CLUI Bus Tours Probe L.A.’s Hinterland

Three bus tours organized by the CLUI took tourists into the desert regions surrounding Los Angeles, as part of the CLUI’s exhibit called Hinterland: A Voyage Into Exurban Southern California, which was displayed at the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibits (LACE) gallery in Hollywood, May 29 to July 6.

Tourism travelling through the hinterland while excerpts from Antonioni’s desert movie epic “Zabriskie Point” plays on monitors overhead. CLUI photo

The series of day-long bus tours took tourists into the area outside the urban zones—the hinterland—to visit sites selected for their unusual and expressive qualities. Due to the spread-out nature of the hinterland, the tours covered as much as 500 miles and lasted ten hours. An extensive program of videos related to the sites and regions being visited helped provide context for the tours, and to fill some of the time in-between sites. Interpretation of the sites was provided through a narrative prepared by Matthew Coolidge of the CLUI, and by “local briefers” who came aboard the bus whenever possible.

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Hinterland Show Closes

After Six Week Run in Hollywood

The Center’s Show called Hinterland: A Voyage Into Exurban Southern California, was displayed at the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibits (LACE) gallery in Hollywood for six weeks, during which time it elicited some interesting interpretations...

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Utah’s Green River Complex

Called “New Area 51”

Actual Prospects of This Being So Seem Slim

The gate leading to the main part of the mothballed complex. Photo by Doug Denk

A remote Army facility in eastern Utah was called “the New Area 51” in Popular Mechanics Magazine’s June cover story. According to the magazine, the Green River Complex, along with Michael Air Field at Dagway Proving Ground, may become an aviation test complex, replacing the overpublicized Groom Lake base known as “Dreamland” and “Area 51.” Though based on limited evidence, the claim has increased interest in the Green River Complex, sufficient to warrant a characterization of the facility in these pages.

Officially called the Utah Launch Complex, the 3,650 acre site in the bare hills north of Moab, was established in 1961 as a launch point for test missiles bound for the Army’s 4,000 square-mile White Sands Missile Range, in New Mexico. The site has been in “caretaker status” since the last launch in 1974, and has fallen into disrepair. It seems to be an unlikely candidate for a new classified defense project site, as was discovered by field researcher Doug Denk, reporting to the Area 51 Research Center:

It didn’t take a whole lot of searching to find the place, which is located next to Interstate 70, about six miles east of the town of Green River, Utah. To get there, simply get off I-70 at exit 162, and head south (away from town). You will immediately come to a “T” intersection. Turn left and you’re on the main drag of the Green River Launch Complex.

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Forbidden Gardens

A Little Bit of Imperial China in Eastern Texas

The Forbidden City, under a canopy in the new part of East Texas.

CL1) photo by Marc Curtin

Field Report by Mark Curtin

Located amidst the rice fields of East Texas is a scale model of the Forbidden City of Imperial China, and the great tomb of the Emperor Qin. These two models are part of the expanding Forbidden Gardens, a massive outdoor museum covering more than 40 acres, and containing thousands of figures, and model buildings.

The main attraction is a 40,000 square foot model of the Forbidden City, the walled center of government of Imperial China, established in Beijing in the 15th century during the Ming Dynasty. 22,000 human figures populate the model city, each only a few inches tall. Hundreds of buildings duplicate the city's layout and architecture with beautiful detail, at a 1/200 scale.

The other major component of the site is a model of the tomb of the Emperor Qin (pronounced "chin", after whose dynasty China was named), who is known as the first emperor of China, and who ruled during the third century BC. The model reflects the known elements of the actual tomb, which lies inside a hill in central China. The emperor's burial mound is said to cover 20 square miles, and is still mostly unexcavated. So far uncovered are eight thousand life-sized terra-cotta figures, each unique, and lined up in rows. Though Forbidden Gardens has duplicated them at half size, and in fiberglass, it is still an impressive sight.

The museum is being built and financed by Ira Poon, a Chinese-American business man from Seattle. Plans call for a strollway, and boat rides through the park, as well as a massage parlor, tea shop, a meeting room for weddings and receptions, and, eventually, a hotel.

Forbidden Gardens is located in Katy Texas, just west of Houston. There is an admission charge.

