

Fern Tiger Associates  
201 Clay Street, Suite 290  
Oakland CA 94607  
510 208 7700  
fern@ferntiger.com

**M O C H**



**November  
2002**

**From 1989 to 2002:  
A Story of Creativity in Purpose,  
Program, and Structure**

From 1989 to 2002: a Story of Creativity in Purpose, Program, and Structure

## **The Story of MOCHA, the Museum of Children's Art**

November 2002

*“What we’re about is breaking down the barrier between art and the audience. ...At MOCHA people are able to discover ‘I can do art’ – even a failing student, a teacher who thinks she can’t teach art, a parent who doesn’t know how to relate to a child. ...We teach children, but also adults, to create their own world and validate their own point of view.”*

by Fern Tiger Associates  
c. 2002

## Table of Contents

### ***Part I***

Historical Narrative.....

### ***Part II***

Critical Decisions

Developing Core Programs.....

- ▶ On-Site Programs
- ▶ Discover Art
- ▶ Project YIELD

*Lessons Learned* .....

Establishing a Community Presence .....

- ▶ Community Connections
- ▶ Permanent Location

*Lessons Learned* .....

Pursuing Strategic and Effective Organizational Development .....

- ▶ Board Development and Staff Leadership
- ▶ Recruiting Staff Artists
- ▶ Strategic Planning

*Lessons Learned* .....

### ***Appendices***

- An Oakland Timeline (1989-2001)
- A MOCHA Timeline (1989 - 2001)
- MOCHA Exhibits
- Grants to MOCHA
- Participating Schools
- Accomplishments and Awards

## **Overview**

The Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA) in Oakland, CA, is a successful community-based organization with more than a dozen years of experience providing creative experiences for children in the East Bay .. in public schools, neighborhoods, and at the MOCHA Gallery. Founded in 1989, on what at the time seemed like a lofty vision and a shoestring budget, the organization has matured to become the third-largest arts organizations in Oakland. This study provides a narrative overview of MOCHA's history, and then explores more deeply a number of issues and critical decisions MOCHA faced along the course of its development. Some of the broad themes include:

- ▶ the development of research-based arts education programs;
- ▶ artists as teachers and program developers;
- ▶ efforts to link arts education with a regional school reform movement;
- ▶ an emphasis on community development;
- ▶ cultivation of local political support;
- ▶ a three-pronged program model – on-site, in the schools, and in the community; and
- ▶ increasingly strategic agency leadership and organizational effectiveness.

In general, this is a story of serendipity and planning; of friendship and commitment; of passion and stamina; of children and art; of ability and cunning; and of success amid many obstacles. It is the story of being in the right place at the right time and of making the purpose right for its time.

*It is the story of MOCHA – the Museum of Children's Art in Oakland.*

## *MOCHA: An Idea and A Purpose*

Whimsical. Organized chaos. A series of serendipitous moments. These are words and phrases often used to describe MOCHA by those who are acquainted with this successful community-based organization located in Oakland, California. But these phrases belie a more calculated and strategic – if a little fortuitous – set of choices on the road to becoming an established East Bay institution.

The Museum of Children’s Art (MOCHA) was the brainchild of two young women – a stockbroker and a biologist, who hatched the idea during a plane ride from New Orleans to San Francisco. At its inception in 1988, it had no programs, no facility, and just \$2,000 in available cash. But it had an idea: that art should be accessible to all children; that children have the right, the ability, and the desire to be creative; that their creativity should be celebrated and displayed for all to see; and – perhaps most importantly – that the process of creating art should be a fun, even joyous, experience and a means to be challenged and to grow.

Today, more than a decade later, MOCHA is the third-largest arts organization in Oakland.<sup>1</sup> It serves 18,700 children annually (8,700 through off-site programs and 10,000 on-site); runs multiple programs grouped into three core areas; has partnerships with 27 public elementary schools in six Bay Area cities; is supported by a staff of 45 people (21 full-time, 24 part-time) and a community-based board of 15; and has an operating budget of approximately \$1.8 million.

How did MOCHA journey from vision to successful reality? What were the critical steps that MOCHA took to get to where it is today? What stood in the way? What contributed to the success? The following narrative traces MOCHA’s history and offers in-depth analysis of the core decisions and actions that had substantial impact on the direction and subsequent success of the organization.

