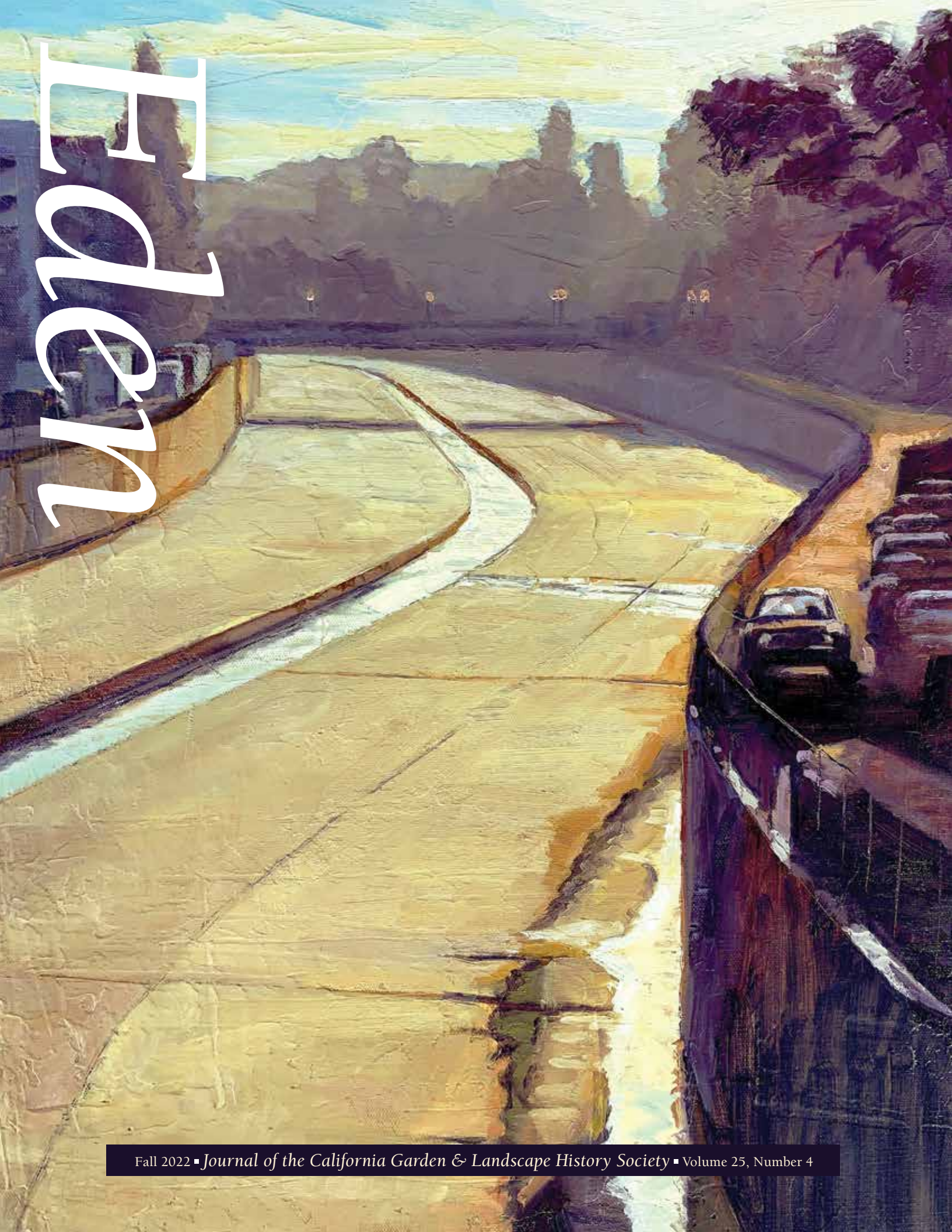
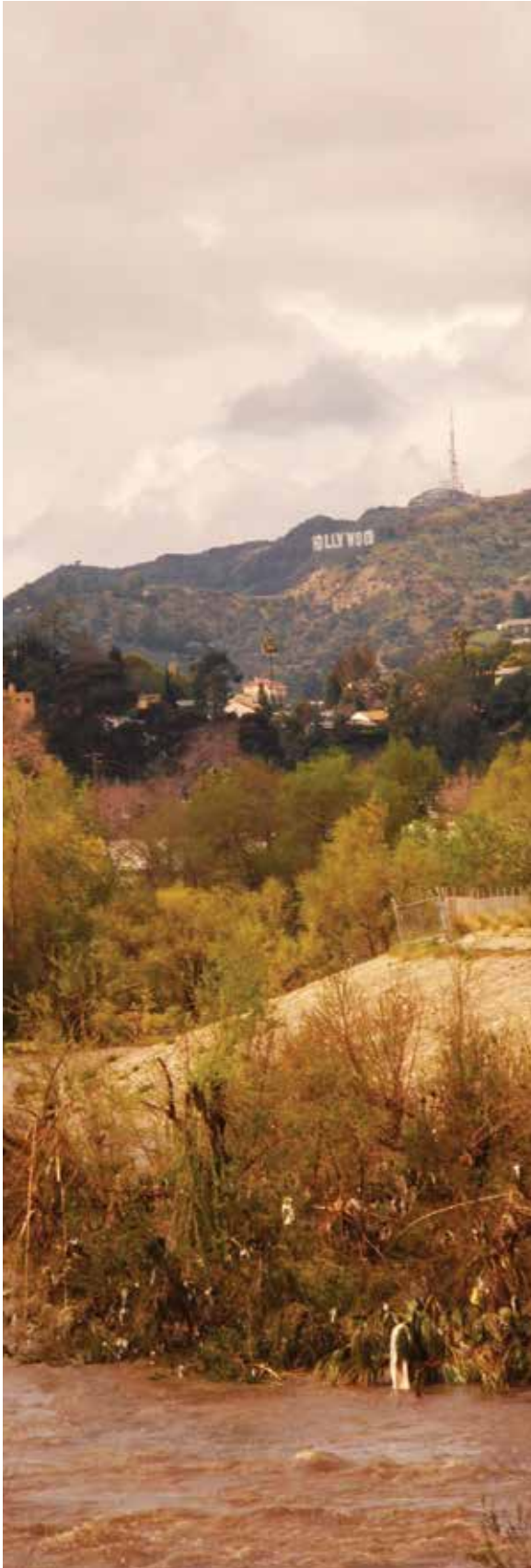


# Eden







The Hollywood sign looks over receding floodwaters in Frogtown, the trash-strewn trees a reminder of the height and ferocity of flooding during a winter storm. Photo by Tilly Hinton.

# Eden

JOURNAL OF THE CALIFORNIA GARDEN & LANDSCAPE HISTORY SOCIETY

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Above: A focal point of the Big Trees Resort in Yosemite Park was this pavilion, which was constructed around a gigantic living redwood tree. Like a giant umbrella, it housed the reception area and was also used for alfresco dining. Vintage postcard, courtesy Christopher Pollock.





**ARTIST  
JOHN KOSTA:  
PAINTING A LOVE  
LETTER TO THE  
RIVER OF ANGELS**

**STEVEN KEYLON**





Portrait of John Kosta.

*All photographs of paintings are courtesy John Kosta.  
The captions accompanying the paintings were written by the artist.*



# Artist Johu Kosta's work has a pensive quality.

Using an elegantly restrained palette, his brand of realism infuses his work with mood, feeling, and contemplation. His most recent works, a series on the Los Angeles River, document its unexpected beauty while also capturing its almost melancholic romance. Kosta explains, "Most Angelenos have seen their river hundreds of times, often in short glimpses as passed over on highways or trains. This is a river submerged in the public's consciousness, always present, and yet often invisible."

The Los Angeles River series takes Kosta, born and raised in Los Angeles, back to his childhood. "I would play in the open fields under the high-tension electrical tower easements that adjoined the Los Angeles River. The nearby concrete levees loomed large in my imagination. Most people thought of the river and power easements as ugly, but they

were my playground and my muse."

Of his five siblings, one of his older sisters was "fearlessly creative," and Kosta would watch as she sculpted things out of wax or plaster. It was she who encouraged him to start sketching at an early age. Kosta was awarded a scholarship to the Otis Art Institute while still in high school. "I would take the bus an hour each way to attend life drawing classes on the weekend. It was a life-changing experience to be in a class full of other young artists. I began to realize that this is who I am."

As is often the case, life got in the way. His father had a printing business, and because it was expected that Kosta would one day take it over, he decided to get a management degree. "Even though I was studying management, I would comingle fine art with my business classes. It was an odd

combination: calculus then life drawing, economics then sculpture. For some odd reason, I loved both the arts and business and thrived on the hard work required to pursue both. It was not uncommon to see both my French easel as well as my work briefcase in the trunk of my car. Sometimes I would commute to work extra early and pull off the side of the road to set up my easel and paint for a couple of hours before heading into the factory. And as my own family grew (I had five children), I would often ask them to pose for me as subjects of my art."

After thirty years, the family business was sold. Finding himself unemployed at fifty, Kosta returned to school and got a master's degree in landscape architecture at Cal







**LA River painting 16 "To Imagine"**  
24" x 30" oil on canvas

In LA River painting 16 "To Imagine" the partial face of a Kilroy-like character appears in the lower left corner, the face combining with vivid colors and abstract shapes inspired by J. W. M. Turner's famous painting 'The Fighting Temeraire'. Merging with electrical lines, bridges, roads, riverbanks, warehouses, and cloud formations, everything explodes forth from the peculiar character's head as does the end of the Fourth Street Bridge and the vanishing point of a channelized Los Angeles River void of vegetation and life. The painting's chaotic elements seem to shout "Look at us...we are one. Imagine with me. Together let us build a new future."

**"MOST PEOPLE THOUGHT  
OF THE RIVER AND POWER  
EASEMENTS AS UGLY, BUT  
THEY WERE MY PLAYGROUND  
AND MY MUSE."**





**LA River painting 25 “Arroyo Calabasas”  
24” x 30” acrylic on canvas**

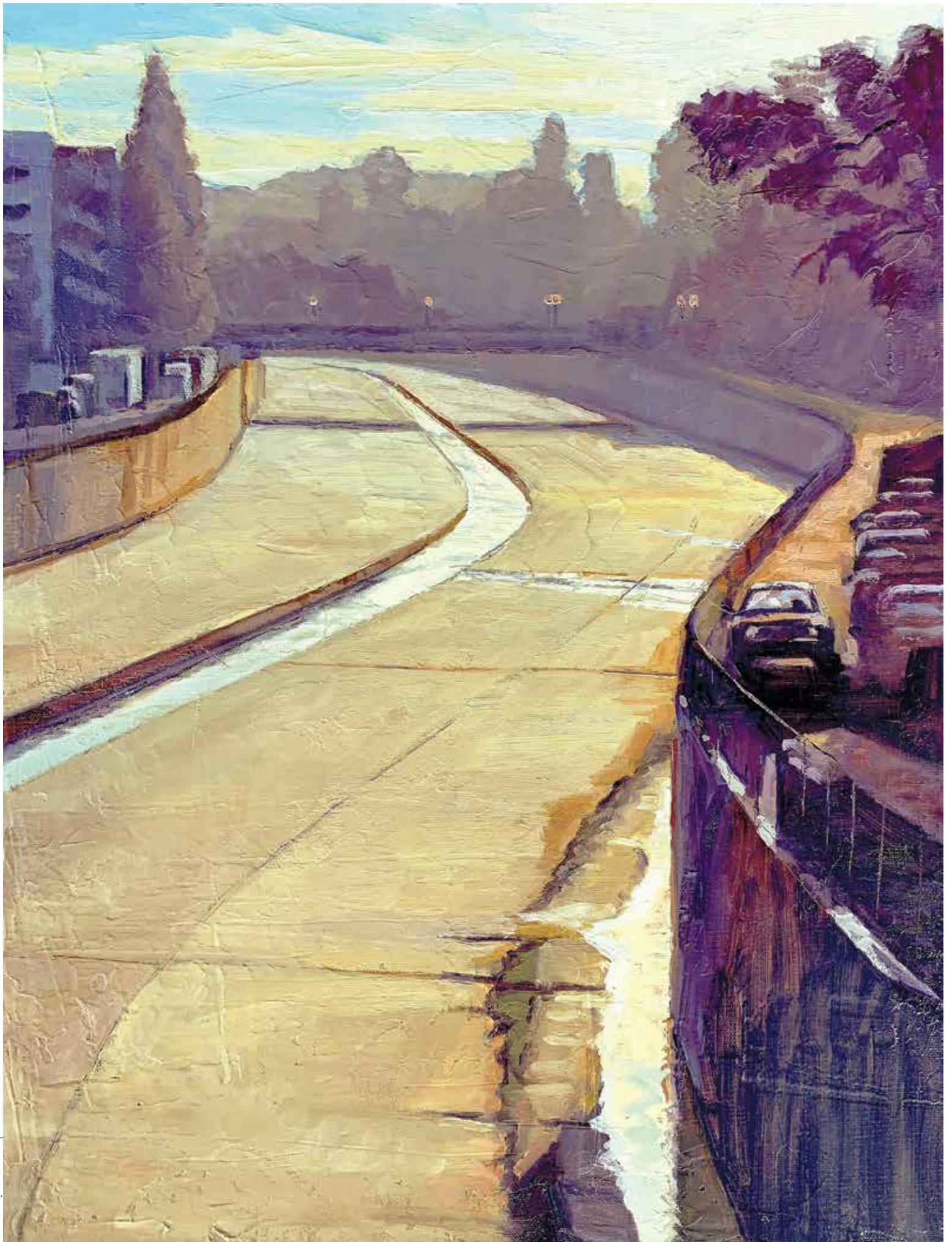
LA River painting 25 “Arroyo Calabasas” depicts a local storm channel and main tributary of the Los Angeles River in Canoga Park near the Westfield Mall Costco. Neighborhood irrigation and street runoff provide a steady supply of moisture enabling the growth of channel-moss and algae. A nearby tree casts diagonal shadows of blue, dark green and gray reflecting the silvery cerulean blue light of a typical Southern California day. Catching bits of sunlight, the magenta flowers of a tropical bouganvilla vine poke through a chain link fence. They are nature’s minions, fingers of life and color invading the boundary of man’s Engineered River.

**LA River painting 51 “Warner Bros. Back Lot”  
24” x 18” oil on canvas**

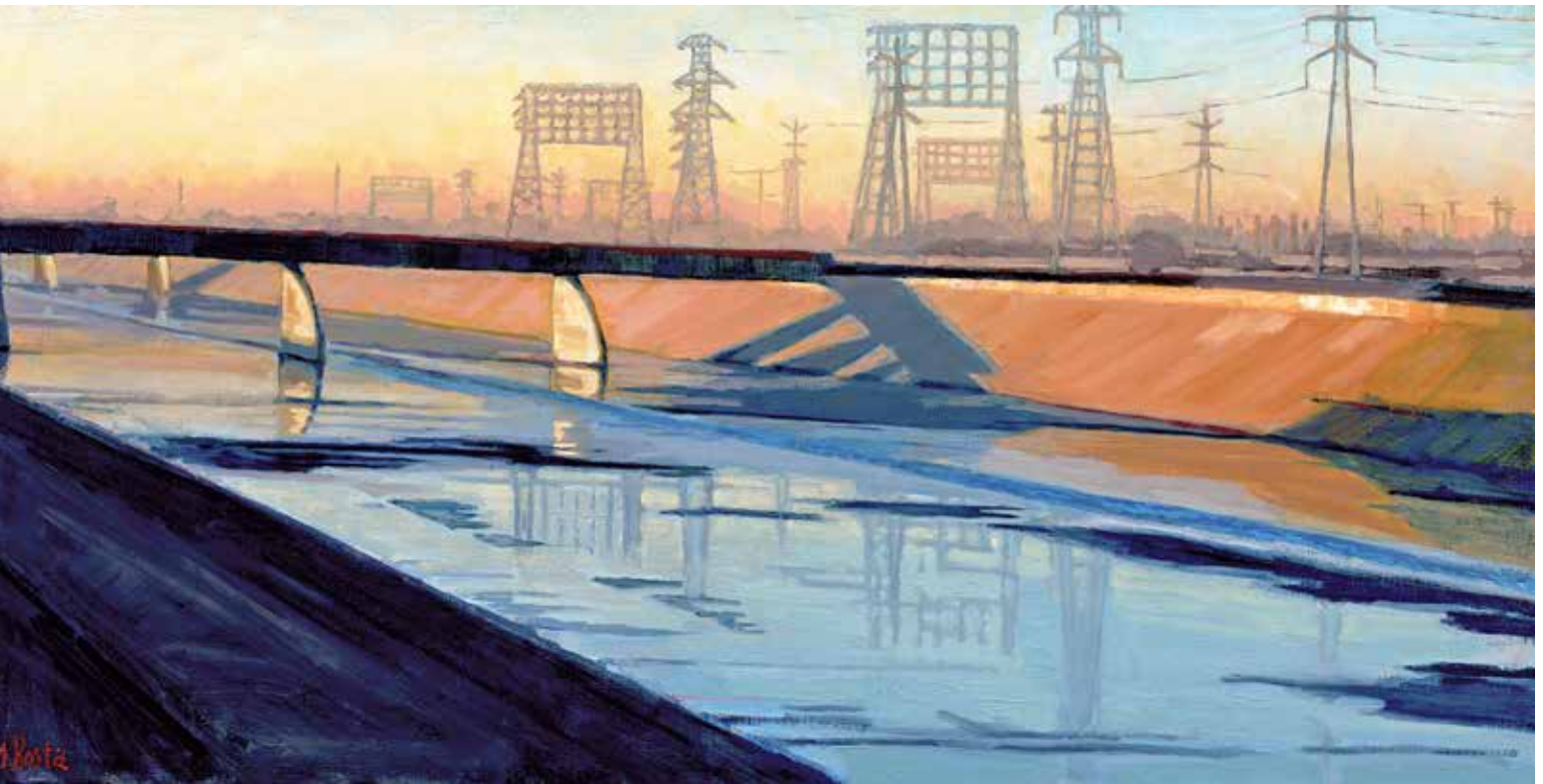
In search of more land to expand operations of a burgeoning movie industry, from 1915 to 1935, a number of Los Angeles area movie studios moved their operations from Hollywood to the San Fernando Valley near the LA River. One such studio was the Warner Bros. Studios, their back lot depicted in this LA River painting 51 where old vehicles, parked catering trucks, and the costume warehouse to the left in the distance are visible.

