

For Immediate Release

Final Phase of Major Transformation at Mingei International Museum

A New Living Room for Balboa Park, Reimagined Museum Scheduled to Open in 2021

December 4, 2019

San Diego, CA—United under the theme, **Imagine Mingei**, local arts and culture supporters, trustees, donors and elected officials gathered at the site of the soon to be transformed Museum to celebrate the progress and future of this treasured institution.

Mingei International Museum officials announced a major project milestone and fundraising success to date for the visionary transformation of its facility on the **Plaza de Panama**. This marks the start of the final phase of construction for this significant project in the heart of **Balboa Park**. With over \$37 million already raised, the Museum is moving forward with its full transformation plans. Designed by local architecture firm **Luce et Studio**, Mingei International Museum's bold physical building renovation will allow the Museum to carry out its mission in meaningful new ways.

The already award-winning project will feature a newly designed space where the community can gather and visitors can find respite, beauty and creative inspiration. This includes a new Plaza level open to the public free of charge, additional entrances on the east and west sides of the Museum, a dedicated education center and a garden courtyard accessible to all Park visitors.

“Today we are here to mark a key milestone in our Museum transformation. Two days ago, our board of trustees unanimously voted to move forward with the final phase of construction in our comprehensive renovation. I am happy to announce we have just signed contracts to complete the project and are thrilled to have achieved over 70% of our \$52 million fundraising goal,”

- Mingei Executive Director and CEO **Rob Sidner**

Assemblymember **Todd Gloria** (78th District) was on hand to congratulate the team. “I’m impressed with Mingei International Museum’s vision and courage in embarking on a transformational project that embraces the community and increases access to its collections for everyone. By going big, Mingei reflects the audacity of Balboa Park’s founders in providing enticing public spaces open to all.”

City Councilmember **Chris Ward** (District 3) also acknowledged the value of the Museum to the arts, education and the overall community. “Mingei, along with the other cultural institutions here in the Park and around our region, plays a vital role in our community for people of all ages and backgrounds. As a parent I know the importance of arts education, and how important exposure to the arts is during formative years. In addition to education, our arts institutions give us a sense of civic pride. This district and all of San Diego is eager to welcome Mingei back to Balboa Park.”

Mingei trustee and capital campaign co-chair **John Seiber** said, “Projects like this can only happen with the investment of the community. Generous philanthropy has been essential to realizing this exciting vision. These donors have invested in Mingei and Balboa Park with an eye to the future.”

He acknowledged the support of key donors to date, including lead gifts from **Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies** and **Frances Hamilton White**, and additional major gifts from **Lucille and Ron Neeley**, **The Donald C. and Elizabeth M. Dickinson Foundation**, the **Elizabeth and Walter Smoyer Family Trust**, **Price Philanthropies**, **Joan and Irwin Jacobs**, and **The Legler Benbough Foundation**. Over 300 donors have supported the project already, including the Museum’s entire board of trustees. Seiber announced the kick-off of a \$15 million public campaign to complete the project funding.

Mingei International Museum believes that art belongs to everyone—a value that is taken to heart in its renovation plans. The plan expresses a dynamically renewed commitment to the Museum’s vision and the community it serves. Sidner shared highlights of the renovation, including:

- Lively **new civic space to gather**, with free access for all on the Plaza Level
- New additions to the Park landscape, including an inviting **courtyard garden** next to the Plaza de Panama
- Quiet and spacious upper level galleries devoted to exhibitions, with a **library open to visitors**
- Restored historic spaces, including upper **terraces** which will be structurally reinforced and opened to the public for the first time in decades, **offering views of the Plaza de Panama, El Prado and the California Tower**
- Access to the building’s **historic Bell Tower**, which will be opened and activated with

- a new grand staircase
- An **education center** for K-12 students, including a classroom for students of all ages to engage in hands-on artmaking
- An elegant, **multipurpose theater space** designed for performances, lectures, concerts and special events
- Enhanced amenities for Park visitors, including **a new iteration of the Museum’s beloved store**, Shop Mingei; a **walk-up coffee bar**; and a **full service cafe**
- Improved operational elements for shared tenants, including a **new freight elevator**, HVAC system and **revitalized circulation spaces** (benefitting The Old Globe and San Diego Art Institute as well as Mingei)

Sidner added, “We hope that Mingei’s transformation will provide inspiration to others and serve as an example of what is possible to do for the Balboa Park that we love.”

The Museum expects this final phase of construction to last 12 months, and plans to reopen to the public in the first half of 2021.

San Diego architecture firm LUCE et Studio, led by architect **Jennifer Luce**, has designed a beautifully transformed, award-winning space that responds to new needs, new opportunities and new possibilities, optimizing Museum operations and the visitor experience.

“It’s an important moment to aspire to a big gesture of change. This project with Mingei is a perfect confluence—it’s about the Park, the craft of fine art, and good design. And it’s one of the most authentic and humble institutions in the city that I believe in. It couldn’t be a better fit.”

- **Jennifer Luce** Founder and Principal, LUCE et studio

The renovation project is being carried out by **Layton Construction**, a nationally-ranked commercial contractor. Construction management is provided by **Gardiner & Theobald**, a nearly 200-year old London-based firm.

In November 2019, **this project received an award** in the category of “Unbuilt Design” from the San Diego AIA chapter.

About Mingei International Museum

Mingei International Museum collects, preserves and exhibits “art of the world, art of the people,” including folk art, craft and design from all eras and cultures. Mingei was founded in 1978. Originally located at University Town Center in La Jolla, the Museum relocated to Balboa Park in 1996. A non-profit institution funded by individuals and community support, the Museum offers inspiring exhibitions and diverse educational programs to more than 100,000 visitors a year. At the heart of Mingei are stunning exhibitions of folk art, craft and design that exude human creativity and spirit. While the Balboa Park Museum is temporarily closed for a major renovation, Mingei remains open for business with pop-up exhibitions, maker events and installations happening across the region, expanding the Museum’s potential for collaboration and adding new perspectives. Annual, institutional support for Mingei International Museum is provided by the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture.

mingei.org/imagine

About LUCE et studio

LUCE et studio is a collaborative studio practicing at the intersection of architecture, art and design. The studio’s work spans multiple scales from regional master plans to custom furniture. Commissions include projects for museums, corporate design firms, boutique hotels, civic institutions, colleges, and private residential clients. Canadian-born architect Jennifer Luce established the Studio in 1990.

Image Downloads

mingei.org/downloads

###

Media Contacts

Toni Robin

TR | PR

(858) 483-3918 (office)

(619) 997-3918 (mobile)

tr@trprsandiego.com

Jessica Hanson York

Mingei International Museum

(619) 704-7510 (office)

(619) 206-4595 (mobile)

jjork@mingei.org