### *The Earliest Years*

In the 1980s, Oakland, like many cities with large populations of color, was grappling with the results of population flight and economic disinvestment – issues which began in the 1970s and grew with continued lack of support and resources: high unemployment, urban blight, community disinvestment, climbing homicide and crime rates, increasing numbers of low-performing schools, and a rapidly expanding crack-cocaine epidemic. The effects of Proposition 13, passed in 1978, had been fully realized, leaving schools without the funds to offer the supplementary academic activities that are central

---

1

MOCHA is the third-largest arts organization in Oakland, behind the Oakland Museum and the Oakland Ballet based on organizational budget.

to cognitive, creative, and social development: art, music, dance, sports, drama, and more.

Jill Vialet arrived in Oakland in 1989, fresh from the East Coast, via Harvard University's undergraduate education program, a stint as a stock broker, and a job as a counselor working with Eskimo children in Alaska. What she found was a community struggling to build an economic base and to maintain its cultural vitality. Oakland – the city that had boasted a thriving jazz and blues scene since the 40s and was the home of Jack London and other acclaimed writers, the location where Isadora Duncan performed her first dance, and where numerous cultural institutions were founded.

Inspired by the effects that art and artistic creation had on Eskimo communities Vialet had worked with, and by children's museums she knew in Boston and Washington, D.C., she had a vision of a community-based arts resource for children. Soon after, she found herself on a flight with a seat-mate who was a molecular biologist and recent Reed College graduate, Mary Marx, who was stirred by Jill's vision. Two weeks later, in Jill's kitchen, the pair sat down to draft the founding documents for what would become the Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA).

The Spring of 1989 was upon them. Elihu Harris was campaigning for his first term as mayor of Oakland and readily offered his support to the fledgling children's museum concept, with a goal of making art accessible to all kids. With bylaws and articles of incorporation in hand, Jill and Mary toured Oakland, talking to possible supporters and recruiting their first board members. Many of the original members might be called "F.o.J." or "Friends of Jill," including parents of her college classmates back east. But included in that original group of board members were two people who would remain involved long term with the organization and bring particular expertise and connections which helped MOCHA become credible quickly: a physician who was the director of the local children's hospital research institute and the director of the Oakland Metropolitan Forum, a university-sponsored program. As the story is told, Jill "practically camped out" at the offices of the Oakland Metropolitan Forum waiting for the director to come to work and continuously implored him to be on the board. As he describes it, "I figured that the only way to get her to leave my office was to agree to serve on the board."

Though many local leaders found the two women "energetic and charming," some were critical of their lack of experience and lack of history in Oakland and "Oakland's ways" (neither woman was from Oakland). It was said that child-centered community institutions had been attempted before, and neither the economic base nor sufficient community interest existed for such a project. Undeterred, Jill and Mary sought political allies and community members for their board, and recruited professional friends to donate *pro bono* legal and accounting services.

When they came knocking on the door of Children's Hospital of Oakland, the Director of Child

Life Services was intrigued by their enthusiasm and the uniqueness of their idea. She was all too aware of the anxiety, pain, frustration, and boredom faced by children in the Hospital's oncology and hematology wards. Therein, MOCHA's first "Artist in Residence" project was created. Two professional artists were recruited to teach art to children at the Hospital each week. The artists offered a wide range of experiences, and even provided special "bedside" sessions for children unable to leave their hospital room. Twice a week, classes attracted 10-20 children for three hour sessions. The program ran through MOCHA until 1999, when the hospital decided to bring the program "in-house," and hired a former MOCHA staff member to become the full-time artist-in-residence.

To build community momentum and generate its initial financial resources, MOCHA hosted a reception at the Ginn House in Preservation Park. Children, parents, community members, and local politicians turned out to look at kids' art, eat ice cream cones, and talk about the importance of creativity in the lives of children. Following the reception, MOCHA opened a bank account.

At this early stage, MOCHA had no real funding and no budget. To support themselves and to enable them to have time for MOCHA, Jill and Mary each worked at the East Bay Conservation Corps, an agency dedicated to promoting youth development and leadership through environmental programs and community service. The Conservation Corps was known for its experiential education and service-learning model, which integrated academic instruction with community service and had extensive relationships with students, teachers, and several East Bay school districts. Jill and Mary were both involved in the Corps' Project YES (Youth Engaged in Service), which trained teachers in service-learning concepts and provided youth with in-school, after-school, and summer experiences in community volunteerism. Both Jill and Mary used their time at the Conservation Corps to gain experience in program design and implementation, to begin making connections with individual teachers, and to work directly with youth. The Conservation Corps also provided (somewhat indirectly) phones, computers, and a fax machine, that enabled MOCHA to start its operations.

