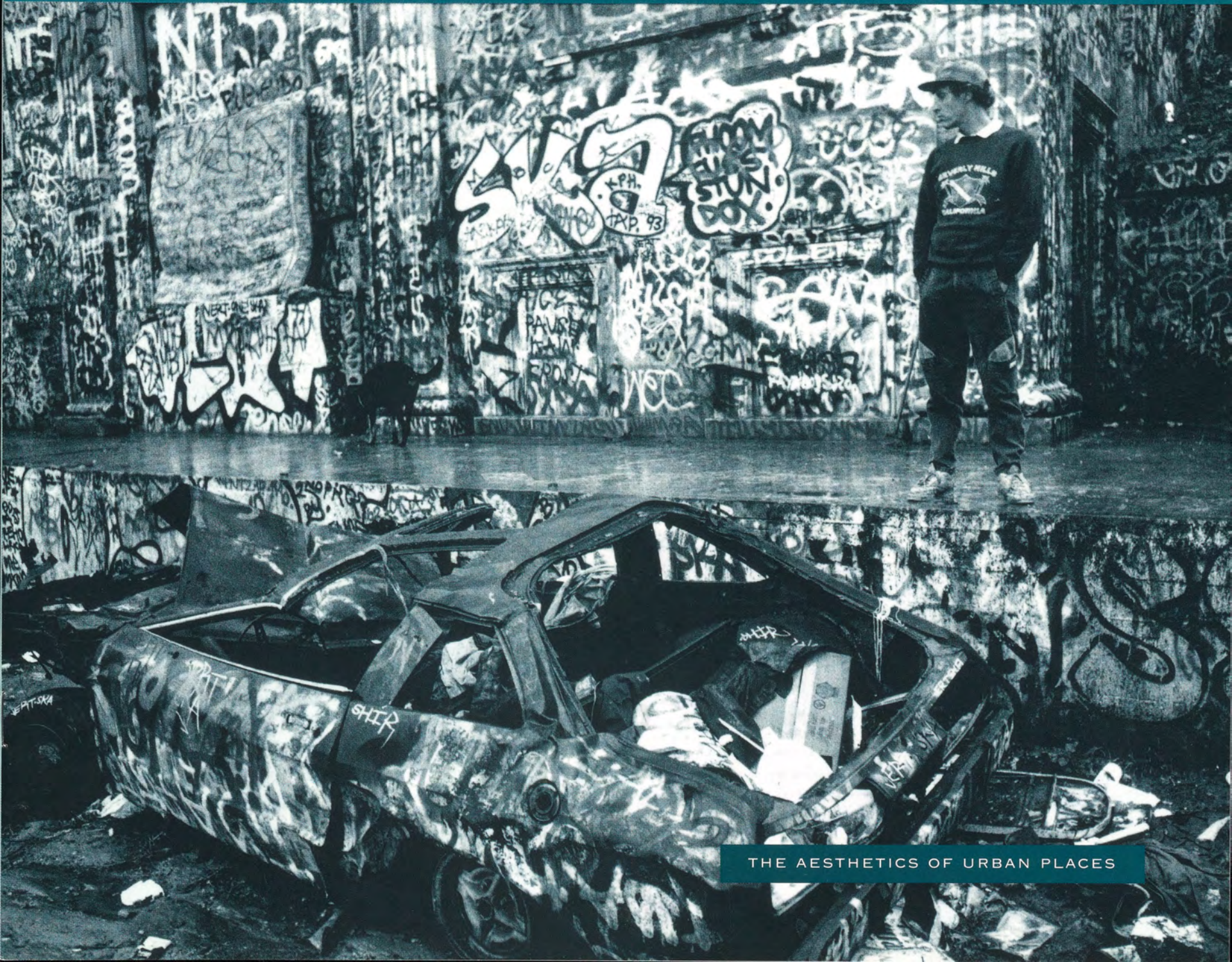


CONSERVATION

The GCI Newsletter



THE AESTHETICS OF URBAN PLACES

The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter

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THE GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE

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The Getty Conservation Institute is an operating program of the J. Paul Getty Trust. Other programs of the Trust are the J. Paul Getty Museum; the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities; the Getty Art History Information Program; the Getty Center for Education in the Arts; the Museum Management Institute; and the Getty Grant Program.

Conservation, The GCI Newsletter is distributed free of charge three times per year, in English and Spanish, to professionals in conservation and related fields, and to members of the public concerned about conservation. The GCI works to develop a broad constituency for conservation and to promote an international appreciation of the value of our cultural inheritance and our shared responsibility for its preservation.

THE GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE

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Front cover: The Belmont tunnel. Photo by Raul Herrera, participant in the "Picture L.A." project (see pp. 12-14). Back cover: Globe photo by Dennis Keeley.

1994 / Vol. 9, No. 2

Everyone views cultural landmarks through different eyes. The photograph on the cover shows how one young participant in the GCI's "Picture L.A." project sees his own city, and demonstrates just how varied the definitions of a "landmark" can be.



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In 1932 Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros painted *América Tropical* on a wall on Olvera Street in downtown Los Angeles. The political content of the mural outraged some of the city's civic leaders, and not long after its completion the mural was painted over. Forgotten for decades, it was left to languish in the strong California sun. In the early 1970s, the first efforts to preserve the fading masterpiece began, but it wasn't until the late 1980s that, with the assistance of the Getty Conservation Institute, substantial steps were taken to rescue the only surviving public mural by Siqueiros in the United States.

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Los Angeles, among the youngest of the world's major cities, has produced a wide variety of landmarks even within its relatively brief life. For several years, the Getty Conservation Institute has been interested in learning more about Los Angeles landmarks as part of its effort to preserve the cultural heritage of its home community. A 1992 Institute study indicated that many groups traditionally have been underrepresented in the city's official landmark programs. In light of this, the GCI gathered together a group of ethnically diverse youths in order to learn more about different viewpoints on what constitutes a landmark.

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América Tropical



AT ABOUT AN HOUR PAST MIDNIGHT ON AN OCTOBER NIGHT IN 1932, Arthur Millier, art critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, wandered through Olvera Street in downtown Los Angeles. There he found Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros, sitting on a scaffold, “sweating in an undershirt” and “painting for dear life.”

by Jeffrey Levin

Siqueiros was struggling to finish his largest work since he had arrived in the city earlier in the year. It was a 24-by-5.48-meter (80-by-18-foot) mural, situated on the outside second-story wall of Olvera Street’s Italian Hall.

The mural had been commissioned by gallery owner F. K. Ferencz of the Plaza Art Center, who instructed that its theme be “tropical America.” Siqueiros — a participant in the Mexican Revolution

and a seasoned Communist Party organizer who had just spent a year in Mexican prison for his activities — had no intention, he later said, of painting “a continent of happy men, surrounded by palms and parrots, where the fruit voluntarily detached itself to fall into the mouths of the happy mortals.”

However, for most of the weeks that Siqueiros and his team of assistants labored on the mural, the work’s central image remained unpainted and the artist’s ultimate intent unclear. Then, as Millier reports, the day before the scheduled unveiling, Siqueiros sent everyone home and worked through the night to complete the mural’s main figure. Set in front of a Maya-like pyramid, he was an Indian crucified on a double cross with an American eagle above him. In the upper

right-hand corner of the mural, two revolutionary soldiers were depicted, one pointing his rifle at the eagle.