In this area, the Los Angeles River appears particularly sterile and artificial. How appropriate that in Los Angeles, a city known for its entertainment industry of perfect bodies and wrinkle-free face lifts, would have its namesake river surgically re-engineered into smooth-bottomed concrete ribbons.









**Los Angeles River Painting 62, "Edison Substation near Compton Creek"  
18" x 36" oil on canvas**

In Los Angeles River Painting 62, "Edison Substation near Compton Creek", the golden light of an early winter morning sunrise cast misty shadows onto the concrete riverbank. Located between the river and the Harbor Freeway just south of the Del Amo Boulevard Bridge, Edison substation electrical towers are reflected in the shallow pools of water on the river bottom. Views such as this are ephemeral and occur only a few times a year as the runoff from brief rains drain into San Pedro Harbor and the river dries revealing its more common concrete faces.

Poly Pomona. "After designing and building numerous outdoor spaces and beautiful gardens, I eventually realized that what I really wanted to do was to paint as a fine artist. So, I quit designing landscapes and picked up the paintbrush full time." "It was my MLA studies relating to designing public parks that took me back to the LA River, taking me full circle back to the river from my childhood," Kosta explains:

In 2017, I took a day trip to hike into the main concrete channel of the Los Angeles River where I was struck by its incredible beauty -- not beauty in the typical sense, such as pretty trees, vegetation and wildlife (though that does exist in the Glendale Narrows area of the river), but rather in the feelings of glorious isolation, silence, brutal architecture, the play of light and shadow -- all just moments from the hustle and bustle of a major metropolitan downtown. I was led to visually document this kind of beauty along its entire fifty-one-mile length, from the river's source in the San Fernando Valley to its terminus in the Long Beach Harbor.

Iconic rivers throughout the world have served as not only muses for artists but essential backdrops for everyday life: Paris has the Seine; London the Thames; Rome the





**Los Angeles River art painting 64**  
**"Urban River Blues"**  
24" x 30" oil on canvas

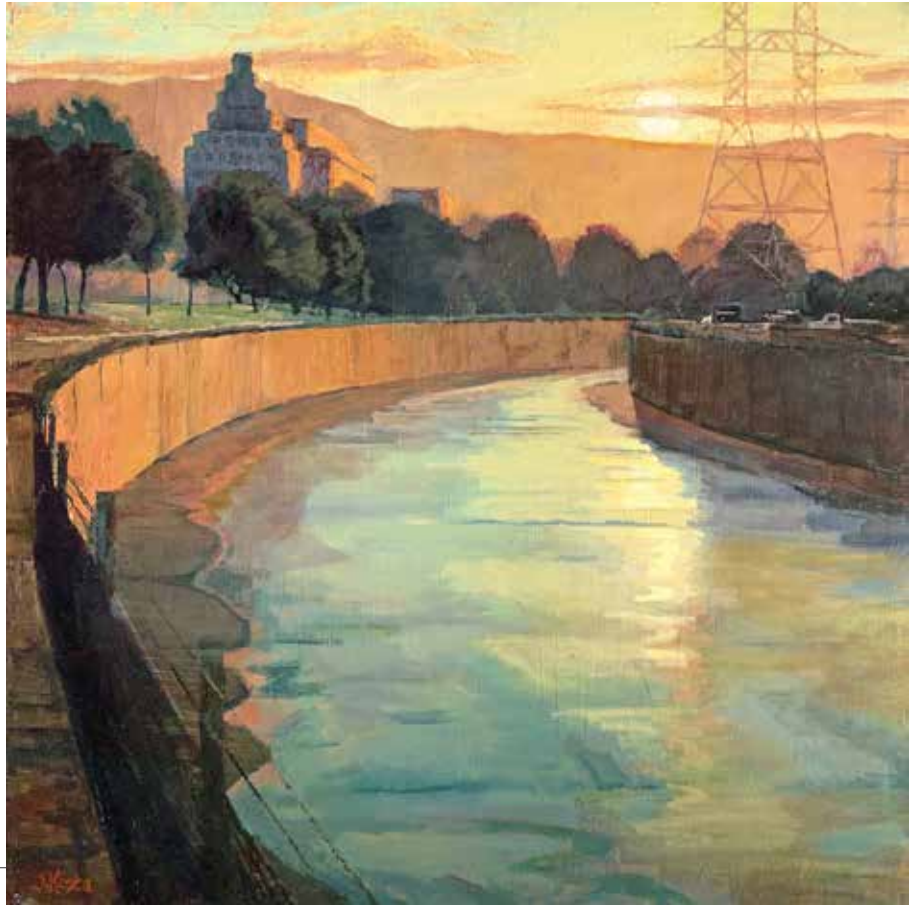
In Los Angeles River painting 64 "Urban River Blues", a large distribution warehouse casts colorless shadows onto a vast man-made canyon of concrete. This is a place that was once home to countless sycamore, native willows, steelhead trout and to the Tongva people. Today it is the world's longest concrete-encased river.

**FEELINGS OF GLORIOUS  
ISOLATION, SILENCE, BRUTAL  
ARCHITECTURE, THE PLAY  
OF LIGHT AND SHADOW --  
ALL JUST MOMENTS FROM  
THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF  
A MAJOR METROPOLITAN  
DOWNTOWN.**



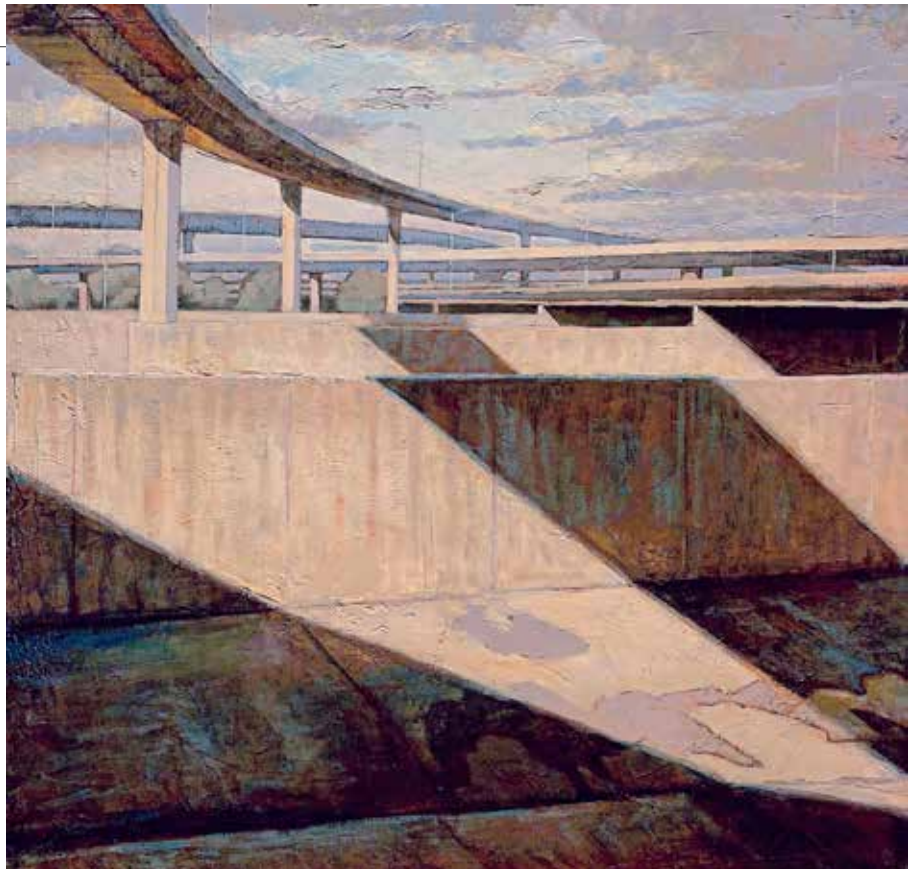
**Los Angeles River painting 65 “ABC Studios”  
30” x 30” oil on canvas**

Near the Disney / ABC studio buildings and the small local Buena Vista Park, Los Angeles River Painting 65 depicts a bucolic early-morning sunrise before the busy City of Angels awakens. Here the river maintains its sheer vertical walls and solid concrete bottom. Several miles to the east, the river begins a gradual turn south and the vertical concrete walls of the channel give way to more accessible sloped walls and a natural sandy floor typical of the river in the Elysian Valley and the community known as Frogtown.



**Los Angeles River painting 72  
“Interchange”  
30” x 30” oil on canvas**

Most people think of the Los Angeles River as ugly, if they think of it at all. Says Kosta “For me, living along the river in Paramount, California, the concrete levies and Edison easements were my childhood playground and my muse. Today I paint them to tell their story”. In LA River art painting 72 “Interchange”, the 105 freeway overpasses glide like ribbons of silk above the horizon, their shadows casting polygons of sienna onto vertical walls of Naples yellow. A dry river bottom and remnants of puddles suggest that a river once flowed.







Tiber. Such waterways continue to play an essential role in the lives of the communities they run through. In contrast, Los Angeles seems to have turned its back on its river. After the flood of 1938, and with the help of the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Los Angeles River was lined with concrete and turned into a lifeless drainage channel.

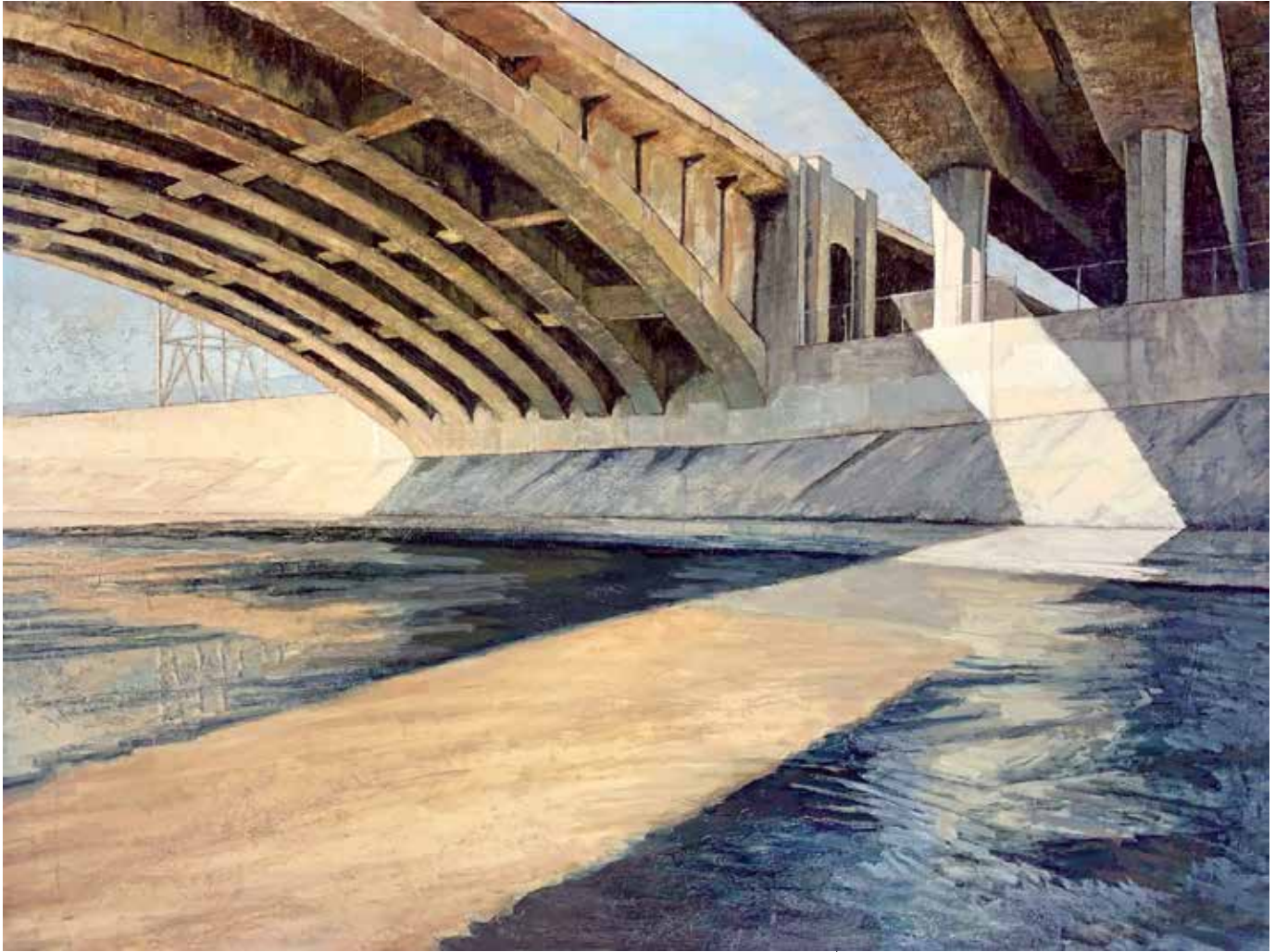
The Los Angeles River, in fact, has always played a number of vital roles. As the primary watershed for almost all of Los Angeles County, the river can undergo remarkable and monumental shifts in mere hours from sleepy stream to raging torrent, and during brief periods of flash rainfall, the Los Angeles River can carry more water per minute than even the great Mississippi. In more quiet times, when its flow returns to normal, parts of the river can be bicycled and hiked. In the Glendale Narrows area, near Atwater Village, the river becomes a meandering

**Los Angeles River painting 74**  
**“Sepulveda Dam Love”**  
**24” x 30” oil on canvas**

This scene almost didn't get painted. Unsure of the off-beat subject and unique composition would make a worthy work of art, eventually the artist relented deciding that the Sepulveda Dam was such an important element of the river and its infrastructure that it needed to be represented in the series.

In painting 74 of the series, “Sepulveda Dam Love” a badly damaged shopping cart, left by a local homeless resident, is dwarfed by the nearby massive flood control structure, the Sepulveda Dam. As broken as its once-owner, the cart leans but still stands. The dam, the broken shopping cart and the graffiti tell a complicated story of strength, control, fragility and hope for both an unpredictable river, and a sometimes-mercurial people.





**Los Angeles River painting 76 “The Light Beneath”  
30” x 40” oil on canvas**

Bright light of a cloudless day casts polygons of golden white amid calming triangles of blue. Reflections highlight the warm ochre and gold intricate structural details of the invisible-to-most underbelly of eight parallel arches supporting an older overpass to the left. More contemporary structural engineering is evident on the bridge to the right that spans similar distances but with less materials, albeit with less architectural beauty.

**VISTAS INCLUDE**

**HIGH-RISE**

**SKYSCRAPERS,**

**OIL REFINERIES,**

**MOVIE STUDIO**

**BACKLOTS, AND**

**THE ONCE-ADMIRRED**

**QUEEN MARY.**

granite-strewn stream with migratory birds and home to abundant aquatic life where sport fishers angle for carp and canoeists dodge boulders. Further south, near and beyond the city center, more man-made features prevail, including historical architectural arches, brutalist overpasses, and civil engineering miracles. And along its short fifty-one-mile length, vistas include high-rise skyscrapers, oil refineries, movie studio backlots, and the once-admired Queen Mary. I hope that this Los Angeles River series of paintings will help bring greater appreciation to urban rivers around the world and to bolster efforts by local authorities for their revitalization.

*Kosta is a Fine Artist Member of the California Art Club as well as an associate artist of Oil Painters of America. Both of these organizations support the field of traditional realism in fine art. His paintings are held in private collections in California, Oregon, Washington, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New York, and the European Union. He lives in Claremont where he has a studio adjacent to his home and garden.*





**Los Angeles River painting 77**  
**"Puddles"**  
**30" x 30" oil on canvas**

Located at the confluence of the Rio Hondo and the Los Angeles Rivers in Paramount, ephemeral shallow puddles only briefly present after a rain, reflect early morning sunlight and the iron lattice structures of Edison towers marching like giant kaiju into a distant silver horizon.





**Writing a river:**

**how journalism helped restore the Los Angeles River**

**Tilly Hinton, PhD**

### **Los Angeles is a city of paradoxes.**

It is a place where extreme wealth coexists with dire poverty and where sunsets are made more beautiful by smog, which at the same time compromises public health with inhumane levels of pollution-related asthma and cancers. The paradoxes extend to the

river. The Los Angeles River – its abundance the very reason for LA's existence in this location – was encased in a concrete straitjacket in the mid-twentieth century, rendering it a decidedly unconventional river. The river stretches some fifty-one miles from Canoga Park in the northwest to Long Beach in the south, passing through well-heeled neighborhoods, working-class suburbs, industrial districts, urban downtown, and remnants of





estuarine wetlands.<sup>1</sup> Once a seasonal watercourse shaded by willow trees and home to steelhead trout, it is now highly constructed, with almost its entire length consisting of concretized banks and riverbed, built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in an attempt to prevent the flooding which so ravaged the city.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most enduring and influential sources of river awareness is the work of journalists to document the river's many stories. In my long-ago grad school days, I spent time poring over the Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) archives at their River Center headquarters in Cypress Park, discovering just how important journalism has been – and remains – to the collective effort of river attentiveness and, for the optimistic

among us, to its restoration. Press clippings with hand-written notes, yellowing envelopes with articles and post-it notes scrawled by Los Angeles River saint<sup>2</sup> and FoLAR co-founder Lewis MacAdams all attest to the importance of the news in telling, and keeping, river stories.