From that time, MOCHA's efforts and infectious energy snowballed. Throughout the summer and fall of 1989, MOCHA sponsored an exhibit of art produced by more than 200 children in the Soviet Union; mounted another children's art exhibit at Oakland's City Hall (representing the art of more than 300 children) and two other shows at the Clorox Corporation in Oakland and the Larkin Street Youth Center in San Francisco; hosted a booth at Oakland's well-attended Festival on the Lake; and developed relationships with teachers in schools throughout Oakland.

Despite the apparent casualness of MOCHA's efforts and its supposed willingness to do projects wherever and whenever requested, MOCHA's founders had an uncanny, strategic, and definitely

contagious ability to become known, to attract visibility through the press, and to gain support. In these early days it seemed as if MOCHA was everywhere, yet nowhere: it was “a museum without walls.” MOCHA was without a location, without real staff, without funding. MOCHA was “grassroots” – of the community, for the community, in the community.

The organization’s name, “MOCHA,” had a clever ring that went beyond mere accident: as an acronym it should have been MOCA. Instead, to avoid any confusion with the well-known Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the youthful founders chose to insert the “H” (Museum of CHildren’s Art) enabling them to pull off a clever *coffee* theme in the early days. They developed a newsletter entitled “Expresso” and worked to incorporate the caffeine tie-in into their membership categories (“latte” for big donors; “decaf” for senior citizens and teens). Indeed, in later years, when MOCHA moved to Jack London Square, its staff quickly contracted to have a coffee stand in front of the building. The name could have been accidental or simply cute; in the end, it was clever and smart public relations.

In October 1990, MOCHA got its first grant: \$10,000 from the Skaggs Foundation, which enabled Jill to leave her “day job” at the East Bay Conservation Corps and devote herself full-time to the development and growth of MOCHA. At about the same time, the Bay Area was rocked by the Loma Prieta earthquake, and shaken Oakland residents worked to rebuild and resume their lives. MOCHA started making art with children and families made homeless by the earthquake and living in Salvation Army shelters, offering whimsical fun and creative release. During that time, MOCHA continued to establish relationships with teachers and, for the first time, began to develop curriculum components that could include a formal arts education program that could be respected and replicated.

Though the community was beginning to hear of MOCHA, it still had no home (somewhat ironic for an organization called a “museum” which generally means “*a building or room for preserving and exhibiting artistic, historical, or scientific objects.*”

In early 1990, the developers of Old Oakland offered “MOCHA staff” (all two of them!) a free, but small, space on 8<sup>th</sup> Street that was sitting vacant. Like any good urban pioneers, Jill and Mary decided to move in. With friends from the Conservation Corps, they cleaned up the space, made friends with the neighbors, and began hanging shows of children’s art. They recruited summer interns from the Private Industry Council to help out in the “gallery” and to take on the task of helping MOCHA organize Oakland’s Autumn Fest – planning a benefit dinner, recruiting street vendors, and signing on local bands. MOCHA’s day and night efforts netted only \$7,000 in donations, but attracted considerable media attention and a great deal of public interest in the potential for the organization.

MOCHA recruited two interns from Mills College to research, plan, and hang a dramatic

“Killing Fields” exhibit, featuring children’s art from Cambodia. The concept for the show originated when the doctor on MOCHA’s board provided the organization with stacks of artwork created by refugee children whom he had encountered while working in Cambodian refugee camps. The exhibit received strong media attention, including spots on the evening news and coverage in the press. The intensity of the show demonstrated the seriousness of MOCHA’s efforts and alerted more of the community to MOCHA.