Green River Complex

continued from page 1

The facility itself, officially referred to on signs here as the Utah Launch Complex, is in a shallow valley roughly four miles long east-west and one mile wide north-south. It consists of a total of ten significant buildings and structures scattered throughout the valley, with a few other old foundations and poles here and there. Overall, the complex is in a terrible state of disrepair. Signs are unreadable, windows are boarded up, and most buildings are visibly damaged in some way. The power lines to all the buildings I inspected had been smashed to bits.

Starting on the west side of the complex, at the "T" intersection mentioned above, and heading east up the main drag, the complex is laid out like this: After about 0.5 miles, there are three large, gray metal buildings on the right. These are completely fenced off, and are labeled as the Magazine Area. These buildings sit only about 200 yards south of I-70, and are plainly visible from the freeway.

At 2.2 miles is the intersection of Crystal Geyser Road with the Meteorological Building (as indicated by a sign out front) just to the south. The building is completely empty and in sad shape. Continuing on the dirt road to the south leads through some low hills and then south west to the geyser and the east bank of the Green River. North on Crystal Geyser Road leads past a communications tower, on a hill to the east, then under the interstate.

At the end of the main drag, at mile 3.3, is the launch part of the complex, with five major structures. It is enclosed by a chain-link and barbed-wire topped perimeter fence, and is hidden from immediate view from I-70 by some hills to the north. The gate into the main complex is usually wide open, and there are no visible "No Trespassing" signs anywhere in the area.

At the center is a bunker-type, concrete and earth structure. Immediately behind the bunker is what appears to be one of the launch sites, now only a concrete slab with metal rails along its length. A couple hundred yards south of the bunker is the largest building in the complex, known to be the former device assembly building. Also in this main complex area is a large shed or garage, and a collapsed tower.

I could find no signs of any recent activity, anywhere on the site, in fact, the place looks utterly abandoned. In the four or five hours I spent examining the site, I never saw another person.

The Lay of the Land Summer 1992

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Tour 1, entitled Antelope Valley: The Cradle and Grave of Aerospace, visited some of the major, and minor, aerospace facilities in the Antelope Valley, north of Los Angeles, including a tour around the perimeter of Air Force Plant 42, where the Stealth Bomber is made, and a visit to a "secret" radar-cross-section test facility, used to develop radar-evasive military aircraft.

Tourists milling around the Aviation Warehouse Inc. yard, at El Mirage, CA, where aircraft parts are stored and used for films. Places from this yard have been tracked all over the country and used in over 100 feature films, including "Speed", "Here", and "Cruel Air".

At the "grave" end of the aviation spectrum, the tour bus visited an aircraft scrap yard where an unusual collection of parts of all sorts of aircraft are used as props in films. Tourists walked through the yard, guided by a "local believer" who pointed out fragments of aircraft that were used in various notorious Hollywood movies. The tour continued to Edwards Air Force Base, the active and historic military aviation R&D base where the sound barrier was broken for the first time, and across the runways of Mojave Airport, where airliners as large as 747's are stored and cut up for scrap.

Giant Rock, a stop on the second Hinterland tour, was the site of many UFO reports, and is the former home of the Van Duzel family, as well as a current biker rave site. It is said to weigh more than Los Angeles' City Hall.

Called The Desert Prosper, the second tour took place two weeks later, and went east of the Great City, to a remote desert art-deco pumping plant along the Colorado River Aqueduct, to an abandoned mine, being considered as a massive dump for Los Angeles' trash, and to various unusual spiritual sites, such as the Institute of Metaphysics, the Integrasion, and Giant Rock, a location with a rich history of unusual uses, including as a major UFO site in the 1950's.

The third and final tour went "south" (the other two went "north" and "east" of Los Angeles, respectively), circumnavigating the Salton Sea, an unusual inland sea, that formed by accident in 1905, filling up a dry valley to become California's largest inland body of water in just a few years. The tour, entitled The Salton Sea and Imperial Valley: Inundation and Desolation, examined a number of the unique land uses that have materialized along the salty and hot shores of the sea, including a massive geothermal power complex, a chemical waste dump, a former nuclear weapons lab site, and numerous crumbling resorts.

The luxury motor coaches used for the Hinterland tours were provided by Sunrise Plaza Charter Services, and departed from and returned to the LACE gallery, where tour participants could view the gallery exhibit of one hundred 11 by 14 inch color photographs, before departure.