One particularly important journalistic contribution, key to the river's emancipation from obscurity, was a series of articles in the *Los Angeles Times* by staff writer Dick Roraback in 1985 and 1986. Unlike other articles during the period, the breadth and depth of Roraback's work was extensive. He wrote about the river's entire length, not an isolated section or issue, and his subject matter ranged broadly. As he walked from the river's mouth to its source, he documented a full

**Opposite: Looking southwards from the Fourth Street Viaduct, a view of the original Sixth Street Bridge, the Seventh Street Bridge, and the 10 Freeway. Note the stacked structure of the Seventh Street Bridge, an innovative Merrill Butler design that built atop an existing bridge to reduce construction costs. Photo courtesy the author, 2011.**

**Above: Looking north, the river's low flow channel bisects the expansive stretch of river channel running through Downtown Los Angeles. So freeway-like is this part of the river that several public officials over the years have suggested it be re-purposed into a freeway for vehicles. Photo courtesy the author, 2011.**





Above: The soft-bottomed Glendale Narrows support an abundance of flora and fauna, making this one of the most-photographed and most-visited stretches of the Los Angeles River. Photo courtesy the author, 2018.

sensory experience – the sights of garbage floating by, the graceful birds, the curious children, the fear of gang fights, the solitude, the fecund river-adjacent farms, and the search for its elusive source. Called *In Search of the L.A. River*, the series of eleven articles was published weekly (or thereabouts) between late October 1985 and late January 1986. All articles were generously illustrated with photographs and, together with extensive text, each piece typically spanned across three separate pages. The articles were written in the third person, about a character called *The Explorer*. *The Explorer* was Roraback himself, a literature graduate of the Sorbonne and an established staff writer with the *Los Angeles Times*:

He had known many of the mighty rivers, and he had learned to love their rhythms, their high-tide howls and low tide lisps, their sweet-and-sour smells, their roles in the history of the great lands they traversed. He had known and loved the great rivers and he had lived in the Southland for 10 years and he was ashamed that he knew not the channel that bisected his own city. He had *heard* of the Los Angeles River, of course – the

mighty Porciuncula of yore – but he had never *seen* it. He had even *crossed* the river, he now knew – more than 15,000 times by rough reckoning – but he did not remember laying eyes on it.<sup>3</sup>

The series became a signature contribution from Roraback to the city. Indeed, his obituary recalled that “in a memorable 1985 series, he followed the route of the Los Angeles River, telling its story to residents who scarcely knew of its existence.”<sup>4</sup> While it was certainly the case that Roraback reported encountering many people who knew little or nothing about the Los Angeles River, he more frequently described people who were strongly connected with the river, particularly for recreation.

The significance of the series is already well-recognized in historiographical and other writing. The unparalleled biographer of the Los Angeles River, Blake Gumprecht named Roraback as one of the three





individuals whose actions heralded the “birth of a movement,” along with activist Lewis MacAdams and architect and engineer Dilara El-Assaad.<sup>5</sup> Scholar and activist Robert Gottlieb offered an abridged list, naming MacAdams and Roraback – “the explorer and the poet” – as the “two people [who] set out to identify not only where the L.A. River could be found but what it represented.”<sup>6</sup> Geographer Matthew Gandy visited Los Angeles from London and undertook a walking exploration inspired by Roraback’s journey.<sup>7</sup>

Roraback’s series prompted more than five hundred letters from *Los Angeles Times* readers all clamoring to share their opinions about a river that, ostensibly, was ignored by

most Angelenos.<sup>8</sup> Roraback acknowledged those letters in the final installment of the series: “Once again, though, sinking spirits were buoyed by the calls and letters, a cornucopia of enlightened eccentricity that had sustained him throughout his muzzy waltz up the watercourse. Words of wit and wisdom from the man who owns the river; the man who found Jesus there; the man who wants to sail up the river; the men who did. From the nostalgic; the historians...”<sup>9</sup>

The reaction to the series is compelling evidence that the river was a place familiar, or at least intriguing, to many in Los Angeles.

What, then, did Roraback’s *Explorer* learn from traveling the river’s length and breadth? And what might we, almost forty

**Above: The official starting point of the Los Angeles River, the confluence of Arroyo Calabasas and Bell Creek. This location, adjoining a school football field in Canoga Park, belies the river’s actual beginnings which are in the Santa Monica, Santa Susana, and San Gabriel Mountains. Photo courtesy the author, 2011.**



## From Basin Camp, the Final Assault

By DICK RORABACK,  
Times Staff Writer

When the thunder sounds like  
jury  
And the rain begins to fall  
I dream the mighty crashin'  
is the L.A. River's call.  
The sound I hear is not a dream,  
It's a motorcycle roarin' upstream.  
Ooze on, L.A. River, ooze on.

—From the song "L.A. River,"  
author still anonymous

The dirt-bikers were tearing up the pea patch, gouging great gobs of smirch from the bed of Dayton Creek.

Dayton Creek is the stream that feeds Chatsworth Creek. Chatsworth suckles Bell Creek. Bell, reputedly, is the mother of the L.A. River. Or is it the Arroyo Calabasas?

Whatever, the Explorer was making a last-ditch attempt to run to earth the source of the river.

### IN SEARCH OF THE L.A. RIVER



Last in an intermittent series.

From Valley Circle Boulevard in Lakeside Park, west to the L.A. County line, Dayton Creek had not seemed worthy of canonization. What may once have been a warbling trout stream, even a salmon

run, was now littered by rusting motorcycle parts. Even the birds had fled in panic at the howl of the Harley. For Dayton Creek, the trill was gone.

Duty-bound, the Explorer, eschewing a dirt road 50 yards to the south, continued to schlep up the dank depression, bashing through the underbrush that soon began to clog the unmade creek bed. It was a decision he would live—barely—to regret.

#### Fortuitous Fall

About 100 yards into Ventura County, a small dog hurtled out of the woods as if shot from a cannon, and made straight for the soft underbelly of the Explorer. Within seconds, Attila the Hungry was joined by three clones. Each dog was about two feet tall, with maa-room hair worn punk-style and a set of teeth rarely seen this side of Transylvania.

To fight was foolish; to run ridiculous; to scream demeaning.

Above: Dick Roraback's 'In search of the L.A. River' series ran in the "Los Angeles Times" from October 1985 through January 1986. This clipping is from his final installment, in which he seeks to find the river's source.

Right: In Long Beach, this tenacious plant survives from a tiny crack in the concrete, a common sight along the river's 51 miles. Photo courtesy the author, 2011.



years later, learn from the written account that remains?

*The Explorer* noticed nature throughout his journey, as well as recorded the perceptions of those he met along the way. Article after article recounts people's beliefs about the river, unreliable as they often were. Physical proximity frequently did not coincide with an even basic understanding of the river. For example, in regard to the source of the river: "The Explorer had heard it before, and from experts. Throughout his expedition, opinions on the source had been thicker than goo. West Covina was a popular choice, with the Pacific Ocean a close second. Ballots had been cast for Sacramento, Caesars Palace, Big Bear, Little Tokyo, North Hollywood and the swimming pool at Playboy Mansion."<sup>10</sup>

As wildly inaccurate as these mental maps were, Roraback's observations of wildlife were more immediately verifiable: "Under the penumbra of untended plane-trees, the water is clear enough for glimpses of foot-long fish. A sign reads "Trespassing Forbidden by Law," but a maverick clique of mallards can't read. Cruising around clumps of water hyacinths, they dive for the fish and come up laughing, scattering butterflies as they shake droplets from their saucy heads."<sup>11</sup>

His catalog of wildlife sightings included

hawks, coyotes, tadpoles and fish. *The Explorer* visited a man who kept an aquarium of fish found in the river: "After the rains," he says, "there's rainbow trout this big! Keepers! You get catfish, carp, crayfish. Come up to my apartment. I have something to show you." Indeed he does. In Wickline's flat is an illuminated fish tank holding an amazing variety of fish – gold, brown, white – all taken, he says, from the Los Angeles River."<sup>12</sup>

*The Explorer* met with old-timers who recalled childhoods spent playing in the river, when "there used to be a lot of wildlife [...] and fish, too, big ones."<sup>13</sup> The effects of littering were noted throughout the series:

Dumped into the rivulet are: an orange Mae West life jacket, a welcome mat, a two-foot length of sugar cane, an entire toilet, water closet intact, a car battery, a whole ironing board with stand ("OK, Harold, that's it, I've ironed my last shirt!"), a rusty clarinet, and what looks to be an alligator but turns out to be a long, undulating strip of dark-green gunk. (Riverwise, Sherman Oaks is the Slime Capital of the World).<sup>14</sup>



In the stretch between Long Beach and Paramount, *The Explorer* met a man who routinely traveled there to “methodically and painstakingly” clean up the urban debris with a handmade rake and broom.<sup>15</sup> “Summertime,” hums the Explorer, “and the river is queasy...” Roraback imagined.<sup>16</sup>

True to his mission to look for the human stories along the Los Angeles River, Roraback wrote extensively on this theme. Through his gaze, we meet two types of people – those who were unaware of or uninformed about the river, and those who used and enjoyed the river in a range of ways. In every article, *The Explorer* would ask questions of those he met. Responses about the location of the river’s mouth and source, indeed its very existence, were relayed in each article: “You think I’m a dummy?” he asks, indignant. “It’s the river that goes through the city, is what it is. The California River, that’s it. Starts way up there and ends way down here.”<sup>17</sup>

A few people were negative about the river, like Martha who said “I never think of the river [...] it just cuts me off. I wish it wasn’t there.”<sup>18</sup> Most people were far more enthusiastic, explaining that they used the river for cycling, skateboarding, horse riding, harvesting mussels, fishing, playing, jogging, sunbathing, dog walking, rafting, shallow-water swimming, and simply sitting by the shore. Instances of children playing at the river were often reported. They played inventive games such as rolling down the concrete banks inside a large cardboard refrigerator box.<sup>19</sup> In another article the ever-present discarded trash became a prized collection for two children: “A mound of debris spang on the current is a treasure trove of stuff. One No-Trespassing sign, two battered baseballs, a squashed egg crate, a girdle (light green), a car seat (burnt), a lobster pot, a new plastic soup spoon, remains of two rat-like varmints, a 10-foot ladder, an unopened green coconut. Painted on a big rock in square white letters is the message “I LOVE GOD,” signed T.M.”<sup>20</sup>

Interaction with the river varied by location. In the river reach that forms the eastern edge of Downtown Los Angeles, Roraback noted that there were “No dreamers here, No Sesame Street. And nobody, but nobody, walking the river bed.”<sup>21</sup> In contrast, human interactions with the river were reported as being far more common in Long Beach “because the river is actually a river there, shallow but wide, with a discernible flow.”<sup>22</sup> The series showcased the river’s diversity. While from one stretch *The Explorer* observed a verdant “honest-to-God vegetable farm,” in another he saw only its “graffiti-scarred bank” with slogans “God Is Alive,” “Defend the Faith” and “Make Them Red (sic) You Your Rights.”<sup>23</sup> These accounts



**Above: Public art and graffiti comingle to enliven river hardscapes in many river locations, such as here at the Glendale-Hyperion Bridges, looking north from the east bank. Artist is not known. Photo courtesy the author, 2018.**





attest that the river was being used for many purposes, and being thought of in many ways, far more diverse than it merely being a drainage ditch that ran, ignored, through the city.

The series said remarkably little about danger, despite it being a frequent theme in the corpus of other river-related articles published in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>24</sup> The dangers of flooding were barely mentioned, except in historical reference to the 1930s floods or



As the river flows through  
Downtown Los Angeles, it  
is flanked by extensive  
infrastructure on both banks.  
This is one of many impediments  
to reimagining the river as a  
more accessible space. Photo  
courtesy the author, 2011



the occasional recollections of people Rora-back met along the way. He never reported witnessing any criminal behavior, though occasionally people did tell of such dangers: "The boys say they don't come out to the river after the sun goes down. "The gangs have their rumbles,' Brian says. 'Chains, knives, even guns. The police helicopters come down in here sometimes, to pick up the guys who get knifed or shot. It's pretty dangerous.'"<sup>25</sup>

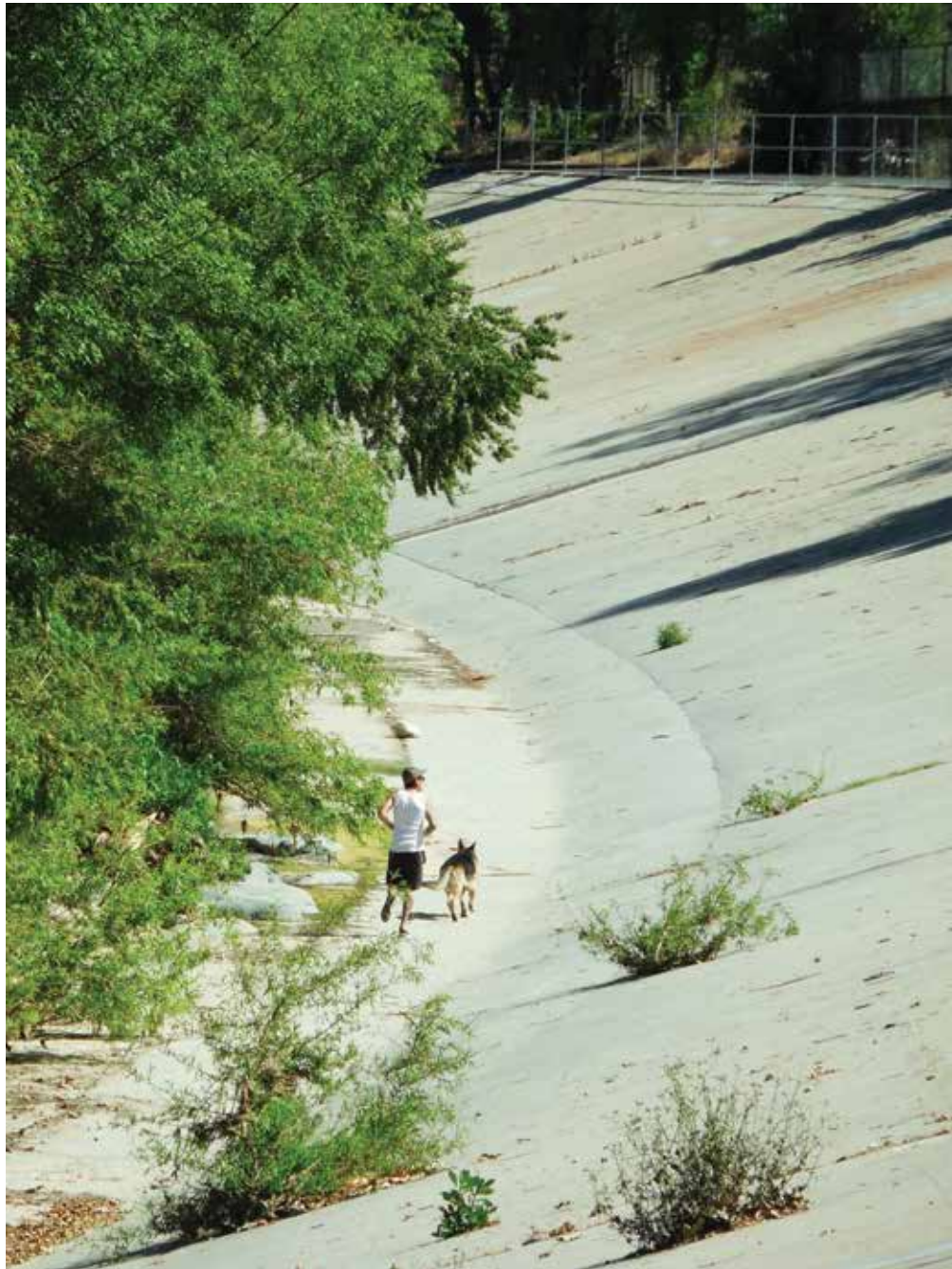
**Opposite, top:** Many unhoused Angelenos make their homes at the river. While this Canoga Park resting place is makeshift, other people have constructed elaborate - though risky - dwellings along the river, making use of stormwater drains, bridges, and temporary islands. Photo courtesy the author, 2011.

**Opposite, bottom:** A mallard lands nearby a discarded No Parking sign, one of countless instances of human habitation coinciding with the more than human world. Photo courtesy the author, 2011.



Right: For many, the river is a welcome place to escape hectic lives. This runner and off-leash dog are making use of the solitude in the concrete apron of the river in Frogtown. Photo courtesy the author, 2011.

Opposite: The abatement of graffiti results in a new kind of mark-making created by the beige abatement paint that authorities apply to remove graffiti tags and pieces. Photo courtesy the author, 2011.



A keen fisherman reported that the river would sometimes be overrun with tiny snakes, so dense that it would be difficult to walk without stepping on them. The danger the fisherman feared, however, was of the human kind: “It’s not so much the snakes, though, as the gangs. I wouldn’t go down there without a gun. At night, I wouldn’t go down there at all.....”<sup>26</sup> A mother allowed her children to “get mucky” playing in the river, but had limits about where they could go “Across the river, though, it’s dangerous. There’s a camp of what I assume are alcoholics, derelicts. They cook out, hang up their wash. Well, at least they wash.”<sup>27</sup>

Another mother deemed the river dirty but nevertheless safe for her children to play in. For her, it was the railway track on the opposite bank that was dangerous territory.<sup>28</sup> Roraback rarely characterized the river as dangerous. Perhaps he did not do so because he chose to challenge a dominant *Los Angeles Times* representation of the river, or perhaps more simply because he was fortunate not to encounter dangerous incidents during his journey.

It was unavoidable that Roraback would encounter and continuously experience features of the flood control engineering that so characterize the river. His references to

channelization seem usually to be in empathetic defense of the river, as if he wished that channelization had not taken away so much of the river’s natural appearance and function: “The Los Angeles River is now a mammoth concrete drainage ditch, a matte monument to flood control. Taming a river is one thing, the Explorer thinks as he sets out on the second leg of his trek to the source. Emasculating it is another. The Great Los Angeles Eunuch.”<sup>29</sup>

Because he didn’t focus on flooding dangers, channelization was almost without justification in the series, although it’s notable that Roraback seemed to describe





Army Corps of Engineers activity with a degree of contempt: “the Explorer peeks over the dike. Subcontracted to the Army Corps of Engineers, a battalion of bulldozers is systematically short-sheeting the riverbed, razing the stream of flora precisely where it is beginning to look like a river again. Why? “Cuz if you don’t,” says the foreman, a steel-thewed man, ‘all that stuff’ll wash down and put your concrete line in jeopardy.’ And Lord knows we wouldn’t want our concrete line put in jeopardy, would we?”<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, he spoke of the river in a much more empathic tone as he described it “groping for a breath of fresh air.”<sup>31</sup> In another episode, *The Explorer* told of a river that: “crawls on its belly. It cowers. Corseted in concrete, the river can hardly breathe, let alone sigh. Domesticated for all time into a dire strait.”<sup>32</sup>

In pursuing his mission to walk the entire river, Roraback encountered barriers to access, including fencing that “stretched from horizon to horizon” and frequent use of No Trespassing signs.<sup>33</sup> In the lower reaches, his path was obstructed by: “the Berlin Wall,

Cudahy-style: an eight-foot cinder-block barrier surmounted by a chain-link fence surmounted by three inward-leaning strands of barbed wire. Whether it’s to keep the river out or the people in is hard to say.”<sup>34</sup>

Roraback noted the bridges which traverse the river, as had the *Los Angeles Times*’ Architectural Critic John Pastier a decade earlier.<sup>35</sup> While Pastier complained that nature’s “unkindness” had denied Los Angeles the opportunity for beautiful bridges, Roraback argued that “as if to compensate for whatever small charm the river has shucked, the bridges have taken up the slack.”<sup>36</sup> Roraback appears to write in defense of a blighted river, and far from celebrating feats of engineering, he heftily critiques them.

