



The Art Dockuments-Tales of the Art Dock, The Drive-By Gallery

Carlton Morris Davis

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The Art Dockuments-Tales of the Art Dock, the Drive-by Gallery tell the stories of the exhibitions and artists who exhibited in this alternative gallery from 1981-1986, a period when artists moved to Downtown Los Angeles and began a large art community in the abandoned warehouses, firehouses, hotels, and other structures that lay east of Skid Row. Artists began by illegally occupying these buildings and experimenting with many alternative means to show their art. The Art Dock was one of these venues. As the community grew the city legalized their settlements, and artists became the "Golden Carrot" leading people to live in downtown. The community flourished during the 1984 Olympics, but declined there after when the cost of legalizing lofts became prohibitive to the artists. The Art Dockuments record this shifting landscape. Rents rose spectacularly. Free living lofts became condos. Many artists were forced out. Some artists still cling to this area now called "The Artist's District. The artists who exhibited in the Art Dock went on to diverse careers. Most are still artists, (one is a nationally known video artist), one became a doctor of oriental medicine, two became painters of skys in casinos around the world, another a scuba diving team leader for underwater filmmakers, and several have died. The stories tell how the artists interacted often violently with one another, the homeless, and the city officials. Some stories evoke tragedies in the community. Some stories are pure comedy. All create a vivid portrait of a exotic community living on the edge.

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