

Mapping space, time, and narrative

Selected Artworks by Kim Abeles



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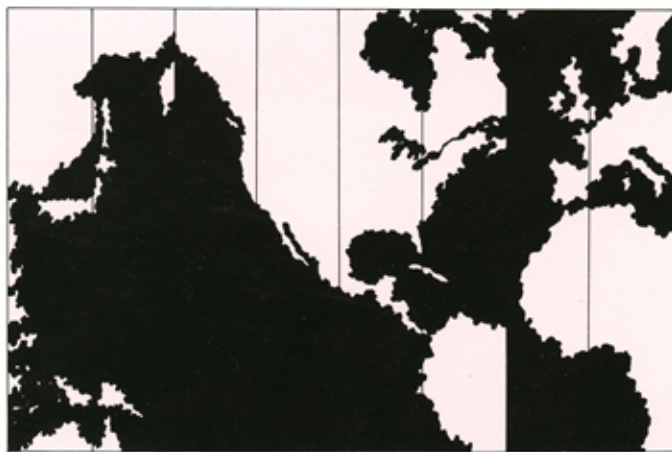
I assembled this book in 2009 as a compilation of my projects that share the theme or structures of mapping. It is presented more as a journal than a finished book.

My interest in mapping started as a kid when I charted my experiences in Japan as an American Field Service student at the age of 16. Much of my inquiry about art started there; everything was experimental, possible, and supported by adults. In 1984-5, this inquiry continued with *Observatory/Territory*, a sculptural contraption that I built to chart the path of the moon and sun during a time period between New Moon and Full Moon. I made this observatory at the George Rickey Workshop in upstate New York, and completed the installation for a show at Pepperdine University in Los Angeles.

In the years that followed, maps became a staple in my way of thinking as a way to plot and reorganize the complicated relationship between space, time, and narrative.



Many of the early installations, sculpture, and performances are documented in the catalogue/bookwork, *Kim Abeles: Encyclopedia Persona A-Z, A Fifteen-Year Survey*, published by the Fellows of Contemporary Art. The exhibit was curated by Karen Moss for the Santa Monica Museum of Art in 1993, and it toured in the U.S. and South America from Chile to Venezuela. The book was a collaboration between the curator, designer Susan Siltan, and myself. Many of the pages complete the encyclopedic style through the use of charts and maps that I created in order to express themes and concepts in the artworks described.



Map based on longitudes of the artist's travels.

ENCYCLOPEDIA PERSONA map



ENCYCLOPEDIA PERSONA map

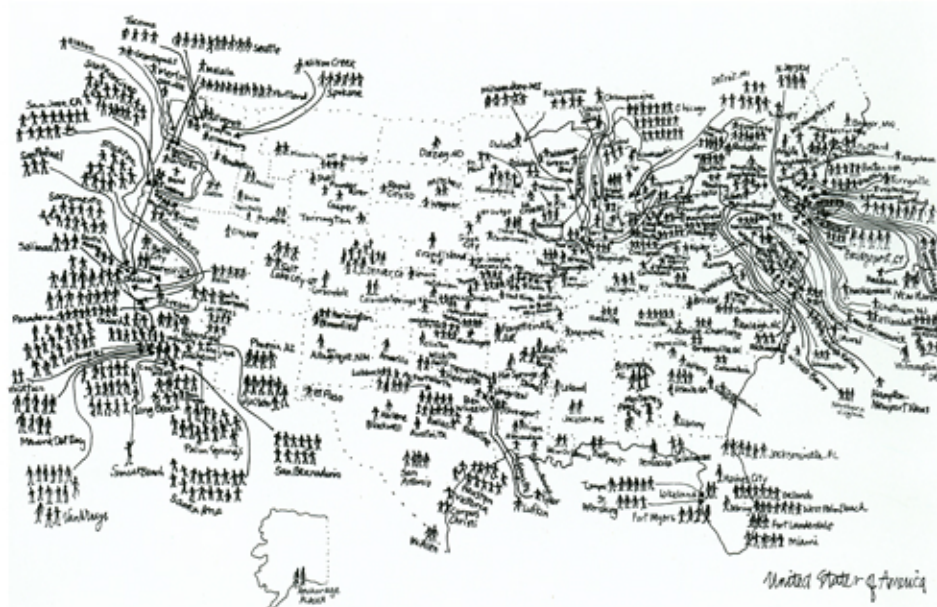
Location of the shoeshine stand (razed in 1986) at Second and Broadway in downtown Los Angeles.

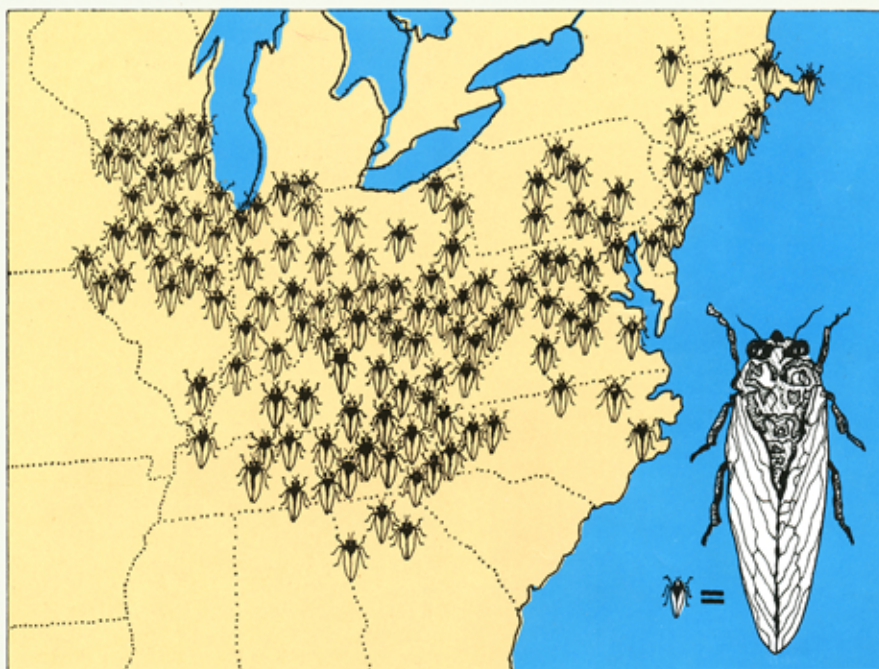


Encyclopedia Persona

A-Z

Map based on the origins of correspondence from *Rara Avis*.
1986. Mixed media book, 11" x 8-1/2". Edition of 100.





ENCYCLOPEDIA PERSONA map

Map showing locations of broods of cicadas that emerge every 13 or 17 years in the Midwest.



David Familian

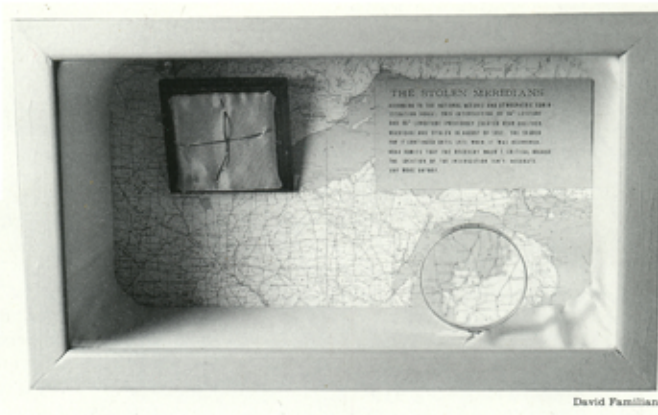
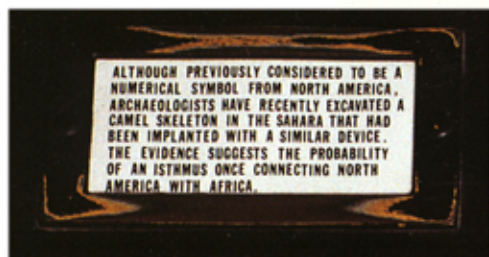
Detail of *The Great Periodic Migration*. The "wings" for the cicada shells that hover above the painting are made of smoke stencilled onto plexiglass.

The Great Periodic Migration. In 1982, a brood of the 17-year cicada emerged from the roots of trees, showering in multitudes upon the Midwest.

Cicadas come forth every 13 or 17 years, and when they are ready to appear, they do so with gusto. They are not locusts, but fly in similar masses. Yet amid the visual chaos, the cicadas sing in absolute unison. Like Houdini's box, something appears from nothing.

Los Angeles is like that emergence, that great migration from the root. At 2 A.M., the only sound in the city is that of the street cleaner's massive brushes. As steadily as the light, the sound mounts: by 9 A.M. no one could think it has been any other way. The parking lot rests vacantly. In a whoosh, the tiny cars below pile into position.

Imperial Shoeshine. For three years I have passed by the shoeshine stand between Second and Broadway, a portable structure housing the business of two men. It is the one man who particularly intrigues me, because the other one wouldn't acknowledge me, and he only spoke with me when I asked them to save the



David Farnham

Fact-Fiction Boxes often incorporated maps, and the artworks were best exhibited at libraries where visitors expect to find truth.

(above) *Stolen Meridians*. 1986. Magnifying glass, dirt, enamel, wood, text, 6" x 8" x 14". Collection of Judy and Stuart Spence, South Pasadena, CA.

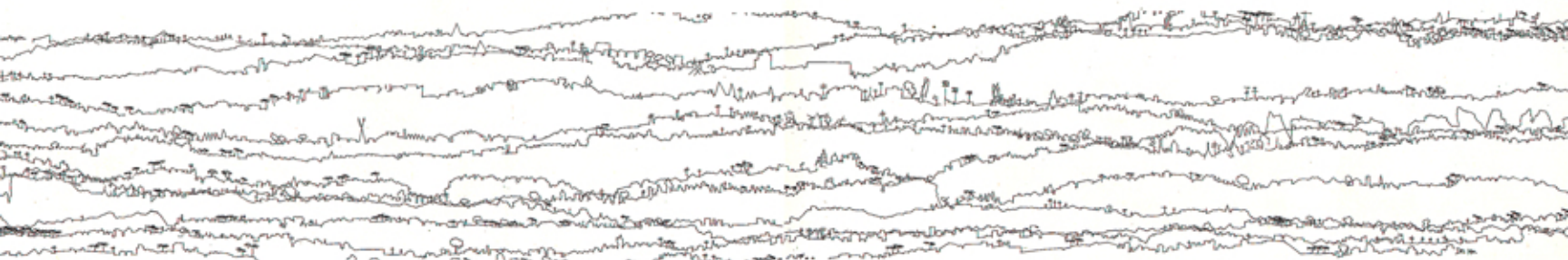
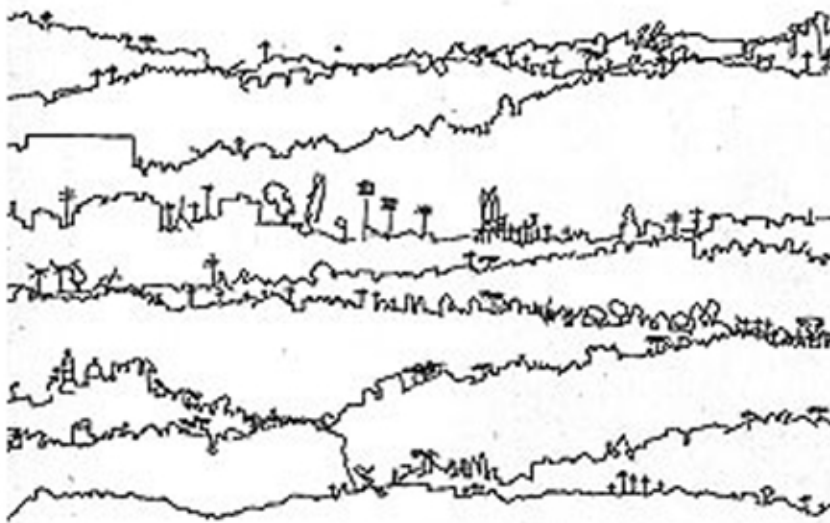
The piece reads: "According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), this intersection of 86° latitude and 46° longitude (previously located near Gulliver, Michigan) was stolen in August of 1952. The search for it continued until 1973 when it was recovered. NOAA admitted that the recovery wasn't critical because the location of the intersection isn't accurate any more anyway."