Journalism has played a constant and important role in enlivening the river in the public imagination, in promoting various representations of the river, and in chronicling the river’s story over time. California journalism icon Huell Howser filmed several episodes down by the LA River.<sup>37</sup> KCET has extensively focused on the Los Angeles River as part of its Departures program, generating





extensive media content including oral history testimony, community mapping, and photography.<sup>38</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* has published a range of articles on the river for decades that explore the many faces of the river, including the Roraback articles. Many news outlets ran stories about a 2021 multilingual survey that surveyed 600 people in Los Angeles, finding that people's top priorities for the river were habitat for plants and

animals (81.6 percent), capturing stormwater for future use before it gets to the ocean (79.6 percent), flood control (79.1 percent), and ensuring that current residents are not displaced by new developments on the river (75.9 percent).<sup>39</sup> Esteemed Los Angeles journalist Patt Morrison re-released her bestselling Los Angeles River treatise, *Rio LA: Tales from the Los Angeles River* in a twenty-year anniversary edition in 2022.<sup>40</sup>

Also this year, photojournalist Pablo Unzueta – recipient of Circle of Blue's inaugural Water & Climate Fellowship program – walked and cycled the river to collect poignant images and testimonies about a river he aptly described as “at a fragile crossroads.”<sup>41</sup> Veteran *Los Angeles Times* journalist Louis Sahagun demonstrated this very precarity when he broke a story in 2022 about the tensions created by proposals to increase the





South Gate is one of several active equestrian districts along the river's fifty-one miles. Here at Hollydale Regional Park, a delighted child befriends two horses and their riders. Equestrian zoning along the river is frequently threatened by development and changing land use priorities. Photo courtesy the author, 2022.

use of recycled water which would switch off the tap to most of the Los Angeles River's environmental flow.<sup>42</sup> These are just a handful of instances of journalists continuing to elevate the river into the public's attention and imaginations, as Dick Roraback so memorably did all those decades ago.

We make sense of the river through cultural markers. People perhaps best know the river in the same way that they think they know the city – through films and music.

The river has starred in *Grease, In Time, Under the Bridge* by the Red Hot Chili Peppers and *The River* by Good Charlotte, to name just a few. Popular culture favors a particularly apocalyptic stretch of river which runs through downtown: all bridges, graffiti, concrete, algal blooms, and heat haze. But this is only part of the story. *California Fly Fisher* magazine applauds its potential for carp fishing.<sup>43</sup> The Great LA River Clean Up (formerly La Gran Limpieza), a long-running annual service project of Friends of the LA River, mobilizes thousands of people in trash removal from multiple sites along the river's course. The expanses of concrete have become canvases for all kinds of urban art, including the wildstyle graffiti piece by Saber that was the largest in the world before being painted over, the now-tagged Frank

Romero piece on the east bank of the river near the Arroyo Seco confluence, and the revered Great Wall of Los Angeles in the Tujunga Wash tributary – a community art project started in the late 1970s that is a half-mile-long representation of the history of California. When Los Angeles hosted the famously frugal Summer Olympics in 1984, a stretch of the river was almost re-engineered into the venue for rowing and canoeing events.<sup>44</sup> More recently, the river has been a site for underground parties attracting thousands of guests, for a life-sized mermaid installation from artist S.C. Mero, for post-punk musical performances by JP Orchestra, for underpass-sized light projections by Projected Visions, for entire art festivals held on the river bed in South Gate, and for the preservation of equestrian culture



against a veritable tsunami of gentrification and urban sprawl. Still, Angelenos continue to be surprised to learn that our city has a river, and are surprised even more to know that it, to some extent and in unconventional ways, functions and even thrives despite its extreme alteration.

Dick Roraback's commitment "at least to his conscience – to walk or bike each foot of the Los Angeles River from its mouth to its source" brought us the wonderful *In Search of the L.A. River* series.<sup>45</sup> Along with the mass of other river-related *Los Angeles Times* articles, the series confirms that the river was far from neglected, and that it was thought about in many ways other than as a mere drainage ditch. While the river may have been misunderstood and poorly treated by many, the coverage in the *Times* testifies to a more nuanced relationship between people and river and attests to many people having developed heartfelt connections with this unconventional and important landscape. Roraback's journalistic contribution is one of many that have brought the river into the public eye; as the articles are part of a long tradition of writing the Los Angeles River into public awareness, demonstrating the power of the media in environmental campaigns, affirming the importance of narrative, and contributing substantially to the historical record of an utterly remarkable river.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tilly Hinton is a cultural producer, scholar, and strategist. An Australian who calls Los Angeles home, her current creative projects include community-sourced environmental storytelling (LA River X) and a podcast and event series called Storytime for the Apocalypse. She coaches people seeking arts, education, and community grants, and has herself won well over half a million dollars in humanities funding (including California Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities, City of Santa Monica, The Awesome Foundation, the City of Sydney, the Commonwealth Government of Australia, and the Australian Learning and Teaching



Council). She has produced large-scale volunteering programs for national and international cultural events and built networks of collaborators across Australia and the United States. Tilly serves as an Advisory Board member for Riverpark Coalition in Long Beach. She wrote the learning and teaching impact policy for the Commonwealth Government of Australia, and the policy underpinned more than \$14 million of allocated funding. In 2020, Tilly was startup catalyst for the Rose River Memorial project, a handcrafted national monument to COVID-19 deaths in the United States. She has curated exhibitions and programming at

the Los Angeles Public Library and Frogtown Artwalk, and with collaborators at Pomona College and The Claremont Colleges Library has achieved the permanent archiving of the now-bilingual LA River X collection into the Western Water Archives. Tilly's research explores the ecological and socio-cultural importance of damaged urban landscapes. She has a Masters and a PhD about the LA River's recent social history, and she took Lewis MacAdams seriously when he told her that her job was articulating and protecting the river's future mythology.



## Endnotes

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10 Dick Roraback, "Just a Trickle Away: It's Another Case of Double Dribble." *Los Angeles Times*, January 23 1986.

11 Dick Roraback, "Exploring the L.A. River: Small Tales from Along Lario Trail," *Los Angeles Times*, October 31 1985.

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14 Roraback, "By the Filmic Shores of Burbank: Reflecting on the Muddy Banks of a Town of Tinsel," *Los Angeles Times*, November 28 1985.

15 Dick Roraback, "Exploring the L.A. River: Small Tales from Along Lario Trail," *Los Angeles Times*, October 31 1985.

16 Dick Roraback, "Bridging the Gap on the L.A. River: With a Song in His Heart and a Yolk on His Shoe," *Los Angeles Times*, November 7 1985.

17 Ibid. This is one example of many responses to Roraback's questions about the river during his walks.

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20 Roraback, "The L.A. River Practices Own Trickle-Down Theory."

21 Dick Roraback, "Bridging the Gap on the L.A. River: With a Song in His Heart and a Yolk on His Shoe," *Los Angeles Times*, November 7 1985.

22 Roraback, "The L.A. River Practices Own Trickle-Down Theory."

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**Opposite: An Amtrak train idles on the east bank of the river while invasive and California native plants coexist in the soft-bottomed riverbed in Frogtown. Photo courtesy the author, 2011.**

**Above: Musician JP Orchestra plays a gig on a slab of concrete he calls Fashion Island, in the riverbed in Frogtown. For almost a decade, Joshua Payne has played pop-up shows at the river, entrancing fans and those who happen upon him. Photo courtesy the author, 2022.**



## PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION:

# Rendering the Los Angeles River

Char Miller and Tilly Hinton



The Los Angeles is one of those streams whose bed, at some points, is above the water. In other words, it flows underground, or is lost in the sand... During the rainy season it enlarges into a broad river, with powerful current and dangerous, shifting bottom... But let the early Autumn come! Then the once-raging torrent purls along, a narrow, shallow, garrulous brook, which bare footed children may easily ford.

— Emma H. Adams, 1887<sup>1</sup>



Two images, “Swimming along the L.A. River” (1948) and “When there’s nowhere to run, float away” (2022) are paired and mounted on a wall in the Photo Friends Gallery in the Central Library, the crown jewel of LA’s public library system. They form part of a collaborative exhibit, “It Really is a River,” co-hosted by the Library, Photo Friends, LA River X and its Spanish-language mirror, El Rio de Los Angeles X. Since the summer of 2019, LA River X, a digital humanities initiative, has been collecting, amplifying, and preserving contemporary Los Angeles River images through community-based curation and publishing. The Library exhibition is catalyzed by the People’s Archive, a grant-funded collaboration that is preserving the LA River X collection by archiving and celebrating it with public programming and engagement.<sup>2</sup>

As curators of the exhibit, we had the enviable task of sifting through the library’s collection of archival LA River images and linking them with contemporary images from LA River X. In the end, we selected a total

of thirty-one images that offered intriguing juxtapositions while attesting to the river’s inalienable *riverliness*, to borrow a phrase that river advocates have used for decades.

“Swimming along the L.A. River,” for instance, depicts three boys cavorting in a deep-water swimming hole near Griffith Park (and, not incidentally, mugging for the camera). A century earlier, taking a dip (and washing clothes) had been banned from the river due to water-quality issues, a prohibition that seems quaint when set against the level of contaminants dumped into the mid-twentieth-century river: industrial wastes, untreated sewage, and animal refuse. To flip that toxic reality, in 2006 Friends of the LA River pushed for a “swimmable, fishable, boatable, bikeable Los Angeles River for all the people of Los Angeles to enjoy.”<sup>3</sup> Theirs is an essential, if still elusive, aspiration.

As activist in its implications is the print with which “Swimming along the L.A. River” is paired—Daniel Gonzalez’s print, “When there’s nowhere to run, float away.” Its subject is Gonzalez’s studio work desk. On it are

his tools and full-page illustration from the novel *The Ballad of Huck and Miguel*, which Tim DeRoche wrote, and Gonzalez illustrated.<sup>4</sup> The novel is a contemporary retelling of Mark Twain’s classic, *Huck Finn*, with the Los Angeles River replacing the Mississippi as a central locale and character; and Miguel, an undocumented boy substituting for Jim. This reinvention and political reorientation dovetails with Gonzalez’s commitment to his “responsibility as a printmaker to be a vehicle not only for culture but to also inspire a sensibility of the creative as a formidable weapon for social justice.”<sup>5</sup>

As these individual images speak to one another, they are also in play with the rest of the exhibition. Individually and collectively, their details divulge an array of stories about the river, its rise and fall and rebirth; its historical import, contemporary dilemmas, and future prospects. Our accompanying captions are celebratory, cautious, mournful and provocative. The subjects pulse with rhythm, tempo, and, occasionally, humor. They offer varying shades of tone, color, and energy.





Left: "Swimming along the L.A. River" 1948.  
Courtesy Valley Times Collection, Los Angeles  
Public Library.

Above: "When There's Nowhere to Run,  
Float Away" 2022 - *Daniel Gonzalez and Tim  
DeRoche*, Courtesy LA River X Collection.





Above: The photo exhibition, "It Really is a River," is mounted on a wall in the Photo Friends Gallery at the Los Angeles Public Library's Central Library location in downtown Los Angeles. Part of a collaborative exhibit, it is co-hosted by the Library, Photo Friends, LARiver X, and its Spanish-language mirror, EIRio de Los Angeles X." Photo courtesy the authors.

Right: "Ocean Liner Travels Down River." 1950. Courtesy Herald Examiner Collection. Los Angeles Public Library.

Opposite: "Arriving Home from Griffith Park" circa 2021 – Jody Rath, Courtesy LA River X Collection.



Each speaks to the river in a precise moment in time, and yet, because each is in conversation with every other, they echo across time.

Like the river itself, each embodies the unexpected. Like the river itself, each is heuristic. We learn by looking.

### Documenting an iconic urban waterway

**Standing in the riverbed, the austere, harsh unnatural landscape feels like a buffer zone in the middle of the city. A world within a world, where other rules apply.**

Miguel Rodriguez, LA River X, 2020

When we look, we remember. Recalling, for instance, just how easy it has been to overlook the Los Angeles River.

Channelization by the US Army Corps of Engineers began in the late 1930s, a massive project that was completed in the 1960s. When done, it had locked the river into a fixed channel, creating an infrastructural monolith designed to flush water through the city, thereby countering the catastrophic flooding which had become a winter peril in the rapidly growing metropolis.

These alterations, several decades in construction, obliterated many of the river's 'riverly' qualities. It became more typical to describe the fifty-one miles as a flood control channel. With that, the contesting of the river's identity was in full swing. Still now, many people express genuine confusion at the idea that Los Angeles really has an actual river running through its urban core.





In July 2010 the US Environmental Protection Agency ruled that the Los Angeles River was a “Traditional Navigable Water,” a capitalized designation that carries with it the opportunity to apply Clean-Water Act regulatory protections to it and all the tributaries and wetlands within the 834-square-mile river basin.<sup>6</sup>

This policy decision had riparian and cultural implications: the Los Angeles River was once more, and legitimately, a river. Yet the formal ruling simply confirmed the views of many others who have always respected the River as kin, as a nature refuge, as a fishing spot, a playground, a gathering place, an artistic muse, even a place in which to shelter. As Los Angeles poet and essayist Mike Sonksen writes in a Whitmanesque ode to his hometown waterway:

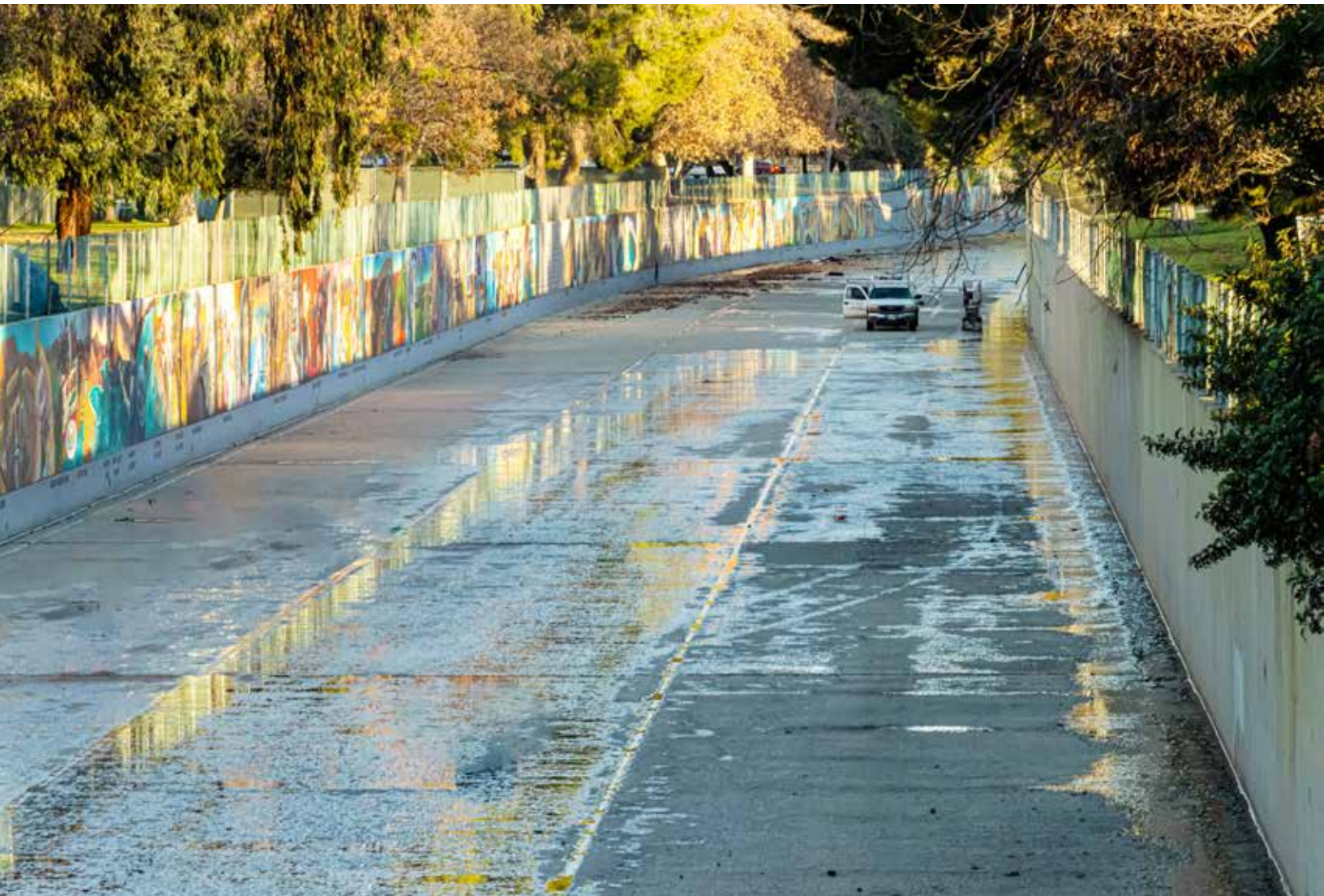
I sing of a river where wetlands

and washes once dominated  
witness the return of the watershed<sup>7</sup>

From the river’s source next to a football field in the San Fernando Valley, to the mid-river bend caressing the eastern flanks of Griffith Park, to the architectural roll call of downtown bridges, to the low-flow channel through the hyper-industrial Gateway Cities, and then the eventual relaxation of the river into a wide expanse in Long Beach, people are having encounters with the river, endlessly.

