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The Studio for Southern California History

August 14, 2011 issue 14

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The Studio celebrates five years!

On June 24, 2011 the Studio celebrated its fifth birthday in Chinatown. This milestone marks many achievements:

–A library of thousands of books, films, ephemera and objects;

–the LA History Archive – our portfolio at www.lahistoryarchive.org;

–Over 75 oral histories that document different experiences;

–Neighborhood projects connected to Artesia, Wilshire Center, the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration and the area now known as Chinatown;

–Exhibits related to activism and love; sports; remarkable LA women; law & disorder over history-- among others;

–Multimedia projects related to people and places across Los Angeles;

–Collaborations with the most amazing students and institutions in the region.

Finally, in July we were voted one of the

BEST OF LA 2011 Los Angeles MAGAZINE

The Studio is a nonprofit resource center dedicated to local history located in Chinatown. Visit us on the web at www.socalstudio.org.

Love is Living Large in Los Angeles

Join us Saturday September 3, 2011 from 7 – 10 pm to celebrate our newest exhibit: *Love is Living Large in Los Angeles* which opens in conjunction with the recognized birthday of the founding of the pueblo of Los Angeles, September 4, 1781. This exhibit focuses on different individuals who contributed to building a community across Southern California history and includes an exhibit dedicated to individuals who "lived large" in Los Angeles by a life actively engaged towards building a better good. This exhibit returns after a brief hiatus for "Navigating LA" and "Los Angeles Loves Leo Limón."

LOS ANGELES LOVES LEO LIMÓN

July at the Studio was dedicated to the work of Leo Limón, and included various programs like a very successful Gatita Workshop (see page 6) and a panel about his work with scholars, artists and activists. The panel was moderated by Christian Lainez and included Tomas Benitez, Gustavo Leclerc, Jenny Price, John Arroyo and Paul Tanzawa -- Leo's high school art teacher from Lincoln Heights High School. The panel and following discussion will be available as a podcast this Fall. Leo Limón's contributions to Los Angeles are unparalleled in that they are a way of life--he integrates conservation alongside free expression. Special thanks to Dona Lawrie for loaning several pieces for the exhibit.

Profile in Courage: Shelley Morrison: "A Home Girl Who Did Good" by Christian Lainez

Right: George Castillo, Shelley Morrison & Christian Lainez

Each issue of proofs highlights one of our oral history subjects who has shaped history in a significant way. In this issue, actress Shelley Morrison is profiled. The Studio had the opportunity to interview Ms. Morrison because of her history with the former Ambassador Hotel and its neighborhood--she was interviewed for the Common Ground Project.

After five decades in show business, actress Shelley Morrison, who is known for playing iconic roles like the wisecracking El Salvadoran housekeeper Rosario on the hit NBC series "Will and Grace," has more than her share of stories. This veteran of the big and small screen has also augmented her professional life with ties to her family and community that have made her a compelling person as well as a skilled performer.

Born in the South Bronx as Rachel Mitrani, a Sephardic Jew of Spanish descent, she moved with her family to Los Angeles as a child in 1946. After six decades in Los Angeles, Morrison still lives in the apartment building that her father owned and managed in Carthay Circle. Her father, a man very much like Don Quixote who had to right the wrongs, was a clothing manufacturer and came out to California first to open shop at Copeland of California. This allowed him to soon after bring the rest of his family here. Morrison inherited her mother's spicy sense of humor and love of film.

She studied at Los Angeles City College with classmates like James Coburn and Robert Vaughn and studied as much about the craft of theatre as possible. Morrison has a long and distinguished acting career and says she was preordained to be an actress; her parents had a passion for theater and film and passed it on to her. CONTINUED ON PAGE 11.

Hill Street Historians Take Over LA

This summer the Studio has hired local college students who have expressed an interest in local history to assist in our collection efforts and to expand our interpretations of local history to include their point of view. This influenced the reach of the Studio's efforts, The Hill Street Historians (as they like to be called) are a vibrant group of smart and sassy individuals. Representing diverse majors from Art to Nursing, these summer interns have worked on projects including the Los Angeles Veterans History Project, the Pioneer Project and Common Ground (see page 8 for a project update). Students have worked throughout the summer gathering oral histories and handshakes for the Studio's ongoing project with Jeremy Rosenberg-- An Almanac of Handshakes.

HILL STREET Historians

They are led by the fearless Christian Lainez, Kelli Quiñones and Janani Subramanian. Each of these students has been working on a project for the Studio and will present their work on September 3 for the re-opening of "Love is Living LARGE in Los Angeles." Subjects include Bicycling along the LA River; a Then & Now postcard series; an introduction to the Homeless Inspiration Project; and much more.