(left) *A Deduction*. 1984. IUD (Copper 7). altered map, wood, brass, acrylic, text, 3" x 11" x 13". Private Collection



A Mile A Minute (LA to Del Mar As Seen from a Moving Train)
1986. Ink on paper, dimensions vary. Collection of California
State University Long Beach, University Art Museum; and,
private collections.

Process: I drew the horizonline while
riding on an Amtrack train from LA to Del Mar.



PILGRIMAGE TO THE WEDGE. From February 26, 1985 to March 17, 1986, I took 274 photographs looking north on Broadway in Los Angeles as seen from my fire escape. My ultimate purpose was to photograph a "wedge" of mountain (part of the San Gabriel Mountains).



Abeles using her sculptural contraption, Pentipede, to measure her stride in order to adjust the pedometer she used during the pilgrimage to the San Gabriel Mountains.

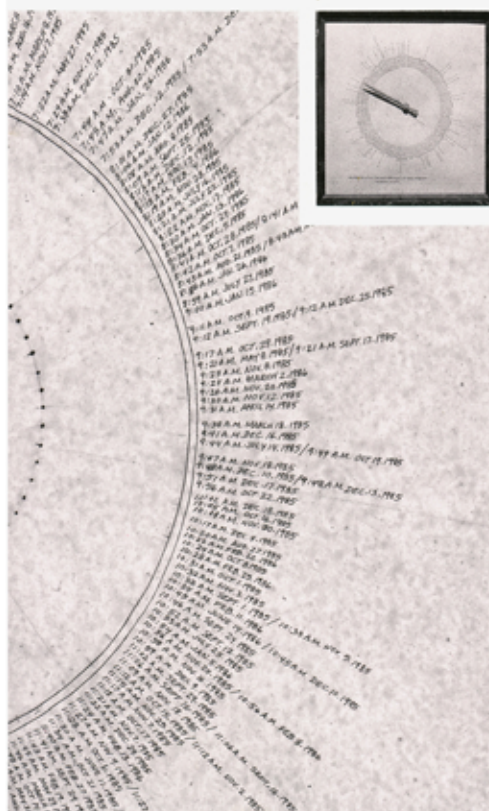


View looking north toward a wedge of the San Gabriel Mountains (obscured by smog) as seen from Abeles' fire escape on Second and Broadway, Los Angeles. This example of the 274 photographic attempts to get a clear view of the Mountain Wedge was taken the morning of a parade for the Los Angeles Lakers.



Mountain Wedge. 1985-7. Acrylic on paper and wood "camera bellows", canvas, 274 photographs looking north on Broadway in Los Angeles at the San Gabriel Mountains obscured by smog; lens, oil painting on canvas, (bellows) 94" x 78" x 184".

PILGRIMAGE TO THE WEDGE



New Kind of Clock (Time Based on the Frequency of Taking Photographs). 1986. Acrylic and ink on paper recording the times and dates of the 274 photos taken in an attempt to capture a clear shot of the San Gabriel Mountains unobscured by smog, clock, marbled wood. 17" x 17" x 3". Collection of the Department of Art History and the Visual Arts, Occidental College, Los Angeles.

I wanted to see how close I'd have to be to get a clear photo of the Wedge. As it turned out, I had to be at the foot of the mountain. I walked as the crow flies, sixteen and a half miles in a direct northeasterly route. And so, if I had to cut through yards and houses, I sometimes knocked on the door to ask permission. I climbed barb wire fences, fell down dusty cliffs, under freeways, and past dogs barking and grabbing my pants. Kids followed after me as if I were the Piper, and in other neighborhoods they told me I wasn't safe walking alone. I saw a couple having sex reflected in a mirror and a friend's painting hanging on a wall. By the time I was finished, I had walked for



ENCYCLOPEDIA PERSONA map
The north(easterly) route of Abeles' pilgrimage from downtown Los Angeles to the San Gabriel Mountains.

about ten hours. I wasn't in good shape. I didn't do this after an athletic fitness program, plus I was a chain smoker at the time. By the time I got to the mountain, I looked like I'd been trashed. My glasses were broken, my hair was full of brambles and thistles. I had been bitten by red ants at one point when I sat on an ant hill. I was literally a mess, pants torn and dirty, cuts and blood everywhere. I never took a photo of myself in that condition. That wasn't the point, though the tale is worth telling.

THE MOUNTAIN WEDGE WAS NOT CLEARLY VISIBLE UNTIL I STOOD AT ITS BASE.



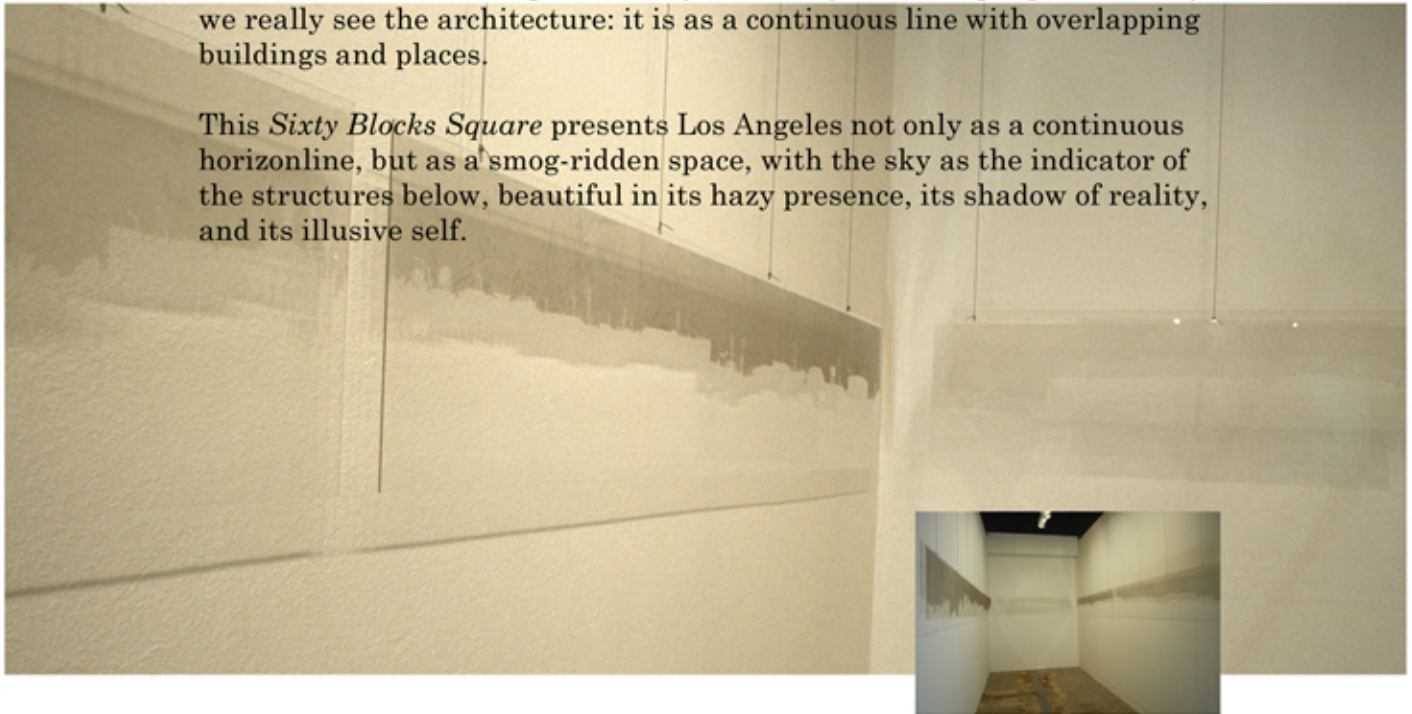
Smog Collector Sculptures (Sixty Days of Smog). 1991-2.. Welded vehicle exhaust systems, bilingual text, images made of smog on plexiglass gathered at various sites in Los Angeles. Funded by the Bureau of Automotive Repair, Department of Consumer Affairs.

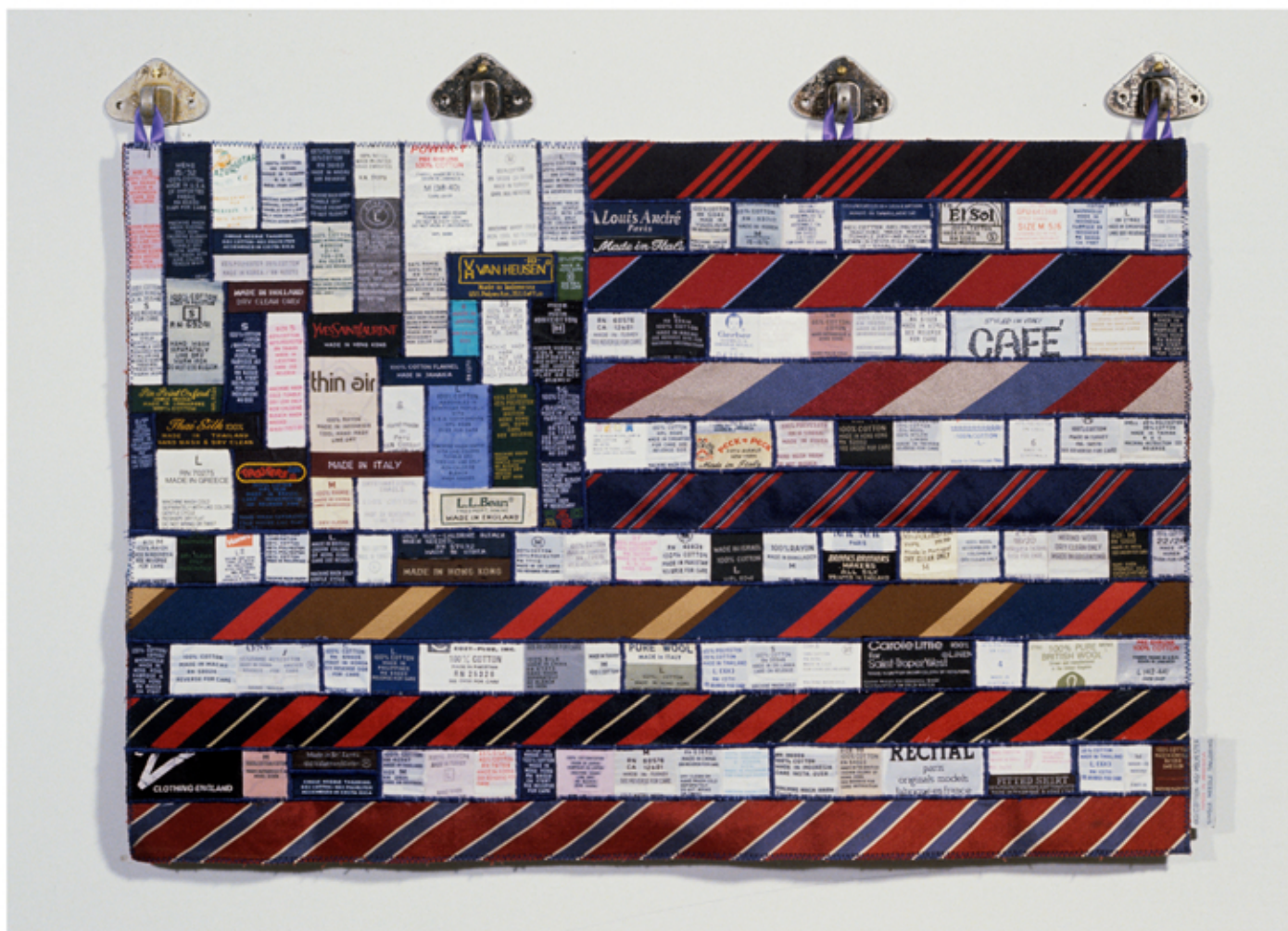


Sixty Blocks Square of Los Angeles Horizon (Seven Days of Smog)
1990/91. Smog on plexiglass. Various dimensions

In the late 80s I started to make horizonline drawings of many cities as I travelled in the US and abroad. I would find access to tall building roofs and sketch the 360° image of the skyline. They are a language of the way we really see the architecture: it is as a continuous line with overlapping buildings and places.

