

# Good Vibes: NEC Projectors Recreate 1967's "Summer of Love" in San Francisco Museum Exhibition

## Facility:

- de Young Museum

## Vertical:

- Museum

## Location:

San Francisco

## Challenge:

- Update current museum technology for a new exhibit aiming to create an immersive visitor experience

## Solution:

- 12 NEC PA803U projectors and two NEC MultiSync EA273WMI-BK 27-inch LED-backlit LCDs

## Result:

- Successful exhibit installation of projection and display technologies that bring 1960s-era psychedelia to life

## Exhibit Date:

- April 8 through August 20, 2017



The Summer of Love may be turning 50, but the technology that recreated it in a museum exhibition is far from outmoded.

San Francisco is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the 1967 counterculture phenomenon – the nucleus of which was in the city's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood – and the de Young Museum's contribution was a special exhibition of 400-plus objects that combined retro clothing and iconic concert posters with cutting-edge digital light shows and projections. [The Summer of Love Experience: Art, Fashion, and Rock & Roll](#), which opened in April and ran through August 20, showcased the music, art, fashion and music of the heady summer of 1967. The museum wanted to do more than just hang photos on the walls.

"We wanted to get into artifacts," said Rich Rice, Director of Event and Exhibition Technology at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. "We wanted to bring a lot of different pieces together and physically recreate the feeling of this period in an immersive way."

Along with the exhibition curators Jill D'Allesandro, Collen Terry and Julian Cox, and exhibition designer Tomomi Itakura, Rice began preparing for the technical aspects of the installation in fall 2016. With plans to project video from the era as well as light shows and video montages created expressly for the exhibition, the curators and designer sought Rice's expertise.

## Selecting the Technology

The Herzog & de Meuron building that currently houses the Museum opened in 2005. While the museum has in-house equipment, including projectors, according to Rice, "They simply weren't robust enough." When looking to purchase new projectors, the manufacturer in mind was NEC Display Solutions.

"We've found the quality of NEC products to be excellent," Rice said. "We recently upgraded our main theater projector to an NEC NP-PH1202HL, and it was a great purchase. The color reproduction has been strong, which is obviously important to us as an art museum."

The powerful technology was just one part of the decision to select NEC. "We also have a longstanding relationship with NEC," Rice said. "They have great customer service and support, and helped us navigate the process of researching the best equipment. We do many different types of projects and don't always have all the experience with all the new gear, so it's great to have someone to guide us."

## The Exhibit

Rice purchased the technology in January for an early April install, which was serendipitous.

"It happened to be when the new models were coming out, which was good, because you want to be on the right side of that," he said.

The installation itself was fairly simple, with some of the projectors' features making them easy to deploy, according to Rice.

"We've got some mounts I've worked with in the past that have given us a lot of flexibility, and it turns out the projectors themselves have a lot of features built in, like auto-detecting when they're hanging from the ceiling and things like that, so I didn't need to do a lot of fine tuning during installation," Rice said. "They're little features, but they're handy and save time, because everything adds up. We spent more time figuring out the media and projection mapping than calibrating projectors."

The exhibition used projectors to present psychedelic light shows created by Bill Ham and Ben Van Meter as well as video footage of the 1966 Trips Festival – using modern technology to recreate the feeling of San Francisco in 1967. The projectors were all mounted in landscape orientation, with the Trips Festival panels custom-mapped to fit the videos.



Rice purchased 12 NEC PA803U projectors for *The Summer of Love Experience*, with a few factors contributing to his selecting that particular model.

"The galleries have a lot of ambient light to be accounted for – from the films themselves as well as the lighting of individual objects," Rice said. "These new projectors are 8,000 lumens, so they're nice and bright, even in those spaces. And of course, we're a non-profit, so we're always conscious of price point."

Rice added that the consistent quality of the NEC projectors would help ensure that the exhibition's multimedia was a success.

"Projectors are hard to purchase – every manufacturer has different specs, and lumens aren't 'apples to apples' from one manufacturer to another," he said. "You expect a certain brightness out of a projector, and you get that with NEC."

In addition, the projectors' features helped solve some issues with the video footage of the Trips Festival – author Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters' three-day 1966 event intended to spread insider knowledge of the drug LSD. The projection was displayed on two screens stretched into semi-circles. The 3-D reform features of the NEC projector allowed for easier mapping of the footage to the screens.

"It's not always easy to hang multiple projectors in these galleries, and these were small and light enough to manage," Rice added. "It was a good package: features, size, weight and brightness."

Rice also purchased two NEC MultiSync EA273WMI-BK 27-inch LED-backlit LCD displays for educational purposes in the galleries – for example, to show video of the original light show process.