Horse riders mount up at historic stables in Atwater and trot along the river and then up into the surrounding hillsides, rolling terrain that Griffith J. Griffith bequeathed to the city more than a century ago. A full-throated roar rattles the riparian quiet whenever motorcyclists race up the concrete riverbed, their own private freeway; storm





drain outlets are emblazoned with graffiti, gaining Insta-fame. The mid-river channel contains another surprise: anglers cast their lines hoping to hook carp and other non-native fish species—that some have dubbed with the catchall name of “sewer salmon”—for recreation and sustenance. In wetlands and shallows, egrets, herons, and other waders feed on the river’s surprising abundance. Where paddlers in kayaks are amazed that it is possible to escape the city, serpentine freeways roar overhead.

If you’re not there, in that instant, it’s almost as if these river stories never happened, except, of course, for the saving grace of photography. Thanks to the curiosity of photographers — professionals and amateurs alike — glimpses of the city’s most important fifty-one miles survive, in pixels and in print. These photos are as essential as they are intriguing. They preserve the river’s history, attest to its ecological and cultural vibrancy, and insist that the City of Angels

has a river as dynamic, fluid, and complicated as any other.

### The People’s Archive

“Perhaps most overwhelming to me about the Great Wall experience has been learning of the courage of individuals in history who endured, spoke out, and overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles. It was true both of the people we painted about and of ourselves the Mural Makers.” Judith F. Baca<sup>8</sup>

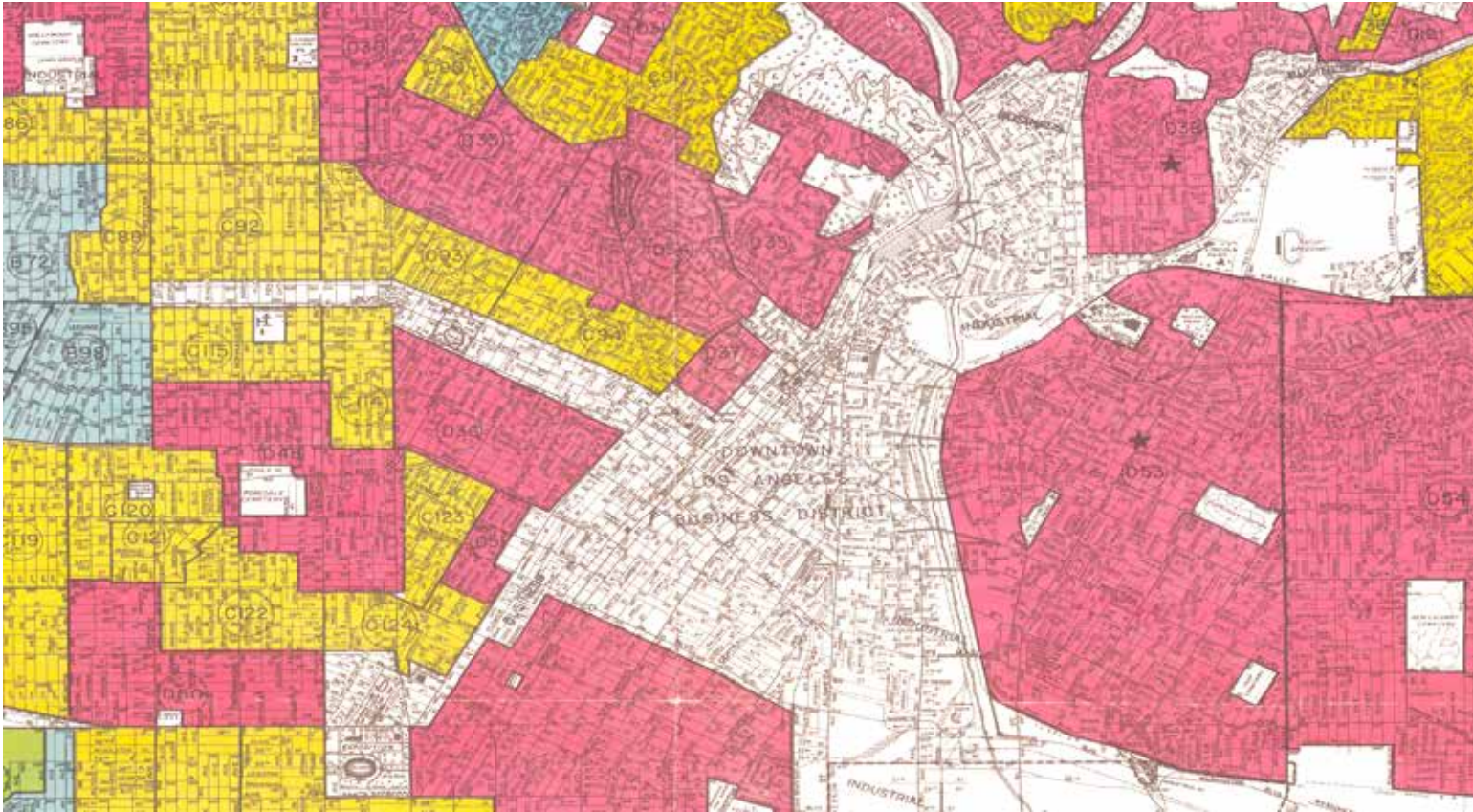
It is one thing to line up the shot with camera or phone, adjust for focus and light, and then click, snap, or touch. It’s another to determine how to preserve what is instantaneous. This is especially pressing if the platform on which this image is posted is Instagram, a digital tool that by design is short-lived. To make the transitory more permanent is one of the goals of *LA River X and El Río de Los Angeles X*, founded and curated

by Tilly Hinton. In collaboration with the People’s Archive, they will safeguard the bilingual LA River X collection through the Western Water Archives, thereby combining Instagram’s lightning-quick, ever-upgraded technology with old-school archival and public humanities methodologies.<sup>9</sup>

The funding from California Humanities makes it possible for the People’s Archive to weave together three strands that emerge in relation to the LA River: narratives, counter-narratives, and conversations. These themes are embedded in a series of vibrant humanities-based conversations and events that are drawing adult and youth audiences that will continue to surface, document, and promote the many narratives of one of the nation’s most important social, environmental, and cultural urban landscapes. Out of these activities will come a representative and democratized river archive.

The first step in making that possible is to work with community members as





producers and consumers of contemporary and historical primary sources and interpretive materials about the river. Within this ambition lies another objective: to engage Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities that for too long have been marginalized in planning and management decisions impacting their lives. Centuries of displacement have been baked into metropolitan Los Angeles's DNA. The Spanish invasion of what they would call Alta California resulted in the violent disruption of Indigenous communities sited along Paayme Paxaayt/LA River, trauma that the Mexican and American settler-states ramified. This ramification was echoed and amplified with the 1930s publication of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation's (HOLC) redlining maps of the metropolitan area. These subjected river-adjacent neighborhoods to overt discrimination along racial and ethnic lines, a practice that "produced landscapes of segregation."<sup>10</sup> Its brutal legacy endures,

a reality which the LA River Master Plan acknowledges: "particularly in the San Fernando Valley and south of Downtown LA, some Hispanic and Latino and Asian communities today are disproportionately challenged by deteriorating social, economic, and environmental conditions."<sup>11</sup>

Economic disparities and political inequities often are manifested in the inability of these communities to preserve their stories about the river. By themselves, LA River X and the People's Archive cannot fully rectify this situation, but these initiatives are giving room to those who wish to share their lived experiences and perspectives with a wider audience and are ensuring that those narratives are stewarded in the archival record. This is especially timely as the river is on a trajectory of major change, starting with the newly adopted, and hotly contested, county-wide Master Plan for the river.<sup>12</sup> Other challenges include several major housing and commercial developments due

Opposite: "Morning Mural Smear" 2022 – Charles Levin, Courtesy LA River X Collection.

Above: Redling Map of Downtown Los Angeles; Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) maps graded residential neighborhoods by their perceived quality based on race and class: Green = "Best"; Blue = "Still Desirable"; Yellow = "Definitely Declining"; Red = "Hazardous." Note: the LA River running through the downtown core.<sup>12</sup>



soon for completion or commencement: the upcoming Summer 2028 Olympic Games; heightened economic pressures in the wake of COVID-19; and ever-present controversies swirling around the river in terms of environmental justice, housing, and public open space.

The photographic exhibit in the Central Library downtown is an example of the commitment to engaging with the river's many publics and, with them, building a more inclusive and representative archive of the LA River as it is seen, known, and experienced by its constituents. The trick, of course, is to make certain that these narratives, counternarratives, and conversations are protected and retrievable well into the future.

Enter The Claremont Colleges Library, our archival partner. Originating as the California Water Documents collection in The Claremont Colleges Digital Library (CCDL), the newly named Western Water Archives is a portal to the underlying CCDL collection, developed as part of a Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) Digitizing Hidden Collections and Archives grant, and that includes water-related primary sources from seven Southern California institutions.<sup>13</sup> Its collection is now being further augmented as a result of a partnership with LA River X whereby the Western Water Archives is ingesting material that community storytellers and cultural bearers have posted to LA River X and El Rio de Los Angeles X and then deeded to the library.<sup>14</sup> By their gift, these artists and creators have gained an expanding, stable, interpretable, and more accessible platform.

### Spatial Transformations

Like digital technologies, bridges often create access. Their spans serve as conduits for the movement of goods, services, and people so crucial to a community's economy. That's part of the story captured in the final

photograph mounted in the exhibit, "1st Street bridge" (1965). But there is more to it as a close reading of it reveals.

On a stormy day, the river is running fast, hard, and furious. By contrast, the human subject—a man, protected from the elements by hat and raincoat, forearms resting on the guardrail—is immobile. We cannot know what he is thinking; his story is imperceptible. Yet his solitary presence gives us permission to pause as he did, and to take in the heavily industrialized scene. Concretized banks channel the floodwaters, an armoring that makes possible the intense development that crowds up against the walled-off river. Rising above, high-voltage towers flow energy into Los Angeles. Beneath these looping wires, we see parallel lines of railroad tracks and switching yards, and — on the periphery — factories, warehouses, and oil-storage tanks. Together, these structures block off the river such that the only way to know that it is there is to stand on a bridge. Even then, the individual meditatively gazing at this tableau is elevated above and separated from the river. Passive.

To disrupt that passivity has been the work of countless people and organizations before and since that rainy day in the mid-1960s. Sixty years on, the "It Really is a River" exhibit joins the chorus of those calling for reweaving the Los Angeles River back into the urban fabric and to animating our collective engagement with the larger watershed—a reciprocal dynamic that will transform this concrete corridor into habitat and home.

### Acknowledgments

We pay our respects to the Tongva-Gabrielino people on whose land—never ceded—this article and the exhibition it describes have been produced; and to Paayme Paxaayt (Pi-mé pa-height) the "West River" (the Los Angeles River) as a source of life for all of us residing on the traditional

Right: "1st Street Bridge." 1946. Courtesy Herald Examiner Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

lands of the Tongva People. We are grateful to Photo Friends and the Los Angeles Public Library staff, including Christina Rice and Amy Inuoye for co-creating and hosting this exhibit, and for the millions of images they keep in trust for current and future generations. Thanks to our project collaborator and archivist Lisa Crane at The Claremont Colleges Library for managing the Western Water Archives and to California Humanities, a non-profit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, for its generous grant for this project. A special shout out to Steven Keylon, editor of *Eden*, for his guidance and support.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Char Miller and Tilly Hinton met by chance in 2015 at an international conference in Delft, Netherlands where they separately presented on Southern California water issues. Their initial conversations then have blossomed ever since and they are now Principal Investigators for the California Humanities grant underwriting The People's Archive. Miller is the W.M. Keck Professor of Environmental Analysis and History at Pomona College and author of *Natural Consequences: Intimate Essays for a Planet in Peril* (1922). Tilly Hinton is public historian, cultural producer, and an environmental storyteller whose work focuses on landscapes, public engagement, emotions, and the LA River.







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# THE RUSTIC LANDSCAPES

Christopher Pollock



Located within a spectacular site, this vertically-oriented version of a wattle fence, seen in some Medieval illustrations of gardens, is part of the newly-opened Tunnel Tops project in the Presidio of San Francisco. It was designed by New York-based James Corner Field Operations which also designed the acclaimed New York High Line redevelopment of an elevated freight rail line into an aerial public space. Photograph by author.



# OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA





In the summer 2022 issue, we began our tour of the Rustic Landscapes of California, focusing on Central and Southern California. This installment will show more examples in Northern California, the Bay Area, and the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

## **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA**

### **LASSEN NATIONAL FOREST**

The remote hamlet of Mineral is up in the state's northern reaches near Lassen National Forest. A scenic, rustic portal entrance on California State Route 36 leads into the historic private compound, Battle Creek Meadows Ranch. The tripartite form portal is constructed of unpeeled logs and is flanked on both sides by running zig-zag fences of hand-split stacked wood rails. The portal symbolically tells a story of the ranch as a timber source and grazing pastureland. The ranch development began in 1894, when William E. Gerber (1852-1928), a four-term Sacramento County Auditor and Recorder, purchased the property. He turned the unimproved property into a profitable, self-sustaining ranch during his lifetime. Generations of families have continued to enjoy the private gathering spot.<sup>1</sup>

### **HUMBOLDT COUNTY**

One aspect of the celebration of the Rustic style came about with the emergence of the automobile in the early twentieth century. Americans, including Californians, took to the road on their vacations and often came across places while on the road to somewhere else. Closed access highways did not yet exist, and travelers needed to rest along isolated stretches and be entertained. Creativity

spawned private businesses along these roadways, and any roadside attraction had only a short time to tell its story and convey the promise of a unique experience. In Northern California, groves of ancient giant redwood trees and the regional tall trees' imagery were used to sell souvenirs. Who could resist the unusual eye-catching roadside rest-stop in the form of the He and She rustic outbuilding, which was located southeast of Eureka at Grundy's Redwood Terrace resort in Humboldt County's Garberville? Its construction mimicked a sawn section of a huge redwood log laying on its side. In truth, it is just the bark applied to the plywood-faced form. Grundy's resort included lodging, a restaurant/bar, a store, and a service station.<sup>2</sup> No longer extant, this popular pitstop was demolished in the 1960s.

### **FORT BRAGG**

Further down the coast lies the forty-seven-acre Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden at Fort Bragg. This spectacular coastal garden includes recent interpretations of rustic woodwork. For example, the dahlia garden features a trellis structure of dimensional lumber with insets of rustic twig work. A visitor enters through the rustic Deer Gates to get to that garden, located at a narrow point in the landscape where the rustic theme is continued.

## **SONOMA COUNTY**

The unincorporated community of Camp Meeker is located just south of the Russian River in Sonoma County. The greater area was once owned by Melvin C. Meeker Sr., a lumber baron who acquired a timber claim on government lands and, beginning in 1866, established several of the area's lumber mills.<sup>3</sup> One project that used cleared timberland was a tract called Camp Meeker. Here, starting in 1898, summer vacation cottages were built within a tightly laid out plan: more than 700 cottages were built by 1911. With ferry and train connections, it was geared toward San Franciscans, who flocked to the resort site. The lumber mill was nearby, so lumber was advertised as "cheap." The camp had various amenities for recreation but, more importantly, had all the infrastructure of a village. At some point, an entry portal of large logs was built to support a sign proclaiming the name at the camp's entry. Once inside, other features included the aptly named three-story Hotel Rusticano: its porches and attached gazebo were built with log columns and balusters of branches. The camp's inhabitants expressed their individuality in their many "woods-themed" bridges, fences, gazebos, archways, and porches. The camp's highlight was the unique Living Tower, built in 1906 as an eighty-foot-tall observation tower on Look-out Mountain.<sup>4</sup> It was constructed using four





symmetrically placed mature redwood trees, set fourteen feet apart and rising to seven levels, accessible only by ladder. Those who braved the vertiginous climb could see the panoramic vistas of the immediate rolling countryside and other distant counties.<sup>5</sup>

Also located among the dense Russian River redwood groves is the secretive all-male Bohemian Grove enclave of San Francisco's Bohemian Club, an old-school fraternal organization. The legendary Grove hosted a "unique and powerful network of men in the Sonoma County redwoods," as noted by Ph.D. candidate Peter Phillips in his thesis.<sup>6</sup> The genesis of this site in the hamlet of Monte Rio, originally owned by Marvin Meeker, began in 1893 when it was rented for a Club event. In 1899, Meeker sold the initial acreage to the Club. Contiguous acreage was added over time to encompass today's 2,700 acres. In the Club's formative years, the campsite abounded in various forms of rustic seating carved from logs. At the less sophisticated level were logs laid on their sides and set in rows as seating for the outdoor amphitheater, while multiple (substantial diameter) timber sections provided a linear seat with a high back that enclosed the Campfire Circle.

Moving eastward, Sonoma County's wine country demonstrates another type of construction. Facing Sonoma Plaza is the historic Mission San Francisco Solano,

founded in 1823. It was the northern terminus of the string of missions along much of the length of Alta California. Displaying a traditional building technique, the ceiling of the south-facing porch is lined in horizontally laid small-diameter wood branches known as *latillas*, also called *vigas*. They are chosen for their straightness and function as a decking, bridging the space between roof beams. This was a common vernacular construction technique in arid climates. In this case, the *latillas* serve as a foundation for a clay barrel tile roof. Sometimes this technique is used without a roof, providing shade below. A modern-day example can be found in Healdsburg, on the west side of the Plaza at Dry Creek Kitchen's outdoor seating area. Here, the *latillas* were placed on a dimensional lumber frame to create a roof covering that allows dappled light patterns of shade from the warm sun.