This *Sixty Blocks Square* presents Los Angeles not only as a continuous horizonline, but as a smog-ridden space, with the sky as the indicator of the structures below, beautiful in its hazy presence, its shadow of reality, and its illusive self.





Made in America presents geography through the manufacturing labels from the clothing of four people.

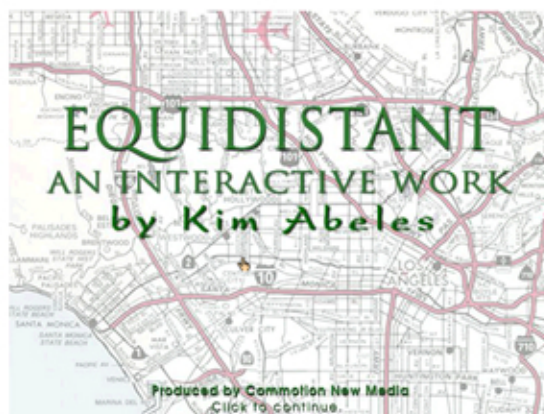
Made in America. 1992. Clothing labels from the closets of four people, neckties, hardware, 14" x 21". Courtesy of Max Protetch Gallery, New York, NY





Equidistant. 1996. Photographs, sound, and mapping as an interactive work. Created in collaboration with artcommotion.com and also produced on CD for LA Freewaves in collaboration with LA Culture Net and the Getty.

I envisioned concentric circles drawn upon the Los Angeles city map with the La Brea Tar Pits as the center point. (The Tar Pits as a beginning, a center of time and space, a place where the elephants sink and the surface bubbles.) Each point on each circle has its counterpoint that is equidistant to the center, and each time I photographed both sites. Though I could select the original site by choice or seduction, its mate was always dictated by the location of the first.



Examples of *Equidistant* pairs



Executive Producer: Phil van Allen
 Producer: Joe Nuccio
 Art Director: Molly Bosted
 Programmer: Guy Greenbaum
 Production Art: Alex Safonov
 Videographer: Matt Gainer



Equidistant
by Kim Abeles

I envisioned concentric circles drawn upon the Los Angeles city map with the La Brea Tar Pits as the center point. (The Tar Pits as a beginning, a center of time and space, a place where the elephants sink and the surface bubbles.) Each point on each circle has its counterpart that is equidistant to the center, and each time I photographed both sites. Though I could select the original site by choice or seduction, its mate was always dictated by the location of the first.

Each photograph noted on the map has its twin, like sister sites and psychic pairs, they are linked by distance divined by the system, as if waiting for the other all this time.

I selected sites like the Watts Towers and Mann's Theater for their fame and importance. Other sites called to me as they came into my view as if I were traveling by air like a housefly waiting to land. (My daughter and I snuck into a wedding and the couple's video will later reveal my 7-year-old in a neon color jacket darting in and out as the bride begins her walk down the aisle.) The partner site was always the calling of the first.

Main Map

EQUIDISTANT
AN INTERACTIVE WORK
by Kim Abeles

Equidistant re-plots the Los Angeles map, placing the La Brea Tar Pits in the center of several concentric circles. Using photography, video, and audio, Abeles documented paired sites on each circle. Each point on each circle has its counterpart that is across the diameter of the circle. Each time, she photographed both sites. The site downtown on Broadway and its equidistant point in Bel Air were recorded on videotape during a 24-hour period of time.

Click on a point to see an image pair.

Introduction

Inhabitants of Los Angeles typically remain within the confines of their villages, some complete with freeway walls or tall ornate gates protecting their keepstake. We feel safe among ourselves within these villages and to venture outside their boundaries is to feel singular in a strange land.

Each site had a pronounced aspect that acted as its signature, an obvious spot of composition or content. I attempted to attend to the matched sites, leaving my preconceptions behind; while some clichés held fast, others fell to the curb. Indeed, the keen eye sees beauty even in decay, and spiritual decay may sparkle. Well-kept homes, both spacious and modest, appeared in all directions of the circles. I stayed suspicious of my viewpoint understanding the choices of my viewfinder.

I know where beauty is and you can buy it as a necklace in Beverly Hills. I know the beauty of rust against wood against crumbling paint and great artworks have frames around its surface. (People stand, sit, speak, and sleep behind each doorway and urban cave.) Nature can be bought and it's tucked away behind security signs, but nature also flexes her strength as the lush green grassy knolls undulate in the once concrete front of the gas station on Main and 59th.

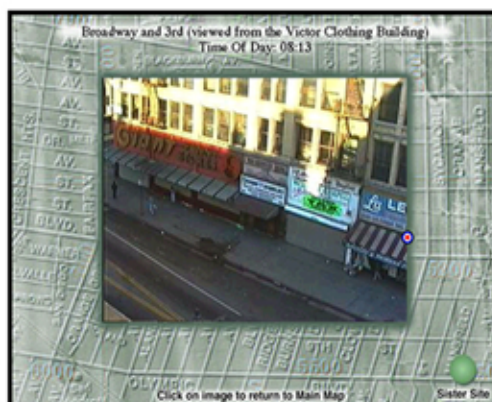
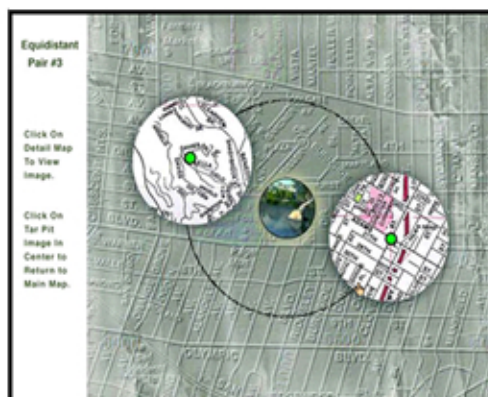
Main Map

The sites at Second and Broadway and its equidistant point in Bel Air were recorded on videotape during a 24-hour period of time. You will see each minute of change, and you are able to pull up specific moments. The notion of surveillance revealed itself more apparently with our ability to rewind and repeat and observe more closely the occasional human interaction on the street. Otherwise, people move past one another quickly.

Equidistant is a piece in progress; thus far, I have traveled to over 120 locations in the Los Angeles region, gathering site and sound. The concept provides a method for viewing the urban landscape disregarding conventional city divisions, ignoring the layout of the streets. Nature offered the balance for my observations, since she consistently insists on pushing wildly through each sidewalk, park and cemetery. In Los Angeles, Nature can be found groomed, polished, and shaped into friendly shrubs.

Kim Abeles
March 1996

Main Map



Legend for a Mapping (Los Angeles Architecture). 1997. Welded metal structure, mixed media “legend” objects and photographs, dimensions of steel silhouette: 35’ x 10.5’ x .5”. Installallation views at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery and Pomona Museum of Art, Claremont,CA.

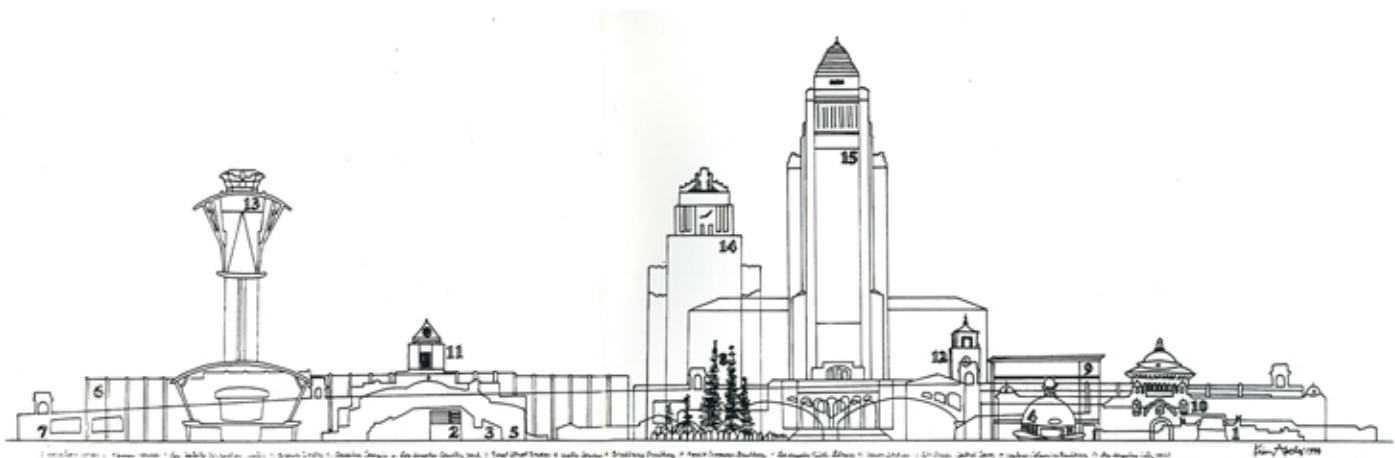
I have this romance with Los Angeles. I wear the stillness of its empty nightgown. I drink it up in the morning light. I find my quiet self amid the noisy movement of lunchtrays and wiggling jello.

Explain:

Historically, at its core, art has served as a guide to the vistas that we see from each of our own observation decks. My work from the past two decades results from the urban experience, the contemporary viewpoint of our historical follies and a Sisyphean journey in search of Nature. My projects and artworks are portraits of Los Angeles, though I view this city and these concepts as symbols of the urban. L.A. has all the components, problems, and achievements of the typical urban schema.

"L.A. is probably the most mediated town in America, nearly unviewable save through the fictive scrim of its mythologizers."

--Michael Sorkin, 'Explaining Los Angeles', *California Counterpoint: New West Coast Architecture*, 1982, San Francisco Art Institute, p.8.





I measured each building or structure using a tape measure and a sonic-measuring tool for the heights. The primary structure of *Legend for a Mapping* compares the proportionate scale of some of the notable buildings of Los Angeles expressed as a welded, steel-rod outline. The outlines of each building fit one inside the other to express their proportional relationships. Each building represented on this metal grillwork is assigned a number attached to its silhouette. Individual art works in the form of drawings and sculpture become the legend for this mapping of Los Angeles architecture. These respond to the beauty, tales, and human-touched moments of the architecture.

Describe:

Los Angeles hides her magnificent buildings behind a windshield. The architecture ranges from the exquisite lacy interior of the Bradbury Building (born from a séance of psychic dimensions), to housing complexes that are homes for the strong hands that provide for society's comforts. Each building holds a story revealed through books and guided tours. The story I love best about Hollyhock House is not really about the architect Frank Lloyd Wright, but rather, about Aline Barnsdall: the cultural visionary, adventuress, self-determined single mother. Simon Rodia created the Watts Towers from an unusually pure creative force, the momentum of the spirit, in a world where motives most often drive the tool. And by contrast, the destruction of extraordinary feats of architecture, like the demolition of the Richfield Building, leaves a ghost-like silhouette upon the skyline. L.A. holds the genius of Julia Morgan in the Mission-style home of the previous Herald Examiner, and architect Claude Beelman's turquoise and gold Deco wonder of 1930, the Eastern Columbia Building. The Los Angeles Public Library is a monument to Bertram Goodhue's philosophical understanding of art integrated with architecture as a truly inspired space.



Selections from the "Legend Inventory" for *Legend for a Mapping (Los Angeles Architecture)*

Each "legend" item is numbered to correspond with the building it represents.

1

° Portrait of Aline Barnsdall and her daughter Sugar Top (1918).¹ Aline was a self-determined single parent, who preferred not to marry.