They have represented the Studio at events across the region-- from Bloomfest in the Alameda Arts District; to the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration for the Veterans Grand Picnic hosted by Robert Rosebrock; to Pioneer Boulevard in Artesia; to the Los Angeles River with Jenny Price and the Urban Rangers. Included in this amazing group are Lucas Benitez, Marie Eleanore Cabal, Carla Calderon, Claudia Carcamo, George Castillo, Gabby Garcia, Michelle Lopez, Nicole Miller, Michael Mattice and Jonathan Tran.

FEEL BETTER ABOUT THE FUTURE, FOR ONCE!

the LA River Ramble by Jonathan Tran

With additional help and photographs provided by Michelle Lopez. Hiking in LA? Many people imagine Los Angeles to be an urban landscape with very little foliage and in many ways, these people are correct. The hike down to the LA River was not exactly similar to a hike in a national forest. There were not many animals or wild plants; instead the hikers were able to view a city whose wild life has been hidden behind buildings and cars. The LA River has become denatured; cement has been paved over the riverbed, and the small amount of water flowing has people questioning whether the LA River is really a river. That's why we need activities like the LA River Ramble by the Urban Rangers which some Studio interns participated in on Thursday August 4, 2011.

The day started off in a meeting with all the volunteers and rangers outside of the Geffen Museum of Contemporary Art, who directed us to where we were going to be stationed. Carla Calderon, Claudia Caracol and I were stationed on the Backcountry Riverside Ranger Station while George Castillo was stationed at the East-West Connector Trail, controlling the heavy flow of excited hikers. Michael Mattice and Nicole Miller were stationed underneath the Sixth Street Bridge on the Public Access Trail setting up tours to the LA River. Duties consisted of distributing waivers and permits to the public who were interested to visit the Los Angeles River and watching over the drawing and comments table. CONTINUED ON PAGE 10.

GATITA WORKSHOP MEOWS ALL

On July 16 Leo Limón taught Studio guests how to make a Gatita and everyone walked away very happy. A gifted instructor, Limón showed participants how to use color and simple illustrations to convey many ideas. One of the highlights (at right) was Marie Eleanore Cabal's amazing illustration of Leo as a cat with various cats represented in his iconic styles. Note the paw clouds and "Van Gogh" sky. Right: Leo proudly displaying the work. Those who missed the exhibit may visit its online profile through the LA History Archive. Special thanks to Leo for making it such a great event.

The Studio Gets Their Bloom on at Bloomfest 2011

by Marie Eleanore Cabal

Bloomfest. A cornucopia of art, music, history, and culture, the Studio for Southern California History partook in festivities last Saturday, July 23. Assigned to Booth #28, Studio staff and friends alike were treated to an explosion of sound, taste and color, all in celebration of Joel Bloom, the unofficial mayor and founder of what is now known as the Downtown Los Angeles Arts District. Food trucks and booths lined the streets of Rose, Traction and 3rd, their asphalt grounds traversed by Bloomfest attendees and their canine companions under the hot summer sun. Displaying merchandise ranging from rocks painted by LA river artist Leo Limón to shirts emblazoned with the Studio logo, to histories of people like Ruben Salazar, Studio staff kept themselves cool with exotic snow cones from a nearby stall—made up of flavor combos like peach and sage—and other Bloomfest swagger. Of course, no Studio field day would be complete without oral histories; the staff, divided into teams that took turns (wo) manning the station and exploring the festival while interviewing Bloomfest attendees about their experiences within the city of Los Angeles. Visitors were serenaded by indie groups like Hello Vegas and Love Grenades while browsing the various art prints and tees.

The Hill Street Historians weren't really impressed until Studio supporter extraordinaire Isa-Kae Meksin arrived and introduced the students to Lili Lakich -- CONTINUED ON PAGE 11.

Soda Tasting for the Southwest

by Jonathan Tran

Author with Marie Cabal & George Castillo.

Beautiful evening, live music, and plenty of soda tasting provides an ideal approach to end a summer day and most importantly an effective method to raise funds for the Southwest Museum. The Summer Soda Tasting took place on Sunday, July 25th, 2011. The soda tasting was sponsored by Galco's Soda Pop Stop, located on 5702 York Boulevard. Proceeds from the event went towards donations to the Southwest Museum--LA's oldest museum and repository of the world's biggest collection of Native American objects. Though closed, the Southwest Museum is clearly loved by many. The turnout for the event was high. There were long lines upon entering and checking out, however customer service was exceptional -- Charles Phoenix entertained and mixed soda nonalcoholic cocktails-- and the lines were speedy. Upon entering, it was impossible not to be drawn in by the vintage, old-school feel of the store. Galco's Soda Pop Stop featured a vast array of unique and novelty beverages. The beverages served during the soda tasting included Bundaberg to Red Ribbon to Hank's. Being a novice soda drinker, it was exciting to try out the different flavors. An unexpected favorite was almond-flavored soda, which was a refreshing change from the usual Coke and Pepsi. CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Navigating LA leaves the Studio by George Castillo

A thrilling month of art ended in June when the Studio announced the closing of Navigating LA. Curated by students from Dr. Reina Prado's Cultural Studies course "Welcome to LA" at Claremont Graduate University, Navigating LA explored the movement and navigation of people, communities, and borders across time. The exhibit featured multiple free events designed to show how art can convey multiple meanings. While we are sad to see Navigating LA go, we know the students will continue to do amazing work in and out of the classroom and in art. The exhibit opened with a great start on May 6th-- Lysa Flores sang for the opening reception. CONTINUED ON PAGE 10.

