



Louis Armstrong and Velma Middleton
Photograph by Lee Friedlander

NEVER TURN BACK

ECHOES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC

↗ ↖ 3,500-5,000 square feet
↘ ↙ of gallery space required

📅 Available:
After March 30, 2027

🕒 Rental Period:
Minimum of 13 weeks

🌐 Language: English + Various
digital guides (see back)

SYNOPSIS

Never Turn Back: Echoes of African American Music focuses on the profound and resilient musical expressions of African American Gospel, Blues, Jazz, and Soul musicians through photography. The title, Never Turn Back, draws from the Negro Spiritual "I'll Never Turn Back No More" by Mahalia Jackson.

The exhibition navigates through the foundations of Gospel music and the origins of Blues in the Mississippi Delta, highlighting the resilience and storytelling embedded in early African American musical traditions. It features evocative photographs that capture the raw emotions, struggles, and triumphs of artists, while spotlighting iconic moments from the lives and careers of musicians who leave an indelible mark on American music. The exhibition's graphic design blends vibrant visuals, era-specific listening stations, and immersive lighting, with each section reflecting the genre's cultural spirit through music, fashion, stage aesthetics, collaborations, and historic music spaces. Photographs and ephemera together create a rich visual narrative of these vibrant music scenes. Select artifacts, such as instruments and costumes, further weave a holistic story of historic moments that continue to shape modern African American music.

Never Turn Back embodies the spirit of artists who use their music and lives to push forward against the challenges and determination they face as African Americans. The exhibition captures their soulful narratives, musical innovations, and the cultural impact that continues to resonate through time.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Visitors interested in music/photography and history will be captivated by Never Turn Back's style and subject matter. The target audience of *Never Turn Back* is all ages.

LIST OF EXHIBITION ELEMENTS

ARTIFACT HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Performance images of artists such as Aretha Franklin, John Lee Hooker, Etta James, Willie Mae Thornton, Buddy Guy, and many more!
- Displays of prominent and rare Gospel, Jazz, Blues, and Soul albums.
- Booklets and sheet music from early 20th century artists.
- Two vintage juke boxes, blues club sign, a Michael Jackson Stage-Worn costume, and other 2D + 3D artifacts from the MOPOP permanent collection.
- Five interactive listening + sampling stations that highlight each genre within the exhibition.



SPACE REQUIREMENTS

(CEILING HEIGHT, MINIMUM ACCESS DIMS, ENVIRONMENT)

- Ceiling height is a minimum of 10ft (size of the tallest exhibit component).
- Empty crates and shipping blankets required 400 sq ft of clean, dry storage.

SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

- During opening hours, trained museum security staff, professional guards, and/or monitored cameras must be present.
- Alarm system and/or guards are required during closed hours.

POWER AND LIGHTING

- A minimum of 10 dedicated circuits at 20 amps, 120 volt circuits, and a minimum of 10 dimmable circuits for the house artifact lighting (hosting venue to provide lighting fixtures).
- Dedicated full-power circuits for exhibit casework and AV hardware.
- Sufficient outlets and/or power supplies to distribute exhibit circuits to components within exhibit.
- Sufficient lighting fixtures with UV filters and a variety of lamps, lenses, and filters to adjust the beam spread and intensity.
- Light fixtures require UV filters and a compliment of lamps, lenses, and filters to adjust the beam spread. Non-artifact items can have slightly higher light levels.
- A MOPOP technician/registrar will establish light levels. Hosting venue is responsible for maintaining and monitoring light levels.

SHIPPING

One truck - Hosting institution is responsible for providing Certificate of Insurance prior to shipping.

INSTALLATION TIME

MOPOP recommends 10-14 days for installing this exhibition. 5-7 days are required for deinstall.

INCLUDED/NOT INCLUDED

INCLUDED:

- 2D and 3D artifacts from MOPOP's permanent collection
- All exhibition didactics—including wall text and digital labels.
- Select screens for films and interactive elements.
- Interactive listening stations for each exhibition section
- Hip-Hop sampling station interactive
- Large format film containing multiple sections from MOPOP's Oral History collection

NOT INCLUDED:

- Large-scale wall graphics

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

3D GALLERY TOUR

Inquire to request a link to the 3D gallery tour of the exhibition

LANGUAGES

English. Large print and digital guides available in both English and Neutral Spanish.

AVAILABILITY

After March 30, 2027.

PHOTO CREDITS

1. NTB Intro Signage
2. Aretha Franklin - credit - Photograph by Lee Friedlander
3. Quincy Jones - credit - Courtesy of Quincy Jones
4. HipHop Remix Interactive Listening Station
5. Guests Looking at Historic Blues Artifacts