### NAPA VALLEY

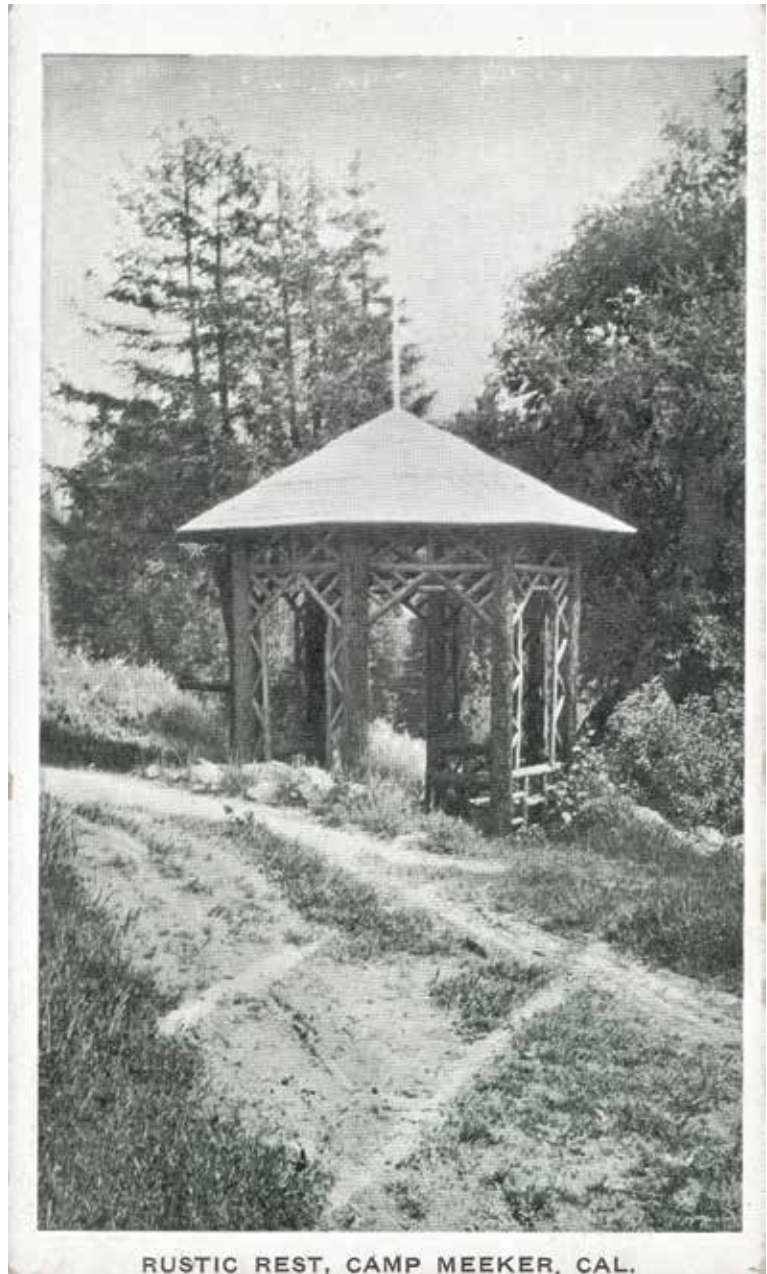
A different kind of example in Napa Valley's wine country is the large and elaborate entry portal to Longchamp Farm in the village of Rutherford. The painted signage is lettered in a rustic font, the name alluding to the property's French theme. Previously known as the Carpy Ranch, which grew wine grapes, globe-trotting Francophiles Alice and Philetus Everts acquired the 400-acre property in 1902 as part of a trade for a

Above: The private compound's portal into Battle Creek Meadows Ranch, in the hamlet of Tehama County's Mineral, makes a bold statement with its tripartite form. The ranch was created in 1894 as a retreat for the Gerber Family who still maintain the property situated close to Lassen National Forest Park. Photograph by author.

Below: Towering cliffs set the background scene for this spiritual place that was the first Forest Chapel at Tamarack Lodge in Mammoth Lakes. The open-air sanctuary had a nave that was furnished with chunky Rustic furnishings. It featured a standing log fashioned into a pulpit decorated with twining gnarled roots. Today a similar structure replaces the original one.







RUSTIC REST, CAMP MEEKER, CAL.

building that Philetus owned in Oakland.<sup>7</sup> All the vines had to be removed due to an outbreak of phylloxera, so Everts focused on alfalfa. Later it was noted that various grains, fruits, and nuts were grown on the ranch.<sup>8</sup> This was a late-in-life gentleman farmer's ranch for the California pioneer, who came to California in 1852 and served as general superintendent of the Eureka and Palisade Railway of Nevada, the line supporting the silver mines.

### MARIN COUNTY

A muscularly designed picnic shelter sits within the wooded municipal Phoenix Lake Park in Marin County's town of Ross. The land is part of the Marin Municipal Water District, where the Phoenix Lake and

Lagunitas Lake reservoirs are located. The shelter is part of a picnic area located on a popular hiking trail. Its low stone walls provide a sense of enclosure, constructed of massive stone and peeled logs, with a built-in barbecue at one end. The hut was constructed in 1936 as a project of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), one of several federally funded programs created during the Great Depression to put Americans back to work. A similar hut was constructed at the nearby Lake Lagunitas, part of the same watershed. Designed in the so-called "Park Rustic" style, the picnic shelter is based on a standardized prototype called the "rock-type" shelter developed by National Park Service's consulting architect Albert H. Good for the service's

CCC projects around the country.<sup>9</sup> According to Good, picnic shelters did not have to be bland, one-size-fits-all structures. Instead, they could be simultaneously durable, inexpensive, and attractive, ideally harnessing local regional materials and styles to blend in with the natural landscape and local building traditions. The rock-type picnic shelter, one of the several-dozen prototypes developed for use across the country, was illustrated in the 1938 National Park Service publication *Park and Recreation Structures*.

Another Depression-era project built entirely of stone is the Mountain Theater, also known as Cushing Memorial Amphitheater, located in Marin County's Mt. Tamalpais State Park. Home to the Mountain Play Association, the gently undulating amphitheater





Opposite, left: Constructed in 1906, the four-square Living Tower was part of Sonoma County's Camp Meeker. The corner support columns were live redwood trees that were inserted with seven levels of observation platforms, which allowed access via a series of ladders. Vintage postcard, courtesy the author. Photographer: Lowry.

Opposite, right: An octagonal gazebo at Camp Meeker was but one of the various Rustic expressions used throughout the family-oriented resort camp including the cottages, hotel, post office, and Mitzpah Presbyterian Church. Vintage postcard, courtesy the author.

Left: The men-only Bohemian Grove in Sonoma County's hamlet of Monte Rio is home to summertime gatherings that started in 1893. Shown here, probably around the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, is a group sitting on a redwood log sawed out to create a monumentally scaled linear seat. Courtesy UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library.

Above: A contemporary version of Rustic was used in Healdsburg's Dry Creek Kitchen restaurant, which faces the town plaza. The alfresco seating cover consists of spaced latillas laid on a dimensional wood structure. Photograph by author.

is sited in a natural bowl-shaped landscape with panoramic views of the Bay Area from its 2,000-foot above sea level elevation. The terraced landscape audience seating consists of large, naturally weathered rocks individually selected and having two nearly flat surfaces. Landscape architect Emerson Knight conceived the design in 1925 for the Association, which began using the site in 1913 for its alfresco plays. Work was started in earnest in 1929; however, construction was halted due to the onset of the Depression and did not resume until 1934 when the CCC stepped in. One interesting element is a drinking fountain formed from a large boulder.<sup>10</sup> The work was finally completed in 1940 and has continued as the annual Mountain Play's venue, a unique community

event that continues as a beloved cultural tradition.<sup>11</sup>

## **BAY AREA**

### **SAN FRANCISCO**

Moving to an urban coastal landscape, we arrive at Golden Gate Park, which began in 1870 in San Francisco. Features included several Victorian-era rustic shelters, or summerhouses. These delightfully picturesque and airy bowers were fabricated using natural, bark-covered tree trunks combined with smaller branches. Often it is unknown who designed these artistic constructions, let alone built them. One exception is the work of Anton Gerster, who worked for landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., and

Calvert Vaux, who co-designed New York City's Central Park and Brooklyn's Prospect Park, among many other landscapes around the nation. Gerster was brought to the Bay Area by Golden Gate Park designer and Superintendent William Hammond Hall, who had been in communication with Olmsted. Hall later noted that "Mr. Gerster was recognized as the foremost worker and designer in rustic wood-work in our country. He had planned and erected the works in both Central Park, New York and Prospect Park, Brooklyn, and our having him out here was the realization of another helpful favor from Mr. Olmsted."<sup>12</sup> Gerster agreed to work in San Francisco for one year at a salary of six dollars a day plus one-way expenses. In 1874 Gerster built four open-sided shelters





of varying sizes in the northeastern area of the park with two more authorized in 1902.<sup>13</sup> The structures were perfect visually symbiotic foils and supports for climbing vines. An 1894 publication notes one arbor to be entwined with “nasturtium, honeysuckle and passion vine vieing [sic] with one another in efforts to render the structure beautiful.”<sup>14</sup>

Golden Gate Park also is home to a ‘faux grotto,’ a structure derived from Italian precedents that sometimes was covered in spugne (sponge), a plaster made of limestone. The interior of Golden Gate Park’s historic Alvord Bridge mimics this: it is lined in a decorative application of concrete formed over a mesh, creating faux stalactites that appear to drip from the tunnel’s arched ceiling. The stalactites were stained in hues imitating minerals that had leached out of the earth. The bridge was constructed in 1889 to the design of Leslie Ransome of the contracting firm Ransome and Cushing, which patented the square and twisted iron rebar used in the bridge’s construction. Like many bridges in New York’s Central Park,

this bridge was built to separate foot traffic from dangerous horse traffic at the park’s east entry near the newly-opened Sharon Quarters for Children. Another bridge in Golden Gate Park is called the Rustic Bridge. Spanning the south side of the park’s Stow Lake, the double-arched structure is clad in massive red natural boulders, creating its rustic appearance. The boulders came from a quarry on the nearby property of Adolph Sutro located to the south of the City near Laguna Honda.

In contrast to this exaggerated ruggedness, dressed gray stones line the outside edge of the brick arches. Park Superintendent John McLaren designed the bridge, and stonemason Donald McKay carried out the work. To aid construction, cofferdams were built on either side of the site during construction. The bridge was finished in 1893.

The Rockery was constructed in 1891 along the pedestrian pathway between the popular Conservatory of Flowers and Second Bandstand. Upon emerging from the tunnel under JFK Drive from Conservatory Valley, steps lead up into the shaded Rockery.

As its name suggests, the Rockery consists of large rocks that also serve as a retaining wall to support the path’s rise up the hill. Plants are placed in the interstices, especially ferns, providing a naturalizing effect. According to the 1891 Report of the Park Commissioners, the rocks were obtained from a site two miles southeast of the park.

Rockeries, or rock gardens, were one of the many rustic elements that Victorians commonly added to their gardens. This is related to what was called rockwork, which includes stairways, retaining walls, and stone enclosures of various kinds. Several contemporary books were published, giving readers detailed advice about location, materials, and plant specimens. A sample is by the American landscape and ornamental gardener Edward Sayers, who advised about the construction of a rockery in his 1846 book, noting that “stones for the rockery should be of the roughest kind.”<sup>15</sup> This reflects the Picturesque characteristic of roughness, sudden variation, and irregularity.

Faux rocks also were a favorite of Golden Gate Park Superintendent John McLaren.





Opposite: Longchamp Farm in the Napa Valley's Rutherford was owned by Philetus Everts in the early 1900s, where this large portal led to his farm growing various grains. This was a gentleman's farm for California pioneer Everts as he was a magnate in various businesses including lumber and a railway. Courtesy California Society of Pioneers.

Left, top: The picnic shelter known as "Three Bear Hut" is located on the grounds of Phoenix Lake in Ross. The shelter was constructed in 1936 by the Civilian Conservation Corps in a muscular style using large logs and stone blocks. Photograph by author.

Left, bottom: This Rustic inn could be easily reached by a scenic railway within the mountainous area of Marin County's Mt. Tamalpais. The inn, the second on this site, was opened in 1914. The mountain was very popular during the Golden Age of Hiking. Vintage postcard, courtesy the author.

But these were with a twist. Lacking many of the desired large specimens nearby, he had artisans craft concrete to appear like artfully placed rocks. What is unusual about rockwork of this type is that upon closer inspection, the viewer realizes that smaller real rocks are combined with the faux to create the illusion, especially after some aging. A nice touch was that they often had pockets where a flowering specimen or fern could be planted.

Within Golden Gate Park, the most prominent incarnation of faux rock is found at Huntington Falls, built in 1894 as a seemingly natural waterfall that cascaded downhill over many rocks and under bridges on its way down to Stow Lake. What is seen today is a re-creation of the original, which collapsed in 1962 and was not rebuilt until 1984. The reconstruction used gabions (rock-filled wire cages) as the structural base of the construction. However, many of the small rivulet water channels that once flowed from the reservoir located at the hill's apex can still be found in Strawberry Hill Island's sandy landscape.

Several additional wood-based rustic structures in Golden Gate Park, being ephemeral, have not survived except in photographs. These included an auto bridge at the park's east end, a shelter for the bison herd, and many benches scattered throughout the park. A picturesque wooden bridge also once spanned the park's west-end North Lake.

A modern rustic element in the Park's de Young Museum landscape is a fence constructed as part of the Children's Garden. Hood Design Studio of Oakland designed it. Its construction consists of square wood posts attached to a frame with vertical steel rebar rods that capture the horizontally laid logs. As the logs shrink or decay, they can easily be replaced.

On San Francisco's Spruce Street in Presidio Heights, visitors will find a formal faux bois fence created in 2005 by San Antonio-based Carlos Cortes. The designer comes from a family of craftsmen going back some 100 years.<sup>16</sup> The work is reminiscent of designs by Englishman T.J. Ricauti published in *Sketches for Rustic Work* (1848), as both

share a rigid symmetry.

The cemeteries of Colma, just south of San Francisco, abound with many examples of significant faux bois elements crafted in concrete. Some are in the form of benches, and others are freestanding waste container shrouds.

## PALO ALTO

Environmental artist Patrick Dougherty's willow sculptures demonstrate a contemporary use of the rustic idiom. His artworks have been installed in various California locations, including the Djerassi Resident Artists Program in Woodside, the San Jose Museum of Art, a private residence in Portola Valley, and the San Diego Wild Animal Park. These ephemeral pieces are swirling sculptural delights. One temporary installation, entitled "Double Take," was constructed in 2011 on the grounds of the Palo Alto Art Center and took three weeks to build. Dougherty sourced the material locally from a Pescadero farm. This was part of an exhibition, "The Nature of Entanglements," which focused on woven natural materials.<sup>17</sup>





Above: Anton Gerster, who worked with Olmsted and Vaux on Central Park, constructed this largest of several rustic shelters, aka summerhouse, in Golden Gate Park. Today just its flush granite foundation marks the shelter's outline. Courtesy Western Neighborhoods Project.

Opposite, left: Alvord Bridge in Golden Gate Park is noted, especially by structural engineers, as it was the first cast-in-place concrete bridge in the U.S. to utilize the new technology of twisted iron rebar. Constructed in 1889, the tunnel's design included a decorative effect in the form of concrete stalactites, creating a grotto. Courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.

Opposite, middle: In 1875 the San Francisco-based Pacific Rural Press newspaper published an illustrated article showing the design of "A Rustic Shelter" by Anton Gerster who constructed shelters for Olmsted and Vaux. The article was penned by F. P. Hennes[e]y who would later become interim Superintendent of Golden Gate Park. From Pacific Rural Press, March 20, 1875, v. IX, n. 12, 1.

Opposite, right: This faux bois bridge once spanned a portion of Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park. Its existence is odd given that it seemed to go nowhere as it was placed at a narrow end of the lake. It may have been constructed as a fly-casting platform for the San Francisco Fly-Casting Club that was originally housed nearby. Vintage postcard, courtesy the author.

Originally intended to close in 2012, the installation was held over until finally being dismantled and fed into a woodchipper in 2016.<sup>18</sup> But, his work was so popular that Dougherty was again commissioned to create another piece in later 2016 titled "Whiplash," also located at the Center.

### EAST BAY

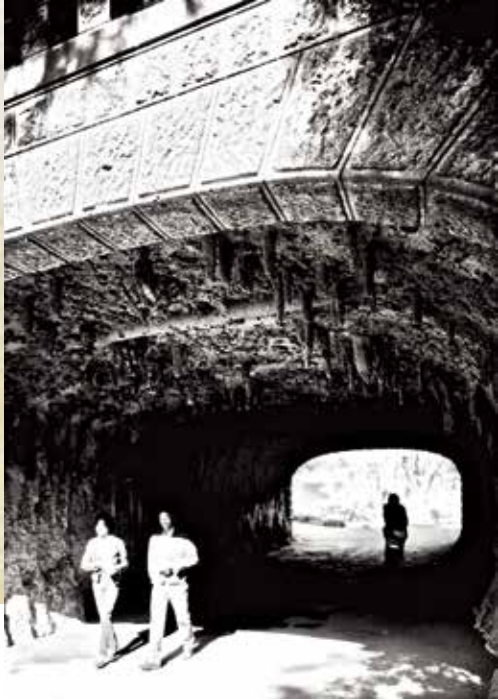
In Alameda County's East Bay region, the city of Piedmont has a long history of rustic-themed attractions. One early locus was the Piedmont Springs Hotel, nestled in the Oakland Hills. Several entrepreneurs, including Water Blair and James Gamble, developed the hotel on a canyon endowed with numerous natural sulfur springs (a fad of the period). It was first built in 1872. In 1887, its growing popularity led to the addition of cottages. Bushy Dell Creek was the main creek: A waterfall named The Cascade was developed with a grotto added further along the trail. After the hotel burned in 1892, real estate developer Frank C. Havens took a lease on the property. In 1898, he enhanced the site with rustic wood benches, bridges, and fences within the setting of numerous water features and tropical plants. The garden was developed and further enhanced with all sorts of exotic flora. Another embellishment was a double-level rustic treehouse or viewing platform with the nickname "spooning house." An octagonal open-air rustic tea house built

entirely of small-diameter wood logs was one of the venues; over time, the entire structure was covered with climbing vines. Nearby was a formally designed wooden bridge leading to a Japanese Tea House with flanking stanchions of geometrically-placed rustic stickwork. The sticks were formed into elaborate patterns of diagonals and grids, culminating with a globe shape at the top. Rustic woodwork could also be seen at the site's theater.

The property was bought by the city of Piedmont and dedicated as a public park in 1925, having avoided a residential development scheme. The landscaping was designed by University of California-trained landscape architect Howard Gilkey, who had worked with botanist Luther Burbank early in his education.<sup>19</sup> During this period, the decaying wood benches were replaced with faux bois ones. Recently the Piedmont Beautification Foundation provided funding for work on the park. With the realization that only one faux bois bench remained (and by then in poor shape), sculptor Michael Casey of San Francisco constructed a replica of this long curved bench. This replica was installed in 2005 on the lower level of City Hall Plaza. Sadly, none of Piedmont Park's nineteenth-century buildings exist today; however, fragments of the landscape embellishments remain.

