an incredible origin story of unconventional creativity without boundaries, of upset, failure, persistence, and pioneering that gave birth to a new kind of entertainment that still resonates now more than ever. That's what this exhibition is about."

"We are honored to partner with the museum's longtime supporter and Advisory Committee member, Don Hahn, to showcase artwork and ephemera from this remarkable moment in history," adds Kirsten Komoroske, Executive Director of The Walt Disney Family Museum. "This new special exhibition will allow visitors to further delve into the stories of innovation behind Disneyland attractions and experiences that have inspired joy and wonder for generations."

On July 17, 1955, an estimated 90 million viewers—more than half the population of the United States at that time—tuned in to their television sets to watch the grand opening of Disneyland on ABC. By the time it was unveiled to the public, Walt Disney and his collaborators had been developing the Park for more than two years and gathering inspiration for the better part of a decade. *Happiest Place on Earth: The Disneyland Story* will showcase the ideas, designs, and artworks behind the fascinating evolution of Walt's original theme park—explored through the lens of his relentless imagination.

Guests will discover historic objects from the Park, early concept art, designs for unrealized attractions, archival footage, costume development illustrations, stunning hand-drawn maps, and rarely seen historical photographs that chronicle the production, realization, and early guest experiences that Walt envisioned and pioneered. The special exhibition's interactive elements will also offer a more in-depth look at the Park's original attractions and the creative risks that defined them.

"We were fortunate to have the Walt Disney Archives, Animation Research Library, and Walt Disney Imagineering contribute an incredible range of historical materials to this exhibition," says Villar Delgado. "Together with treasures from our museum collection, the goal was to balance iconic imagery with rarely seen early artwork that reflect Disneyland's complex development and highlight the bold ideas and collaborative spirit that made the Park a reality."

The museum theater will also have regular screenings available of the new short film, *Happiest Place on Earth: Walt's Disneyland*, produced by Hahn for the special exhibition. This exclusive documentary traces the creation and early years of Disneyland through Walt Disney's own words and features rare archival interview footage.

Happiest Place on Earth: The Disneyland Story will be open to the public from Friday, November 14, 2025, in The Walt Disney Family Museum's Lower Lobby and Theater Gallery. Entry to the special exhibition is free with general admission, with a suggested donation of \$5 to support the museum's initiative to present world-class original exhibitions.

ABOUT DON HAHN

Disney Legend **Don Hahn** has produced some of the most successful animated films of all time, including Walt Disney Animation Studios' *Beauty and the Beast* (1991)—the first animated film to be nominated for a Best Picture Oscar®—and the global phenomenon *The Lion King* (1994).

He studied music and art before starting at Walt Disney Animation Studios in 1976 in the basement of the Ink and Paint Building where the old animation art was stored. He soon worked for Woolie Reitherman, one of Walt Disney's legendary "Nine Old Men," who directed *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* (1961) and *The Jungle Book* (1967)—movies that Hahn idolized as a kid.

Hahn's producer credits include *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996), *The Emperor's New Groove* (2000), *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* (2001), and *Maleficent* (2014). Three of his films—*Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), *Beauty and the Beast*, and *The Lion King*—are now recognized by the Library of Congress as culturally, historically, and esthetically important. His Emmy®-winning documentaries for PBS and Disney+ include *Waking Sleeping Beauty* (2009), the seminal film about the Disney renaissance of the late-1980s through the 1990s; and *Howard* (2018), a biography on the life of influential songwriter Howard Ashman. He was a founder and Executive Producer of the acclaimed DisneyNature nature documentary film series.

Hahn serves on the Advisory Board of The Walt Disney Family Museum and is a former trustee of PBS SoCal. He has been honored with two Academy Award® nominations, an Emmy for his PBS documentary *Freedom Writers: Stories from the Heart*, two Golden Globes® for Best Picture, and two Honorary Doctorate degrees. In 2022, he was inducted as a Disney Legend, awarded to those who have made extraordinary and integral contributions to The Walt Disney Company.

ABOUT THE WALT DISNEY FAMILY MUSEUM

The Walt Disney Family Museum presents the fascinating story and achievements of Walt Disney, the man who raised animation to the level of fine art, transformed the film industry, tirelessly pursued innovation, and created a global, yet distinctively American legacy. Opened in October 2009, the 40,000-square-foot facility features innovative technology alongside a vast collection of historic materials and artifacts that bring Disney's achievements to life. Early drawings and animation, movies, music, listening stations, a spectacular model of Disneyland, and much more are presented in a myriad of interactive galleries. The museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in the scenic Presidio of San Francisco.

- Hours:** Open Thursday through Sunday: 10am to 5:30pm, last gallery entry at 4:30pm.
Closed Mondays through Wednesdays and the following public holidays: January 1, Thanksgiving Day, and December 25.
- Where:** 104 Montgomery Street, The Presidio of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA 94129
- Tickets:** Check waltdisney.org/tickets for current general admission pricing.
Happiest Place on Earth: The Disneyland Story special exhibition is free with a suggested donation of \$5.
Museum admission is free for members, children under 5, and active and retired military personnel, in addition to their spouses/dependents with valid ID.
- Contact:** 415.345.6800 | waltdisney.org/happiest-place
- Follow:** facebook.com/wdfmuseum | Instagram, Threads & X: @wdfmuseum
- Press Kit:** bit.ly/happiest-place-presskit
- Media Contact:** Caroline Quinn | press@wdfmuseum.org