The work was unveiled October 9, 1932. When the scaffolding came down, “onlookers gasped,” reported Millier in the *Times*. “No one but the author had been able to visualize the close-knit powerful design so long shaded and concealed by those scaffolds.”

For a number of the city’s artists, including those who had assisted Siqueiros with the mural, the work was tremendously exciting. “It had guts in it,” recalled one over 40 years later. “It made everything else at the



time look like candy box illustrations. Many of the artists said, ‘My God! This is wonderful vocabulary.’”

Such enthusiasm was not universal. While acknowledging the mural as “an interesting experiment,” one review asked “Why get hysterical about Mexican art?...Why imitate it and adopt it in our own country, whose traditions are entirely alien to it all?” The reviewer pleaded to “keep the Mexican motif in the Mexican quarter.”

The negative reaction did not end with criticism of the mural’s aesthetic aspects. Its political content prompted outrage from some of the city’s civic leaders, including those who had established Olvera Street as a Mexican marketplace two years earlier. Not long after the mural’s completion, Ferencz was forced to

cover over the most visible third with white paint. Within a year, the entire mural was painted over.

The controversy did little for Siqueiros’ political standing in the United States. A renewal of his six-month visa was refused, and he was forced to leave the country. But the episode by no means brought a halt to Siqueiros’ career. His stature as an artist continued to grow, and today he is known as one of the triumvirate of Mexican muralists, along with Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, who reawakened the world to the dynamic possibilities of mural art.

As for *América Tropical* — as the mural is now known — it was forgotten for decades, left to languish in the strong Southern California sun. In the early 1970s, the first efforts to preserve the now-fading masterpiece began, but it wasn’t until the late 1980s that, with the assistance of the Getty Conservation Institute, substantial steps were taken to save the only surviving public mural by Siqueiros in the United States.

The Neglected Masterpiece

The techniques and materials employed in the creation of *América Tropical* Siqueiros first tried out several weeks earlier in a fresco class he taught at Chouinard Art School. Over a two-week period, he and his students painted upon one of the school’s walls an outdoor mural called *Street Meeting*. (This mural, too, was an object of controversy and ultimately covered over.) In preparation for the mural, a pneumatic drill was used to roughen the wall surface and give greater adhesion to the white cement on which the mural was painted. Because the cement dried rapidly, Siqueiros used an airbrush extensively in applying paint.

A similar approach was utilized in the making of *América Tropical*. “From here,” Siqueiros later said of his experimentation on the mural, “all my methods changed on the road to a modern technology for social modern art.”

The artist no doubt hoped that the experimental methodology would prove durable. Indeed, one contemporary review of the mural concluded that “rains will never wash it off, nor sun dim its details, for it is cement!”

Time did not confirm this appraisal. In the decades that followed its creation and covering over, the mural

Left: Color rendering prepared by conservator Agustín Espinosa in 1990, showing how the mural might have looked when first unveiled.

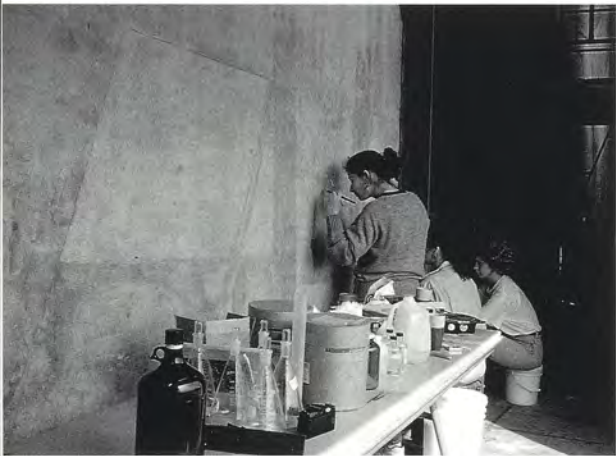
Below: Siqueiros in 1971. Photo: © Luis Garza.

displayed the effects of sun, rain, smog, and earthquakes. The painting layer beneath the white paint began to deteriorate as the white paint itself slowly eroded. In places the mural faded and peeled. Portions of the plaster started detaching from the wall. Due to the high level of pollution in the area, the mural’s surface became coated in dirt.

In the early 1970s, art historian Dr. Shifra Goldman and Los Angeles filmmaker Jesús Salvador Treviño spearheaded the first attempts to preserve the mural. Stimulated by their efforts, Siqueiros himself made plans to paint a replica of the central portion of the mural on a series of wooden panels, which he intended to present to the city of Los Angeles. Unfortunately, the artist died in January 1974, before the panels were completed.

In 1977 Jean Bruce Poole joined the staff of El Pueblo Park, the city agency that today administers the historic block of buildings on Olvera Street. As the park’s senior curator, Ms. Poole was surprised to learn of the mural’s existence. “I said, ‘Look, you’ve got a masterpiece here. It’s an absolute outrage; you’ve got to do something to save it.’” Joining forces with others already working for the mural’s preservation, she sought technical assistance and resources to save what remained. But despite a growing interest in the





mural by the city's Mexican-American community, financial support for its conservation did not materialize. Because of the lack of funds, no preservation measures were taken other than erecting a protective plywood shed around the mural.

In 1987 Ms. Poole met with then-Getty Conservation Institute Director Luis Monreal and Special Projects Director — now Institute Director — Miguel Angel Corzo, to discuss *América Tropical*. Mr. Corzo, a native of Mexico City who grew up seeing the murals of Siqueiros, Rivera, and Orozco, had viewed *América Tropical* for the first time just a few months earlier. "I was really appalled that nothing had been done to conserve it," he recalled. "There seemed to be no sense of respect for the work of art, which was very saddening." Because of the mural's aesthetic and symbolic value, he felt strongly that the Institute should get involved.

Later that year, David Scott and Michael Schilling of the Institute's Scientific Program took paint samples from the site and prepared an analysis of the paint pigments used in the mural. Subsequent analysis of a sample removed from the site in 1971 indicated that the paint's binder was probably cellulose nitrate. The

Above: The 1990 cleaning and consolidation of the paint layer during the first phase of the conservation program. Photo by Nancy Kaye.

Right: Photo taken in 1932 showing whitewash covering the most visible third of the mural. Photo courtesy of El Pueblo de los Angeles Historic Park.

exposure to direct sunlight and pollution of a binder consisting of cellulose nitrate, over a period of many years, would significantly contribute to the deterioration of the mural's painting layer.

In 1988 the Institute officially joined with El Pueblo Park and the Friends of the Arts of Mexico Foundation to undertake the mural's rescue. After consultation with conservators and engineers, a comprehensive program for saving *América Tropical* was developed.

The Conservation Effort

The first phase of the mural's conservation began in 1990. Mexican conservators Agustín and Cecilia Espinosa headed the conservation team, assisted by two students from the wall paintings conservation training program of the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. Over the course of several months, the team removed the remaining white paint from the mural, cleaned and consolidated the painting layer, and reattached loosened cement plaster to the brick wall. Traces of asphalt running along the base of the painting were also eliminated.

