



THE HUNTINGTON
Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

NEWS

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CONTACTS: Thea M. Page, 626-405-2260, tpage@huntington.org
Lisa Blackburn, 626-405-2140, lblackburn@huntington.org

**INNOVATIVE DIGITAL EXHIBITION
TO FOCUS ON DYNAMIC CHANGES IN POSTWAR BUILT
ENVIRONMENT OF LOS ANGELES**

*“Form and Landscape: Southern California Edison and the Los Angeles Basin, 1940–1990”
launches in spring 2013 as part of Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A.*

It draws on vast Huntington archive of historic photos from Southern California Edison



Doug White, “Shopping Bag Market,” (undated).
Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens.

SAN MARINO, Calif.—The Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West will present an innovative, web-based digital exhibition this spring with more than a dozen authors, critics, and scholars curating photographs from the 70,000 strong Southern California Edison archive of The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. “Form and Landscape: Southern California Edison and the Los Angeles Basin, 1940–1990” is part of Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A., an initiative of the Getty celebrating the city’s modern architectural heritage through exhibitions and programs at arts institutions in and around

Los Angeles starting in April 2013. “Form and Landscape” will launch in May and will be available through www.huntington.org.

The digital exhibition is organized by William Deverell, history professor at University of Southern California and director of the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West, and Greg Hise, history professor at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Among the curators are Deverell and Hise as well as Christopher Hawthorne, *Los Angeles Times* architecture critic; artist Mark Klett; writer Ruben Martinez; author D. J. Waldie; and The Huntington’s own curator of photographs, Jennifer A. Watts. Each has chosen 25 to 30 images relating to regional landscape and infrastructural change in Los Angeles according to themes such as “scale,” “text,” “domesticity,” “mobility,” and “noir.” Each curated set will include an accompanying essay. Three public forums, each at a different location in Los Angeles County and featuring rotating panelists drawn from the group of guest curators, will complement the digital exhibition.

“I’ve been fascinated with the Edison archive since it arrived here,” said Deverell of the tremendous trove of images that Edison International donated to The Huntington in 2006. “It’s such a gold mine of history—from the late 19th century to the late 20th century Edison had photographers out in the field documenting everything from the installation of telephone poles to various other electrical applications. Now we get to have some fun, dig more deeply, and look for what else is in these pictures—behind the telephone poles and switching stations. And there’s a lot there.”

In the late 1880s several small independent electric companies worked to bring power to Southern California. In 1897, West Side Lighting Co. and Los Angeles Electric Co. merged to form Edison Electric Co. of Los Angeles, which would go on to acquire other local electric companies and later become an international conglomerate. Remarkably, as it played a vital role in creating and expanding the regional landscape and infrastructure, Edison photographers also documented the process, leaving a vast [archive](#) of photos that reveal the interiors of businesses, restaurants, nightclubs, and other architectural gems of early Los Angeles as well as small tourist hotels and rooming houses on Bunker Hill.

“Form and Landscape” will focus just on the post–World War II period and will likely include examples of power generation and transmission, commercial architecture, and “All Electric” kitchens. Deverell and Hise have allowed curators leeway as to what images to choose and how to interpret them. For example, D. J. Waldie is writing a murder mystery for his section, titled “noir.”

In addition to the themed sections, cinematographer Josh Oreck plans to choose specific images from the exhibition and rephotograph the views, creating yet another commentary on the nature of change to the modern built environment.

“This exhibition will highlight a remarkable story of regional metropolitan expansion *and* the extraordinary archive itself,” says Hise, who also hopes the digital format will bring the material to new audiences.

Related events

Three public panel discussions will complement the exhibition this spring.

April 1 (Monday), 7:30 pm. “Better Living Through Electricity: Los Angeles, 1940–1990” □
Huntington Library, Friends’ Hall

In a moderated discussion inspired by “Form and Landscape: Southern California Edison and the Los Angeles Basin, 1940–1990,” panelists explore the ubiquitous distribution of electricity in industrial, commercial, infrastructural, and residential sites throughout greater Los Angeles in the second half of the 20th century.

April 15 (Monday), 7 p.m. “Inexplicable Los Angeles: Ghosts and Traces, 1940–1990”
University of Southern California, Intellectual Commons, Doheny Library

In a moderated discussion inspired by “Form and Landscape: Southern California Edison and the Los Angeles Basin, 1940–1990,” panelists explore hidden, lost, inexplicable, and often strange aspects of the metropolitan history of greater Los Angeles as revealed by an ostensibly narrow image archive devoted to infrastructure and electrification.

July 11 (Thursday), 7 p.m. “Laboratory for Modernity, Los Angeles, 1940–1990”
Pasadena Public Library, Central Branch

In a moderated discussion inspired by “Form and Landscape: Southern California Edison and the Los Angeles Basin, 1940–1990,” panelists explore the rise of modern architectural and infrastructural culture in metropolitan Los Angeles in the second half of the 20th century.

Support for the online exhibition and public programs has been provided by the Getty Foundation.

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About The Huntington

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens is a collections-based research

and educational institution serving scholars and the general public.

The Huntington is located at 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino, Calif., 12 miles from downtown Los Angeles. More information about The Huntington can be found online at www.huntington.org.

Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A. celebrates the city's modern architectural heritage through exhibitions and programs at cultural institutions in and around L.A. starting in April 2013. Supported by grants from the Getty Foundation, Modern Architecture in L.A. is a wide-ranging look at the postwar built environment of the city as a whole, from its famous residential architecture to its vast freeway network, revealing the city's development and ongoing impact in new ways.