Another rustic Piedmont feature is a faux bois seating group and table seen in Dracena Quarry Park, near its south entry. The site was





formerly part of a quarry owned by Walter Blair, that supplied crushed rock to pave the streets of Oakland and Piedmont. Again, landscape architect Howard Gilkey is credited with the park's design, which was also developed during the 1920s. The faux bois that remains today is found within a redwood grove at the dead end of Artuna Avenue.

## FREMONT

An all-faux bois garden of delights is Gardens at Palmdale, located on Mission Boulevard in Alameda County near the historic Mission San José. The site was first established as a residential estate in 1858 and underwent a succession of owners. Intersected by Mission Creek, it featured a large private landscaped area facing the boulevard, visually secured by a partial height stone wall. When the Sisters of the Holy Family took over the property in the mid-twentieth century, the garden still contained many remnants of past owners.<sup>20</sup>

Walking this property is a journey of discovery akin to a treasure hunt. Elements within the gently undulating mature landscape include three pond areas, one with a fountain, all fed by Mission Creek. There are five small freestanding grottos of stone, some with planting pockets. Several bridges remain over the ponds, and seating includes a pair of faux bois chairs. Several rock clusters are scattered over the landscape. One

remarkable piece is a faux bois barbecue. The creator of these elements is unknown.

The Sisters recently sold much of the property for real estate development. Part of the complicated and unusual deal struck by the Sisters was the donation of the 5.4 acres of garden that is now protected in perpetuity by a conservation easement. Part of the sale funded an endowment program to assure ongoing garden maintenance. Due to the Sisters' actions, the garden known as Gardens at Palmdale is now available to residents and the public.

Saratoga's Sanborn County Park is on the eastern slope of the forested Santa Cruz Mountains. James R. Welch, a Superior Court Justice and previously city attorney for San Jose, originally built the Welch-Hurst Residence in the early 1900s. The property's rustic main building later served as a youth hostel. The rustic landscape elements here, extensions of the main building's character, include two gazebos, whose supporting log columns also provide a link with the surrounding forest of redwood tree trunks. They sit on low rockwork walls extending into the surrounding wooded landscape.<sup>21</sup>

## SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS

Deep in the isolated old-growth redwoods of Felton was Welch's Big Trees Resort, also in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Joseph W. Welch, Sr. purchased the grove in

1867 and developed it into a popular destination in the cool forest. Access to the resort was by the Santa Cruz and Felton Railroad. One rustic building was the Big Tree Clubhouse with its surrounding veranda with a log balustrade, each of the verticals topped by a rustic planter of twig work, filled with ferns. On the grounds were fences of stacked logs and an open-air observation point, a platform sitting on top of a giant redwood stump. At the turn of the century, it had a train station, hotel, dining hall, cabins, and dance pavilion. Later it was known as Big Trees Park, and the property is now part of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park.

## SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS

### LAKE TAHOE

The Lake Tahoe south shore area—known as Tallac Historic Site—once was the summer vacation playground of three wealthy San Francisco families. These estates, a series of joined compounds sited on what today is seventy-four acres, were originally built for the Baldwin, Heller, and Tevis families between 1894 and 1923. Collectively, the site is a symphony of rustic embellishments. The Pope House, which faces the lake, was built in 1894 for the Tevis family and is the oldest residence here. It sports barked log columns with perpendicular



Another bridge in Golden Gate Park is the Rustic Bridge which features spectacular large red boulders. Built in 1893 by stonemason Donald McKay, its double-arch spans Stow Lake leading a visitor to Strawberry Hill Island. Photograph by author.



Built in 1891, Golden Gate Park's Rockery is part of a pedestrian-friendly connector between the Conservatory of Flowers and the Tennis Center. The excavated connector was lined in large rocks interspersed with ferns of various kinds in the interstices. Vintage postcard, courtesy the author.



In 1902 the former Deer Park in Golden Gate Park was further developed as De Laveaga Dell which featured fern collections sited within the existing California coast oak grove. Additionally, an entirely artificial landscape of a stream flanked by mostly fake rocks (*fausse pierre*), was crafted with pockets for small plants in some instances. From *Thirty-First Annual Report of the Board of Park Commissioners of San Francisco*. San Francisco: Phillips, Smyth & Van Orden, 1902.



The Indian Cabin, with its decorative gable truss infill, is a tribute to Adirondack Rustic design. It is located on the Tallac site facing Lake Tahoe and was used by the Tevis family boys as a gymnasium at one point. Courtesy Ronnie Schumate, via Flickr.



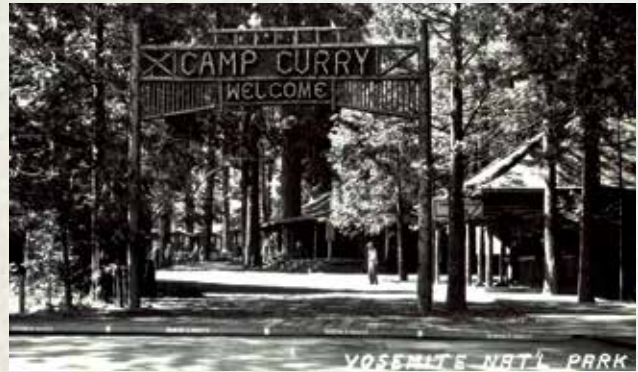
logs as capitals supporting the porch. Also located on the Pope Estate portion is the Indian Cabin with its front porch, which is a tribute to the Great Camps of New York State's Adirondack Mountains. Its lacy roof truss of tree branches decorates an otherwise straightforward design of expressed log structure with intact bark. Another Tevis-era element is an arboretum pond surrounded by various amenities using rustic construction techniques, including a whimsical gazebo, bridge, fences, and seating. These have been recreated for today's visitors to imagine it was in 1910. Several other log buildings also are part of the compound, rounding out the rustic outdoors theme.

## YOSEMITE

Within Yosemite National Park's spectacular combination of topography and towering redwood trees was the seasonal Big Trees Lodge in upper Mariposa Grove. The site was near today's historic Wawona Hotel that preceded the hotel as a camping concession of the Yosemite National Park Company, formed in 1917. The simply designed camp consisted of fourteen portable structures: some were wood cabins, while others were tents. The camp's focal point was an octagonal open-air building built around an enormous redwood tree known as the Montana tree.<sup>22</sup> Constructed in 1920, this building was mainly used as an alfresco dining room. The foundation was cloaked in rough bark set at an angle, pierced by stair steps that were linear half sections of logs. All the exposed structural members were dead straight except at the corners, where identically curved pieces contrasted with the otherwise conventional composition. A roof of planks (still with their bark) topped off the building. Around part of the building was a fence with main posts of cut log sections topped with matching planters. This rustic camp was demolished in 1932.<sup>23</sup>

Built nearby during the same period is the welcome portal to Yosemite Valley's Camp Curry, constructed circa 1914 for use by the public. It symbolizes a visitor's entrance into an informal lodging area that consists of canvas tents and wood cabins: all the constructions here, including ancillary ones, are characterized by unpeeled logs and bark strips. The more formal Ahwahnee Hotel (1927) is not far away, designed by park architect Gilbert Stanley Underwood on the other side of Yosemite Valley. It is of a similar style, especially the cavernous dining wing with its expressed log structure. The portal seen today is similar to the original. Recently, open bus shelters – made of stone and peeled logs – have been built in the valley using the same techniques.





**MONO COUNTY**

Located near Mono County's Twin Lakes, not far from the Mammoth Mountain ski resort area, is a spiritual place called the Forest Chapel, located at Tamarack Lodge. However, the chapel was in place before the lodge was created. The chapel was the work of Lloyd B. Austin, an English professor at the University of Minnesota. He came to California to create mountain trails for hiking devotees during California's Golden Age of Hiking from the 1880s to the late 1930s. He created the crude chapel, which at first attracted a few scattered residents. With time, the area became an attraction to hikers as a camping spot, which evolved into cabins that were built there in 1924. Guest preachers were among those who came to the spot.<sup>24</sup> The small open-air structure

Left: Bordering the Children's Garden in Golden Gate Park's de Young Museum site is a contemporary version of a Rustic fence designed by Oakland's Hood Design Studio. Another version, by the same architect's office, can also be seen at Cornerstone Sonoma's demonstration garden in the Sonoma Valley. Photograph by author.

Top: The Chapel of the Transfiguration in Tahoe City is another semi-covered spiritual place. It was constructed in 1909 of granite and wood and is attributed to architects Robert M. Ward and Robert H. Watson. The structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Vintage postcard, courtesy the author.

Middle: This faux bois fence in San Francisco's Presidio Heights District was designed by the residence's owner and constructed in situ by San Antonio, Texas-based craftsman Carlos Cortes in 2005. Photograph by author.

Bottom: This portal is a welcoming sight in Yosemite's historic Camp Curry. The camp's many buildings are Rustic as well, let alone the park's many other old, as well as some new structures. Vintage postcard, courtesy the author.





Top left: With Lake Tahoe as its backdrop, today this area is known as the Tallac Historic Site. One of the embellishments on the Tevis Estate portion was recorded in this 1910 photograph of the garden with its variety of rustic elements including bridges and a gazebo. Courtesy California Historical Society Collection at University of Southern California.

Top right: A temporary installation of willow sculpture by Patrick Dougherty at the Palo Alto Art Center from 2011 to 2016. Known as “Double Take” the ephemeral work was a delight to children. Courtesy Patrick Dougherty.

Bottom left: Within Piedmont Park was a wood bridge leading to the Japanese Tea House. Every bit of the bridge’s detail was exposed straight sections of branches and twigs, right down to the globe-shaped light fixtures. Rustic in many forms once abounded throughout this park. Vintage postcard, courtesy the author.

Bottom right: A sophisticated portal flanked the entry into Big Trees Park in Santa Cruz. It was built with machine-like precision in its placement of members selected for their straightness or having a certain curvature. Vintage postcard, courtesy the author. Photographer: Zan.

housed a pump organ and a pulpit made of a log section decorated with twined and gnarled roots. A sign over the original pulpit reminded the attendee of the prominent site by stating, “I will lift mine eyes — unto the hills.” Attendees looking at the background setting of cliffs towering above them could easily be humbled by the minuscule pulpit in comparison. Today, you can still go to the lodge and attend a service at an updated but similar rustic outdoor venue located at this majestic spot.

The examples discussed here are just a sampling of the many more and varied project types carried out across the state. A few have been restored, such as The Huntington wisteria arbor, or are under safekeeping such as the Gardens at Palmdale. Mostly it is the faux bois and stone works that have captured people’s imaginations, rather than the much more ephemeral (and thus long-lost) rustic

wooden site structures — at least some of which were secured in photographs. Two exceptions are the iconic wood Curry Village portal that still greets guests in Yosemite National Park and Camp Meeker. Some families return year after year, and in some cases, generation after generation.

### About Christopher Pollock

Chris began his career as a designer specializing in interior architecture. With this experience, he changed gears to focus on historic preservation, specializing in historic research. A native of Connecticut, Chris has resided in San Francisco since 1979.

In 2016, Chris was tapped by the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department to be their first Historian-in-Residence for all the city’s parks, bringing a layer of history to the department. His initial project was to research and record the history of the





Top left: Although this photo comes from an Oakland family's photo collection, it is unknown as to where or when it was recorded. Despite the lack of a provenance, it is a wonderful example of backyard Rustic particularly suited to children. Courtesy UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library.

Top right: The Welch-Hurst Residence was built in Saratoga's Santa Cruz Mountains about 1900 as a second home. Two gazebos extend the building into the verdant landscape surrounded by towering redwood trees. The site is now part of Sanborn Skyline County Park. Courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.

Left: The tripartite Rose Pergola in Santa Cruz's De Laveaga Park was dedicated in 1912. This is just a portion of the pergola, which consisted of three round pergolas with straight connectors between, all in the Rustic idiom. Courtesy Santa Cruz Public Library.

department's some 230 real estate holdings. With the 150th anniversary of Golden Gate Park in 2020, he launched the latest version of his book, first published in 2001, San Francisco's Golden Gate Park: A Thousand and Seventeen Acres of Stories. This publication, by Norfolk Press, is a hybrid of a history and tour guide of the park's many features. This was preceded by another book, Reel San Francisco Stories: An Annotated Filmography of the Bay Area, published in 2013, which covers some 650 movies filmed in the Bay Area since the beginning of talkies.

## Endnotes

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# MARIN ART & GARDEN CENTER NOW ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CGLHS Board Member Antonia Adezio, Executive Director of the Marin Art & Garden Center (MAGC), has let us know that MAGC was recently listed on the prestigious National Register of Historic Places. Many of our members will remember MAGC as the host for our 2018 annual conference.

The designation results from extensive historical research into the founding of the Center in 1945 by a group of passionate advocates for the conservation of open space in Marin. They wished to save this eleven-acre former estate property and create a center for the community to gather and celebrate the arts and gardens. After its founding, the board of this new nonprofit organization commissioned buildings and landscape designs from eminent practitioners in the Bay Area, resulting in a site that has a rich legacy of mid-century modern design that is intact today.

MAGC was found to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places with significance in Social History: Women's History, Conservation, and Entertainment/Recreation, for MAGC's association with the conservation legacy of the women's garden club movement. Many of the founding women, including Caroline Livermore, Sepha Evers, Portia Forbes, Helen Van Pelt, and Gladys Smith, were instrumental in conserving many of Marin's open spaces. These include Samuel B. Taylor State Park, Tomales Bay, and Angel Island State Park, as well as Point Reyes National Seashore and the enlargement of Mt. Tamalpais State Park boundaries. They were also active members of the Marin Garden Club, founded in 1931, which continues to be involved with the gardens at the Center.

MAGC was also deemed significant in Architecture and Landscape Architecture. From the beginning, MAGC served as an excellent example of the Bay Region Modern-Second Bay Tradition. The buildings on site retain the original modern lines, exposed structure, glass walls, and wood panels characteristic of this period. They embody the modernist goals regarding informality, streamlined aesthetics, and affordability, which are sought after by homeowners in the region today.

The Center's resources are the work of locally recognized architects Gardner Dailey and Donn Emmons (Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons) and landscape architects Thomas Church and Robert Royston. The period of significance begins in 1945 from the initial purchase by the Marin Art and Garden Center and closes in 1962 with the completion of the last Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons buildings associated with their evolving master plan.

*Congratulations to Antonia Adezio and the team who worked so hard to achieve this important designation for MAGC!*



Top: From left: Ross Town Council member Bill Kircher, Executive Director Antonia Adezio, Board President Tom Perry, Board President Emeritus Diane Doodha, Supervisor Katie Rice, Ross Town Council member Julie McMillan. Photograph courtesy MAGC.

Bottom: Chris Pattillo and CGLHS member Cathy Garrett of PGADesign.



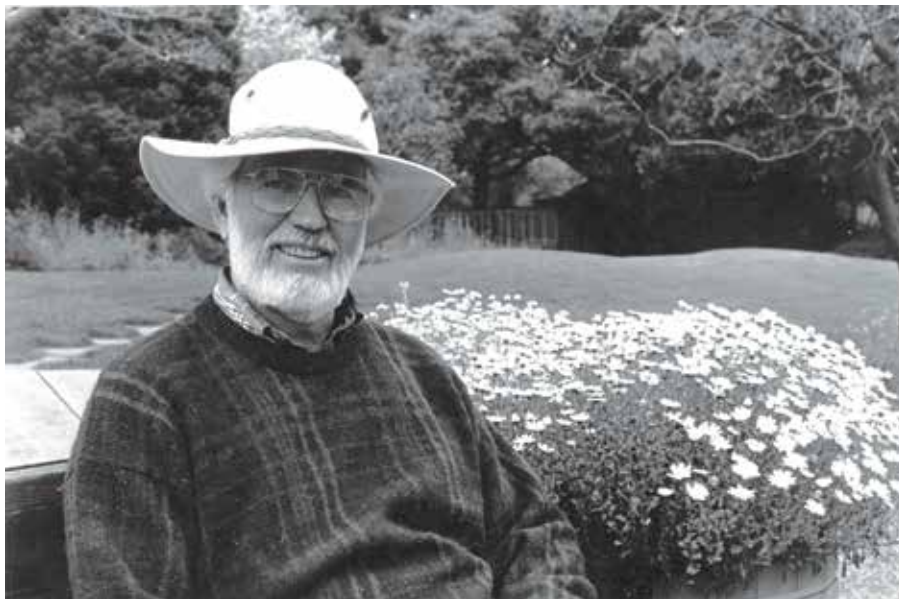
# Russell Alan Beatty, A.S.L.A. (1936-2022)

Susan Chamberlin

In 1977 *Pacific Horticulture* published “Browning of the Greensward” by Russell A. Beatty. This is, in my opinion, the most significant analysis of irrigation in California gardens since Lockwood de Forest, Jr.’s 1924 article, “Do Lawns Belong in Southern California?”<sup>1</sup> George Waters, the founding editor of *Pacific Horticulture*, wrote that it was “the most widely read of any piece” from the magazine.<sup>2</sup> In his essay, Russ argued that our standard landscape of lawn and thirsty exotics mimicking landscapes in other regions meant “we have forgotten, or have never really discovered, where in the world we live.”<sup>3</sup> And while Russ thought lawns were fine for children’s play areas, he probably is the one who originated the now-familiar refrain that if the only people who walk on lawns are gardeners, the grass should be replaced with drought-tolerant groundcovers and native plants.