In May 1991 the Institute installed an environmental monitoring station adjacent to the mural. For over a year and a half, the station measured such factors as wind speed and direction, rainfall, temperature, humidity, and the movement of sunlight across the mural's surface. The data collected provided valuable information about environmental conditions at the mural to assist in the designing of a protective shelter by Altoon & Porter, a leading Los Angeles architectur-

al firm with experience working on historic structures.

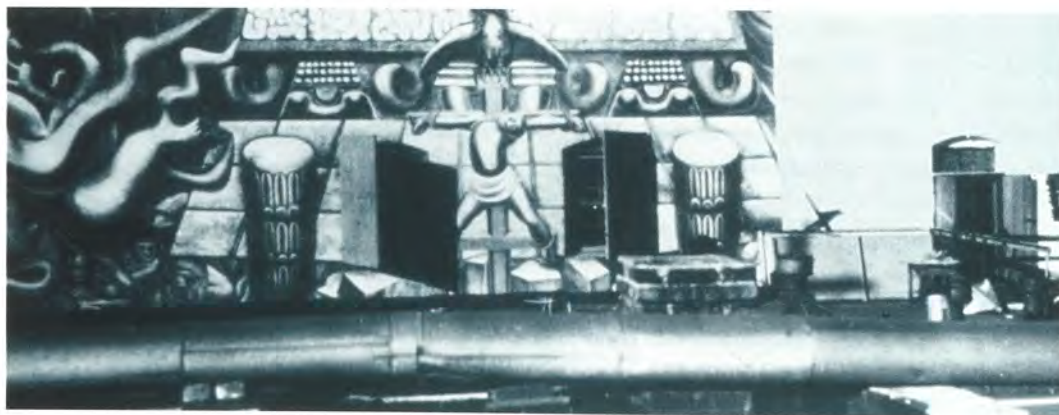
In the spring of 1994, the Institute took another step in its comprehensive assessment of the mural's condition. With equipment designed by Eric Lange, a Fellow at the Institute, the entire mural was documented using digital imaging (see sidebar).

From the beginning of the preservation program, public access to the mural has been a primary objective. An estimated 1.5 million people come to Olvera Street annually. Many would undoubtedly make the mural part of their visit if access were provided. At the same time, because of its artistic and historic importance — and its significance to the city's large Mexican-American population — *América Tropical* has the potential to draw new visitors of its own.

Several major steps remain before public access can be achieved. The first is the seismic stabilization of the Italian Hall and adjacent buildings. This work is scheduled to be started this year.

In addition, plans are being developed for a permanent mural shelter, a public viewing platform, and a historical information area that can provide visitors with a context for viewing the mural. The Institute, together with other organizations, will reach out to the public and private sectors to underwrite the cost of constructing the mural shelter and the public areas. Once a shelter is installed, the mural's final cleaning, stabilization, and consolidation can proceed.

This last effort will not, unfortunately, return *América Tropical* to its original glory. The problematic nature of the materials used in its creation, combined with years of deplorable civic neglect, have left the Siqueiros masterpiece a shadow of its original incarnation. Much of its color is gone.



Nevertheless, the artistic power of the work remains. "You've only got to look at that mural to see the strength in the painting," says Jean Bruce Poole. "Even faded, it is still immensely strong."

Ms. Poole, now director of El Pueblo's Historic Museum, believes that even in its present condition, the mural is "telling a story," one of political controversy and artistic expression. "The mural is tremendously important because it's part of the city's history," she explains. "Even the fact that it's been so badly treated is part of the history."

Luis Garza, the Institute's consultant coordinator for the mural project, agrees. "*América Tropical* has come to epitomize the historical mistreatment of art," he says. Seeing the mural as it is today vividly demonstrates what is lost by such mistreatment. Its destruction by civic leaders provides a contemporary lesson in the consequences of intolerance.

However, as he also points out, the mural is much more than a symbol of artistic censorship and prejudice. *América Tropical* profoundly influenced the mural movement so interwoven into today's Los Angeles, a city with over fifteen hundred public murals. Its legacy in public art, despite its treatment, is considerable.

The conservation of the mural and its return to public view, Mr. Garza believes, can help heal divisions within the community. "The political and social issues the mural so dramatically depicts engage all of us," he observes. "The process of conserving *América Tropical* gives those in our community that rare opportunity to get to know one another better."

This, as much as anything, forms the basis for the Getty Conservation Institute's involvement in the project. As Harold Williams, President of the Getty Trust, has declared, the Trust's long-term goals in its home community include "creating an urban environment in which diversity is a source of strength rather than of conflict."

After over sixty years of existence, *América Tropical* today transcends the controversy that accompanied its birth. "It's a universal work of art," says Miguel Angel Corzo. "It represents a social struggle which we all can understand now. It's a mural for the whole city."

Jeffrey Levin is the editor of *Conservation*, *The GCI Newsletter*.

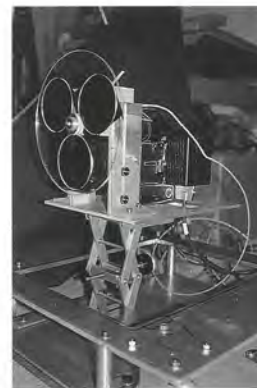
FOR 16 STRAIGHT DAYS IN APRIL, *América Tropical* was once more the site of intense activity. Again scaffolding went up, but the effort on this occasion was not mural creating but recording. Using the Siqueiros mural as a first field site, a small team of Getty Conservation Institute staff, led by Eric Lange, a British conservator and GCI Research Fellow, tested a new system for direct digital capture of a wall painting in situ.

In contrast to conventional photography, digital image capture utilizes a specially designed computerized camera back to record images directly onto a computer hard drive or optical disk. Thus, although the image can be viewed, manipulated, and output as if it were a photographic image, the information is actually recorded and stored as a block of binary code (i.e., a series of 1's and 0's), rather than as a "picture" on film.

Digital imaging of wall paintings in the field offers a number of advantages over traditional methods. While on site, conservators can record cracking patterns, plaster joins, previous restorations, biological deterioration, and other important features using a program such as Adobe Photoshop to produce color-coded transparent "overlays" directly on the images. These layers can be viewed individually or in combination, and can be turned on or off at the touch of a button. Another advantage of digital capture is that it allows the conservator to instantly magnify or enhance particular areas or features of interest.

"What we set out to do was to see if digital capture could be done on-site by conservators in a way that was feasible and practicable," says Mr. Lange, who researched and designed the digital documentation system and organized this test at *América Tropical*. The commercially available components of the system included a Hasselblad camera with a Zeiss lens and Leaf digital camera back, and a Quadra 950 computer with extended RAM and a 20-inch color monitor. Custom components included special scaffolding that moved on a self-leveling trackway, and a camera dolly that rode on its own track at the top of the scaffolding. This system allowed for the camera to be positioned with considerable accuracy.

One hundred fifty-six images were captured in a grid 6 images high by 26 images wide. Once the on-site recording phase was completed, lower resolution copies of the original (12.6 Mb) files were "mosaiced" together to create a single image of the mural. Since the painting is covered by a very narrow shelter, it is



Hasselblad camera, Leaf digital camera back, and custom-built filter wheel mounted on a special camera dolly for accurate positioning. Photo: E. Lange.

impossible to view the site in its entirety, and until now no single image of the mural in its current state existed. Without the capability for digital calibration and adjustment of illumination, color balance, and registration as each shot was captured, it would have been extremely difficult to achieve sufficient consistency with film photography to produce a seamless composite of 156 images.

