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BACKGROUND

The 1968 Exhibit: Walkthrough

JANUARY: “THE LIVING ROOM WAR”

Visitors enter a living room where a Huey helicopter has “landed.” A television plays news reports about the escalating conflict of the Tet Offensive and Walter Cronkite casting doubt over the war effort.

- **Key objects:** Bell UH1 “Huey” Helicopter, Vietnam vets memorabilia.

FEBRUARY: “WE’RE LOSING THIS WAR”

Opposite the helicopter, a media presentation relates combat stories from Vietnam war veterans. On Feb. 18 the Pentagon announced the highest weekly death toll of the war.

- **Key objects:** Flag-draped coffin, soldiers’ memorabilia, draft cards, anti-war buttons.

Lounge – TV & Movies

Visitors settle into bean-bag chairs to watch TV clips from shows such as “Laugh-In,” “Gunsmoke” and “The Monkees” and films such as “Bonnie and Clyde,” “Funny Girl” and “2001: A Space Odyssey.” Highlights from the Olympic Games, Super Bowl II and the World Series are also shown.

- **Key objects:** The Flying Fickle Finger of Fate award from “Laugh-In,” costumes worn by lead characters on “Star Trek,” props from “Mission Impossible.”

MARCH: “THE GENERATION GAP”

Exhibit-goers experience student activism, especially the “Clean for Gene” movement for anti-war Democratic presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy. The sexual revolution is represented by the “LeClair Affair” in which a Barnard co-ed was disciplined for living off-campus with her boyfriend.

- **Key objects:** 1968 college yearbooks, birth control bills, McCarthy peace dress.

APRIL: “I HAVE BEEN TO THE MOUNTAINTOP”

The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and its impact on the American people is told through a media presentation that includes the words of Dr. King from his

“Mountaintop Speech,” given the day before his murder, and oral history excerpts from people remembering King and his legacy.

- **Key objects:** Items loaned from Ebenezer Baptist Church.

MAY: “I AM SOMEBODY”

Following King’s death, the Rev. Ralph Abernathy took up the Poor People’s Campaign. Visitors learn about the Campaign’s call for jobs, income and housing equality and view images of “Resurrection City,” a tent city set up on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

- **Key objects:** boots worn by Abernathy, artifacts from Resurrection City.

JUNE: “THE DEATH OF HOPE”

Robert F. Kennedy’s brief presidential campaign and the effect of his assassination on Americans are explored. The presidential campaign of Hubert H. Humphrey is also presented.

- **Key objects:** Camera used at the Kennedy assassination, Humphrey items including a woman’s belt emblazoned with “HHH.”

Lounge - Music

Original albums cover the wall and shadow boxes display concert tickets, programs, posters and autographs from musicians of the era. Visitors can take a 1968 music quiz and make their own album covers that they can share on Facebook.

- **Key objects:** “Yellow Submarine” lunchbox, concert outfit worn by Janis Joplin.

JULY: “LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT”

Visitors explore the rise of conservatism through the presidential campaigns of third-party candidate George Wallace and Republicans Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon. Other July events include baseball’s All-Star Game, played on July 9th.

- **Key objects:** Campaign memorabilia, baseball signed by players of the 1968 All-Star Game.

AUGUST: “WELCOME TO CHICAGO”

Confrontations at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago are explored through news footage and interviews with convention-goers, protesters, reporters and the Chicago police.

- **Key objects:** Convention badge, political buttons, policeman’s riot helmet, Yippie flag.

SEPTEMBER: “SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL”

A recreated setting of protests by feminist activists against the 1968 Miss America pageant in Atlantic City shows a stuffed sheep wearing a prize ribbon and a “Freedom Trashcan” filled with “instruments of torture” such as high-heeled shoes and bras. Images of women in media and advertising, and the increasing role of women in the American workplace, are explored.

- **Key objects:** Selectric typewriter, Barbie and Julia dolls.

Lounge - Style

Visitors explore the world of consumer goods including plastics—molded into furniture, stitched into clothing and shaped into household goods—along with denim jeans, wood paneling and shag carpeting.

- **Key objects:** Plastic stackable plates, clothing, popular toys like Twister.

OCTOBER: “POWER TO THE PEOPLE”

Opening with the famous “Black Power” salute at the Mexico City Olympic Games, social movements fighting for inclusion and identity are presented, including stories drawn from the American Indian Movement and the Brown Berets, a radical Chicano rights group.

- **Key objects:** Torch from the 1968 Olympics and American Indian Movement jean jacket.

NOVEMBER: “THE VOTES ARE IN”

Visitors learn about the presidential candidates’ platforms on a touch screen monitor and from campaign commercials. Then they enter a curtained voting booth—used in the 1968 elections—to cast their votes where they can compare their preferences with those of other visitors.

- **Key objects:** Voting booth, Nixon buttons.

DECEMBER: “IN THE BEGINNING”

Visitors enter the same living room as in the January section—but with a full-sized replica of the Apollo 8 Command Module. Television reports of the launch and mission unfold while the image of the “Earthrise” is displayed accompanied by audio of the crew reading from the Book of Genesis.

- **Key objects:** Reproduction Apollo 8 capsule, helmet, checklist and watch used by astronauts James Lovell and William Anders.

Artifacts are on loan from the exhibit partners; Mrs. Ralph Abernathy; Alabama Department of Archives and History; Baseball Hall of Fame; James Comisar, The Comisar Collection, Inc.; Ebenezer Baptists Church; Bill Eppridge; Experience Music Project; National Air and Space Museum; National Museum of American History; Pro Football Hall of Fame and Don Rooney.

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