All three tours sold out rather quickly, and the CLUI is considering organizing another tour series in coming months.

On the Salton Sea tour, the bus stopped at Salvation Mountain, an impressive landmark next to Slab City, where Leonard Knight has been painting a hillside for twelve years.

Cocktails were served to Hinterland tourists at the last stop on the last tour, an abandoned yacht club on the north shore of the Salton Sea. Hors d'oeuvres included a variety of smoked, caviar, and dried fish.
Unique Commercial Satellite Launch Complex Under Construction In Long Beach

A unique facility under construction in Long Beach Harbor is about to become part of the first completely commercial satellite launch platform system in the country, called Sea Launch Venture. The site in Long Beach, located at the end of an artificial peninsula on Terminal Island, on land leased from the former Long Beach Naval Shipyard, will be the home port for the venture, which will use a rocket launch pad that travels out to sea for launches. High-bay engineering buildings currently under construction at Long Beach will house final assembly and fueling of the satellites.

Sea Launch Venture is a consortium of European companies, led by Boeing, which owns 40% of the $500 million project, and is building the Long Beach facility. The Kvænerg company of Norway, Europe's largest shipbuilder, is building the launch platform, from a converted 31,000 ton North Sea oil drilling rig. The semi-submersible platform, one and a half football fields wide, is expected to be delivered to Long Beach in the spring of 1998, traveling across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans using its own internal engines. For launches, a 650 foot control ship (under construction at a Kvænerg shipyard in Scotland) would travel with the platform to the launch site, carrying the rocket in its hold. The specialized built ship would dock with the launch pad, transfer the rocket to the pad, then retreat to a safe distance to serve as the launch and launch center for the launch.

CLUI Expands Presence at Wendover Airbase

A Russian company is building the upper stages of the rockets, and a Ukrainian company will supply the Zenit rocket boosters that will send the payloads out of Earth's atmosphere. The first launch is scheduled for June, 1998.

Hughes Space and Communications, the biggest commercial satellite manufacturer, which manufactures satellites in nearby El Segundo, will be the first customer, and has already committed to a $1 billion, 10 launch order. Space Systems Loral has also promised five launch orders. Other commercial satellite companies are expected to sign on, as there is a booming market for communications satellites, and few launch sites to accommodate them (the only other launch sites in the United States are Cape Canaveral, Florida, and Vandenberg Air Force Base in Central California, both of which are government controlled sites).

Sea Launch expects to perform around eight launches a year, most from equatorial waters in the Pacific Ocean, about 1000 miles south of Hawaii. Though the launches will take place from open water, docking facilities at the South Pacific Island chain of Kiribati will be used to service the payloads during multi-launch missions.

Launching from the equator enables satellites to enter into an equatorial orbit, where they are most effective for many communications purposes. Sea Launch’s ability to sail to other parts of the world, to launch satellites into a polar orbit, for example, is an advantage to this type of launch platform. Sea Launch is competing directly with ArianeSpace, the European space consortium, which currently holds 60% of the commercial satellite launch market, and has an equatorial launch complex in the jungle at Kourou, French Guyana, in South America.

CLUI Expands Presence at Wendover Airbase

In preparation for the artist in residence program, which commences this fall at The Center’s Wendover complex, in Wendover, Utah, The Center has taken a lease on another building, which will be restored to a functional state in coming weeks. Originally built during WWII, when the Wendover Airbase was the largest military complex in the country, the building has a view to the south, across the Wendover Bombing Range and the hangar where the Enola Gay was housed when it was being prepared for the nuclear attack on Japan. The Center will use the building as a studio to support artists and others working at Wendover.
The Metropolitan Water District's Sepulveda Canyon Facility
A Vital Water Plant Perched Between Cultural Pillars

Many Los Angeles motorists are familiar with the Sepulveda Pass, a
Canyon on the 405 freeway, and the eight lane artery connecting
LA's west side and the San Fernando Valley. The steep sides of the
vegetated canyon are largely undeveloped, with the exception of
two large cultural complexes on the west wall of the pass: the
Skirball Center, a museum and Jewish Cultural Center, recently
built near the top of the pass; and the new Getty Center complex,
which looms on a sculpted plateau near the bottom. Yet few travel-
ers may be aware that a third vital complex of structures is located
in between these two prominent cultural heavyweights: The
Sepulveda Canyon Water Control Facility.

