



## Playland-Not-at-the-Beach Museum of Fun Opens in El Cerrito

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**Playland-Not-at-the-Beach, an interactive Museum of Fun** will be entertaining and amusing guests all year long starting in June in El Cerrito. Richard Tuck, the museum's self-proclaimed "Master of Fun", grew up in the Bay Area and went to Whitney's Playland and the Sutro Baths as a child. He has always been fascinated by amusement parks, magic, side shows, carnivals and circuses. "It's a shame that today's kids don't get a chance to witness the earlier entertainments of a bygone age," Tuck muses. "Playland-Not-at-the-Beach is a Museum of Fun, allowing kids of all ages (from 5 to 105) to enjoy the same things their great grandparents laughed at a hundred years ago."

The "Circus World" display area reach-

es back to a day in 1930 when the great Sells-Floto Circus rolled into town. This astonishing exhibit features thousands of hand carved miniature figures that realistically depict the Circus's side-show, menagerie of exotic animals, the three-ring big-top (complete with flying trapeze artists, tigers and clowns), dressing rooms, cook house, dining tent, horse farm and veterinary and blacksmith shop. It is one of the greatest examples of American folk art ever created. Carved by Don Marcks, a life-long circus enthusiast, and his father Isaac, the circus took over 50 years to complete. The project was originally intended to provide Don, who suffered from scarlet fever as a child, with a creative outlet and pastime. The Playland-Not-at-the-Beach exhibit of this incredible work of art

includes circus posters from over 100 years ago.

One hundred years of rare artifacts and arcade attractions are presented in the “Penny Arcade” section of the museum. Here, for a penny, visitors can hand crank early movies on a “Mutoscope”, see the original “Fan Dance” and visit “A Sailor’s Paradise” at the “Knotty Peek”. The museum even provides pennies.

The “Carousel Carnival” exhibit area features 40 years of games from Whitney’s Playland, San Francisco’s much-loved amusement park, and other parks around the country including the Long Beach Pike and Knott’s Berry Farm. This area is brightened and illuminated by a magnificent 17-foot long mural by Leo Mora titled “Playland”. Original signage and photographs add to the enjoyment of this lively, colorful area.

Playland’s Funhouse is beautifully commemorated in the Museum’s Laughing Sal Theater, where award-winning artist Charlie Moran has built a life-like miniature replica of the Funhouse complete with Laughing Sal, the famous Walking Charleys, the Maze of Mirrors and the Joy Wheel where generations of visitors spun off its slippery spinning surface into cushioned walls. Miniature replicas of the Limbo Dark Ride and the rickety old Big Dipper wooden rollercoaster add to the ambiance and nostalgia of this area.

In the Board Walk area of Playland Not-at-the-Beach the work of muralists Dan Fontes and Ed Cassel depicts the heyday of San Francisco’s beachfront entertainment district, from the famed original Cliff House and Sutro Baths to Whitney’s Playland at the Beach. Called “A Playland for All,” this panoramic mural measuring 32 feet long by 10 feet tall along one wall alone wraps each visitor in wonderful memories as it continues around the room and provides viewers with an opportunity “to create for themselves something of a little time machine – sliding down the Giant Slide, watching the waves crash beneath the Cliff House, riding the

Big Dipper, or eating their favorite foods at the Hot House”, says artist Dan Fontes.

The Coney Island Pinball Museum and its neighboring Pinball Alley and Laff in the Dark sections of Playland-Not-at-the-Beach present visitors with the opportunity to play seven decades of vintage pinball machines dating from the early wood rails of the 1930’s to the first electronic versions of the games right up through the modern “Lord of the Rings.”

The Bygone San Francisco section of the Museum invites visitors to step back into the Year 1939 when the Golden Gate International Exposition was on Treasure Island. Artifacts adorn the walls and a mural by noted artist John Aaron wraps around a three-dimensional version of the City by the Bay. In another corner, original stereoscopic machines display 3-D pictures of the Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906.

Original woolen bathing suits are just some of the artifacts on exhibit in the Sutro’s Showcase section of Playland-Not-at-the-Beach. Vintage tickets, programs and a multitude of photographs transport the viewer back to a golden age when San Franciscans could swim, dive, and then be amused and entertained for just 20 cents.

Throughout Playland-Not-at-the-Beach the spirit of a Museum of Fun pervades. Visitors can even change the seasons of the year by stepping into Halloween-themed “Dark Mystery”, or meet the 200 elves who inhabit “Santa’s Village.”

Playland-Not-at-the-Beach is a 501(c) (3) educational and charitable organization. Donations to the Museum support its many activities including programs for senior citizens, at-risk children and youth, the economically disadvantaged, and the physically and developmentally challenged.

For more information about Playland-Not-at-the-Beach, visit the Museum’s website at [www.playland-not-at-the-beach.org](http://www.playland-not-at-the-beach.org).