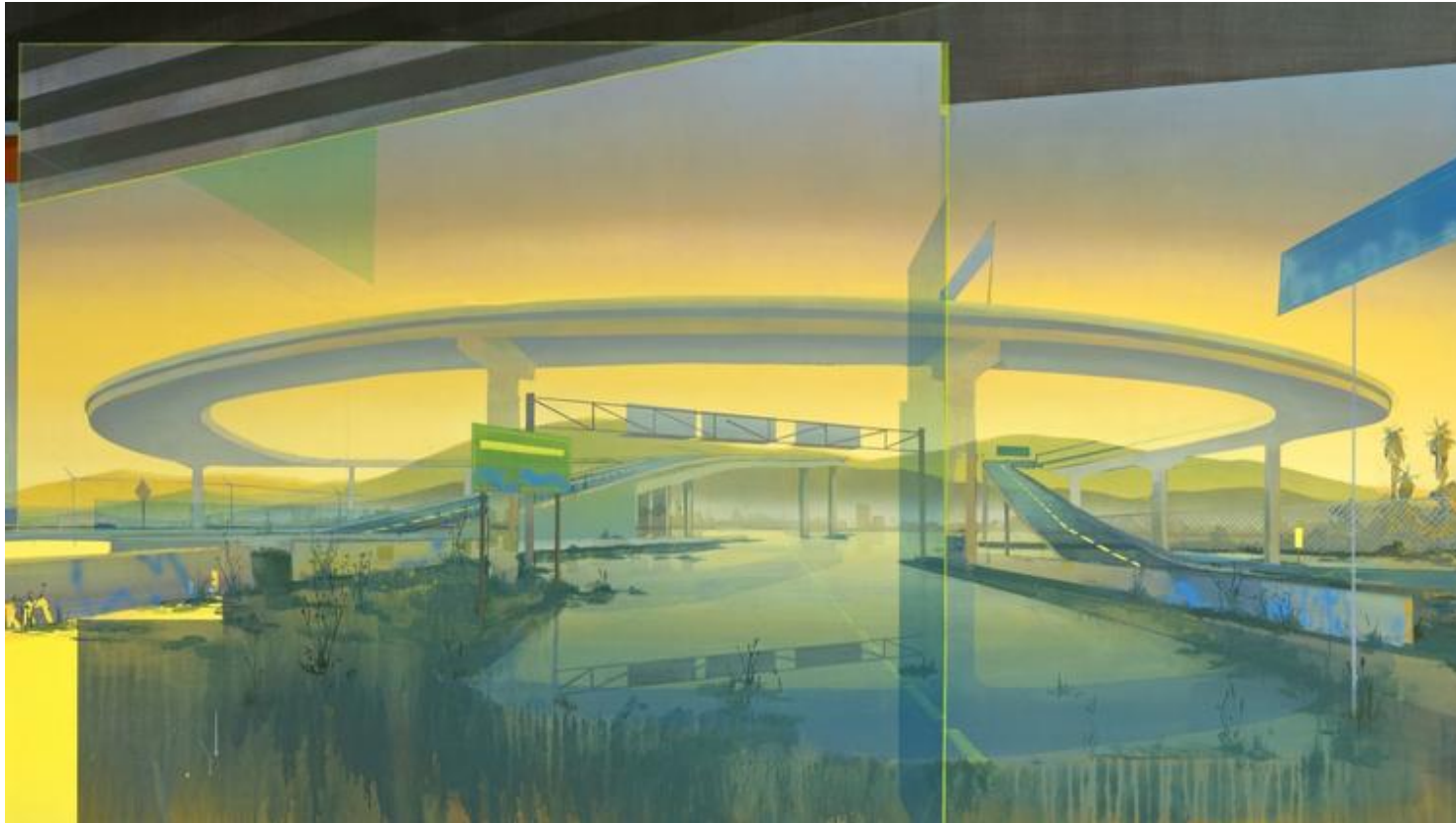


2018 shows us what San Diego's art scene aspires to be



"Until Tomorrow Comes (Part IV)," by Robert Minervini in La Jolla Historical Society's "San Diego: The Architecture of Ecologies." (Courtesy photo)

By **G. James Daichendt**

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county and is connected via a network of creative pockets. It may be best to think of where art is created, exhibited and engaged. While distance separates these cultural ity.