At times, as much as 10% of the city's water enters the control facil-
ity, as it comes through the pass in a nine foot diameter pipe, called
the Sepulveda Feeder. The purpose of the facility is to reduce the
pressure that builds up in the pipe as the water cascades down the
steep grade of the pass, as without a reduction, the pressure would
burst the pipe.

The Sepulveda Canyon Facility consists of five structures, built in
the early 1970's, when the feeder was built to augment the supply of
State Water that was deliverable to the City. The pipe enters the site
on the northeast side and splits into two, with one part leading into
a small power plant, and the other part connecting to the Pressure
Control Facility.

Battery of valves at the pressure control facility.

Pressure Control Facility
The Pressure Control Facility is the key feature of the site. The
facility reduces pressure that builds up in the pipe by "breaking the
head" - slowing the water down through a battery of valves. The
pipe runs through the middle of the building, splitting into a dozen
or so cone valves which de-pressurize the water by forcing it into a
conical spray within the pipe, much like the spray nozzle on a gar-
den hose.

There are three primary water supply systems that bring water to Los Angeles, and three primary water agencies that operate them:

1. The Metropolitan Water District (MWD) which operates the Sepulveda Canyon Facility, built and main-
tains the Colorado River Aqueduct. The MWD also operates five filtration plants, and owns 700 miles of
large-diameter water mains.

2. The California Department of Water Resources operates the California Aqueduct, which brings water to
Los Angeles from Northern California through the Central Valley. The State also operates reservoirs on the
edges of Los Angeles, such as Castaic Lake and Lake Perris, from which the MWD and other local suppliers
draw water.

3. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LWP) built the Los Angeles Aqueduct and, as the
largest supplier of water to Los Angeles, maintains an extensive network of supply lines and filtration plants.
The Power Station

An electrical generating plant was installed on the site to take advantage of the energy contained in the flowing water. The plant has the capacity to produce 8.6 megawatts, which is sold to the local power utility and put on the commercial grid. The rotor of the generator is turned by an "impulse turbine," a series of water jets which spray onto paddles mounted on the shaft at the base of the turbine. The ten-foot diameter rotor turns at a stately 120 revolutions per minute.

Schematic of the power plant. Courtesy MWD

Water Tanks

There are two tanks at the site, one of which is the largest in the MWD system—the top of the tank covers nearly an acre, and is 230 feet in diameter, with a capacity of 13 million gallons. The smaller tank holds another 5 million gallons, and together they are used to balance the amount of water in the system, filling and draining in response to demand and inflow.

View of the large water tank. CLEIS photo

The MWD residence.

Residence

The residence was built to accommodate a caretaker for the facility, and has been lived in by an MWD employee since the site opened. Few duties require working at the site, however, and the current tenant works at the Jensen Plant during most days. Rent on the two-story single family dwelling is less than $100 per month.

Like the rest of the water in Southern California, the water coming through the Sepulveda Feeder comes from a natural drainage system a long way off. It originates in the High Sierras of Northern California and the Sacramento River. As "State water," it travels a few hundred miles through the Central Valley, via the California Aqueduct, and rests for a while in the Castaic Reservoir, near Santa Clarita. From there it enters into the MWD system, flowing into the Jensen Filtration and Treatment plant, located at the north end of the San Fernando Valley (one of the largest water treatment plants in the world), across from the Cascades, which is where William Mulhalland turned a valve opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct for the first time in 1913, and said to the gathered citizens of Los Angeles as the water spilled into the valley, "...There it is. Take it."

Hinterland Gallery Exhibit Closes

One hundred 11" by 14" color photographs, with descriptive text panels, represented the "Hinterland" of exurbian Southern California in The Center's exhibit at the LACE Gallery in Hollywood (ending July 6). The foyer of the gallery had display panels which described The Center and its activities, to further enhance the context of the Hinterland exhibit. After a well attended opening on May 29, the show was visited by over one thousand people, and provoked some interest among local residents. Art critic David Pagel, writing in the LA Times, compared the show to the WPA documentary photo projects of the depression era, and called it an "engaging display...[that] resonates in your mind long after you've left the exhibition."
-Books, Noted-

The Evolving Landscape: Homer Ashmann's Geography, Edited by Martin J., Pasqualetti, 1997
An anthology of the writings of Homer Ashmann, a prescient geographer of the "artistic landscape," and author of such landmark essays as "Natural History of a Mine," "The Head of the Colorado Delta" and "Purpose in the Southern California Landscape."

