

# The New York Times

## Arts & LEISURE

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INSIDE



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### MICKEY GETS A GALLERY

With technical wizardry and a cache of private mementos, a new museum honors Walt Disney.

ART

## A Tribute to the Man, Beyond Just the Mouse

SAN FRANCISCO

At first glance the Walt Disney Family Museum, which opens here on Oct. 1, would seem a serious, even scholarly endeavor. Financed by the Walt Disney Family Foundation and run by Richard Benefield, the former deputy director of the Harvard University Art Museums, it is dedicated not to Disney the entertainment behemoth but to Disney the man, from his birth in Kansas City, Mo., to his role as a powerful studio boss in 1960s Hollywood.

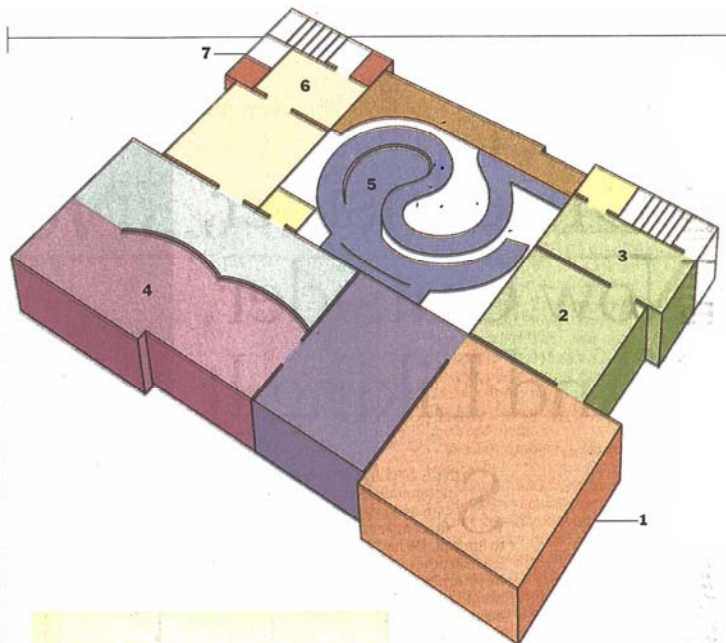
But the museum is likely to defy expectations of sober restraint. Although housed in an unprepossessing barracks in the Presidio, a landmarked 19th-century Army base, inside it proves to be something of a high-tech wonderland, designed by David Rock-

well, the man behind the 2009 Oscars broadcast and the Imagination Playground in New York. Every gallery (numbered at right and detailed in the captions below) is packed with video monitors, touch screens and sound systems intended to bring static drawings, storyboards and ephemera to life.

Many of the exhibits focus on technological advances made by Disney himself that resulted in the first successful synchronized sound cartoon ("Steamboat Willie," 1928), the first convincing suggestion of depth in animation ("The Old Mill," 1937) and the first modern-day theme park (Disneyland, 1955). There is also abundant documentation of his private life, with snapshots and home videos everywhere.

After the death of Disney's widow, Lillian, in 1997, Mr. Benefield said, it dawned on her grandchildren that vast quantities of her husband's personal memorabilia were packed away. "It just seemed like a shame," Mr. Benefield said. The family had the archives moved to a Presidio warehouse, cataloged and made available to scholars. "They started out with a small idea," he said, "and then it grew and it grew."

CAROL KINO



WALT DISNEY FAMILY FOUNDATION, COURTESY DISNEY

### ONLINE: SLIDE SHOW

Additional images of the Walt Disney Family Museum:

[nytimes.com/design](http://nytimes.com/design)



THOMAS NEBBIA/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

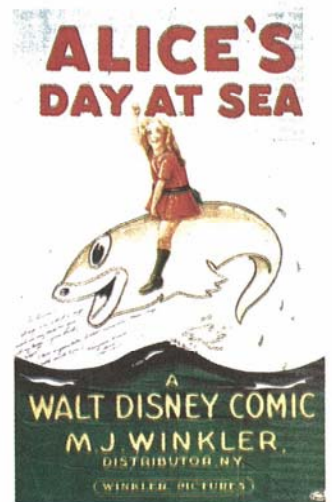
**DISNEY'S HIDEAWAY** In the ground floor lobby visitors will encounter a suite of Victorian furniture from Disney's top-secret hideout, a private apartment above the Main Street fire station at Disneyland. He spent about one night a week there,

always rising early enough to drive the fire truck around the grounds before the public arrived. In this 1963 photograph, which first appeared in National Geographic, he is pictured with Lillian and three of their seven grandchildren.



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**THE BIRTH OF MICKEY** Disney liked to say he dreamed up Mickey Mouse on a miserable 1928 cross-country train ride. His New York distributor had just tricked him out of the rights to his series "Oswald the Lucky Rabbit," and he was desperate to develop a new animal cartoon. On the trip he floated the idea of a talking mouse to Lillian; she liked it but nixed the original name, Mortimer. This sheet of drawings, believed to be the earliest of Mickey, will be on view in Gallery 2 on the second floor, which covers Disney's early Hollywood years. They seem to be the work of several people, including Ub Iwerks, Disney's friend, partner and chief animator.



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**THE ALICE COMEDIES** Disney's first commercial film venture was a series of silent comedy shorts in the '20s that combined a live-action girl with cartoon animals. A poster for the first of these, from 1924, will be in Gallery 2; it features Virginia Davis, Disney's original Alice, who died last month at the age of 90.