Some locations, like the Balboa Park museums, are like familiar friends that we regularly visit, ask questions and continue to develop deep relationships, with the comfort that they will continue to be there for us. Yet there are many more smaller art destinations, like artists' studios, ephemeral projects and public art projects that may not be as well-known but are important sites for providing new experiences that often require us to get outside of our comfort zone.

As we wrap up 2018, here are some of the most significant and interesting experiences that occurred this year across our San Diego visual art network.

Museums

There were a number of powerful museum exhibitions in 2018, but the **La Jolla Historical Society** curated one of the most memorable as it addressed the landscape of our city in the stellar exhibit “San Diego: The Architecture of Ecologies.” Addressing how San Diegans use the automobile to engage the beaches, freeways, suburban/urban areas and the border, the car is presented by 15 artists, including Robert Minervini, Doug Aitken and Margaret Noble, as both an opportunity and hinderance. While the preponderance of freeways and roads can become somewhat dystopian, the exhibit suggests there are rewards for making the trip.

Faiya Fredman, 93, enjoyed a carefully curated and sensitive installation of her work in the exhibit “The Steel Goddess” at the **Oceanside Museum of Art**. Progressing from Fredman’s mythological symbolism rooted in ancient civilizations, the installation demonstrated how her imagery evolved through new media and experimentation over a 20-year span. The artifact-like goddess is the dominant theme, and the imagery would be just as at home in an archeological dig as it is within the white cube of the museum.

The U.S.-Mexico border has been a consistent storyline in 2018, and there were a number of artists and exhibits that drew attention to our unique location. Early in the year, the **Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego** opened “Being Here With You/Estando aquí contigo,” which featured 42 artists from San Diego and Tijuana. The works were arranged so as to engage in cross-border dialogue that models how critical issues can be facilitated in a critical, yet civil, manner.

Public art

Early in the fall, artist **Julien Bismuth** restaged a performance by the late David Antin (1932-2016) that involved a team of skywriters. As the were used to write a stanza of poetry. A two-part performance that stretched to Los :h across the entire United States. Experimental and ephemeral, the unusual spacing of e advertisements over our beaches.

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There are number of inspiring public works in San Diego, but **Chris Puzio**'s "Groundswell" is a noteworthy, architecturally inspired large-scale sculpture that was recently dedicated at the Hotel InterContinental. The giant abstract installation was influenced by the ocean; the intricate aluminum and stainless-steel design gives the impression of fluidity. The mussel-like shapes that hug the form cling together into a vessel that cascades patterns upon the surrounding plaza. Bursting upward, the sculpture is strong with its wide base, yet it unfurls as it proceeds upward, as though it's absorbing its surroundings.

A flurry of activity at Liberty Station's Arts District was jumpstarted by Lissa Corina and Marina Grize in their text-based work that was installed above the structured Navy barracks. The LED letters broadcasted the text "REST WITH YOU COMES EASY." Seemingly a gesture of gratitude and admiration for the military, the phrase "Rest Easy" is commonly used by the U.S. Navy to assure those they protect. However, the ambiguous message becomes something quite different to civilians unaware of this history and can be reframed as a loving complement.

Galleries

Quint Gallery has long held an important role in contemporary exhibitions in San Diego; this year it increased its impact by adding additional spaces to its La Jolla location in what now appears to be a gallery compound. Securing the ability to curate four exhibitions simultaneously, there are three additional spaces called "Fault Line Photos, Museum of ... and Specimen," where uniquely curated and experimental installations complement the traditional gallery program. The gallery row is significant, and its debut featured work by Kelsey Brookes, De La Torre Brothers and Christopher Konecki, furthering the traffic of this important center of activity.

The North Park-based gallery **Visual** teamed with San Diego City College this past year to present a street art-inspired exhibit titled "Contribution II." The group show displayed a youthful enthusiasm as murals seemed to leap off the walls. Relishing in the aesthetic of urban art, the bright colors and accessible imagery are an inspiring and encouraging development that exists throughout San Diego but was centrally located for a short time.

Reflecting upon the San Diego's visual art landscape, we are reminded who — and where — we are. As a border city, we make art that is concerned with human rights. As a thought leader, we facilitate art projects that push boundaries and strive to be more than shoeboxes turned on their sides. As a city without a central arts district, we strive to create community through meaningful experiences dotted throughout the landscape. From North County museums and galleries to downtown public art installations, 2018 gave us quite a bit to celebrate in San Diego's creative spaces.

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