° Portrait of Frank Lloyd Wright with his colleague and wife, Olga Von Milanoff.² Her support and dialogue were critical to his career and accomplishments.

- "Design for Living Room Rug" by Frank Lloyd Wright (1919-1921).³

- Aline Barnsdall constructed billboards on the park's hillside to educate Angelinos and visitors about global issues. She used them also to promote her vision of a cultural center containing galleries, theaters, artists' studios, and the park itself. Barnsdall Park, with the Hollyhock House as an important component, is now owned by the City of Los Angeles.⁴

Δ The Hollyhock design used throughout the Barnsdall project exemplifies architect Frank Lloyd Wright's love of Nature (he thought of Nature as the place where God can be visibly observed).

∞ Hollyhock bookmark

∞ Sugar Top's baby bonnet

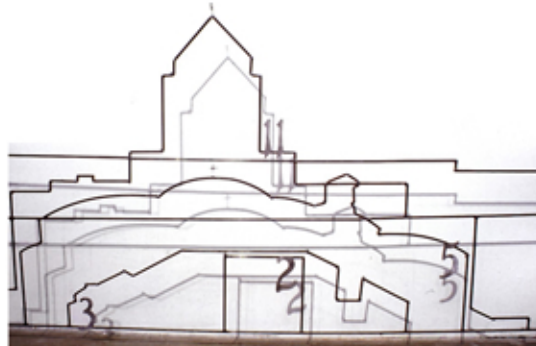
2

° Portrait of Charles and Ray Eames (Christmas 1944)⁵

° Portrait of Ray Kaiser Eames (1935-36)⁶

- Ray and Charles in their home, the Eames House, during the late 1950s.⁷ This steel-framed house was built as a Case Study House seeking low- and moderate-cost solutions for contemporary living.

- Seen here, the actual legs of Charles and Ray Eames⁸ on their molded-plywood leg splints. The Eames couple developed the method of molding plywood for furniture during the early 1940s. The splints manufactured by the Eames workshop were used by the U.S. during World War II for injured soldiers in Europe. During their prolific careers, Charles and Ray Eames created architectural environments, toys, furniture, innovative exhibition designs, as well as educational and experimental films such as *The Power of Ten*.



3

Δ Girl swimming in rec center pool.
∞ T-shirt and ball from the Lou Costello Recreation Center.

4

• Photograph of the Brown Derby (1926) A fantastic and memorable restaurant that was torn down in a state of wicked frenzy.



5

◦ Portrait of Aimee Semple McPherson and her children (1917)¹⁰
• Portrait of Aimee¹¹
• Angelus Temple¹² was built by Aimee Semple McPherson (1923), the dynamic, dramatic evangelist of the Foursquare Gospel. One year after moving to Los Angeles, Aimee had raised one million dollars to erect the church. The church is still active and boasts of sermons in nine languages. Note in the photograph, the radio towers for Aimee's station, KFSG.

Δ Original scores of Aimee Semple McPherson. Her sermons were performances using components of theater: the staging, costumes, music and movement, in combination with an evangelical teaching of Jesus Christ. Scandal surrounded her in 1926 when she was reported missing, apparently kidnapped, after swimming at Ocean Park. Six weeks later, she showed up and was accused of creating a publicity stunt. She was charged, and later cleared, with "corruption of morals" and "obstruction of justice". It is said that in reality, she had been having an affair with a lover at a motel in Carmel, California. Her symbolic song titles include: *Just a Cup of Cold Water* and *Death Swallowed in Victory*.

∞ The water lilies in Echo Park were placed there by Aimee. In 2008, the lilies were removed from the lake because of contaminated water.

6

• *Families Waiting at the County Jail*. The prison and jail population is currently one million six hundred thousand people in the U.S.

Δ I was told that intricate frames made from folded cigarette packs, such as this example, are made by prisoners in the LA County Jail located downtown. This frame was found at Legend 7, the First Street Bridge.

7

- Engineering plans for the First Street Bridge. The original engineer for the bridge in 1928 was H.P. Cortelyn.

- ∞ Evening light on the First Street Bridge

- Δ Rebar from the First Street Bridge, recently under restoration. An elaborate frame made of cigarette wrappers found on the bridge by my daughter, Zoe.

8

- ° Portrait of Simon Rodia, who created the Watts Towers from 1921-1954. At one point during the 1970s, the city wanted to tear down the Towers because officials felt there was a dangerous risk; the Towers were tested for strength, and stayed firm and solid. A tilesetter and telephone repairman by trade, Simon started building the structures when he was forty-two, and worked on them steadily for thirty-three years. When he completed the Towers, he moved north and never looked back at them.

- "A Trowel for Simon Rodia"

- The towers were built originally in Rodia's yard (his house, shown in the photograph¹³, later burned down).

- ∞ Detail of Watts Tower





Public Sitings (All Space in Los Angeles County). 1998. Digital print on fabric, acrylic paint, recycled telephone wire, 4000 color coded poker chips identifying public space in LA., 18' x 12' x 8'. Sections of maps in private collections. Installation views at Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, CA, and Sipkarna/Karlin, Prague, Czech Republic.

Public Sitings defines all the public space in Los Angeles County. My definition of public encompasses a psychological approach rather than that of legal ownership. A mall, for example, is privately owned, but most people consider it to be public as they stroll or loiter among fountains, artificial plants, and shops of every specialty. I use a magnifying glass to pinpoint each public siting, paint its color code, and connect it with telephone wire of the same color; the wire in turn is connected to a disk. I work from the determination that regardless of the actual size of a site, a person's experience is based on a psychological connection and a physical idea of one body, one place. Therefore, all sitings received one disk, like a poker chip, regardless of the actual area of the space.



Bodies of water



Parks and gardens



***Schools, recreation centers,
and senior citizen centers***



Libraries and museums



***Government buildings and
buildings owned by the city***



Jails and hospitals



Cemeteries



Enclosed malls



Golf courses

Aspects of Public: The terms of public remain limited to rules of entry. Parks may be visited during daylight hours, and freeways require a vehicle. People wearing metal spikes cannot walk onto Alhambra Golf Course. Huntington Memorial Hospital is public if you require emergency care, and anyone can visit from 11-8, unless a person is in intensive care, in which case only the immediate family is allowed. Norton Simon Museum, like most museums, is public to children under the age of 12, or if you pay (\$4 for Adults, \$2 for Seniors 62 years and over, and \$2 for Students).



Purpose: I dismantle and orchestrate chaos to a system in order to locate a new observation deck. I took a perfectly good *Thomas Guide* and other maps of worthy direction, and hand-painted my public considerations. Like scalp implants, I plugged each site with its color-coded wire. Wild hairs sprouting like electricity from the orderly circuit board. I try to begin without predetermination of the results by stitching a massive quilt of Los Angeles County, hung upon the wall, floating onto the floor with piles of coded poker chips or coins tallying the cultural view.



Leaf Lounge (All the World's Leaves). 2000. Fabric leaves, padded floor, video projection, sound, variable dimensions. Commissioned by the Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati.

Leaf Lounge presents a space where kids jump into a mass of oversized, fabric leaves, labeled and representing all the trees found globally. Each leaf is scaled 5X its actual size, and each has the shape, veins, texture and color to carefully interpret the particular leaf. Straddling reason and imagination, the installation activates with a wall-scale video projection of all types of trees blowing in the wind that howls around the room. The ocean, created with several shades of blue fabric over foam pads, creates a soft space for kids to jump and throw over 500 soft leaves, each embroidered with the name of the tree and its location of origin in the world.



All the World's Leaves

*Leaves in the wind like seeds propagating through the moving air
from one place to another,
past one language, then another, dry and wet lands,
crossing plastic map placemats on kitchen tables...
over the solid and slashed boundary lines of geography.
The leaves, like so many stuffed animals in a child's room,
speak of our peculiar, contemporary relationship with nature,
at once estranged and as comforting as a doze under a tree
in our memories.*



From Your Seat. 2001. Porcelain enamel on steel insets in concrete seating by architect Doug Suissman, 10" x 20" each (7 total). Located at Grand Central Market on Hill St., Los Angeles. Commissioned by Metro Art, Los Angeles.

From Your Seat uses imagery, photos of sculpture, poetry, fact and fiction to describe seven architectural sites and how to get to each using mass transit from your seat.



The seven buildings and structures were hand-measured and rendered to the same scale, fitting inside one another to express their proportional relationships. Each architectural wonder is accessible ON FOOT OR BY METRO from the seat where you are resting.

Artist Kim Abeles hand-measured buildings with the help of a sonic device and an ordinary tape measure.

#1

Watts Towers

CREATOR: SIMON RODIA
CONSTRUCTED: 1921-1954

Simon Rodia created the Watts Towers from 1921-54. At one point during the 1970s, the city wanted to tear down the Towers because officials felt they posed a dangerous risk; the Towers were tested for strength, and stayed firm and solid. A tilesetter and telephone repairman by trade, Rodia started building the structures when he was 42 and worked on them steadily for 33 years. When he completed the Towers, he moved north and never looked back.

Detail of Watts Towers

Simon's Birthday: February 11, 1918
Agavevirus
Watts Tower: tower, adventure and independent

A Trowel for Simon Rodia
Simon Rodia created the Watts Towers from an unusually pure creative force, the momentum of the spirit, in a world where motives most often drive the tool.

From Your Seat

Watts Towers
Walk south 1/2 block to Pershing Square Metro Rail Station
Take train toward Wilshire/Western or North Hollywood
Get off at 7th St/Metro Center/Dixon Station
Transfer to Metro Blue Line train
Get off at 103rd St/Metro Station
Walk briefly to Watts Towers

University of Southern California Department of Special Collections



The seven buildings and structures were hand-measured and rendered to the same scale, fitting inside one another to express their proportional relationships. Each architectural wonder is accessible ON FOOT OR BY METRO from the seat where you are resting.

Artist Kim Abeles hand-measured buildings with the help of a sonic device and an ordinary tape measure.

#2 Los Angeles City Hall

ARCHITECTS: JOHN C. AUSTIN, JOHN PARKINSON & ALBERT C. MARTIN
CONSTRUCTED: 1926-28



Shown here, the sculpture
Collapsible City Hall Ruler
Collection of Kristin & Greg Escalante

Prior to 1959, buildings in Los Angeles could not exceed 150 feet in height or 13 stories so as to maintain City Hall as the tallest structure.



A Location of Los Angeles City Hall during Mexican Regime, northwest corner of Spring St. and Sunset Blvd.



B First City Hall (1850-53) Located about 200 feet on the east side of N. Los Angeles St.

Inhabitants of Los Angeles typically remain within the confines of freeway walls or tall ornate gates protecting keepsakes. We feel safe among ourselves within these villages, and to venture out of these boundaries is to feel singular in a strange land.



From Your Seat

City Hall
Walk south 1/2-block to Pershing Square Metro Rail Station
Take train toward Union Station
Get off at Civic Center/Bradley Station
Walk east on 1st St. and 2 blocks to Spring St.



C City Hall (1890) between 2nd & 3rd on Broadway

D City Hall under construction (1926-28)

All historical photographs on this panel: USC Department of Special Collections



The seven buildings and structures were hand-measured and rendered to the same scale, fitting inside one another to express their proportional relationships. Each architectural wonder is accessible ON FOOT OR BY METRO from the seat where you are resting.

Artist Kim Abeles hand-measured buildings with the help of a sonic device and an ordinary tape measure.

#3 Bradbury Building

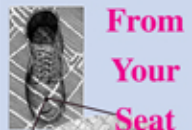
DESIGNER: GEORGE H. WYMAN
CONSTRUCTED: 1893



Shown here, the sculpture *Bradbury Cuij*. Collection of Kristin & Greg Escalante

The Bradbury Building was designed by George H. Wyman, who was an engineer, but had never designed a building previously, and did not become an architect until taking a correspondence course years after completing the Bradbury. He had been offered the job by Louis Bradbury. Wyman had difficulty with the decision to accept the commission because it would usurp the job from his employer, Sumner Hunt. Wyman had a seance with his wife, using a predecessor to the Cuij board, and his young brother spoke from the dead, moving the marker to the letters reading,

"TAKE BRADBURY BUILDING. IT WILL MAKE YOU FAMOUS."