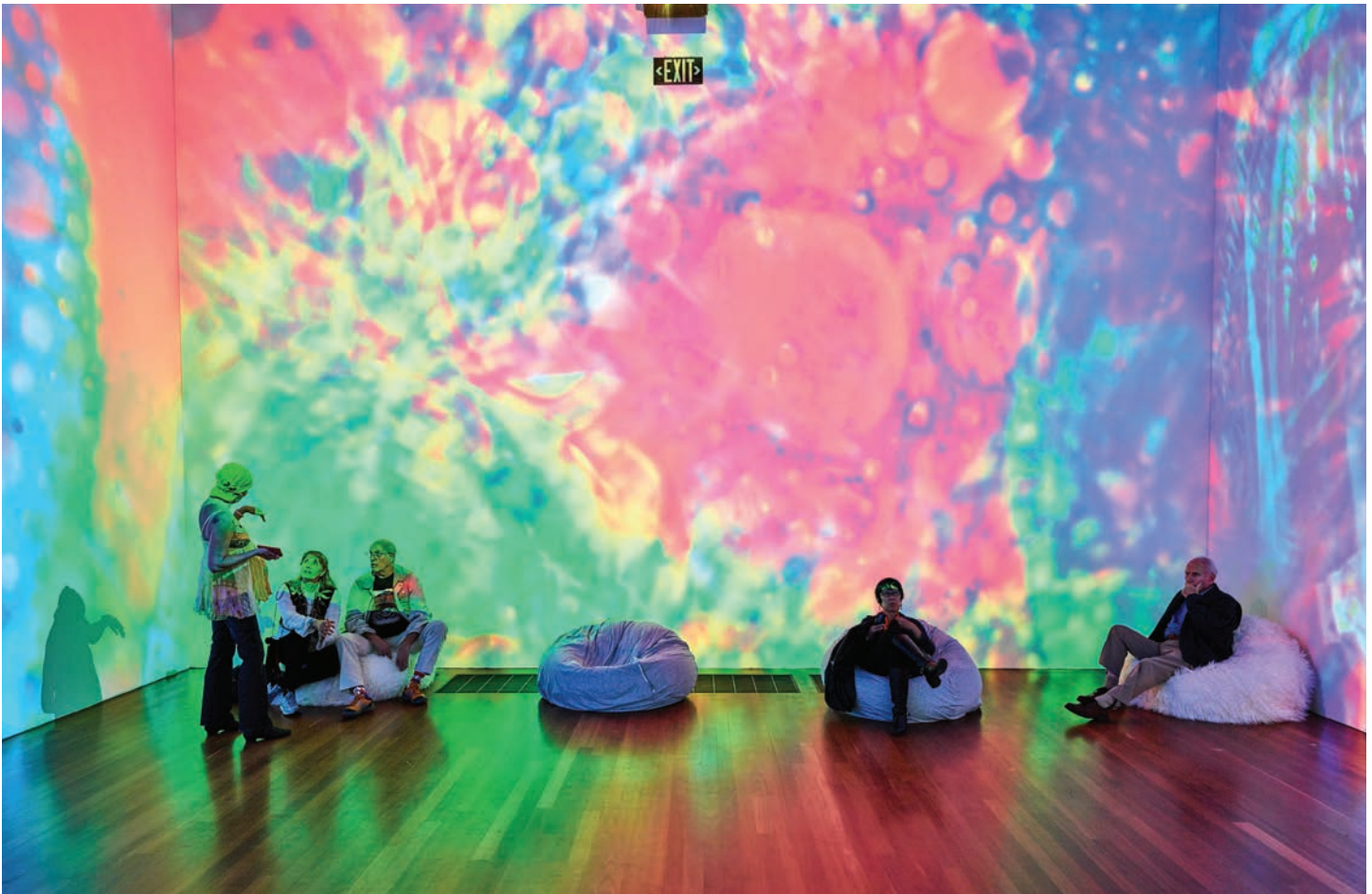
## The Impact

Visitors were enthusiastic about the exhibition - Rice called the light show room "[selfie central](#)," because so many visitors snapped photos of themselves in the room to post to Facebook and Instagram.

"People enjoy art and artifacts and clothing, but we did something special with the projected light show and Trips Festival footage," Rice said. "It grabbed people's attention. It was great to go down to the galleries and see the looks on their faces. We put beanbag chairs in there, and visitors would sit for 30 minutes or an hour and just watch the projections."

Because of the enthusiastic response from visitors, the de Young Museum is planning to do more exhibitions with projector technology in the future.

"We've had good success with projection in the past, but this is the first one we designed ourselves," Rice said. "It's fun to integrate it into the art experience - and sometimes people need that extra push to get excited."



## NEC Display Solutions of America

866-NEC-MORE

[www.necdisplay.com](http://www.necdisplay.com)