The precision of digital photography has another important advantage: Since the information is actually recorded in a numeric rather than photochemical way, it establishes a baseline to which future recordings can be compared to provide accurate and quantifiable analyses of change. Similar comparisons could be made using images in the ultraviolet, infrared, and thermographic spectra.

Traditional methods of site documentation often produce large quantities of information in a variety of formats: binders of slides and photographic prints, oversized files of drawings and transparent overlays, field logbooks, etc. "In terms of information management," says Mr. Lange, "digital documentation can provide immediate, on-site integration of all images, diagrams, condition reports, treatment notes, and other materials generated in the field — all of which can be stored on a few magneto-optical disks. Furthermore, this information is more accurate, more accessible, and easier to reproduce than that generated by traditional techniques."

Urban Places

The Aesthetics of

a conversation with

HENRY G. CISNEROS

8

Appointed Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development by President Bill Clinton in 1993, Henry G. Cisneros has emerged as the President's most vocal cabinet member on the arts and humanities. He served as Mayor of San Antonio, Texas, from 1981–1989, was elected president of the National League of Cities in 1985, and has served on the boards of numerous philanthropic and civic organizations. Secretary Cisneros earned a master's degree in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a doctorate in public administration from George Washington University.

He spoke with Jane Slate Siena, Head of Institutional Relations for the Getty Conservation Institute and Managing Editor of *Conservation*, *The GCI Newsletter*.

This interview is available in an expanded format on video, as the first of a new Getty Conservation Video series, "Conversations." (For ordering information, please see page 18.)

Jane Slate Siena: Mr. Secretary, thank you for welcoming us into your offices, where you have a marvelous selection of paintings on loan from Washington museums.

Henry G. Cisneros: I felt it was important to have something to remind officials of our purpose, our constituency, and the diversity of communities across America. These paintings, by American artists, are about city scenes and landscapes of American communities. They also symbolize the integration of culture in urban development. Why is this integration important?

I've long had a commitment to the aesthetics of urban places, beyond form, function, and utilitarian ideas, to enhance the quality of life where we work, recreate, study, and live. The arts help us achieve that. Frequently, music, visual art, theater, and dance reach people and bring them together. We cannot with political declarations do the kind of integrating that happens in a park when young people see other people of a different ethnic group celebrating their artistic heritage — or attend a street fair and see art exhibitions — or go to museums — or enjoy performances by visiting artists. They're lifted, inspired, and moved to participate through a sense of contact, a sense of oneness.

You have studied what you have referred to as the "accumulated effects" of culture. How has this affected your perspective?

It's not possible to understand world history without understanding the artistic developments of various eras and cultures. One can go through every period of history and see some analogue between the greatness of that time and the interplay of politics, events, and artistic achievements.

As Mayor of San Antonio, you helped transform that city by capitalizing on its historic and cultural wealth. How were you able to balance a range of societal concerns with the need to save the city's irreplaceable cultural assets?

Frankly, the pressing problems of society and the arts and culture of San Antonio are inseparable. The city's economic development and economic prosperity are closely tied to historic preservation and preserving the city's unique culture. When we invest in the city's human scale, the preservation of historic and architecturally-significant places, we're enhancing the economic value of the place because that's what people come to see. These are things that make San Antonio different from any other mid-size American city that has paved over its historic assets with a grid street system. We preserved the meandering, crooked streets that lead to the San Antonio River, along with a battle site, missions, and other historic assets.

What was your approach to the culturally-diverse heritage of San Antonio?

The duality between the majority Texas culture and the Hispanic culture, which now rep-

resents 51 percent of San Antonio, had to be dealt with in ways faithful to both. The traditional leadership of arts organizations and the community-based, indigenous cultural groups faced some tough confrontations. But we were able to work these things out. The dominant institutions learned how much interest there is in folk art, mariachi music, and other manifestations of the local cultures, and have adapted to it. For example, we had a great fight with the Witte Museum and the San Antonio Museum Association when they tried to juxtapose themselves against the folkloric groups. Now one of the most prized collections of the San Antonio Museum of Art is the Rockefeller folk art collection. This wonderfully exciting, colorful, playful collection of Mexican folk art has become a major asset for the community.

What are you seeking to accomplish at HUD?

We have five objectives: to reduce homelessness, to turn around the worst of public housing, to produce more affordable housing and greater access to home ownership, to develop open housing policies by reducing discriminatory practices, and to focus on community life and well-being. In all of these areas, there is a place for quality in design, aesthetic dimensions, and the essence of the urban place. I want to push this agency back to where it began in the 1960s when there was an understanding of preservation, of urban design, of architectural excellence and competitions to achieve it, of the influence of the environment on how people live.

Is public housing the next major venue for publicly funded art?

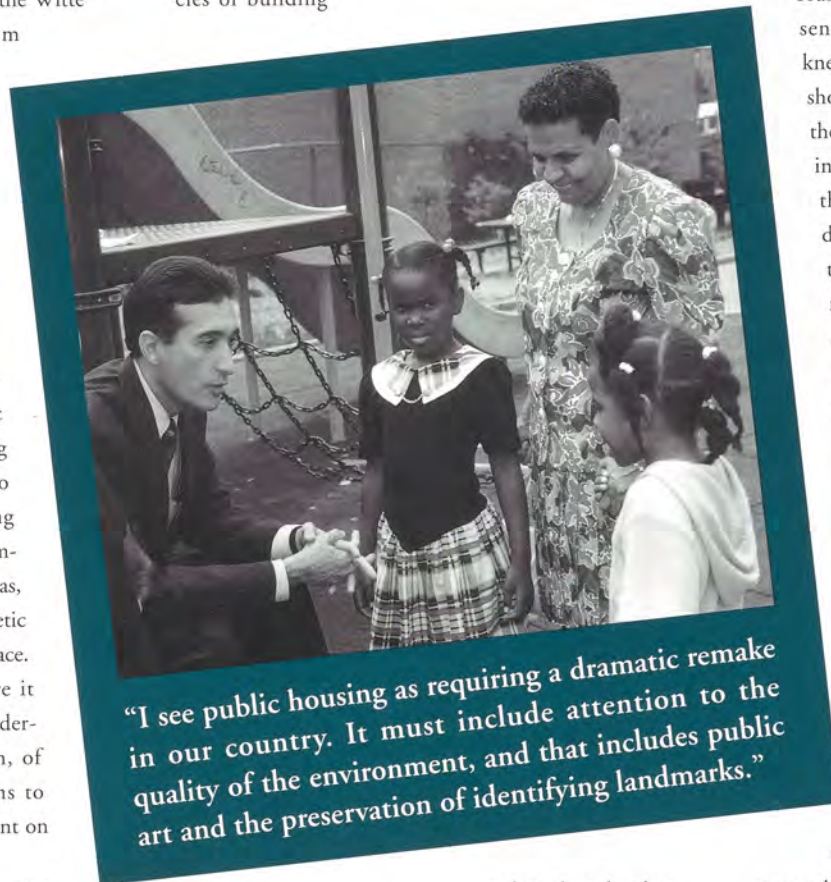
Human beings are not automatons to be put in minimalist buildings with little attention to the needs of the human spirit. This great experiment in housing has failed. Why? Because you cannot, on a low-bid, efficient-design basis, isolate people and warehouse them like cattle. The human spirit doesn't allow it.