Shortly thereafter, MOCHA’s Artist-in-Residence program (already operating at shelters) expanded to include the Oakland schools through a pilot program that sent professional artists into six elementary school classrooms to teach drawing, painting, and dance. Now outgrowing its first space and wanting to hold an exhibition of work by professional artists, MOCHA teachers, and their students, MOCHA located another space in Old Oakland which offered 2,000 square feet, but was piled high with steel rebar and other construction materials. The building developer was in foreclosure on the property and allowed them to use the space, but offered no assistance in helping to clean it up. Undaunted, MOCHA turned again to the Conservation Corps to help clear the area and turn it into an open-plan gallery to display monthly exhibitions of children’s artwork and to offer drop-in art classes to community kids. During that same period, Jill and Mary served on numerous commissions and attended most culturally-focused events in Oakland. *MOCHA was becoming a community presence.*

In the Fall of 1991, firestorms decimated the Oakland and Berkeley hills, burning thousands of homes, but sparing Chabot, Hillcrest, and Kaiser elementary schools. In the wake of the fire, city funding was available for community rebuilding, and in a revitalization effort, MOCHA secured funding to produce community murals at these schools, organizing and coordinating the children who carried out the painting task. *ABC World News Tonight* got wind of the work and did an evening feature on a MOCHA exhibition of artwork created by students at Chabot School. Soon, MOCHA began receiving calls from all over the East Bay. The Oakland Airport asked MOCHA to mount a holiday show in the passenger terminal. It was MOCHA’s first contract (for \$6,000) and, within weeks, 20 schools had signed up to display their students’ art to every air traveler who passed through the Oakland terminal that December.

A grant that Fall from the James Irvine Foundation provided the agency with \$50,000 over two years for programming (an amount almost the size of its total budget at the time). An additional \$15,000 was secured from the foundation to hire a professional consulting firm, Fern Tiger Associates (FTA), to help the organization become more secure. MOCHA referred to FTA as its “first grown-up influence.” Fern Tiger Associates asked questions MOCHA was not yet prepared to answer. What was the growth

plan? Why weren't the artists on the staff? What was the organizational budget and how would MOCHA ensure future funding from diversified sources? How about program evaluation? Many of these questions were acknowledged and tucked away for later. The organization's founders felt MOCHA was too new, too young, and too lacking in infrastructure to be focusing on those issues. However, this experience would help shape MOCHA's recognition of the need to think seriously about the future and about the development of an organizational structure to carry MOCHA forward.

Like other serendipitous events MOCHA treasured, a visit from a former classmate's friend connected MOCHA to its next core founder. A graduate of Brown University and the London School of Economics, Maia Baker was touring the U.S., en route to England where her family lived, when she arrived at MOCHA, ostensibly to pick up the key to a friend's San Francisco apartment. MOCHA's founders quickly recruited her to help out. Maia came for a weekend and stayed for eight years.

Another grant from the San Francisco Foundation enabled Maia to become the volunteer coordinator. (*Now they were three!*) Maia expanded volunteer efforts, and then turned her attention to other organizational infrastructure needs, many of which had been identified in the consultant's report. At the time, MOCHA's financial system comprised piles of receipts in a shoe box. Artists and other part-time contractors were paid without an invoice, receipts were hard to find, and there was no formal accounting system. With a third staff member, MOCHA tried its hand at an organizational budget, instituted expense reporting requirements, organized purchasing decisions, and hired an accountant. A semblance of structure and accountability emerged. The operating budget was now \$150,000.

To raise more money and to generate visibility, MOCHA held its first fundraising dinner in 1992, which netted \$2,000, but began a tradition that would continue for many years. Over the years, these fun, sold-out events took up great amounts of staff time and raised relatively little money (about \$10,000 each year.) But they always garnered attention and accolades, as well as an increasing numbers of attendees, forcing MOCHA to change the venue from some of Oakland's favorite ethnic restaurants (Ratto's and Le Cheval) to the lawns of Mills College. The agency was also famous for its tee shirts. The T-shirts, originally created and screened *pro bono* by an artist friend, were emblazoned with the MOCHA name and were one of the first items sold to raise money for programs. As MOCHA staff put it "One \$10 tee shirt could pay for one hour of MOCHA artist time." [MOCHA tee shirts are still sold today, though they are produced in mass quantities and now cost more than \$10 apiece.]

Also in 1992, through more effective grant writing efforts, MOCHA received funds from the California Arts Council (CAC). The two-year multi-residency grant enabled four artists to teach in four schools on behalf of MOCHA. MOCHA posted a job opening for artists and received 300 resumes.

Though sorting through the applications was no small task, MOCHA was able to select several highly qualified professionals. Those not selected were placed on the back-up list as future resources – *MOCHA's network of artists was expanding*. Given the organization's physical proximity to West Oakland, MOCHA wanted to use the grant to reach further into the neighborhood. MOCHA selected four additional schools as sites for multi-residency art programs: Prescott and Ralph Bunche Elementary Schools in West Oakland, Burkhalter Elementary School in East Oakland, and Garfield Elementary School in Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood.