Perceived alternately as a scenic wonder and a massive power source, Niagara Falls has an especially colorful history, and has attracted a wide variety of visionary seers, such as King Gillette, whose unspun megalony
Metropolis, to be built at the falls, was to make the great cities of the world "look like the work of ignorant savages in comparison." Burton's book aptly describes many of these wonders.

Shot on This Site: A Traveler's Guide to the Places and Locations Used in Film Famous Movies and Television Shows, by William A. Gordon, 1995
A book of film location sites across the country, organized by state, it is a sort of scattered selection of some of the more popular movies of the past, and of the locations that are easily accessible.

In Advance of the Landing: Folk Landscapes of Upper Space, by Douglas Curran, 1985
A personal and perceptive survey of individuals and organizations interested in alien contact and outer space, based on the authors travels across the USA and Canada over six or so years. Includes many nice color photos of "vernacular spaceship sculptures."

Discovering the Vernacular Landscape, by John Brinkhoff Hoffman, 1984
This book is one of the best collections of essay by J.B. Jackson, one of the fathers of modern academic landscape interpretation. Includes the essays "The Movable Dwelling and How It Came To America," and "Landscape as Seen by the Military."

A good account of the evolution of cemeteries in this country, from their early forms as small churchyard plots to the massive commercial memorial parks we see today.

 Products Available from the CLUI Help support The Center with your purchase of these unique items!

The Nevada Test Site: A Guide to America's Nuclear Proving Ground
The only book available that describes the nation's four nuclear test sites and R&D field test facility. Priced at half the publisher's list and Department of Energy official. Published by the CLUI.

60 pages, full color map and over 100 illustrations and original CLUI photographs. $12.50

Miniature Tourist View Cameras $10.00 each
Photograph Tourist View Camera
Offers views of 14 of the CLUI's Suggested Photodumps!

Nevada Test Site Tour View Camera
Tour the Nevada Test Site from the safety of home with this little viewing camera. 16 different points of interest at the Test Site are shown. Original CLUI photos!

A wonderfully illustrated book, with numerous color photographs. Classifies each of the "crop circles" in the series of that appeared in southern England through the 1980's, and describes them in vivid detail.

One of the few books that talks about the United States' recent chemical and biological weapons testing programs. Includes chapters on Fort Detrick and Dugway Proving Ground, as well as on open air tests conducted over major metropolitan areas and in subway systems.

Intern Lucy Lin Hard at Work
The position for the multicultural summer internship, supported by a grant from the Getty Grant Program of Los Angeles, was awarded to Lucy Lin, an art student from Whittier College. Lucy is hard at work over the summer doing internet research and updating the Land Use Database, sorting through sites, from the underground complexes of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to the Nation's Largest Hog Farm.

The Lay of the Land Summer 1997
The Lay Of The Land
Newsletter

The Quarterly Newsletter for The Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI)
a nonprofit research organization dedicated to finding the common ground in issues of land use.

About This Issue:
This issue of The Lay of the Land describes the successful execution of the Hinterland project, a "voyage into exurban Southern California," and talks about some unusual sites in the Southwest and beyond, including two remarkable rocket launch facilities (in fact the skies are full of rockets zipping across U.S. test ranges, from Florida to New Mexico, to Islands across the Pacific!)
Hinterland marks the completion of a major investigative foray into the landscapes of Southern California. Not that we're no longer interested this spectacular region, one of the most dynamic and diversely transformed, not to mention culturally rich regions in the country, but, rather, we will begin to increase our efforts in other parts of the country which are in need of attention, in addition to maintaining our resource on Southern California and publishing the Hinterland in a guidebook form.

The Center for Land Use Interpretation is a nonprofit research organization dedicated to improving the collective understanding of the humanland dialectic.
If you would like to assist with any of the projects mentioned in this newsletter, or any other project mentioned in CLUI literature, please contact The Center.
All gifts are tax-deductible.

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