

25 Aug 2017

Neon glow illuminates State Library

State Library of Queensland (SLQ) has turned on the lights for *The Salon Electric*, a celebration of neon and design.

Iconic pieces curated by neon sign maker Michael Blazek are now on display alongside historical photographs from SLQ's collections.

Housed in SLQ's Asia Pacific Design Library, *The Salon Electric* explores the process of making neon, its relationship to nightlife subculture, and the role of neon in contemporary art and design.

State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald said the collections share a unique period in Queensland's history and aim to ignite Queenslanders' living memory.

"The historical images speak to a different, more carefree, time — from the heyday of the Gold Coast's glitter strip to the regional motel signs dotting the highways," Ms McDonald said.

"Together with Michael's Blazek's curated signs, *The Salon Electric* tells the story of neon signage in Queensland and highlights the role of the maker in design."

Second generation neon sign maker Michael Blazek has worked with SLQ to curate signage from his personal collection as well as essential tools of the trade.

The Salon Electric features iconic Brisbane pieces from Jo-Jo's restaurant, Kookaburra Cafe, and Mr Fourex's beer.

Queenslanders are invited to share their own photographs of local neon signs to aid SLQ in digitally capturing this period of signage and design history.

Using the social media platform [Historypin](#), visitors can upload images from home, add a location, and explore visuals of other signs across the state.

Mr Blazek estimates there are only 200 large scale neon signs left in Queensland, with many signs steadily taken out of service over the past decade.

"There are so many beautiful signs that are disappearing and that's really sad," he said.

"Neon is a long-standing and unique form of design, and the slow dismantling of signs is a huge loss to the design community."

Visitors can meet Michael in a special Q&A session on Tuesday 5 September, following the Queensland premiere screening of Brisbane-produced documentary *NEON*.

Directed by Lawrence Johnston and produced by Veronica Fury, *NEON* explores the beauty, invention, design and heritage of the neon sign in a journey across America.

NEON was produced with assistance from Screen Queensland, Film Victoria, and the Premiere Fund of the Melbourne International Film Festival.

The Salon Electric is open daily in the Design Lounge, level 2, State Library of Queensland until February 2018.

For more information visit slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on.

NEON
Queensland premiere

Tuesday 5 September, 6pm–8pm
SLQ Auditorium 1, level 2
State Library of Queensland
Cultural Precinct, South Bank

Followed by Q&A with

- Michael Blazek, neon sign maker and *The Salon Electric* curator
- Lawrence Johnston, *NEON* film director
- Veronica Fury, *NEON* film producer

High resolution images available upon request

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