### *Growing Pains*

As staff expended energy building the organization, financial troubles crept up on them. Though MOCHA had been thin on money from the start, it had been easy to play loose in the early days. There had been no real overhead then, no rent, and only occasional part-time artists; the staff were young, single, childless, and willing to live on subsistence pay. From the beginning, one tenet and mandate from the board was: "Don't spend what you don't have." Perhaps because of the youthfulness of the founders or because the board recognized that the fiscal capacity of the organization was shaky, this directive was a sacred rule for the organization. Thus, the staff generally resolved financial inadequacies or budget shortfalls through personal sacrifice, stalling payments, or generating innovative and quickly put-together fundraisers.

MOCHA's first financial emergency took the staff by surprise in 1993. Though thrilled by the California Arts Council grant received the prior year, MOCHA discovered that the award was both a blessing and a curse. The grant contract included a one-to-one matching funds requirement; MOCHA had to provide proof of receipt of the matching donation *before* CAC would release its funds. Though MOCHA had pending grants in the pipeline, it took time to get the funds in hand necessary to satisfy the CAC requirement. Suddenly, with a bigger organization and a staff of three, plus a number of artists, the organization found itself strapped for cash. Promising vendors "the check was in the mail," staff juggled weekly cash receipts to cover critical payments, and occasionally stopped paying their own salaries. MOCHA found itself confronted with the financial realities of program management, contract negotiations, and the need to develop surplus funds. Discussions with the board and the consultant helped the staff recognize this as a cash flow problem that could be resolved through interim financing. Some quick thinking and phone calls resulted in a grant application for an emergency loan from the Cultural Facilities Fund, a San Francisco-based nonprofit. Despite financial difficulties, in that same period, MOCHA was selected as the 1993 winner of the Oakland Business Arts Award as Arts

Education Advocate of the Year.

MOCHA continued expanding on-site programs and began charging small fees to cover the cost of art classes. Though MOCHA was in high demand, program expansion often outstripped funding availability. To provide for longer term income, MOCHA applied for and received an innovatively-structured, three-year grant from the Irvine Foundation, as a follow up to the original technical assistance and program grants. In this new grant, Irvine pledged a declining grant amount for each of three years to be matched by an increasing amount raised by MOCHA. (The grant also included funds for ongoing work with the consultant, something the organization felt would help it achieve more stability.) In structuring the grant, the foundation had a discussion with the consultant and together they arrived at amounts that seemed realistic, yet challenging. In total, MOCHA needed to raise \$30,000 (\$5K, \$10K and \$15K) over the three year span of the grant. At one point, the funder suggested that matching contributions be limited to donations less than \$5,000 each – encouraging MOCHA to reach out to a larger pool of donors. That qualification was dropped because it seemed so unlikely that any *one* individual would suddenly donate such a large amount, to this still young organization, to match the foundation grant.

As MOCHA's luck would have it, about two months after the grant was awarded, one of MOCHA's founders made a fortuitous connection with the Comer Family Foundation, which was so impressed with MOCHA's work in the community it made a three-year grant of more than \$100,000 – exceeding the three-year match required from the Irvine Foundation in one swoop! After several months of belt-tightening and nail-biting, MOCHA's financial situation seemed solid (at least in comparison to where it had been.)

MOCHA's work in schools continued to attract attention. An art teacher at Kaiser Elementary School, who had helped MOCHA paint murals at the school after the Oakland hills fire, had been following MOCHA's progress, and occasionally taught as a MOCHA artist-in-resident. One day, Arlene Schmaef announced she was prepared to give up her steady teaching job and guaranteed retirement to work at MOCHA. A grant from the Brunner Foundation funded her initial work at MOCHA. With master's degrees in both fine arts and education, as well as 26 years teaching in the public schools, she brought to MOCHA a passion for arts education, a philosophical belief in public education, and the training and experience necessary to provide MOCHA's programs with a rigor they had not yet developed. She believed strongly in the role the arts could play in education and, very early during her time at MOCHA, began developing the framework for what would become the "Discover Art" program.