Russ died in August at age eighty-six in Washington State, where he lived with his wife on Whidbey Island. For twenty-eight years he taught in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning at the University of California, Berkeley. He was also a landscape architect who continued to practice after his retirement as a Senior Lecturer Emeritus, first in the mountainous Bonny Doon neighborhood in Santa Cruz (where he contributed a “Landscape Improvement Plan for the California Native Plant Garden” at the entrance to the UC Santa Cruz Arboretum), then in Santa Fe, New Mexico (where he did the first design for the new botanical garden), and finally in Langley in the Puget Sound. Everywhere he lived, he designed his home garden to be appropriate for the region and its climate. A garden he designed at Sea Ranch, the famous planned community on the Sonoma coast (where he was on the Design Committee) is a beautiful example of his sensitivity to regional conditions and his horticultural smarts.<sup>4</sup>

In the early 1970s, Russ was already an advocate for school children growing vegetables, and was championing the use of native plants and appropriate horticulture, which he often called “sensible landscaping” as he spread the word to real people tending to actual landscapes in his many lectures to garden clubs. One can imagine his tenure committee members at UC Berkeley, where he was hired as an assistant professor in 1967, raising their eyebrows because his garden



Portrait of Russ Beatty. Courtesy of the Environmental Design Archives.

club lectures outnumbered conference presentations and his publications in popular horticulture magazines outnumbered essays in peer-reviewed journals. And while Russ did some of those approved things too, and his book, *Trees for Lafayette*, was the recipient of the 1980 Planning and Analysis Merit Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects, he was never advanced up the tenure track. Instead, he became the Department of Landscape Architecture’s invaluable “Lecturer with Security” teaching plant identification, planting design, and horticulture in a department that focused on environmental planning but realized their students in landscape architecture should probably know a thing or two about plants.

While the department did not emphasize the essential role plants play in our world, Russ did.

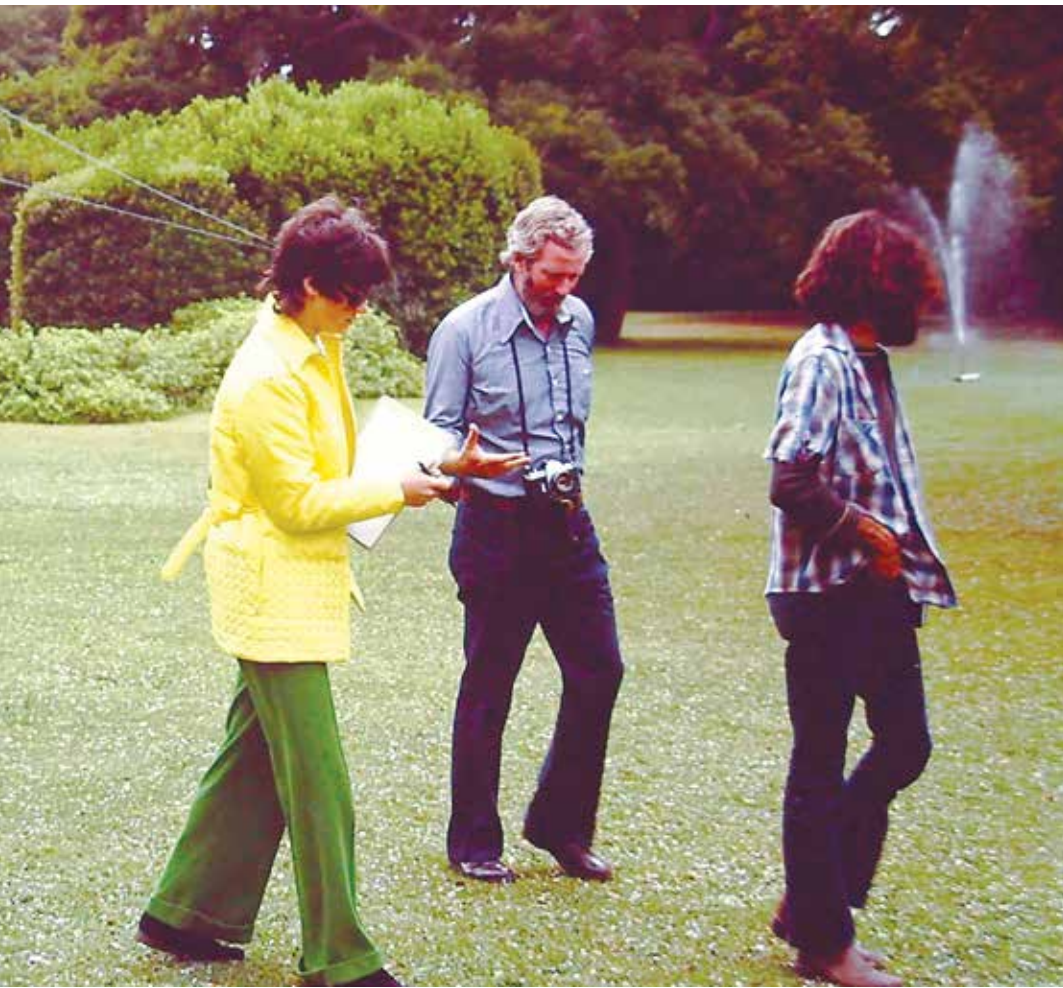
His environmental awareness was expressed in his lectures and writings about landscape design and water conservation; working with and creating garden microclimates; fire resistant landscaping; urban forest management; tree planting; wildlife habitats; ecological fitness; environmentally-sound regional landscapes and achieving regional character with native plants; xeriscaping; planting guidelines for heat island mitigation and energy conservation; erosion control; and prescribed grazing by sheep and goats to maintain natural landscapes. He recognized that plants called “native” to California might clash with the specific natives at a site

or fail in the local growing conditions, and he believed communities should establish guidelines to avoid creating fire hazards and address inevitable drought conditions.

As the keynote speaker at the dedication of the new Morton Arboretum Research Center in Lisle, Illinois, Russ defined appropriate horticulture as, “Horticulture that is responsive to the environment on a long-term basis; reduces dependence on non-renewable resources; is economically, functionally, and ecologically sound; is aesthetically pleasing and artistically satisfying; and is socially responsible.”<sup>5</sup>

It is not surprising that Russ had an interest in historic landscape design—he was in the History Club in his Pennsylvania high school. In 1970 he wrote about the first five years of Golden Gate Park.<sup>6</sup> Other work includes the “Rancho Los Alamitos: Garden Restoration and Landscape Maintenance Plan” co-authored with Renn A. Bradshaw and David C. Streatfield in 1987; the 1996 “Historic Landscape Report and Garden Maintenance Plan for Dry Creek Cottage Garden in Union City”; the book, *Gardens of Alcatraz*, which he co-authored as part of his long association with The Garden Conservancy; and the Baseline Documentation Report for the Green Gables Conservation Easement prepared by PGAdesign.<sup>7</sup> He also co-authored the history of tree planting in the introduction to *The Trees of Golden Gate Park and San Francisco*.<sup>8</sup> His 2002 “Historic Landscape Report: Cypress Lawn Memorial





Russ Beatty, middle, leading his UC Berkeley graduate design class on a tour of the Dickenson garden in Santa Barbara in 1974. Courtesy Chris Pattillo.

Park, Colma, California” was edited for *Eden’s* Spring 2003 issue as “Cypress Lawn & the Rural Cemetery Movement.” In our last correspondence, Russ was reluctant to make cuts to this essay for the forthcoming CGLHS book “California Eden: Heritage Landscapes of the Golden State” because he was feeling his age and wanted to complete his memoirs for his family about being raised during the Depression and the Second World War. I mentioned that the botanical name for Monterey cypress had been changed. With his typical humor he responded, “Damn botanists! Were I still teaching, I’d use the *real* names!” He okayed my edit of his article just before he died unexpectedly, following surgery.<sup>9</sup>

Russ was born in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania on July 9, 1936. Both of his parents taught English at his high school. He majored in horticulture at Pennsylvania State University, where he was the president of the Agriculture Student Council and edited the department publication, *Farmer, Forester and Scientist*. He was also president of the horticulture fraternity and the Student

Council. Russ obtained a Master of Landscape Architecture degree from UC Berkeley in 1966. Geraldine Knight Scott was one of his teachers at Berkeley. She was also the Director of the Blake Garden in Kensington, and he was the co-director with her for a semester, then was appointed director in 1967. Scott criticized Russ in her oral history for not maintaining the formal, clipped hedges. But this was the late 1960s after all, and he was busy turning the garden into a learning lab for hands-on student experiences, “cultivating a vibrant social spirit” in the garden, and growing a beard.<sup>10</sup>

Russ was my mentor when I was an undergraduate at UC Berkeley. We shared a love of plants, which was unusual in the Landscape Architecture department in those days and still is. He helped me transition to the career I have now. Dick Turner, the former Director of the Ruth Bancroft Garden who taught with Russ for more than four years at Berkeley, wrote to me that he was loved by his students. I was lucky to be one of them.

Russ is survived by Jane, his wife of

fifty-eight years, their daughter Carol, and grandchildren. Their son Thomas, a back-country guide and advocate for the disabled, died in a plane crash in Alaska in 2007.<sup>11</sup>

**CHRIS PATTILLO, FASLA, Landscape Architect and founder PGAdesign:**

My favorite story about Russell Beatty is from the day we met. I was finishing my senior year as an undergraduate student at UC Berkeley. I had completed all of my required courses but needed more units to graduate, so was able to take any class I wanted. A friend from the student co-op that I lived in encouraged me to take Russ Beatty’s plant identification class. She said it was a lot of fun.

When I looked into the class, I noted that it was “for majors only” which I wasn’t. I was getting my bachelor’s degree in sociology. Attending the first class anyway, I stood in the back of the room, hoping he wouldn’t notice me. It was standing room only because he was such a popular professor. I was gambling that Russ wouldn’t know that I wasn’t a major and somehow, I’d be admitted to his class.

When the class was over Russ walked right up to me saying, “I don’t recognize you, are you a landscape major?” I confessed I wasn’t and made a plea to be admitted anyway. He said, “It would depend on how many students dropped out,” but I could stay and see what happened.

Neither of us knew on that day that his leniency would change the course of my life, that a few years later I’d serve as his teaching assistant, or that decades later Russ would refer my landscape architecture firm, PGAdesign, to take over some of his cultural landscape consulting jobs.

My fondest memory of Russ was the time that he took our entire graduate design class on a five-day, garden tour in Santa Barbara. We visited the Bass (Casa del Herrero), Dickenson, Donohue, Lovelace, and Tremaine private gardens during that trip, as well as the Santa Barbara Mission and a church in Montecito. It was the Lovelace Garden designed by Isabelle Greene that most impressed me. I can still recall the intense desire I had to jump into the black bottom swimming pool built under a canopy of live oaks. That day it was unimaginable to think that decades later Russ would refer me to Isabelle Greene, who called to ask me to consult with her on how best to preserve her masterpiece, and later to document the garden for the Historic American Landscapes Survey.<sup>12</sup>

Russ was a student’s teacher. His passion was teaching – not writing, so while he was published, it was not sufficient to achieve tenure. That he was declined that honor



was a grave injustice. His students loved him and absorbed his passion as our own. He was teaching us about resource conservation and resiliency long before the terms were in common use. He not only changed my life's path but undoubtedly that of many of his students. With the sensibilities he'd ingrained in his students we helped change the course of the profession and the region's awareness of our environment, a lasting legacy far greater than tenure.

**DOUG CAMPBELL, RLA, ASLA. Campbell & Campbell – Architects, Planners, and Landscape Architects.**

I met Russ Beatty in the fall of 1969, when Regula and I arrived at Berkeley, and I enrolled as one of his students in the graduate program in Landscape Architecture in the College of Environmental Design. I owe much to all the faculty and visitors I encountered there. With no formal exposure to the field, but coming from an academic background in psychology and the theatre arts and growing up in the ranching and farming communities of California and the desert borderlands of the southwest, I was particularly drawn to Russ's teaching about the elements and the fabric of the living landscape. I was particularly impressed with his authoritative knowledge and understanding of the "real world" of public infrastructure, and of the land development and landscape industry (I believe he was consulting with the City of Lafayette during that time). While this was several years before his brilliant and influential essays of 1977 and a decade later, I recall perspectives he expressed at the time on underlying economic and cultural landscape-shaping forces, and the breadth of subjects of the books on his office bookshelves. These recollections led me to look again at his writings, with a new appreciation of his voice in speaking to a wide audience beyond academia and the professions. He tells us in his 1977 essay: "Someone once stated that our image of the future affects our present. Until we have an image of the

future, we are unable to deal realistically with the present." And "A third alternative seems more plausible in the long run. That is to develop a new landscape ethic and aesthetic consciousness. By considering the drought as a welcome opportunity and challenge, we can be more effective in dealing with it directly, as individuals, and with longer lasting, more satisfying results. By learning anew or relearning what it means to live in a Mediterranean climate where water is a precious limited resource, we can all develop a new consciousness in planting the landscape." Ten years later he states: "Our gardens and landscapes express our attitudes about the places in which we live and work." He reminds us that the contours of our deeply embedded and usually unconscious "inner landscapes" profoundly affect the reality of the outer landscapes in which we live and must be reconciled. In the decades since, his call "...to develop a new landscape ethic and aesthetic consciousness" has taken on an existential importance. Thank You Russ.

**ANTONIA ADEZIO, executive director of the Marin Art & Garden Center:**

I am proud to count Russ as having been a mentor, colleague, and friend over the course of thirty years.

It was my good fortune that Russ was among the members of the fledgling advisory committee, chaired by Richard G. Turner, formed to help Ruth Bancroft with the transition of her garden from private to public, under the aegis of the equally newborn Garden Conservancy, in 1989. His steady guidance, patience, and insights into what made that garden so special were instrumental in the success of our efforts, and every meeting was a learning experience.

Russ gave unselfishly of his time and knowledge and his commitment to the discipline and practice of landscape preservation was inspirational. Doggedly certain of the values of some gardens that were underappreciated, he was a strong advocate and communicator about the importance of

saving these pieces of our cultural history, despite all odds. He was a leading voice on the Conservancy's professional Screening Committee, enlightening us all about the history and significance of West Coast gardens.

Everything I know about the history of California gardens I learned from Russ – this is not an exaggeration! As a visitor from the East Coast, everything about California was new to me, and Russ opened my eyes to the complex story of how our West Coast-designed landscapes came to be, and the often colorful stories behind them. His love of this special place came through loud and clear in his many lectures and informal conversations on the topic.

Russ had a wonderful sense of humor, and the pilgrimages we made together – often to obscure locations to meet idiosyncratic garden makers — were always memorable and fun. It was a special treat to visit Russ and Jane in their home in Santa Fe and see that he brought the same enthusiasm and zest for learning and gardens to their new high desert landscape.

Russ was an inspiring voice in our field and one that will be sorely missed by all his colleagues, students, and friends.

**CAROL BORNSTEIN, retired Director of Living Collections at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County:**

I didn't know Russ very well, but I have fond memories of him. He was very helpful and supportive during my time as horticulture director at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, serving on my horticulture advisory committee and encouraging me to keep at it with the landscape design symposia that I co-coordinated with Mary Carroll, the garden's education director. His two articles in *Pacific Horticulture* on landscaping in California's summer-dry climate were catalysts for that series and I invited him to speak at three of them. Russ's assessment of the West's natural and built landscapes helped shape my own views.

## Endnotes

1 Lockwood de Forest, Jr., "Do Lawns Belong in Southern California?" *Garden and Homebuilder*, December 1924, 232.

2 George Waters, "The Days of Compost and Conservation," *Pacific Horticulture* (July 2001) *Pacific Horticulture | The Days of Compost and Conservation*.

3 Russell A. Beatty, "Browning of the Greensward," *Pacific Horticulture* 38, no. 3 (Fall 1977). *Pacific Horticulture | Browning of the Greensward*. The article was reprinted in *The Pacific Horticulture Book of Western Gardening*. George Waters and Nora Harlow, eds. (Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 1990) and "Revisited" in *Pacific Horticulture* 76, no. 3 (Summer 2015). As landscape architects produced drought-tolerant gardens in the decade following the 1970s drought, in 1988 Beatty contributed "Greening of the Brownsward" to *Pacific Horticulture* *Pacific Horticulture |*

*Greening of the Brownsward*.

4 "A Wind-blown Garden on a Sea Ranch Bluff," *Pacific Horticulture* 70, no. 3 (July 2009). *Pacific Horticulture | A Wind-blown Garden on a Sea Ranch Bluff*.

5 Russell Beatty, "Urban Horticulture: New Dimensions & New Directions," *The Morton Arboretum Quarterly* 18, no. 2, (July 21-Sept. 20, 1982): 28.

6 Russell A. Beatty, "Metamorphosis in Sand: The First Five Years of Golden Gate Park," *California Horticultural Journal* 31, no. 2 (1970): 41-46, 73.

7 John Hart, Russell A. Beatty, Michael Boland, Roy Eisenhardt, *Gardens of Alcatraz* (San Francisco, CA: Golden Gate National Park Association, 1996).

8 Elizabeth McClintock, *The Trees of Golden Gate Park and San Francisco*, Richard G. Turner, Jr., ed., introduction by Russell A. Beatty and Peter Ehrlich (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2001).

9 The editorial committee for the book made the decision... They also have revised the book name to be *California Eden: Heritage Landscapes of the Golden State*.

10 The quote is from <http://virtualcollections.ced.berkeley.edu/exhibits/show/blake/beatty>. For Scott's comments, see Geraldine Knight Scott; Suzanne B. Riess; Jack Buktenica; Reed Dillingham, "Geraldine Knight Scott, 1904-1989, A Woman in Landscape Architecture in California, 1926-1989," Oral History Transcript, 1976-1988 (Bancroft Library, Regional Oral History Office, Berkeley, CA).

11 Susan Chamberlin would like to thank Marlea Graham, Joel Michaelsen, and Laurie Hannah for research assistance. All online materials above were accessed in August 2022.

12 From Chris Pattillo: Our HALS consultant team that included Carol Roland-Nawi, Stephen Schafer and PGA published a book, *Documentation of the Lovelace Garden*, that is available from <https://www.magcloud.com/browse/issue/1228021>





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Front Cover: **LA River painting 51 "Warner Brothers Back Lot"**  
**24" x 18" oil on canvas, John Kosta, artist.**

In search of more land to expand operations of a burgeoning movie industry, from 1915 to 1935, a number of Los Angeles area movie studios moved their operations from Hollywood to the San Fernando Valley near the LA River. One such studio was the Warner Brothers Studios, their back lot depicted in this LA River painting 51 where old vehicles, parked

catering trucks, and the costume warehouse to the left in the distance are visible. Courtesy John Kosta.

Back Cover: A focal point of the Big Trees Resort in Yosemite Park was this pavilion, which was constructed around a gigantic living redwood tree. Like a giant umbrella, it housed the reception area and was also used for alfresco dining. Vintage postcard, courtesy Christopher Pollock.