I see public housing as requiring a dramatic remake in our country. It must include attention to the quality of the environment, and that includes public art and the preservation of identifying landmarks. It means murals, architectural treatments, colors, and a lively environment that stimulates children.

We must convert sterility and disrespect into meaningful life experiences.

We're discussing an expanded agenda for the arts at a time of reduced resources at the national level. How do we respond to this dilemma?

The first thing is to recognize a new collaboration among the federal agencies that focuses on community. Secondly, we must do a better job in the federal agencies of building



"I see public housing as requiring a dramatic remake in our country. It must include attention to the quality of the environment, and that includes public art and the preservation of identifying landmarks."

cultural and other human considerations into our work. A public housing remake, for example, should include a cultural component. Ultimately, it is critical that we work with foundations in a new era of partnership. Frequently, philanthropic organizations can provide resources that would not be available otherwise, as you are doing at the Getty.

Is a trend emerging to use art and culture as vehicles for community development?

Yes. It's the result of an infrastructure, built up in recent years, of community-based arts institutions. They have a legitimate artistic purpose and have provided a foundation for this movement.

Los Angeles is a prototype for the challenges that many American cities face and that you are addressing. What have you learned from your intense association with this city?

I care deeply about Los Angeles. I was with Mayor Bradley and others after the riots in 1992, and I came to see Los Angeles as an analogue for the crisis that confronts American cities generally. Driving the burning streets of Los Angeles with the sky orange from flames and sirens wailing and a sense that America was coming unraveled, I knew that I would come back into government should the opportunity present itself to address the urban crisis in a new administration. Then, in January 1994, I returned to Los Angeles after the earthquake to help those who were rendered homeless. It was truly gratifying to go to Los Angeles for several weeks, see the community response taking hold, and then return and see that the programs we judged necessary in that emergency were working. When you give to a place, you gain a real affection for it, and so I have a special affection for the miracle that is Los Angeles.

The GCI is conserving a large public mural by David Alfaro Siqueiros located in the historic heart of Los Angeles. We hope our work will serve as a catalyst for conservation of the entire neighborhood. Do you think it's possible for this kind of action to stimulate the attention the area needs?

I have no doubt. These efforts need to begin somewhere, and the preservation of something as important as Siqueiros' work — and an explanation of it to a modern

generation as an expression of heritage — is important. It can stimulate community pride and other efforts to revive the neighborhood. Every complex of artistic activity started with a single act and somebody asking the question "Do you think it will make a difference if we do this one?"

How would you like your tenure in office to be remembered? As having dealt with the immediate needs to house the homeless, to provide affordable housing to more people, and to improve public housing. But also as having put into place permanent improvements that form a lasting legacy well beyond the utilitarian, the practical, the minimalist, the functional — and that recognize our humanity.



After the

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN LOS ANGELES

Southern California got an early wake-up call on January 17, 1994, as the most destructive earthquake in the history of Los Angeles struck at 4:31 A.M. The 6.7-magnitude earthquake crushed lives, destroyed highways, turned parking structures into rubble, and brought the contents of buildings crashing to the floor. A 5.9-magnitude aftershock rumbled through the city just a minute after the quake, and millions of people fled into the streets in those predawn hours.

The Northridge earthquake was centered in the San Fernando Valley, northwest of downtown Los Angeles. Destruction was not limited to the epicenter, and communities 20 or more miles away experienced severe damage. Fifty-seven people lost their lives, thousands were injured, and thousands more were left homeless.

Remarkably, Southern California museums suffered little damage to collections through all this devastation. Over the past decade, museums have upgraded protection with a variety of techniques, from isolator bases — mechanical devices that can absorb up to 80 percent of ground movement while allowing objects to remain relatively still — to adhesive wax and bubble wrap.

Unfortunately, historic structures throughout Southern California were not as secure. More than five hundred officially designated landmarks and other historically or architecturally significant buildings were damaged, with an estimated repair cost of more than \$250 million. Damaged historic structures included the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, Los Angeles City Hall, the Andrés Pico Adobe, and the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood.

In the first few days after January 17, several preservation organizations formed a consortium to save threatened buildings. Ultimately named Historic Preservation Partners for Earthquake Response, the group included the Los Angeles Conservancy, the California Office of Historic Preservation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Getty Conservation Institute.

For most of the Partners, this involvement was an extension of their ongoing efforts in planning for disasters and disaster response. In the mid-1980s, for example, the GCI initiated a series of meetings on disaster preparedness that brought together directors of cultural institutions and disaster experts. These meetings played a part in sensitizing

Q u a k e

by John Hinrichs

the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to the value of cultural property and brought about a shift in FEMA policy with regard to conservation.

The National Trust has been particularly active in disaster response. “The first time the National Trust really responded to a disaster was Hurricane Hugo in late 1989, and then the Loma Prieta earthquake,” says Peter Brink, a vice president with the National Trust. “The key to our quick response this time was the support from the Getty Conservation Institute. They provided key staff people who made the difference.”

Within two weeks of the quake, the consortium developed a low-interest loan program with First Interstate Bank of California to offer immediate funds to stabilize historic buildings. Owners of historic properties could borrow up to \$20,000, with an interest rate of no higher than 4 percent for the first year. The funds were available for architectural and engineering services and the cost of materials and labor necessary to stabilize buildings.

To encourage property owners to participate, a project manager and program staff, hired with support from the GCI, began coordinating technical assistance teams. Working with property owners, the teams — composed of architects, structural engineers, and preservation specialists — assessed damage to buildings and offered suggestions on how to stabilize and rehabilitate historic structures.

Soon the effort expanded. “The first few days after a disaster strikes are key to setting a tone for preservation,” says Linda Dishman, executive director of the Los Angeles Conservancy. In order to respond fully to the earthquake, “it was extremely important to identify the historic structures that were damaged.”

The Partners project developed a computer program to pinpoint historic buildings damaged in the quake. The survey of buildings inspected by City of Los Angeles officials — which grew from 12,000 structures after the first day to more than 80,000 one month later — was electronically compared against the State of California Inventory of Historic Properties — more than 8,000 structures in Los Angeles alone. This created a computer-generated list of 171 significant structures in Los Angeles that sustained damage from the earthquake — 58 buildings posted unsafe by city inspectors and 113 buildings with limited entry.

Using the initial work of the technical assistance teams and the preliminary estimates of damage generated by computer and field survey, the consortium developed a more comprehensive response plan. Other organizations and agencies, including the National Park Service and the California Preservation Foundation, joined the response project.

In February, \$5 million was allocated to the Partners from the emergency earth-

quake disaster relief package approved by Congress and signed into law by President Bill Clinton. With funding now on its way, the program staff, sharing offices with the Los Angeles Conservancy, was expanded from a project manager and two assistants to include three field directors, a grants administrator, and an administrative assistant.

Based on the federal funding, the Partners have established two grant programs to assist in restoration efforts. Technical assistance grants — varying in amounts up to \$10,000 per recipient — are available to organizations, cities, and property owners of historic structures for feasibility studies, architectural and engineering services including structural analysis, and historic preservation reports. The grants can also fund community or district economic recovery assessment.