From Your Seat

Bradbury Building
Walk 1/2-block north to 3rd Street
Walk 1 block east to Broadway



The building is known for its extraordinary light and airy interior with its breathtaking gridded skylights made of hundreds of panes of glass. The building is also well known as a location for the infamous film, *Blade Runner*.

Los Angeles hides its magnificent buildings behind a wall of steel. Each building holds a story revealed through books & guided tours.





The seven buildings and structures were hand-measured and rendered to the same scale, fitting inside one another to express their proportional relationships. Each architectural wonder is accessible **ON FOOT OR BY METRO** from the seat where you are resting.

Artist Kim Abeles hand-measured buildings with the help of a sonic device and an ordinary tape measure.

#4

Union Station

ARCHITECTS: JOHN & DONALD B. PARKINSON
CONSTRUCTED: 1935-39



When Union Station opened (1939), the trains travelled along the west, front entrance. View of station from Alameda Street



Pigeons inside Union Station

A Mile a Minute (LA to Del Mar as Seen through a Moving Train)
Private and public collections including California State University, Long Beach Art Museum
The artist drew this horizonline while looking out the window of a moving train from Los Angeles to Del Mar. The title refers to how fast she was drawing.



From Your Seat

Union Station
Walk south 1/2-block to Pershing Square Metro Rail Station
Take train to Union Station



The seven buildings and structures were hand-measured and rendered to the same scale, fitting inside one another to express their proportional relationships. Each architectural wonder is accessible **ON FOOT OR BY METRO** from the seat where you are resting.

Artist Kim Abeles hand-measured buildings with the help of a sonic device and an ordinary tape measure.

#5

Hollyhock House

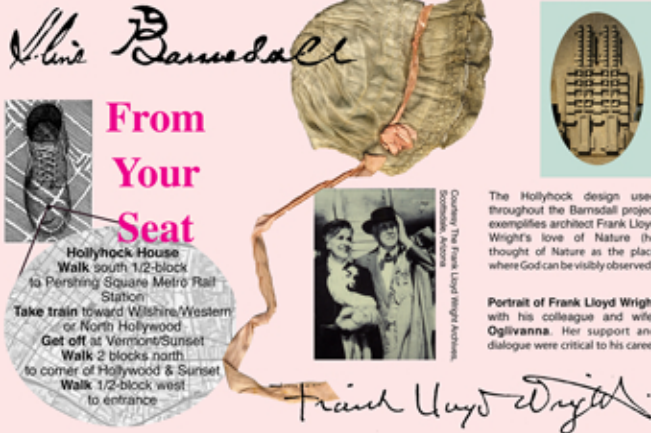
ARCHITECT: FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT
CONSTRUCTED: 1917-20 CLIENT: ALINE BARNSDALL



Portrait of Aline Barnsdall and her daughter Sugar Top (1918). Aline was a self-determined single parent who preferred not to marry. As a wealthy woman, she could enjoy such luxury and social ease in her personal life.



Aline Barnsdall, cultural visionary and adventures, constructed billboards on the park's hillside to educate Angelinos and visitors about global and political issues. She used the billboards also to promote her vision of a cultural center containing galleries, theaters, artist's studios, and the park itself. Barnsdall Park, with Hollyhock House as an important component, is now owned by the City of Los Angeles. The well-known photographer Edmund Teske documented many of the billboards that Barnsdall created during the 1940s.



From Your Seat

Hollyhock House
Walk south 1/2-block to Pershing Square Metro Rail Station
Take train toward Wilshire/Western or North Hollywood
Get off at Vermont/Sunset
Walk 2 blocks north to corner of Hollywood & Sunset
Walk 1/2-block west to entrance



The Hollyhock design used throughout the Barnsdall project exemplifies architect Frank Lloyd Wright's love of Nature (the thought of Nature as the place where God can be visibly observed).

Portrait of Frank Lloyd Wright with his colleague and wife, Ogilivanna. Her support and dialogue were critical to his career

Kim Abeles 2009 Dedicated to my daughter Zoe



The seven buildings and structures were hand-measured and rendered to the same scale, fitting inside one another to express their proportional relationships. Each architectural wonder is accessible **ON FOOT OR BY METRO** from the seat where you are resting.

Artist Kim Abeles' hand-measured buildings with the help of a sonic device and an ordinary tape measure.

#6

Central Library

ARCHITECT: BERTRAM G. GOODHUE
CONSTRUCTED: 1922-26

Historically, at its core, art has served as a guide to the vistas that we see from each of our observation decks.



Bertram Goodhue's philosophical understanding of art integrated with architecture inspired a building of great pleasure and beauty. It is a place of natural linkage for the past and present because of its historical murals, classical sculpture, elegant fixtures, the grandness



The library's rich collection of public art includes works created through Goodhue's vision of art created seamlessly with the architecture, and contemporary works commissioned during the 1990s. Shown above is one of the stencil designs found in the original mural painting of the Central Library, modified here through a collage of poetic license.

And on your left is one of sculptor Lee Lawrie's goddess-faced sphinxes located on the second floor. Her book is inscribed with Plutarch's quotation in Greek, stating:

I am all that was and is, and is to be, and no person hath lifted my veil.



From Your Seat

Central Library
Walk south on Hill Street to 5th Street
Walk 2 blocks west to Flower Street

Kim Abeles 2009 Dedicated to my daughter Zoe



The seven buildings and structures were hand-measured and rendered to the same scale, fitting inside one another to express their proportional relationships. Each architectural wonder is accessible **ON FOOT OR BY METRO** from the seat where you are resting.

Artist Kim Abeles' hand-measured buildings with the help of a sonic device and an ordinary tape measure.

#7

LAX Control Tower

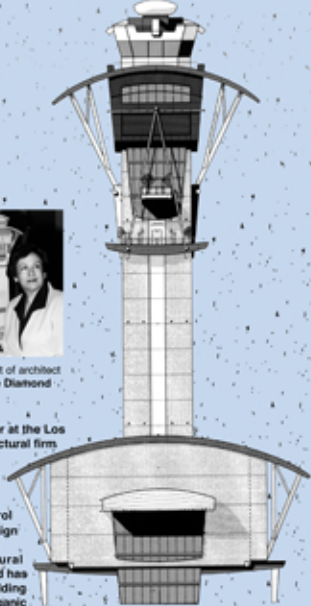
ARCHITECT: KATE DIAMOND
CONSTRUCTED: 1993



Portrait of architect Kate Diamond

Architectural renderings of the Airport Traffic Control Tower at the Los Angeles International Airport. Kate Diamond of the architectural firm Siegel Diamond Architecture designed the Tower (1993). It reaches 287 feet at its crown. The Tower also includes art-work by public artist Sheila Klein. The goal of the design team was "to simultaneously meet the critical challenges of the complex functional requirements of air traffic control

and the civic design goal of making meaningful cultural images." Diamond has described the building as having the "organic imagery of the high-tech tree."



From Your Seat



LAX Control Tower
Walk south 1/2-block to Pershing Square Metro Rail Station
Take train toward Wilshire/Western or North Hollywood
Get off at 7th Street/Metro Center/Union Station
Take Metro Blue Line train to Imperial/Wilmington/Plaza Station
Take Metro Green Line train toward Marina/Redondo
Get off at Aviation Station
Take free shuttle to LAX



Each airplane in this drawing represents ONE PASSENGER.
Shown here, total yearly LAX passengers (arrivals & departures): 57,974,559

Sidewalk Medallions. 2001. A series of three cast metal manhole covers depicting data about the infrastructure underneath the streets, 25" diameter. Located Hill Street between 3rd and 4th Street, and locations south. Commissioned by MTA, Metro Art, Los Angeles





Mapping Los Angeles

February - April 2001

Abeles in collaboration with the Los Angeles community, mixed media installation, 40' diameter. Located at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and administered by LACMA's Education Department.



Shadow-box tables containing sections of an enlarged map of Los Angeles combine to create the entire map of the city. Visitors created assemblage “monuments” and positioned them within the tables to commemorate specific locations, usually their homes or a favorite site. The sculptural map transformed for three months at LACMA's park.





The Concentric Circle from My Room. 2002. Abeles in collaboration with teens, mixed media installation, 14' x 15' x 15'. Funded through the Cotsen Artist Fellowship and administered by the Friends of the Junior Arts Center, Los Angeles.

The workshops were directed by Abeles and project staff, Richard Godfrey, Nicholette Kominos, and Naomi Buckley. Student artists included Camille Villanueva, Lyubomir Nickerson, Eli Feldman, Elaine Chun, Zoe Abeles, Wren Marvel, Michael Zuniga, Karen Ashimyan, Sima Ashimyan, Mariam Ashimyan, Grigor Harudyunyan, Luc Unruh, Michael Johnson, Juliet Dietrich, and Stephanie Cremin.



universe
city
neighborhood
home
bedroom
self

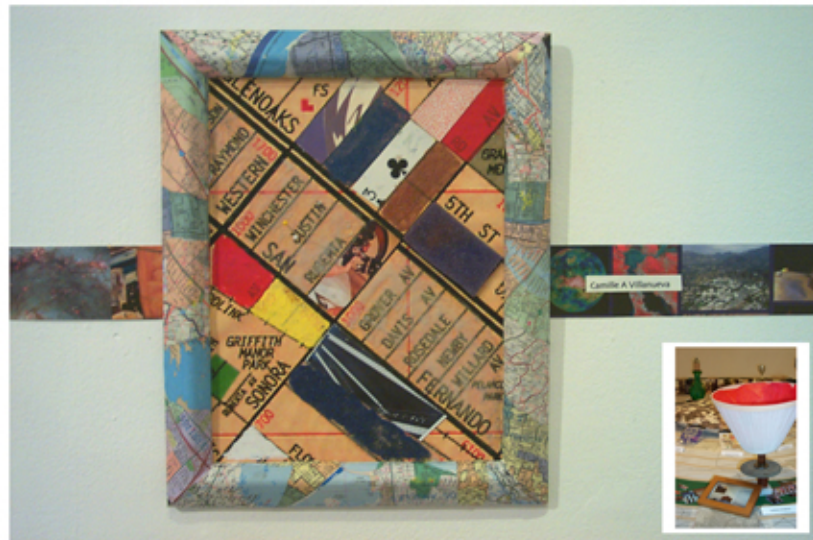
The Concentric Circle from My Room focuses on the experience of the individual who resides in the City of Los Angeles, and how that continually juxtaposes with the other people and objects in that same experience.

I considered this idea as one would a web structure or as that in microscopes and telescopes, the way in which information expands and interrelates. The project evolves from the idea that the individual person, our homes and families, our communities, the city, and the larger scope of life is the expanding vision of our experiences.

The students were lead through a series of workshops with the creation of artworks generated from a concentric enlargement, starting with the Self as portrayed in badges honoring heroines and heroes. Next, they created artworks about their bedrooms, their homes, their neighborhoods, and a collaborative experience starting with a two-hour journey in the area of Hollywood. The culminating viewpoint was presented by NASA programmer, Peter Del Rosso, who talked to the teens about The Universe.



Students' work was presented within the installation's concentric mapping, starting in the middle with the "self" and continuing out to the walls and its images of "the universe".



