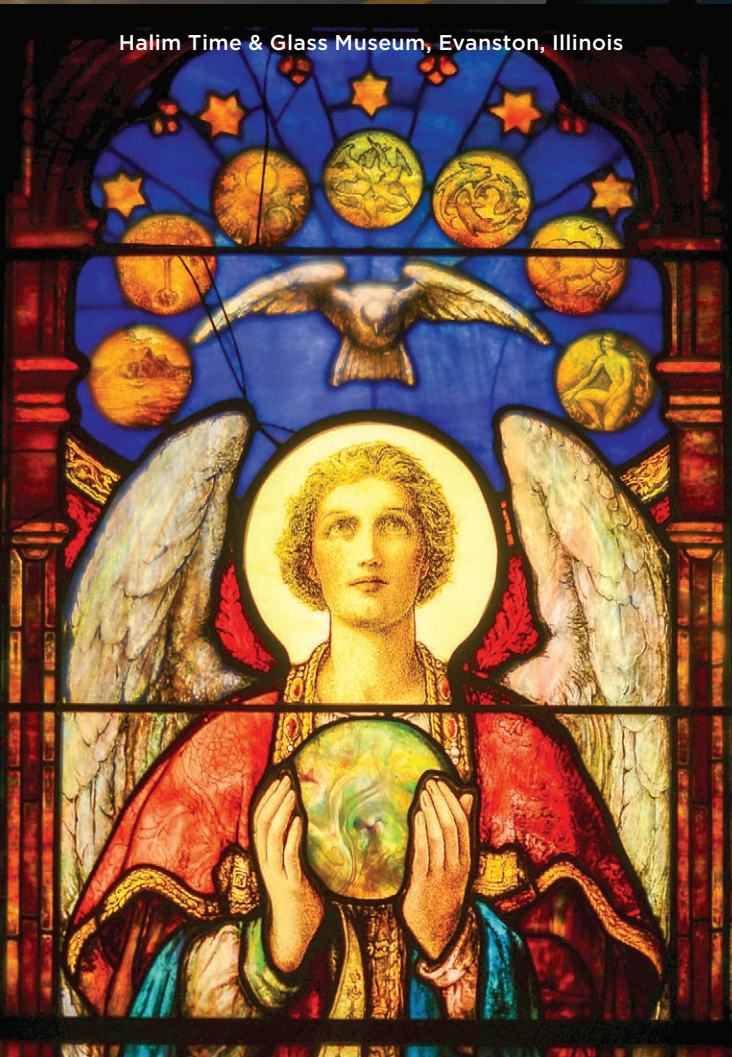




The Henry Ford Rouge Gallery, Dearborn, Michigan



Hollywood Museum, Los Angeles



Halim Time & Glass Museum, Evanston, Illinois



The Neon Museum, Las Vegas

## A Specialty Museum Sampler

### COMPUTER HISTORY MUSEUM, MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIF.

Artifacts and displays from the abacus to the supercomputer.

### MUSEUM OF AMERICAN FINANCE, NEW YORK CITY

A public museum showcasing the country's relationship with financial markets, money and banking.

### KYOTO RAILWAY MUSEUM, KYOTO, JAPAN

More than 53 trains, including an 1880s steam engine and one of the world's fastest bullet trains.

### HOLLYWOOD MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES

Exhibits on the development of the film and cinema industry in the US.

### LEEDS INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM AT ARMLEY MILLS, LEEDS, NORTHERN ENGLAND

The Industrial Revolution is on full display with textile machines, trains and heavy manufacturing equipment.

### THE HENRY FORD, DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

Largest indoor-outdoor museum complex in the US, focuses American innovation.



# Museums, Minus the Masterpieces

How a little-known world of specialty museums offers a glimpse into innovation of the past.

Chicago's Art Institute houses several of Monet's "Water Lilies" paintings. Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" sits in the Louvre in Paris. Beijing's National Museum has priceless treasures from China's imperial dynasties. But what about being inspired not by Van Gogh but by, say, the original Stardust Casino sign housed in an outdoor lot of neon relics? Or perhaps one of thousands of history's most fascinating medical devices? And don't forget getting an up-close view of trains, textile machines or even the abacus.

We are talking, of course, about the innumerable specialty museums that may be off the cultural radar for most, but each with its own intrinsic value. Indeed, many offer leaders an eye-opening window into just how breakthrough innovations really occur.

Our own three-museum tour took us to the heartland of America and an unusual destination: the Halim Time & Glass Museum in Evanston, Illinois. Here, we marveled at a room dedicated to chronometers. What may look to the untrained eye like brass clocks in wooden cases actually represent

an important technological breakthrough: Chronometers solved the mystery of how to determine longitude, the east-west global positioning that eluded seafarers for centuries and caused many a devastating shipwreck. This 18th-century technology ultimately led to the digital mapping and satellite imaging we have today.

Real estate investor Cameel Halim established the museum from his private collection of clocks. For busy executives, studying time is an existential reflection. "You need to slow down and think about time, the earth going around itself in one day," Halim says. "It is important to think what time *is*."

A few miles south in Chicago is the Eleanor Robinson Countiss House, a massive early 20th-century mansion overlooking Lake Michigan and home to the International Museum of Surgical Science. Its extensive collection of more than 7,000 artifacts includes rare medical texts, some dating back to the 15th century, scary-looking early surgical tools, as well as ultramodern diagnostic tools for detecting cancer. A macabre favorite is a collection of ancient Peruvian skulls with

puncture holes, evidence of Incan practices in cranial surgery.

The span of medical history is captured in the Hall of Immortals, showcasing a dozen larger-than-life stone statues of the greats in the field; in the Hall of Murals hang paintings showcasing medical developments through the years. "It's not just an overview of medical history, but many thematic exhibits that go really deep into the specifics," explains Michelle Rinard, the museum's manager of education and events.

But what if surgical devices and clocks just aren't your thing? We capped our tour in, of all places, Las Vegas, to see The Neon Museum, a two-acre outdoor space that houses more than 250 signs and symbols that adorned the city's casinos and other businesses. "The Boneyard," as it is called, delivers a unique perspective on how this gambling mecca has used a combination of art, advertising and technology to reinvent itself multiple times over its relatively brief history. The most prominent display is the massive Stardust Casino sign—11,000 light bulbs and 7,000 feet of neon tubing. Plus, there are smaller, neon-filled wedding chapel and motel signage from the 1930s through the '60s. This is "Old Vegas," when a bright neon sign was a big deal in the desert sky. At night, museum visitors can see several of the signs restored to their former brilliance.

Sure, it isn't Michelangelo's "David" or a Gutenberg Bible, but it's all a reminder that "art" can certainly have many definitions. ●

Clockwise from top left: Walter Bibikow/Getty Images; Batman; The Neon Museum, Las Vegas, Nevada; Courtesy of Halim Time & Glass Museum



See our own tour of a handful of specialty museums at [kornferry.com/institute](http://kornferry.com/institute)