As Discover Art was taking shape, MOCHA was once again faced with its perennial problem:

space. The current location that MOCHA had been using in the Old Oakland development was being repossessed by creditors, and MOCHA would soon be required to pay market rate rent. Once again, the organization needed to pull up stakes. Through a board member's connection, MOCHA was introduced to property owner and developer who had 5,000 square feet available in the Jack London Square neighborhood. Since it was vacant, he was happy to have a conscientious, community-based organization use the space "temporarily." The new space was large, had good light, and didn't have any constraining interior walls. MOCHA had free reign to divide it up as needed for gallery, work areas, and administrative offices. For some time, MOCHA had envisioned creating a small retail store as a way to generate unrestricted income to support programs. Now a space was available to explore this potential. One board member had extensive retail and marketing experience. She offered to develop an innovative on-site store, stock its inventory, and staff it on a daily basis. In 1994, she joined MOCHA's staff, bringing the total working at MOCHA to five.

While the store sounded like a good idea to most board members, some were hesitant about how a retail operation fit with MOCHA's mission. They questioned how MOCHA could manage the store and what responsibilities and potential liabilities this venture would bring the organization. Ultimately, the *ayes* were in the majority and MOCHA moved to create a very unique store near the entry of the facility. The store sold children's books, toys, and paraphernalia, including a good deal of clothing and memorabilia with the MOCHA logo.

For the first time in its history, MOCHA was a legitimate, rent-paying tenant (although well below market rates.) But this tenancy had been described as "temporary" by the building owner, causing MOCHA to be cautious about any investment in the space. Rent was kept low and MOCHA was viewed by its entrepreneurial, devoted landlord/benefactor as a "draw" to the emerging Jack London Square neighborhood. (It's important to remember that MOCHA pre-dated most of the restaurants that are now brimming with customers: the cineplex, the parking garage, the renovated shops and Barnes & Noble, and the creation of Jack London Square as a tourist destination.)

The move to the new space brought its challenges. MOCHA was no longer "the museum without walls." The small but growing staff worried it was becoming too institutionalized. The budget had expanded to \$300,000 for the support of structured programs and relationships developed with hundreds of children, parents, teachers, school district administrators, board members, funders, local and regional politicians, and influential community members. MOCHA was faced with the responsibility of maintaining the spirit of its innovative founding while supporting a real infrastructure. It needed to define its vision in a way that respected its history and accomplishments, but also acknowledged its

vulnerability. Initially, MOCHA grappled with this definitional change as it worked to draw the community to its new location. The previous site, a storefront on an active city street, attracted plenty of neighborhood foot traffic from children and adults passing by on the sidewalk. At Jack London Square, MOCHA would become a destination in and of itself. Had it not built strong community and public relations, the visitor count might have declined.

*MOCHA was now five years old.* It was expanding in multiple programmatic and geographic directions. The move to Jack London Square and the larger space provided MOCHA the opportunity to offer on-site programs including drop-in art classes, summertime and school holiday “art camps,” and art-focused birthday parties. These activities not only generated interest and enthusiasm among community members but provided an unrestricted income base. Discover Art’s curriculum was being developed carefully and purposefully. Its intention was to cover the basic “vocabulary” of visual art – line, shape, color, texture, and space – while allowing a large degree of instructional flexibility for individual artists and public school teachers who learned to teach the course to their elementary age students. MOCHA entered negotiations with the Oakland schools for a renewable, annual contract which would cover two-thirds of the Discover Art program cost at five elementary schools. Unfortunately, negotiations came to an unexpected halt with the onset of the 1996 Oakland teachers strike, leading MOCHA to explore options for partnerships with other districts.

From the perspective of organizational development, MOCHA staff and its board debated over the most appropriate options for solidifying MOCHA’s community connections, expanding its programmatic reach, and managing its growing reputation. Some argued that, as MOCHA developed into an esteemed community institution, it needed and deserved a *permanent* home to provide tangible evidence of its organizational presence. The result of these conversations led to a drawn-out, three-year project to identify and obtain a permanent location.

In the midst of the search for a larger, long-term facility, Jill announced news of her first pregnancy and advised the board that she would be taking a maternity leave. Together, staff, board, and consultant decided Mary would add the title of co-executive director to her program director title. Efforts were made to anticipate tasks and projects that would need attention while Jill was away. After the birth of her baby girl and over the course of her maternity leave, Jill decided that she was ready to move on to new professional challenges. She had been with MOCHA from its inception and wanted to focus on different issues. MOCHA faced its first leadership transition.

