



Pico Building, Los Angeles, c. 1930s by Orpha Mae Klinker. 25 x 30 inches, Oil on canvas

Casa de la Guerra

Brushes and Lens Capture California Landmarks

By Jeanelle Casillas / CASA

BEFORE PHOTOGRAPHY, artists captured their surroundings and moments in time with the flowing strokes of a paint brush. The current exhibition at Casa de la Guerra brings that age into dialogue with the present when they present *Orpha Klinker and Bill Dewey: Landmarks of California*, on view through October 19th. The exhibition speaks to the ongoing value of historic preservation as it pairs 19th century paintings and 20th century photographs of “historic landmarks.” *Orpha Klinker and Bill Dewey: Landmarks of California* features paintings by Orpha Mae Klinker (1891-1964) and photography by local photographer William B. Dewey.

“What I found significant about the photo documentation of these historic buildings and sites was that we as a state and a culture have made great efforts to preserve these places in order to maintain the continuity of who we are as a people and what our state looked like at the beginning of the 19th century. And, while a great deal has been lost, it is gratifying and important that nevertheless, these places that I photographed have been, and will be, preserved,” shared Dewey.

In an effort to support the nascent California Historic Landmark Registration Program, Klinker lectured around the State using paintings from her “Landmarks of California” series. Many of her paintings were also published in the *Los Angeles Times*.

Landmarks of California is the second incarnation of an exhibition that Frank Goss, co-owner of Sullivan Goss— An American Gallery, curated in 2008. After acquiring the series from the Klinker estate and in an effort to continue Klinker’s project of documenting California’s historic resources, Goss commissioned Dewey to photograph the same sites. Dewey photographed approximately 25 locations that ranged from the city of Sonoma in Northern California to San Diego in Southern California.



Castro Adobe, San Juan Bautista, c. 1930s by Orpha Mae Klinker. 18 x 22 inches, Oil on canvas



Pico Building, Los Angeles, 2008 by Bill Dewey. 11 x 14 inches, Ultrachrome Print



Castro Adobe, San Juan Bautista, 2008 by Bill Dewey. 11 x 14 inches, Ultrachrome Print

“When we were offered these early treasures, I jumped at the chance to show them,” recalled Goss. “However, so much time had passed, that I thought they needed some sort of context. Dewey is a very well recognized architectural photographer. He does lots of work for our State and Federal government agencies where historic documentation is important. It was a natural fit to commission him to travel the State and place his tripod exactly where Klinker would have placed her easel.”

The exhibition at Casa de la Guerra fills two rooms and highlights about a dozen sites from the Klinker/Dewey collection. Side by side, Klinker’s oil and watercolor paintings (made between 1929 and 1939) are paired with Dewey’s black and white photographs, showcasing the evolution of each site. Some of the structures in Klinker’s paintings still stand, hardly changed, others are crowded by modern interventions, and others no longer exist.

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– Frank Goss, Sullivan Goss

“I’m thrilled with the way the exhibition turned out,” shared Dr. Anne Petersen, Associate Director for Historical Resources at the SB Trust for Historic Preservation (SBTHP). “Casa de la Guerra is a great place for art exhibits. It has an atmosphere that really suits this particular project...The pairings encourage us to be thoughtful about caring for the historic resources in our community so that they continue to be available to future generations. It’s a perfect fit with the mission of SBTHP”

And, Dewey was the perfect photographer for this project. He has a background in historic building photography and worked for the Library of Congress for the last 20 years. Dewey finds that the black and white medium “has a timeless quality that allows the viewer to experience seeing the photograph as though it could have been taken yesterday or many years ago.”

The biggest challenge Dewey experienced was photographing locations where the buildings no longer exist. Without a building to photograph Dewey only had rough descriptions of locations or approximate street addresses.

Dewey hopes that exhibition viewers, “will come away with an appreciation for the legacy of our early California architecture and that these great examples have been preserved, need to be preserved, and still influence the architectural styles of what we see around us in Southern California today.” He finds it “particularly gratifying that this exhibit is hung on the walls of the Casa de la Guerra, which itself is a prime example of a preserved historic structure, thanks in great part to the SB Trust for Historic Preservation.”

Casa de la Guerra is located at 15 E. De la Guerra and is open Fri-Sun 12-4pm. Admission is \$5/\$4. For more info call 965-0093 or visit www.sbthp.org/casa

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