

museumlab: An exciting new destination for the clever and curious

The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing. Archilochus
Thinkers have been arguing for millennia about what the 7th century poet and mercenary meant when he wrote that sly line about a fox and a hedgehog, but I found myself thinking about the all-knowing fox when I heard about the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh's exciting new venture: Museum Lab, opening April 27, 2019.

When workers knocked out walls and replaced windows to restore the historic Carnegie Free Library of Allegheny building for this expansion, one of the many discoveries they uncovered was an original terra cotta arch decorated with engraved foxes. Ah, the clever fox, known in myth and fable as a curious, playful and adaptable creature. I wondered if this animal was in the mind of Scotsman Andrew Carnegie in 1886 when he commissioned this building to be one of the first Carnegie Free Libraries in southwestern Pennsylvania? Or did the skilled artisans who carefully restored the intricate details of the carvings recognize the metaphor? In my mind, Museum Lab creates a clever world of curiosity and play that is like no other.

"In one space we went from having a room with an eight-foot ceiling with no windows to a 30-foot ceiling with twelve windows. The light just came streaming in," says Jane Werner, Executive Director of the Children's Museum. "The whole building started to breathe again."

A stone's throw from the Children's Museum's home on the North Side, Museum Lab is a new museum for kids ten and older, families, teachers and researchers to experience art, tech, making and learning.

In a bold educational twist, Museum Lab shares space with partner organizations that serve youth, like The Saturday Light Brigade, Allies for Children, University of Pittsburgh School of Education and Carnegie Mellon University's Entertainment Technology Center, IDEATe Network and Master of Arts Management Program.

The real master stroke is the partnership on the second floor that provides a new home for the Manchester Academic Charter School (MACS) Middle School, where lucky 6th through 8th graders will have access to all the spaces in Museum Lab and teachers can integrate three unique learning centers into their curriculums.

studiolab

In the Studio Lab, young artists can explore technique and learn from staff, plus local and visiting visual and performance artists. The debut exhibit, "Nek Chand: A Hidden World," features the Museum's collection of more than 45 colorful, mosaic sculptures by Indian artist Nek Chand. Following Chand's process, visitors can help make sculptures and mosaic murals from found materials using techniques like mosaic tiling, layering and assemblage, and work alongside visiting artists who are inspired by Chand's story and artwork.

makelab

This lab provides a wide variety of equipment, including 3D printers, a laser cutter, woodworking and soldering tools, sewing machines, plus computer and game design systems for kids to let their maker imaginations go wild. Under the guidance of skilled supervisors, kids can build, design or make whatever they want to express their boundless creativity.

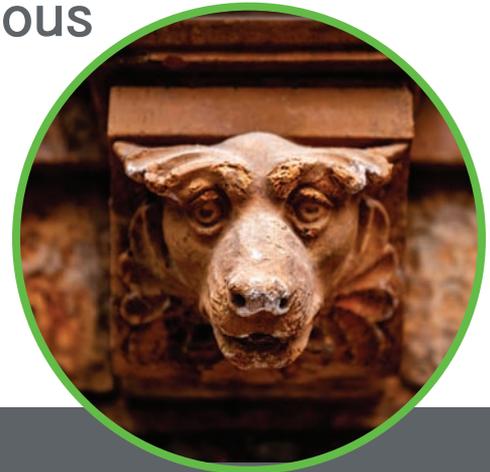
techlab

Here is where kids discover the cutting edge of digital technology. Kids can record a song or video, learn editing techniques and participate in a live radio show. Thanks to CMU's Entertainment Technology Center, kids can experience the creative process and learn how to tell their stories using state-of-the-art technology.

gymlaci-WHAT?

Aside from the innovative learning centers, Museum Lab will contain one of the most unusual and exciting exhibits: Gymlaci in the Stacks.

If students and visitors need a break or have the sudden desire to scale a three-story art installation, the Gymlaci is there for the climbing. This mammoth structure is built around the original steel



Terra Cotta Fox
Credit Children's Museum of Pittsburgh

bookshelves from the original library, warmly remembered as "the Stacks." Slovenian artist Manca Ahlin's woven long rope sections, using traditional bobbin and lace techniques, will create this giant rope landscape with bridges, ladders, swings and hammocks. Gymlaci will be open to the public beginning June 8, 2019.

Exercise has never been more fun, and I predict the Gymlaci will be a popular attraction for years to come.

The coolest place for kids

Over the last two years, the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh has raised nearly \$18 million towards its \$18.5 million goal to restore the landmark library and create the largest cultural campus for children in the country, which solidifies the Museum's standing as one of the nation's leading and most innovative cultural and educational institutions.

"We've been encouraged by the generous support we have received and continue to receive for this project," says Jane Werner. "Now we have the chance to get everyone involved to help us cross the finish line and make Museum Lab a reality."

When you visit Museum Lab and walk under that terra cotta arch, look at the carved foxes and appreciate the clever, curious people at the Children's Museum, who also know many things, and make Pittsburgh, hands down, the coolest place for kids.

For further information, visit www.museumlab.org.

Writer Ann K. Howley is looking forward to Museum Lab's Grand Opening and won't let mild acrophobia stop her from climbing to the top of the Gymlaci this summer.

Museum Lab Exterior - Credit Ed Massery