In September of 1996, an incredibly smooth and almost transparent change occurred as Mary went from co-executive director to executive director. Though the transition was, for the most part,

seamless, Mary faced substantial challenges when she assumed the exclusive role of executive director. MOCHA was in the midst of an exhaustive search for a permanent facility. Staff had diverted energy from some critical efforts including program management, fundraising, and board development. Concerned about maintaining and building the organization's focus, and needing to increase access to revenue sources, Mary recommended adding four new board members to complement the existing group and to broaden the skills and expertise she felt important as resources for her and for the organization. She asked staff to look at all program activities and carefully consider which were essential and which were draining limited resources. She assessed grant opportunities to increase MOCHA's funding stream. And she put the quest for a building purchase on hold.

While MOCHA managed to grow programmatically and financially (its budget today is \$1.8 million), these organizational growth bumps encouraged the organization to focus on longer term, strategic issues, leading MOCHA to realize that it needed to pay greater attention to issues like board development, communications, and finances.

Along with a leadership change came staffing and organizational shifts. The manager of the MOCHA store wanted to take on program management roles and began to oversee on-site programs (fee-for-service classes, camps, etc.) and formalized the program for MOCHA birthday parties, helping to take the challenging parental task of coming up with clever party themes out of the hands of parents.

By now, Discover Art had expanded to eight schools. To formalize and broaden her programmatic role, Arlene was named to a newly-created, Director of Education Programs position. In this new capacity, she began a deeper exploration of how the arts education programs could be used to prompt school reform and increase educational achievement for children. Around this time, MOCHA received a grant to expand its community programs at an Oakland Housing Authority site. This project laid the groundwork for what would become Project YIELD, perhaps MOCHA's most significant effort to effect neighborhood change through the arts. After the collective angst over finding a permanent site, MOCHA reached an agreement with its landlord to stay in the Jack London Square location, with a staged annual increase in rent. Within five years, MOCHA would have to pay market rate an amount that would severely tax the organization.

### *An East Bay Presence*

With some of its growing pains behind it and the security of a comfortable location for a few years, MOCHA concentrated on solidifying its organizational capacity. Its visibility increased; it received several prestigious awards and Harvard University's School of Education invited the organization to

participate in an assessment of arts organizations. Changes afforded opportunities and challenges. In 1998, after eight years, Maia decided to return to England, and Mary learned she was pregnant. Maia's proposed departure and Mary's impending maternity leave spurred MOCHA to re-evaluate its staffing, along with its operations and systems. Again, through connections, MOCHA hired a finance director away from the City of Oakland's Cultural Funding program. She brought with her an enthusiasm for children and the arts, as well as operational and management experience. With the arrival of MOCHA's new director of administration, Maia left for Europe, and Mary took a three-month maternity leave. Within a short time, MOCHA streamlined its purchasing efforts, developed the ability to generate financial and management reports at the push of a button, and instituted regular staff meetings. These and other efforts built an efficient operational and management system. That same year, MOCHA hired a grant writer who succeeded in garnering funding from several new foundations which brought about a change in staff structure, enabling the hiring of full-time staff artists and further expanding staff professional development.

In 1999, with the culmination of a five-year search for a permanent home, MOCHA signed a 21-year lease (with a very advantageous rent structure) with the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC) for a 4,000 square foot gallery and office space in the newly redeveloped Swan's Market in downtown Oakland. For the first time in its decade-long history, MOCHA had a home. After the initial euphoria of finding a real location, MOCHA assessed the build-out needs of the space. Taking a collective gulp, MOCHA staff realized that they needed at least \$600,000 to complete site renovations. In addition, they felt that MOCHA had grown to the size that it needed an operating reserve fund. With the help of their consultants, Fern Tiger Associates, MOCHA determined that the time was right to launch a capital campaign. The campaign goal was targeted at \$750,000.

With a new home, the successful launch of a capital campaign, a stable staff, and sophisticated management systems, MOCHA was able to focus more closely on programs and long range goals. It began to look carefully at projects that were successful and those that drained the organization's energy, taking note of lessons learned along the way.

In 2001, secure that it would be around for some time to come, the board engaged in its first long-range, strategic planning process, asking big-picture questions about what new programs should be added; if and how MOCHA should expand; what role MOCHA should play in arts advocacy on the local and state level; and what impact, if any, MOCHA might have on a national level, assisting other community-based organizations in the very same start-up process it had experienced a dozen years earlier. The completion of that plan dovetails with this story.