More than \$3 million is available to provide funding for repair and restoration of buildings in the National Register of Historic Places or structures determined eligible for inclusion in the register. It is envisioned that the bulk of this money will be distributed in small awards to assist as many historic buildings as possible.

Mr. Brink considers the team effort demonstrated by the Partners to be “a real breakthrough.” Ms. Dishman agrees. “The Partners program is exciting because we are pooling our resources in a way that provides more ser-

vices to people who need help,” she says.

Jane Slate Siena, Head of Institutional Relations at the Getty Conservation Institute, sees the partnership as a model for what is still necessary at a national level. “To deal with a local catastrophe, we’ve created a working partnership of cultural heritage groups that includes the private sector and government, local and national organizations,” she explains. “But this won’t be the last disaster. We need to develop a strong partnership nationally so that future emergencies, wherever they occur, will be confronted with a focused and coordinated response.”

John Hinrichs, a Hollywood-based writer who specializes in arts, culture, and politics, is the communications consultant for Historic Preservation Partners for Earthquake Response.

Left: The El Cortez apartment house in Santa Monica just hours after the January 17 earthquake struck. The building, constructed in 1928, was awarded a technical assistance grant and is being repaired. Photo: ©Nancy Kaye 1994. Above: The Ara’s Pastry building, located in Hollywood. Built around 1925, the structure has received grants for technical assistance, repair, and restoration, and work is under way. Photo: Lisa Snyder for the Los Angeles Conservancy.



Picture

[news in conservation]

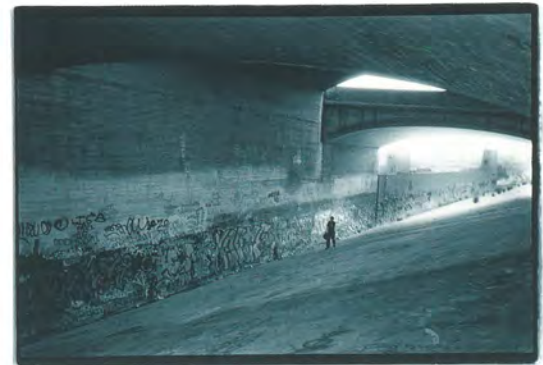
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View from the Chateau Marmont Hotel, Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood / Daniel Hernandez

DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS OF A LANDMARK:

1. A marker indicating a boundary line.



Los Angeles River Tunnel / Abbey Fuchs

3. A prominent and identifying feature of a landscape, distinguishing a locality.



Hollywood Boulevard / Younghee Seo

4. An event marking a turning point in history.



After the Malibu Fire / Ennis Beley

L.A.

by Anita Keys

LANDMARKS OF A NEW GENERATION

Los Angeles is among the youngest of the world's major cities, a place where the urban landscape is continually undergoing change. Still, even within its relatively brief life, the city has accumulated history, a history that has produced a wide variety of landmarks — from the whimsical to the sublime to the abstractly futuristic.

For several years now, the Getty Conservation Institute has been interested in learning more about Los Angeles landmarks. "Part of our mandate is the preservation of cultural monuments as defined by the community in which they exist," explains Miguel Angel Corzo, Director of the GCI. "If we are to help preserve the heritage of Los Angeles, our home community, we need to know as much as we can about attitudes of people in Los Angeles regarding landmarks. How do they define them? Do they provide the community with a sense of identity or belonging? Do the various ethnic communities that make up this city agree on what constitutes a landmark? Has the city's changing demographic profile altered the function or importance of particular landmarks?"

In 1992 the GCI conducted an extensive study of the city's landmarks, their relationship to the city's history, and their use by the people of Los Angeles. Among other findings, the report indicated that the city's cultural diversity was not a significant factor in the designation of landmarks. "One of the things the 1992 study showed us is that many groups traditionally have been underrepresented in the city's official landmark programs," observes Mahasti Afshar, Program Research Associate at the GCI. "Ethnic minorities and youth are an important part of the picture of Los Angeles, and yet we are totally in the dark as to how they relate to the city's cultural landmarks."

In light of this, the idea arose to gather together a group of ethnically diverse youths in order to learn more about different viewpoints on what constitutes a landmark. "Specifically, we thought that asking a group of young people to photograph sites they considered to be landmarks would give us an insight into values that haven't yet been recognized or documented," says Mr. Corzo.

From this idea, the "Picture L.A." project was born. Award-winning Los Angeles photographer Lauren

2. A building or site having historical significance.



Union Station / Sabrina Paschal

Greenfield was asked to organize the photographic project. Through referrals from school art programs and community centers, Ms. Greenfield — whose photographic assignments have ranged from Indian village life in Chiapas, Mexico, to contemporary French aristocracy — selected youths from diverse cultural and geographic backgrounds (see sidebar). Interest and motivation weighed as heavily in the selection process as prior photographic experience — and these traits proved strong in the participants. All eight who began the project successfully stayed with it.

During the three-month shooting period, the project's young participants went into their own communities photographing personally significant social and architectural landmarks. Though supervised by Ms. Greenfield or one of her assistants, they chose their own subjects and perspectives. Each developed such individuality that, in Ms. Greenfield's words, "by the end of the project, we could tell an Abbey print from a Younghee print from a Daniel print. That says a lot about how developed their visions became and how honestly they were looking at the world around them."

Group field trips were taken to the Getty Center under construction, Watts Towers, Hollywood, Sunset Boulevard, Beverly Hills, and downtown Los Angeles. Two group meetings also were held at the Conservation Institute, one at the beginning of the project, another at a final session during which participants reviewed one another's photographic work.

In the sites chosen and the relationship revealed between the social landscape and the physical environment, the black-and-white photographs provide a striking vision of Los Angeles. Crenshaw Boulevard, for example, is portrayed in the close-up of a lowrider; Sunset Boulevard is identified by movie billboards merging with the lush vegetation or by a swimmer creating graphic patterns in the pool at the Chateau Marmont; devastation after the Malibu fire is contrasted with the exuberance of an eight-year-old pedaling his toy tractor.

Adults involved in the project found their definition of landmarks changed as a result of the photographs. "Prior to the project I would have picked the Hollywood Bowl and the typically known sites as the important places of Los Angeles," commented Jessica Karman, a project assistant. "Now I look a little deeper."

Raul Herrera, one of the participants, became particularly fascinated with a group of people occupying the Belmont tunnel, an old building close to downtown where every surface is covered with graffiti. "Young people see that other side of L.A. that everyone else tries to ignore," he says. "We can't ignore it because we live in it and are part of it. I think adults try to filter out homelessness, but to me it's part of our community."

The period of the project was a pivotal time for Los Angeles. Still reeling from the riots, the city was further tested by fires, mud slides, and earthquakes. For project participants such as Osofu Washington, the destruction demonstrated the need for preservation work. "When something has been there for a while it touches the lives of people," he explains. "I never had a desire to preserve things. Now I really care about things that may not be here two years from now."

The project's culmination will be an exhibition at the Bridge Gallery in Los Angeles City Hall in early December. Over 70 of the photographs will be displayed. Complementing the exhibit will be color images of the participants taken by Lauren Greenfield, a short video on the project, and a catalogue of the exhibition photographs. The exhibit subsequently will travel to other venues.

Anita Keys is a consultant for the Getty Conservation Institute and Project Coordinator for "Picture L.A.: Landmarks of a New Generation."