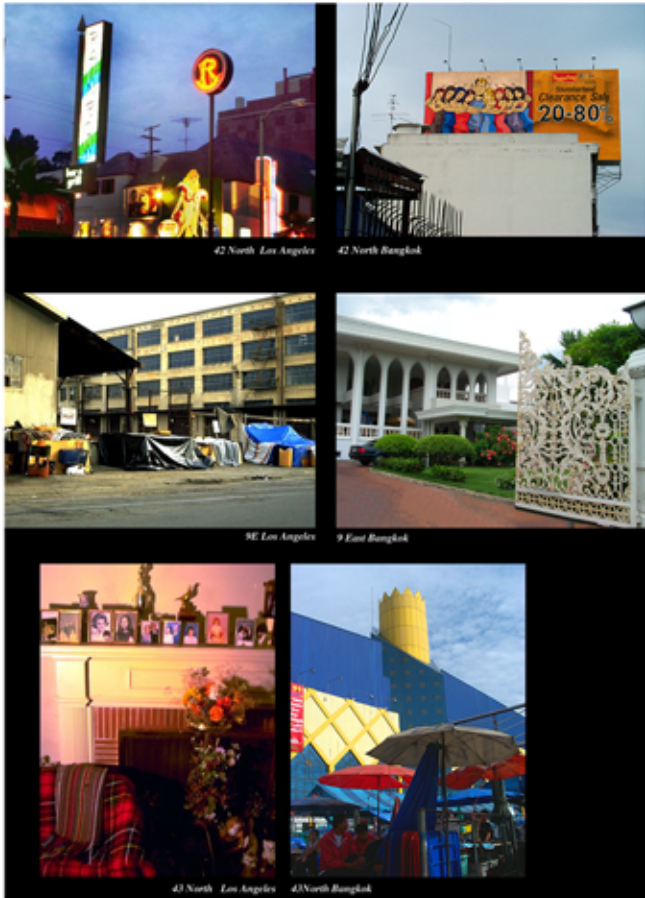
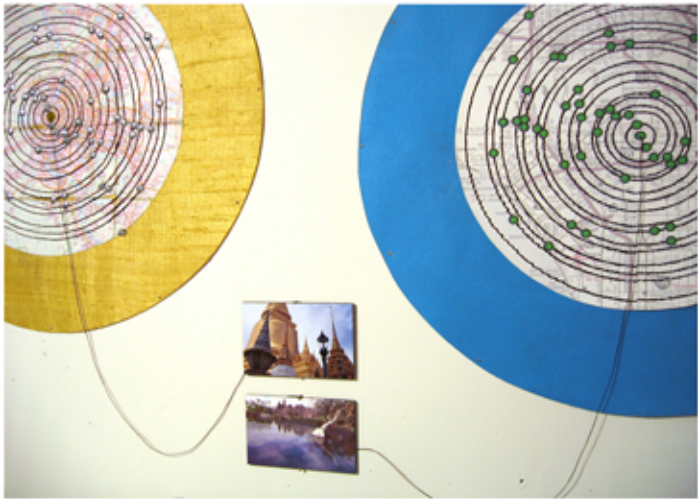
Equidistant Bangkok/Los Angeles. 2002. Photographs, maps, and an interactive computer program showing the same relative spots in each city, with Los Angeles' La Brea Tar Pits and Bangkok's Emerald Buddha as center points, (installation dimensions) 10' x 6' x 10'. Installation views at Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.

In 2002, I placed the concentric circles of the Los Angeles version of *Equidistant* (see pages 12-14) onto the map of Bangkok with the Emerald Buddha as the center point (a spiritual, timeless center). I photographed pairs of sister site locations.

Each photograph noted on the map has its twin, like sister sites and psychic pairs, within each city. They are linked by distance divined by the system, as if waiting for the other all this time.



Examples of sister sites for LA and Bangkok



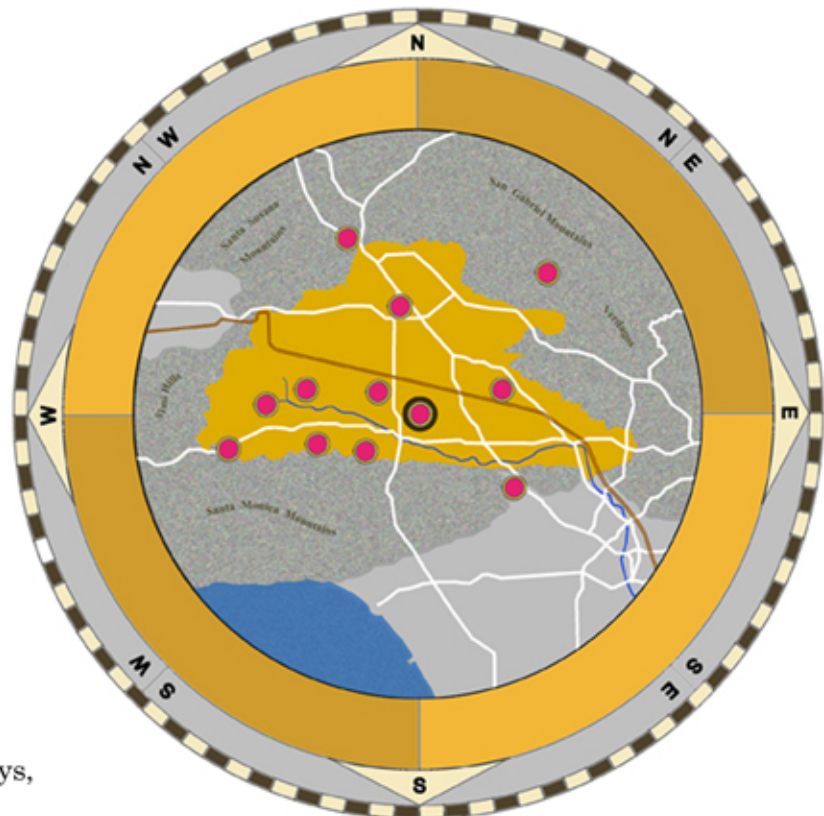
Rotunda Mapping and Valley Storybenches. .2003. Mixed media, variable dimensions. This project is in satisfaction as part of Voit Van Nuys Civic Center Partners' Arts Development Fee obligation, Cultural Affairs Department, City of Los Angeles.

Rotunda Mapping:

A 32-foot paving created with rustic marble terrazzo, tinted concrete, polished terrazzo with lasercut silhouettes (railroad tracks), bronze medallions, brass directionals, brass names of mountain ranges, tile.

Valley Storybenches:

Twelve 6-foot diameter cast concrete benches with incised text; bronze medallions repeating images in *Rotunda Mapping*, 98 inlaid wedge-shapes made of cast concrete, concrete imbedded with objects and lasercut silhouettes, porcelain enamel on steel images and graphics, bronze-cast poems by Lewis McAdams in his handwriting (commissioned by Abeles for each *Valley Storybench*).



Architects: Ware Malcomb
Hardscape Plaza Designers: Rios
Associates

Artist: Kim Abeles

Location: Marvin Braude San Fernando
Valley Constituent Service Center, Van Nuys,
Los Angeles County, California

Rotunda Mapping is a mixed-media interpretation of the San Fernando Valley experience. The 32-foot diameter paving is located at the Marvin Braude San Fernando Valley Constituent Service Center in a dramatically elegant, dome-lit lobby space embraced by the arms of a pair of staircases designed by Ware Malcomb. In *Rotunda Mapping*, a tactile map of the San Fernando Valley is nestled at the feet of the mossy-green, marble-aggregate forested slopes of the rustic marble terrazzo Simi Hills and the Verdugo, Santa Susana, Santa Monica, and San Gabriel Mountains, their names spelled out in brass.



Twelve white cast-bronze medallions denote a dozen simultaneously metaphorical and factual visitor destinations across the Valley. In an adjacent hardscape plaza designed by Rios Associates, Abeles' twelve *Valley Storybenches* develop the themes of

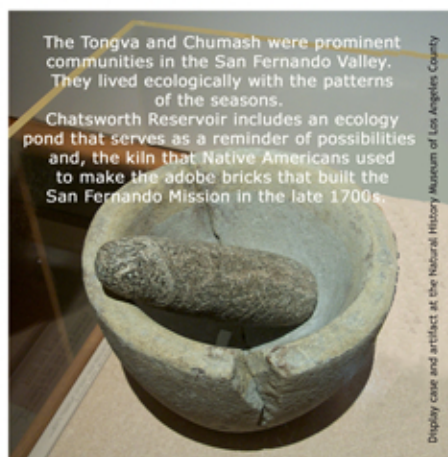
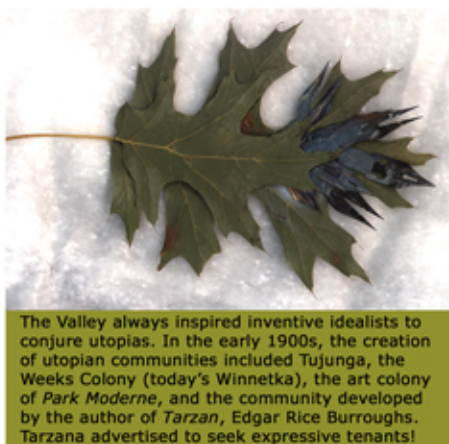
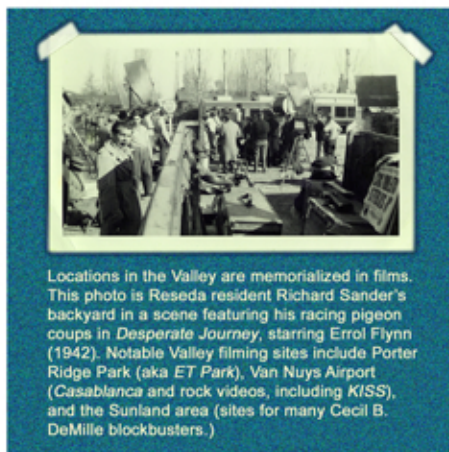


River
Railroad
Memorial
Utopia
Airport
Monument
Treaty
Nature
The Arts
Mission
Aqueduct



and as the center point of Rotunda Mapping, the viewers' location, the San Fernando Valley Constituent Service Center, the twelfth metaphorical and actual site. (opposite page) Detail of *Valley Storybench* for *Treaty*.

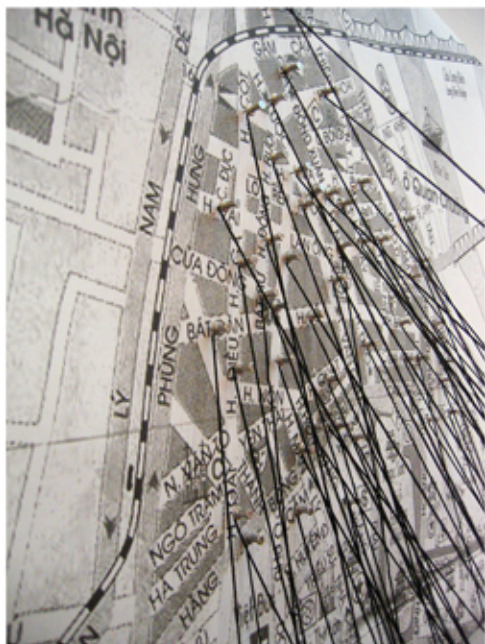




Rotunda Mapping tells us where we are with 9-inch brass letters for the eight primary directions of the geographic compass. Slate tiles demarcate the increments of the degrees. Constructed of terrazzo and blue glass, the Los Angeles River is made to appear wider than it actually is, to express its importance to the past and future of the Valley. Traditional terrazzo is used in combination with laser-cut railroad tracks, placed in a lyrical pattern along the route of the Southern Pacific/Union Pacific Railroads. Free-ways slice through textured mountains and the concrete colorations of the Valley expanse.

Abeles interviewed local scholars and professionals to collect direct impressions of the people, places, and nature of the Valley; then she commissioned poet Lewis MacAdams to compose the *Valley Suite* of poems to be cast in bronze on the *Storybenches*. Abeles intended for *Rotunda Mapping* to be an active site for visits by local school children, and an opportunity for interactive learning through this large-scale map and its attendant *Valley Storybenches*. (opposite page) Details of *Storybench* tiles.