Updates on Common Ground: Histories of the Ambassador and Its Neighborhood
by George Castillo

Common Ground officially started last April and we are proud to announce the latest updates to this important project. The Studio collected over 70 historic postcards on the neighborhood with help from Ambassador aficionado Tess Inman and over 100 articles on the history of the neighborhoods. Additionally, we have interviewed a dozen individuals on the importance of the neighborhood and how it changed over time. In addition to being assisted by the New Open World Academy's fantastic teachers like Felicia Perez (above), the Studio has been assisted by Margaret Burke--long time director of public relations at the Ambassador Hotel and author of Are the Stars Out Tonight?, an amazing history of the hotel. As the photograph here shows, both individuals showed off their tattoos on a recent tour of the renovated campus. With the help of students and faculty, Studio interns have used the summer to build on this work and are developing web-based projects on the neighborhood and will lead a Walking Tour on September 17, 2011.

If you are interested in attending this special tour or would like to be interviewed for the project, be sure to contact the Studio. The Studio would like to once again thank all of the students, faculty, and friends who have helped us with Common Ground so far. Thank you!

Remembering Kullu-Kae

by George Castillo

We mourn the loss of beloved official Studio muse, heroine and feline. The Studio was first introduced to Kullu when we moved to our current location and invited her to step inside, look around, eat, and offer her opinion on our use of space. After touring the Studio and meeting the staff, Kullu meowed her approval and quickly became one of the most cherished visitors to the Studio. Her beautiful orange fur and adorable white-tipped tail were matched in splendor by her lovely, warm personality towards many Studio guests. Kullu always made a special appearance during events, walking tours, or even just to meow a hello to a friendly visitor. One of our last memories of Kullu was when she came over to introduce herself to high school students getting ready for a walking tour. As always, our guests loved Kullu.

As our time with Kullu grew, so did our love and admiration for her. Eventually, she became a member of the Studio family and had her own throne (a chair covered with a red blanket) in our office so that we could have someone to inspire and motivate us throughout our day with a loving glance, an encouraging meow, or a purr that seemed so soothing, it could only have originated from a place overflowing with love and ready to impart wisdom into the lives of others.

Kullu-Kae was one of the smartest (and oldest at 14 years old) cats the Studio staff has ever met. Obviously, a cat like Kullu could only have fostered such a loving and caring demeanor after years of life experience. She was so friendly, so affectionate, and so wise that I wouldn't doubt that when we met her, she knew her time on Earth was almost up. They say that those closest to death should be watched carefully because they are teaching the rest of us how to live – and Kullu definitely taught us how to live. She taught us to always express kindness and love to strangers and to spend time with those we cherish and appreciate. Thank you, Kullu-Kae. The Studio loves and misses you.

LA RIVER RAMBLE - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Throughout the day Carla and I managed to take a break from setting up and went to visit the 6th street entrance to the river. Then, we were guided underneath a tunnel that exited out on the LA River. I went down to the LA River and was able to see the sunset and hear an LA River Ranger talk about the history of the river and how the LA River was crucial to the founding of Los Angeles. Participants of the tour were asked to share ideas on what the LA River could be. One popular idea was the creation of community parks beside the river.

The LA River Rangers were very resourceful and helped educate the hikers on the history of the LA River. The hikers were allowed to explore three trails: The LA River Corridor Loop Trail, the East-West Connector Trail across the 1st Street Bridge, and the Public Access Trail. The Interns at the Studio had a great experience on the LA River --a nice change from their usual fast-paced city life.

NAVIGATING LA - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Other events included a poetry reading organized by Claremont student Allie Fernandez. Poet Gloria Alvarez read her work including her poem "Contrastes/Contrasts" which was put into a lesson plan by student Jennifer Escobar, available on the LA History Archive. Escobar also organized a panel on Leo Politi, the children's book author and talented artist. Attendees included Harry Yan, George Yan, Frank Yan, and Mary Yan Joe ("Moy Moy"), featued in Leo Politi's children's book Moy Moy; Ellen Daigle, artist and Politi family friend; Fabricio Cervantes, LA historian writer, and director; Ann Stalcup, author of Leo Politi, Artist of the Angels. This panel will be available as a podcast in the Fall. The Studio offers its most sincere thanks to all the students, educators, panelists, and visitors that we met over the course of this exhibit.

