

STRATEGIC STABILITY: GUIDING A WHIMSICAL
NEWCOMER TO MATURITY



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When Fern Tiger Associates was first approached to help the Museum of Children's Art in Oakland, MOCHA was a very small, very high-energy, somewhat chaotic organization, which had moved three times in two years and kept its business receipts in a shoebox. But it had already captured the attention of national news outlets and a number of prominent Oaklanders. Run by a trio of bright and determined twenty-somethings in 1991, the "museum" was actually a versatile, fledgling youth arts program lacking a home. More than a decade later, having generated continual momentum, MOCHA has grown to be one of Oakland's largest and most stable arts organizations.

Locating a permanent facility marked a milestone for MOCHA, which had moved often in its early years. To celebrate the move to a permanent home, children paraded from the former Jack London Square location to the new downtown site in Swan's Market, carrying papier maché giants – generating excitement for the new site.



In the beginning, MOCHA staff teasingly referred to the staff of FTA as their “paid grown-ups,” who asked tough, real-world questions about MOCHA’s plans for growth, diversified funding, and evaluation. For more than a decade, FTA worked closely with MOCHA, fostering the development of formal accounting systems, marketing programs, building staff and board, strengthening management systems, and pursuing a permanent home. FTA’s assistance with strategic fundraising and the creative presentation of the organization ensured the successful completion of a \$750,000 capital campaign. In 2001, FTA facilitated a comprehensive strategic planning process, the culmination of a decade of growth (from three staff to 50).



MOCHA's selection of FTA to help with the planning process was a reflection of FTA's sensitivity to and knowledge of the organization's culture. FTA helped MOCHA assess its programs; examine the work of peers in the arts and youth development "marketplace;" review funding issues and board composition; and acknowledge opportunities to become a broader regional presence.

Continually supporting the development of professional materials for the organization, FTA also created a number of products for MOCHA, including *The MOCHA Story* and a vibrant display to acknowledge capital campaign donors on one wall of the museum.

MOCHA, the Museum of Children's Art in Oakland, works to ensure the arts are a fundamental part of the lives of all children by helping them learn and create, by teaching and advocating for hands-on arts education, and by offering programs in low-income communities.