36 Streets of Hanoi. 2004. Gouache paintings on paper of street maps in Hanoi, with objects related to their names, 10' x 8' x 6'. Installation views at Hanoi University of Fine Arts, Vietnam

Thirteenth century Hanoi, like its contemporary version, identifies its streets by the merchandise sold from busy corner to corner. "I am near the street with the dressmakers." "Take me to the avenue with the thread. "Meet me in the road with the mattresses." During the earlier centuries, the streets were formally named for the items. "Hàng" meaning "merchandise" is the typical prefix for the street names, followed by the product sold at the location. For example, Hàng Gà means the merchandise is "chicken", and Hàng Bông refers to cotton. *36 Streets of Hanoi* makes material a practical naming of streets that transforms into merely a reference on a map hundreds of years later, similar to street names I am familiar with in the States, like "Oak Street" where no oaks remain. In Hanoi, the merchandise has shifted. Hàng Dầu where hundreds of jars of oil once harkened its name, now displays thousands of shoes piled along the same spot with the street sign watching over it as a transformed ghost.

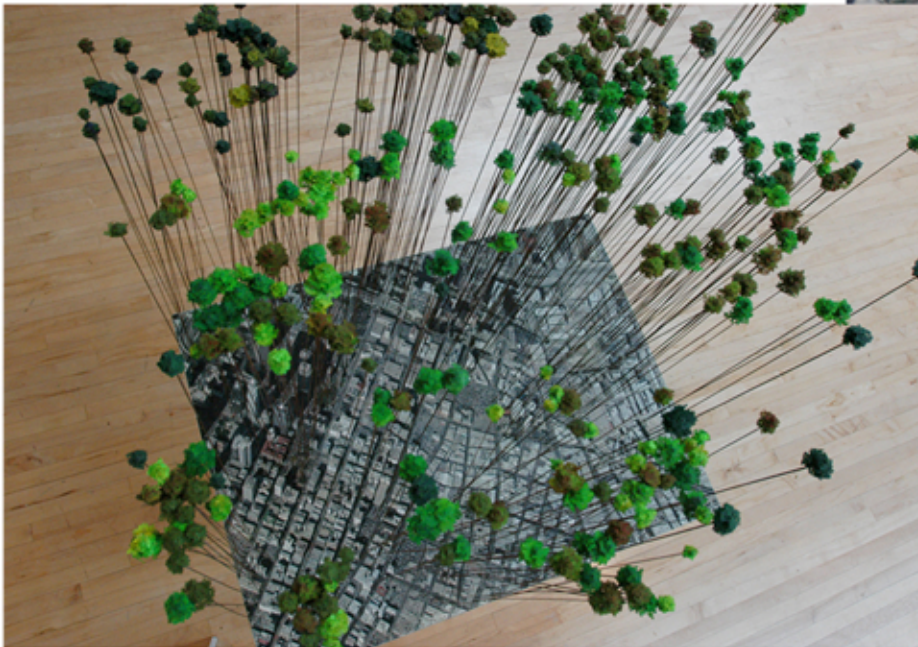


Looking for Paradise (One Tree for Each Tree Downtown) from the series, *Signs of Life*. 2004. Archival ultrachrome print and model trees on sculptural table, 72" x 43" x 33". Installation views at the Schneider Art Museum, Ashland, Oregon.

Sign of Life is a series of works that use satellite photographs and pin-points life forms in urban areas. Each piece identifies either trees or structures built by the city's nomadic homeless. One of the first pieces, *Looking for Paradise* uses hand-painted, model trees to mark each tree in a section of downtown Los Angeles. "More than I would have imagined," remark most viewers.

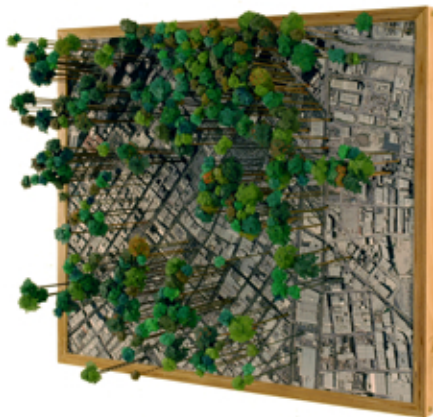


But look carefully at the city blocks with no signs of life, peculiar with their concrete landscaping. The edge of the cement world is as we remember it, and as we see it through a corrective lens.



Signs of Life (diptych). 2005-6. Archival ultrachrome prints of aerial view of downtown Los Angeles, model trees, lightbox, computer with slide show, 21 1/2" x 25 1/2" each. Installation view at the Torrance Art Museum, California.

The model trees indicate one tree for each tree downtown, and the sites of homeless encampments are illuminated from underneath the aerial view. The aerial location is identical. A computer presents a slide show of photographs of the structures and tents for each site.







The Importance of Objects (The Natural History Museum Collection). 2005. Specimens and artifacts from the museum's collection; floorplan of the museum created as a paper construction; monitors with behind the scenes video footage; archival digital prints used in mixed media sculptural table, 3' x 4' x 9'. Commissioned for the exhibition, *Conversations* at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Consider the image of thirty-three million objects in one place: specimens and artifacts taken care of and closely observed by scholars. Vaults and drawers and shelves meticulously house objects that at first might seem one and the same. In a world transforming into a gluttony of throwaway consumerism, here are specimens lovingly labeled, carefully handled, and investigated with a Sherlock eye. The migration of birds, like the migration of objects, describes a history logged in orderly drawers of specimens tagged with handwritten diaries.



The Importance of Objects implies a peek at the entire collection of the Natural History Museum, specimens in alcohol and objects made by hand, brought together again as they are in nature. The sculpture is a table shaped in the footprint of the Museum, displaying a selection from each collection, suggested by the curators of each. Inset video monitors show five visual montages of the collection storage, labs and offices. Here is a narrative about maintaining the items, like books in a library or genealogy in a hall of records, each with a number, a category, an origin, and a visual language of life's objects.



Navajo textile (208 x 140 cm)

Polychaete - Medusa Worm (in alcohol)

Shame-faced Crab - Calappa flammea

Mountain Beaver - Aplodontia rufa (skull)

Black-throated Magpie-Jay (stuffed)

Complete disarticulated skeleton of a female White-throated Magpie Jay

2 Papago miniature baskets

2 Acoma miniature pottery

2 Eskimo ivory carvings

3 Zuni fetishes

Nudibranch - Diaulula greeleyi

Floor plan and stairs of the museum made of cut paper over charcoal markings

Fiber optic lighting with paper sconces

Photographs of diorama details for the six table legs with satin leg interiors

Photographs of brick exterior of the museum for table sides

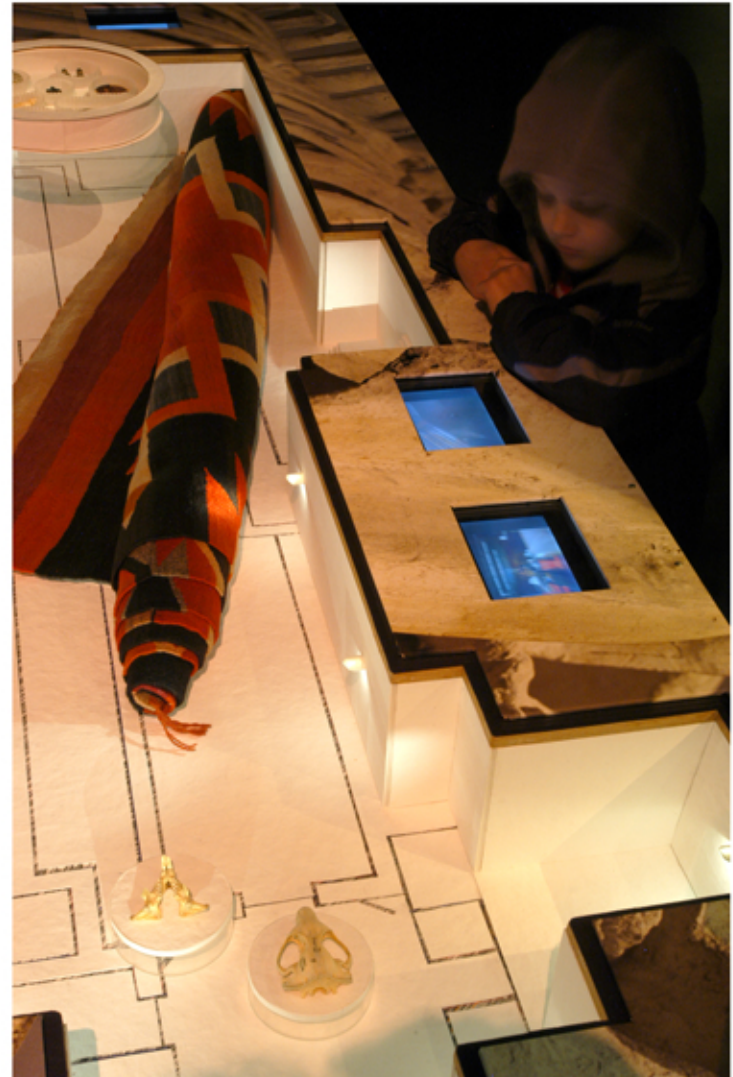
Photograph of mammal skeleton for table top

Camera lens for viewing the nudibranch specimen

Paper candy box with handmade glassine candy wrappers for each fetish object and miniature

Video of storage facilities and research labs

The Importance of Objects
Contents of sculptural table





Installation view at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, and stills from videos of the research labs and storage rooms.





Through the Center of the Earth. 2006. Cast concrete pavers with community's objects and fossils of same, bronze text, Path: 60' in length; "earth" and benches: 17' diameter. Located at the Community Magnet School, Bel Air, California. Funded through the School Beautification Program

Concept:

Imagine a long path extending from Los Angeles, through the center axis of the earth, to the other side of the world. What will you find? The distance passes through the geologic layers of the earth's composition, and on the opposite side of the globe is Kerguelen Island.

Materials and form:

Through the Center of the Earth features a pathway and benches made of mosaics, various concrete treatments, and bronze text to create this mapped narrative. The pathway visualizes the strata of a cross section of the earth, from Los Angeles to Kerguelen Island. Fossilized impressions in the concrete, in addition to changes in its texture, color, aggregate, and mosaics create a geologic illustration of this passage. The mosaic parts are created from broken dinnerware and toys donated by the school's families. These were created in Abeles' studio as pavers and then installed at the site. At opposite ends of the pathway are the locations of the school and the island written in brass text that is embedded in the tinted concrete.

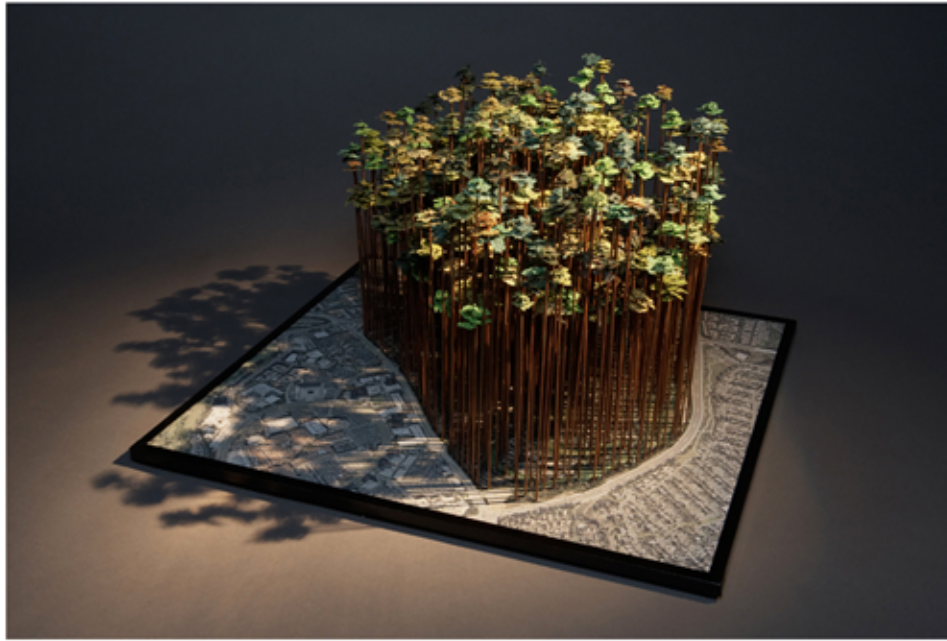




Leaf Lounge Beijing (All the World's Leaves). 2007. Fabric leaves, padded floor, video projection, sound, variable dimensions. Installation views at the Songzhuang Festival, Beijing region, China.