Back row, left to right: Abbey Fuchs, Osofu Washington, Miguel Angel Corzo, Lauren Greenfield, Raul Herrera, Sabrina Paschal. Front row, left to right: Luis Castro, Ennis Beley, Daniel Hernandez, Younghee Seo. Photo: Jessica Karman.

ENNIS BELEY is from South Central Los Angeles. Thirteen years old at the time of the "Picture L.A." project, he is presently in the seventh grade at United World International School. Prior to working on "Picture L.A.," he videotaped his life for six months for a BBC documentary entitled "L.A. Stories." He would like to be a journalist when he grows up.

LUIS CASTRO was born in San Salvador and currently lives in Koreatown. Twelve years old during the project, he attends seventh grade at Crossroads School in Santa Monica. He is not sure what he wants to be when he grows up. Since "Picture L.A.," he has been photographing his trips to different places.

ABBEY FUCHS has lived in Hollywood since she moved from New York at the age of three. Sixteen years old during the project, she recently graduated from Fairfax High School where she studied photography, among other subjects. Now attending Cal State Sonoma, she is majoring in communications.

DANIEL HERNANDEZ is from Boyle Heights. Ten years old when the project began, he is now in the sixth grade at Griffin Magnet Jr. High School where he is studying one of his favorite subjects — computers (he also enjoys playing football and basketball). Daniel is in the third generation of his family to be born in Boyle Heights.

RAUL HERRERA is from the Hollywood area and was eighteen when the project began. He graduated from Hollywood High School where he first studied photography. Now attending Los Angeles City College, Raul is majoring in photography and journalism. His family is originally from Mexico City.

SABRINA PASCHAL lives in the Hacienda Heights Projects in Watts. She was fourteen years old and in the ninth grade at Markham Jr. High at the time of the project. Sabrina is studying video at the Watts Towers Arts Center, and her hobbies include basketball, rollerblading, and swimming. She would like to be a pediatrician.

YOUNGHEE SEO lives in Hollywood but spends most of her time in Koreatown. Eighteen years old while participating in "Picture L.A.," she recently graduated from Fairfax High School. Her parents still live in Korea. Younghee studied drawing in high school and plans to attend art school.

OSOFU WASHINGTON lives in Inglewood. A student at Crenshaw High School, he was sixteen when the "Picture L.A." project began. He is an avid basketball player and shares a love of music with his family. He also enjoys computer graphics and hair styling, and would like to open his own restaurant or barber shop.

Swimming Pool at the Chateau Marmont / Younghee Seo

G C I NEWS

RECENT COURSES

Preventive Care of Historic Photographic Prints and Negatives, Part II

The third and final offering of this course at the Institute was held March 21–25, 1994. It was attended by 17 conservators, curators, archivists, collection managers, and technicians from Australia, Canada, and the United States. As in the past, the course was taught by Debbie Hess Norris, a photographic conservator and Deputy Head of the University of Delaware/Winterthur Art Conservation Training Program, and by Jim Reilly, Director of the Image Permanence Institute of the Rochester Institute of Technology. The main topics of the course were film and print process identification, deterioration, storage, and emergency preparedness and response.

Pest Management and Control for Museums

This course, offered for the first time, was held April 11–15, 1994. The course reviewed past and current approaches to pest management and control and examined new approaches including the use of nitrogen as a nontoxic method of eradication, a technique being developed by the Institute's Scientific Program. Staff from the Institute and the J. Paul Getty Museum, as well as outside specialists, served as instructors. The course's 21 participants were from Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the United States.

Preventive Conservation: Museum Collections and Their Environment

This course was held at the Institute from May 2–13, 1994. Twenty-two participants from Australia, Canada, France, The Netherlands, New Zealand, the Republic of China, Russia, Spain, and the United States attended. The course offers technical information on the museum environment combined with a review of strategies for integrating preventive conservation into museum policies and operations.

For information about these and other courses, please contact the Getty Conservation Institute Training Program at 4503 Glencoe Avenue, Marina del Rey, CA 90292, USA. Telephone: (310) 822-2299 / Fax: (310) 821-9409.

RECENT EVENTS

Site Conservation Seminar in Israel

In October 1994 the Getty Conservation Institute cosponsored a two-day seminar in Israel on site conservation for senior archaeologists. The seminar helped to identify issues and participants for a formal course on site conservation to be held in 1995 in Israel. The Institute is collaborating on the seminar and the course with the Israeli Antiquities Organization.

Rock Art Symposium at the Society for American Archaeology Meeting

In April 1994, as part of the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, the Getty Conservation Institute offered a one-day symposium on "The Management and Conservation of Rock Art Sites." Joining with the Institute in organizing this event was the US/ICOMOS Rock Art Committee and the Rock Art Archive of the University of California, Los Angeles. Participants in the filled-to-capacity symposium included rock art specialists working for a variety of agencies and organizations, including the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the Archaeological Conservancy, and the American Rock Art Research Association.

U P C O M I N G E V E N T S

National Summit on Emergency Response: To Protect the Cultural Heritage

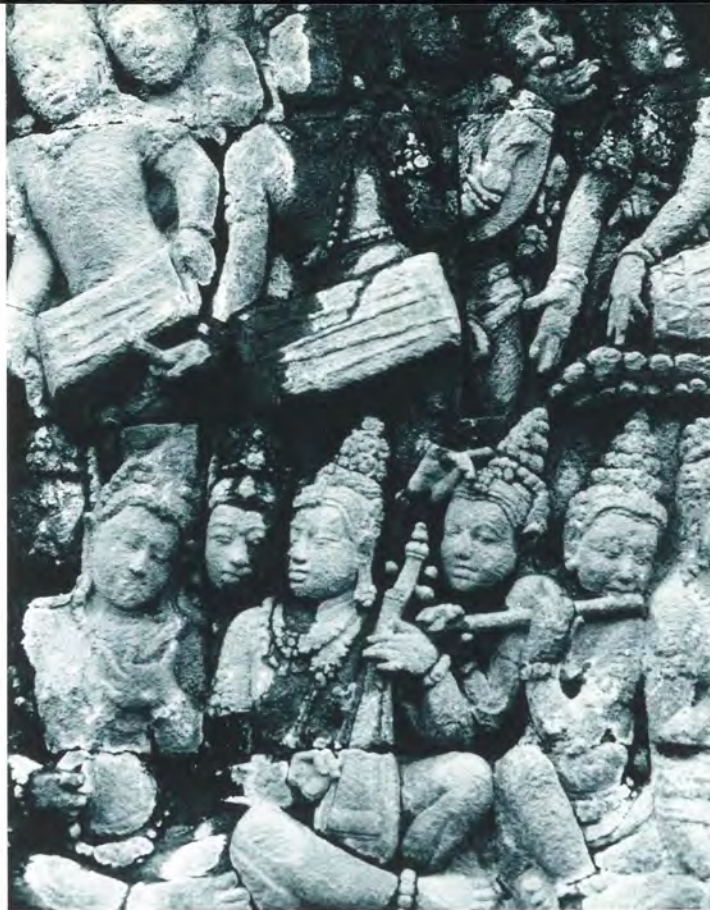
While cultural institutions in the United States have made great strides in developing plans to meet emergencies, the natural disasters that have struck the country in the last two years have shown that even the best-prepared institutions need special assistance when disaster strikes. Instant access to information and the quick delivery of on-site assistance are essential to salvage collections, stabilize historic structures, and begin recovery.