SOUTHWEST SODA SIPPERS - FROM PAGE 7

There is a flavor of soda for every type of person, from quirky to odd, to fruity. They also offer an abundance of candy selections that brought back sentimental childhood memories for many adults. The selection of candies includes Big Hunk, OhHenry! and old-fashioned Hershey's. What made the event a success was the exceptional selection of beverages, the amazing customer service, and the fact that everything was for a good cause. Overall, the Summer Soda Tasting was an enjoyable event that brought the community together.

BLOOMFEST - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

world renowned neon artist whose studio was adjacent to the Bloomfestivities -- and truly represented cutting edge LA art. Lakich generously opened her gallery to the students, and Isa-Kae Meksin proved once again that she is the most connected person in Los Angeles and a hero to the Studio.

PROFILE IN COURAGE - MORRISON ... FROM PAGE 3.

She has appeared in over 65 plays, as a regular on several television series, in guest-starring roles in over 150 television series and in 15 feature films. Many fans affectionately remember her as Sister Sixto opposite Sally Field in the hit 1960s television series The Flying Nun , and appearing alongside the late Gregory Peck in the western "MacKenna's Gold." In 1973, Morrison met Walter Dominguez, a non-fiction writer, while both were working on a feature film. Within two weeks of dating, Dominguez moved in with Morrison; the two fell in love and married. As long-standing community activists, Morrison and her husband have been honored by the city of Los Angeles for their work with the homeless as well as their community involvement in the aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

Coming from an age in Hollywood where respect was key to succeeding in the business, she prides herself in being close with the crew and cast of a production and fans outside of the job. One instance that inspired this attitude was a chance encounter at the age of 15 with Academy Award winning actress Mercedes McCambridge while working at the May Company on Wilshire Boulevard. Morrison had come into work after her parakeet, Chico, died and was very distraught. McCambridge stepped into the Housewares section where Morrison had been working and noticed she was upset. "She came over to me and asked me what was wrong and was just so kind. I told her about my bird and she was so dear. This extraordinary actress that I idolized...it not only comforted me, it taught me something," she recalls.

She enjoys having people recognize her and thank her for making them laugh. In return, Morrison thanks them because the legacy she wants to leave is one of laughter. Morrison recently returned to her roots when she was inducted into the Bronx Walk of Fame. A street sign bearing her name was unveiled on 159th Street and Grand Concourse Boulevard. Morrison has joined the ranks of past honorees Secretary of State Colin Powell, filmmaker Stanley Kubrick, and talk-show host Regis Philbin in the street naming tradition. She is also a three time cancer survivor but retains a spirit of peace and optimism that is as infectious as her winning smile.

Support the Studio -- Become A Member!

Benefits include:

- A unique artwork by Leo Limon -- a Gatita rock (while supplies last);
- A subscription to proofs the Studio's newsletter;
- A 25% discount on Studio products;
- Membership rates with Partners like TOWN HALL LA

Membership categories

Student/Senior $25
Individual $55
*Friend $75
Family $100
(2 adults & 2 kids)

Patron $250
Supporting $500
**Benefactor $1,000

***Fees are annual ***

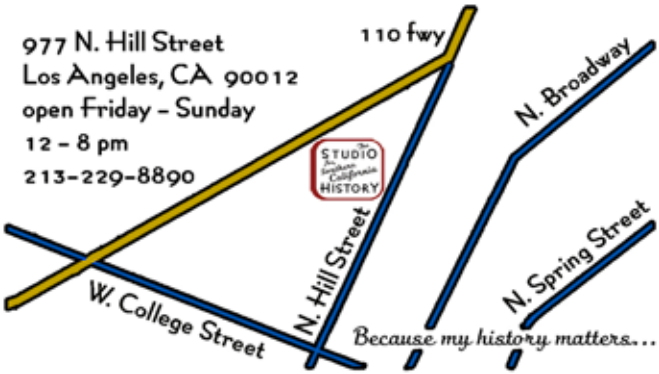
2011 -2012 Schedule of Events

September 3 – Opening: "Love is Living LARGE in Los Angeles" re-opens with mini gallery showing Linda Vallejo's Electric Series. Student presentations begin at 4 and Lysa Flores performs at 8 pm.

September 17 – Ambassador Hotel Walking Tour
led by the Hill Street Historians

October 3 – Opening: mini gallery with Ofelia Esparza's Altares.

October 29 – Evergreen Cemetery Walking Tour
led by Christian Lainez & Steve Goldstein

November 5 – Opening: mini gallery with Emilio Venegas.

December 3 – Chinatown Walking Tour
led by Monica Pelayo.