Abeles worked with hundreds of students from Beijing to create the fabric leaves for the participatory environment entitled, *Leaf Lounge*, for the Songzhuang Festival in 2007. (See pages 23 and 24, for the original installation of 2000.) The American representation for the art exhibit was curated by Holly Wang. The leaves were returned to the students following the exhibition.



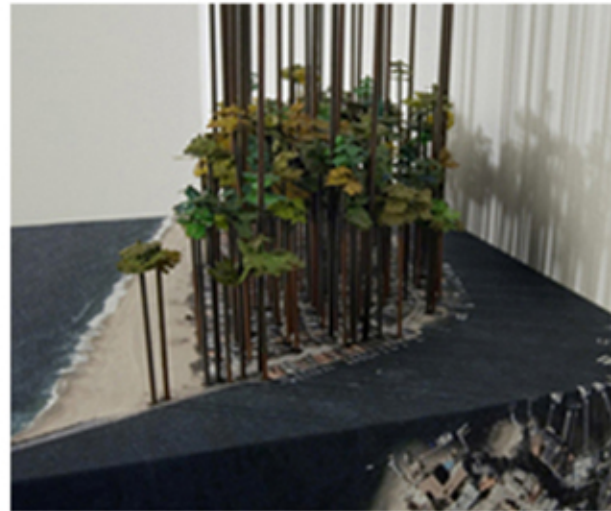


Enchanted Forest (and golf course) from the series, *Newport 260°*. 2007. Archival ultrachrome print and model trees, 9 ½" x 16" x 17". Private collection.

In 2007, the *Signs of Life* series (see pages 44-47) extended into the notion of the representation of trees, in locations like baseball stadiums where their concrete blankets are encircled by clusters of plantlife. Another region of focus is the Newport Coast of Southern California where palm trees are a common luxury, leaving the engraved impression of perfection on the minds of visitors. The series title, *Newport 260°*, refers to the promise that these gated communities offer a “260° view of the coast.”

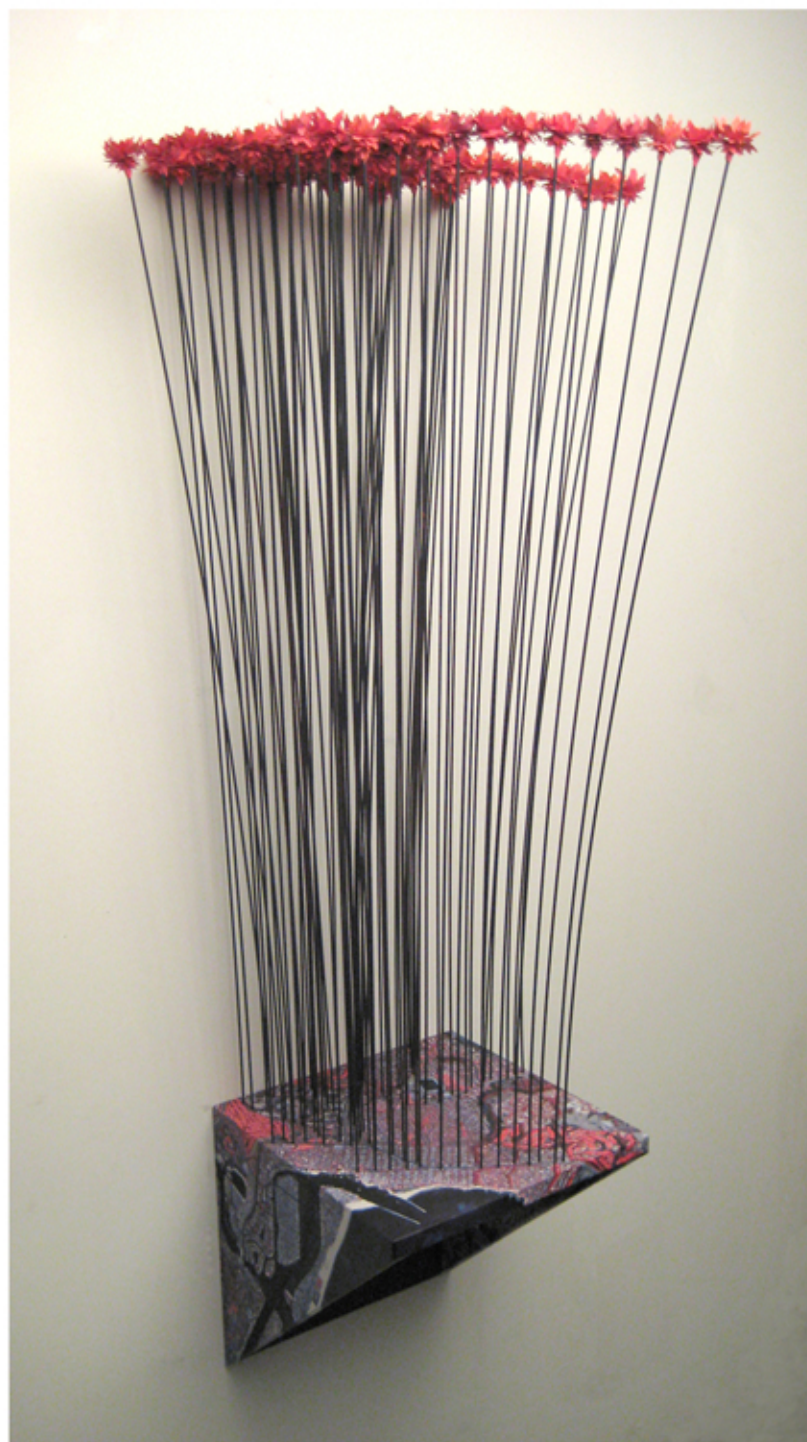
The *Bling* series was exhibited alongside *Newport 260°* aerials. I snuck into gated communities and took photographs of the “mcmansions”, then translated my resulting drawings into cast bronze jewelry.





Tall(II) from the series, *Newport 260°*. 2007. Archival ultrachrome print and model trees, 9½" x 16" x 17".

(opposite page) *Infrared Tall* from the series, *Newport 260°*. 2007. Archival ultrachrome print and model trees, 48" x 12" x 12". Private collection.





Dodger Stadium from the series, *Signs of Life*. 2007. Archival ultrachrome print and model trees, 10" x 8" x 3". Edition of 8. Private collections.



Concrete Blanket from the series, *Signs of Life*. 2008. Archival ultrachrome print and model trees, 10" x 8" x 3". Edition of 8. Private collections.

The Golden Mile. 1999-2009. Ultrachrome print. 2 panels @ 15" x 672" ea.
Collections of The Public, West Bromich, UK, and Suzhou Cultural and Art
Commission, China.

The Golden Mile of West Bromich shares meaning that is both historical
and relevant to its city planning. As the central street, it creates a dynamic
line that connects the many shops and cultures that describe its path. *The
Golden Mile's* historical significance comes from the many stories that its
residents have to tell in their distant and recent memory.

Where is "the old West Brom"? Some buildings like the Library and the
Town Hall harken to the days of Reuben Farley or the Broadhead's pas-
tries. Walking from end to end along *The Golden Mile* reveals more of the
history than a window shopper - at eye level - might observe. Look to the
second floor. There, the old West Brom resides.

The Golden Mile, as a digital document, is a 17-meter photograph of the
entire stretch, east and west sides of the street, first and second floors of
every building. The image shows an upright portrait of each shop or in-
stitution from Carter's Green to Trinity Way.







Time-Line-Space portrays history from the vantage point of individuals walking upon the same location, the same spot, over decades of time.

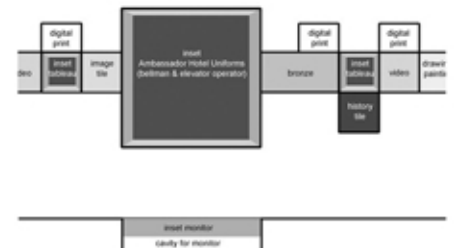
It is as if you are walking as someone else.

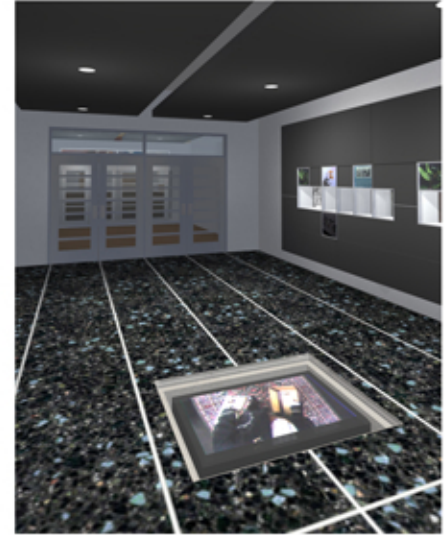
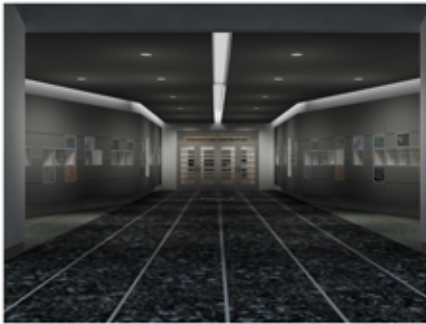
Time-Line-Space. Completion date: 2010. Mixed media timeline installed in two interior walls, video elements within the timeline and in the floor, includes Ambassador Hotel artifacts, 50' x 10' on two walls; video monitor in floor : 3' x 4'. Located at the library entrance Central Los Angeles New Learning Center (Ambassador Site). Commissioned by the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Architects: González-Goodale Architects, Pasadena, CA

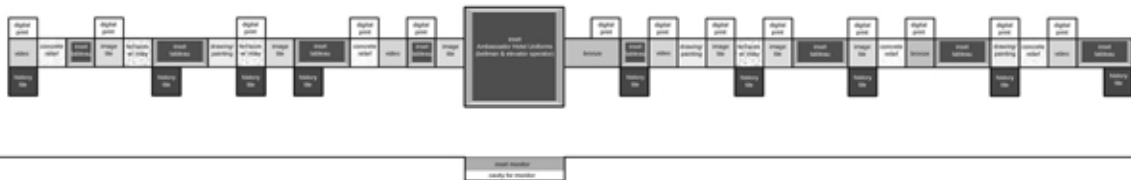
Description: *Time-Line-Space* speaks through two devices:

- 1) a video installed in the floor, and
- 2) a mixed media timeline installed within the interior walls of the library entrance. The artwork spans the time periods prior to humans, during active Native American communities, and to the opening of the Central Los Angeles Area New Learning Center, and focuses on the time period between 1921 to 1968 and the era of the Ambassador Hotel.





Virtual images of *Time-Line-Space*:
Videos in floor and walls, 2- and 3-d artworks that show
the history of one-spot



range groves
red in steel and
apples scattered
freeway off-ramp
ratunda is a man
or better olive. The
y know a moment
to your way in music
are singing to you

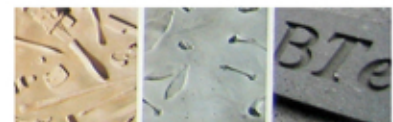


Photo credits and acknowledgements

The photographs of *Observatory/Territory* on page 2 are by Janice Felgar.

Photographs from the catalogue/bookwork, Kim Abeles: Encyclopedia Persona A-Z, a 15-Year Survey, found on pages 3-9, were taken by David Familian and Daniel J. Martinez.

Special thanks to Dace Taube of the USC Regional History Center for her help and encouragement with the research and historical photographs related to the *Hill Street Seating* project found on pages 25-28.

Photographs on the following pages were taken by Ken Marchionno: 19, 21, 44-45, 48-51, 56-60.

All other photographs were taken by Kim Abeles.