To address these issues, the Getty Conservation Institute, the National Institute for Conservation, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency will convene a national conference in Washington, D.C., on December 1, 1994. Co-sponsors include the American Institute for Conservation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the National Park Service.

At the conference, leaders from federal agencies and the private sector will discuss priorities for information and on-site services, describe available financial and technical assistance, and propose useful alliances with scientific organizations and other resources outside the cultural field. Special attention will be given to innovative models from other fields that might be applicable to cultural institutions and regional conservation/preservation programs that could be implemented nationally. It is expected that one or more working groups will be created to address the implementation of ideas generated by the summit.

Painted Wood: History and Conservation

A symposium on the history and conservation of painted wood will be held November 11-14, 1994, in Williamsburg, Virginia. Organized by the Wooden Artifacts Group of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) and sponsored by the Foundation of the AIC, the program is being chaired by Valerie Dorge, Training Coordinator at the Getty Conservation Institute. Presentations will address the history of painted wood from aesthetic, cultural, and technological perspectives and will discuss problems and ethical issues related to the conservation, interpretation, and exhibition of painted wooden objects.



LUIS MONREAL

The Future of Asia's Past: Preservation of Architectural Monuments in Asia

The Asia Society, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Siam Society, in association with the World Monuments Fund, are organizing a conference on preservation in Asia, to be held January 11-14, 1995, in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The purpose of the conference is to bring together scholars, government officials and policymakers, business developers, and tourism officials to create an international network of individuals committed to cultural preservation in Asia and to encourage a comprehensive approach to the management of the region's diverse artistic heritage. The conference is therefore designed to include conservation specialists, as well as political scientists, economic analysts, and tour operators.

Focusing on immovable cultural heritage, the conference will address not only the relationship of tourism to preservation but also examine ways in which deterioration can be minimized. By bringing together those involved in preservation at various levels, the conference, it is hoped, will lead to more coordinated multilateral efforts.

For a detailed conference program, please contact the Asia Society Galleries, 725 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021, Attn: Conservation 1995.

NEW PUBLICATIONS



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The Aesthetics of Urban Places

*A Conversation with Henry G. Cisneros,
Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*

Secretary Henry Cisneros speaks with Jane Slate Siena about the role of the arts in urban revitalization and development. Secretary Cisneros describes his efforts to restore San Antonio while Mayor, and talks about his unique involvement with other cities in America since his appointment by President Clinton in 1993 as the country's foremost community development official. The Secretary discusses historic preservation, the need for a human dimension in urban design, and his commitment to making art and culture an integral part of the public environment. (26:30 minutes, VHS format, color)

This is the first of a Getty Conservation Video series, "Conversations," in which prominent figures in art, politics, and related arenas discuss contemporary issues relating to conservation.

Archaeometry of Pre-Columbian Sites and Artifacts

Based on the 28th International Archaeometry Symposium jointly sponsored by the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Getty Conservation Institute, this volume offers a rare opportunity to survey under a single cover a wide range of investigations concerning pre-Columbian materials. Twenty chapters detail research in five principal areas: anthropology and materials science; ceramics; stone and obsidian; metals; and archaeological sites and dating. Contributions include Heather Lechtman's investigation of "The Materials Science of Material Culture," Ron L. Bishop on the compositional analysis of pre-Columbian pottery from the Maya region, Ellen Howe on the use of silver and lead from the Mantaro Valley in Peru, and J. Michael Elam and others on source identification and hydration dating of obsidian artifacts. The volume is edited by David A. Scott, Head of Museum Services at the Getty Conservation Institute, and Pieter Meyers, Head of Conservation at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. [448 pages, 93 B/W illustrations, 110 line drawings, paper]

Books and videos may be ordered from: The Getty Trust Publications Distribution Center

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Jane Slate Siena

Head, Institutional Relations, Director's Office

Music was Jane Slate Siena's first artistic passion. A native of Clarksville, Tennessee, she studied piano and violin in her undergraduate years, later receiving a master of music degree from the University of Wisconsin. Afterward, she returned to Tennessee where she worked as a music teacher, coach, and competition organizer, serving also as pianist for the Metropolitan Opera Regional Auditions and consultant to the Tennessee State Museum. During this time, she became the first artist to receive studio financing from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

In 1982 she moved to Washington, D.C., where she became a Program Coordinator for the National Institute for Conservation, just at a time when interest in conservation was growing. While in Washington, she conducted several national studies, including an American Association of Museums report mandated by Congress that assessed conservation needs and resulted in new federal programs for U.S. museums. Among the studies were several for the Getty Conservation Institute, and in 1985 she joined the GCI as Special Projects Coordinator, becoming a Program Officer the following year.

The founding editor of *The GCI Newsletter* and now its Managing Editor, Ms. Siena presently serves as Head of Institutional Relations for the Institute. Working with other national and international organizations dedicated to the arts and conservation, she has organized conferences and partnerships as part of the GCI's efforts to increase conservation awareness and resources. She initiated the Institute's timely involvement in Saint Petersburg with the Russian Academy of Sciences Library and has helped to shape the GCI's work on the problems of historic cities — in particular its projects in Quito, Ecuador.

In addition to her work at the Institute, she is chairperson of National Musical Arts, the chamber music ensemble in residence at the National Academy of Sciences (now in its 15th season). She also serves as co-organizer of art at the vice president's residence in Washington, D.C. When at home, she still occasionally finds time to play her 1889 Chickering piano.

STAFF PROFILES

Cecily M. Grzywacz

Associate Scientist, Scientific Program

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Cecily Grzywacz graduated from high school as class valedictorian and started college at California State University, Northridge, with the intention of becoming an accountant. Two years later she switched to chemistry, in part because she considered it her most challenging subject. Graduating with a bachelor of science degree, she was uncertain what vocation to pursue. Because her instructors urged her to continue her chemistry studies, she did so while working as a technician in the corporate research laboratory of ARCO.

In 1985, on a whim, she applied for a Research Assistant position in the GCI's Scientific Program. At the time she knew little about conservation but was intrigued by the possibility of applying her knowledge of chemistry to a humanistic pursuit — having been raised in a household with politically liberal and artistic leanings, she found this appealing. She had no expectation of being offered the job — but she was, a week following her interview.

Ms. Grzywacz's research at the Institute has concentrated on liquid chromatographic analysis. Her work on the application of high performance liquid chromatography to binding-media identification formed the basis of the thesis for her master's degree in chemistry (received in 1992). Since 1986 her research efforts have also focused on the museum environment, as she has helped to identify and validate cost-efficient passive monitors that can measure the presence of low concentrations of indoor pollutants. It has been gratifying for her to disseminate the results of her work, and she particularly enjoys her participation in the GCI's annual training course on preventive conservation.

She is continuing work on passive monitors and hopes in the future to investigate the effectiveness of pollution mitigation measures. She remains excited by the challenge of finding ways to turn high-tech research into accessible applications. In addition, her enthusiasm for organizing has prompted her active involvement in a variety of committees, which have included the GCI's Open House Planning Committee and the J. Paul Getty Trust's Staff Events Committee.



IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GCI'S CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT THIS NEWSLETTER IS PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER



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