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The Autry Presents *California Continued* Opens Sunday, October 9, 2016

Project spans two new galleries and an ethnobotanical garden—the most transformative project in the Autry’s history

Shares powerful stories illuminating Native Californian ecological knowledge and present-day environmental dilemmas in the American West

Los Angeles, CA (June 13, 2016)—Through the most significant renovation since its founding in 1988, the [Autry Museum of the American West](#) opens nearly 20,000 square feet of redesigned indoor and outdoor spaces on October 9, 2016. With new temporary and core galleries, an ethnobotanical teaching garden, and an immersive media projection room, [California Continued](#) explores the ongoing and interdependent relationships between people and the California environment. Drawing on a combination of Native cultural materials, firsthand perspectives, and contemporary artwork, this project connects Native Californian history, traditional ecological knowledge, and cultural practice to address environmental issues facing Californians today.

California Continued includes: *Human Nature*, a long-term, core exhibition focusing on ongoing cultural practices for tending the environment; *The Life and Work of Mabel McKay*, a temporary exhibition showcasing the legacy of this prominent Pomo basketweaver and healer; *Human Nature Garden*, an outdoor space that explores traditional and more contemporary uses of over 60 native California plants; and *California Roadtrip*, a virtual journey through the state’s most scenic and extreme landscapes. Developed with input from a wide range of Native American advisors, *California Continued* features many Native cultural objects and works of art on view for the first time. The project was made possible through the Autry’s extensive, decade-long preservation of the historic collections of the Southwest Museum of the American Indian, which followed the 2003 merger of the two museums.

“We are thrilled to introduce these powerful and interdisciplinary exhibitions,” said **W. Richard**

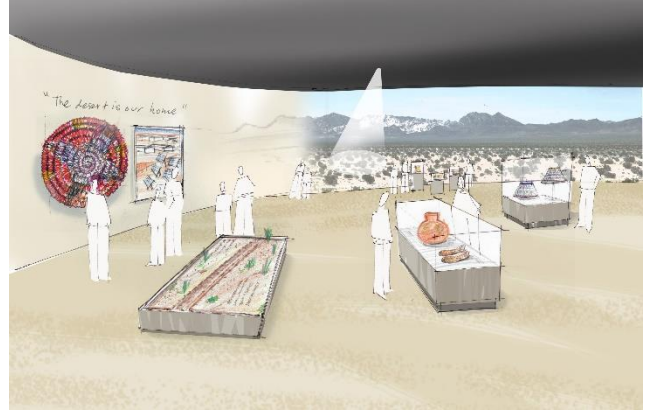
West, Jr., the Autry's President and CEO. “As with our Native forebears, our relationship to the land is informed by art, cultures, and science. These new exhibitions celebrate our interconnectedness with the environment, using the lessons of the past to better understand our present and guide us in our shared future.”

Human Nature

Focusing on four key California stories—Salmon, Fire, Desert, and Plants as Food and Medicine—*Human Nature* explores how traditional ecological knowledge can help current residents understand and care for the environment. Vividly illustrated with Native American objects and contemporary artworks, photography, soundscapes, and multimedia displays featuring present-day Native communities, the exhibition investigates the ways in which culture and ecology come together in the California landscape. As a long-term, core exhibition space, *Human Nature* is designed to allow sections to be changed out over time so more stories of California can be integrated and shared.

As **introduction**, visitors encounter a California-shaped display with 50 stunning Native objects and artworks made from natural materials found statewide, representing more than 25 tribal communities. Highlights include Chumash weaver Linda Aguilar’s basket combining traditional materials with credit card pieces and bingo chips, as well as fully feathered baskets, steatite carvings, and an exquisite archaeological clay olla. Using the declining salmon populations in the Klamath River Basin as a case study, the **Salmon** section considers mitigations inspired by Native traditions and rituals, including dam removals, fishing restrictions, and tighter controls on industrial and agricultural runoffs. Striking visuals include a hand-made canoe by Yurok carver Axel Lindgred, a wood carving of a salmon by Wiyot artist Rick Bartow, and Lyn Risling’s (Karuk) painting, *Hope and Renewal Swim Against the Current*.

The **Fire** section contrasts traditional Native uses of controlled burning with historic government policies of fire suppression. Visitors experience the power of fire through a dramatic video projection and learn how artistic, social, and cultural practices are tied to controlled burning. Culturally valuable to numerous Native communities, the unique and fragile **Desert** environment is introduced through a variety of objects from the Mojave region. A highlight is a new commission by Cahuilla artist Gerald Clarke, a six-foot diameter basket made of beer and soda cans that comments on how development, technology, and industry impinge on desert lands. The **Plants as Food and Medicine** section explores indigenous food sources such as chia and sage and the health benefits of California’s rich biodiversity—long employed by Native populations—in addressing health challenges.



Left: Rendering of the **Fire** section of *Human Nature* **Right:** Rendering of the **Desert** section of *Human Nature*

The Life and Work of Mabel McKay

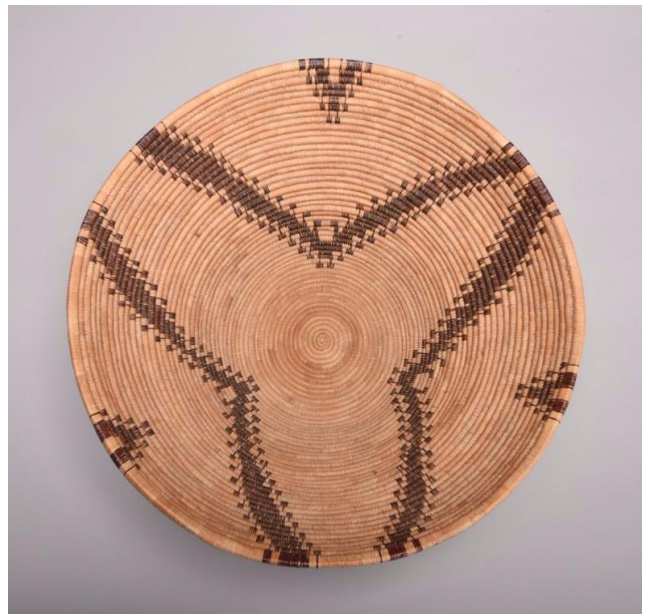
The Autry's newly renovated gallery for temporary exhibitions is dedicated to viewing the history of California through an environmental lens. The space opens with the Autry's first-ever solo show dedicated to a Native American woman's life and work. Mabel McKay (1907–1993), a Long Valley Cache Creek Pomo woman from Northern California, represents a fascinating modern figure who maintained traditional ways. McKay is celebrated not only as a master basketweaver, but also for her many roles as traditional healer, advocate for her community and the environment, and teacher who shared her knowledge of Pomo traditions worldwide.



Left: Mabel McKay demonstrating basketweaving, photograph courtesy of Sharon Rogers and Marshall McKay
Right: Two of Mabel McKay's baskets, photograph courtesy of Sharon Rogers and Marshall McKay

Widely considered to be one of the greatest California basketweavers of all time, McKay's masterworks are highlights of the exhibition. A homey tableau reproduces McKay's work environment, and other personal items in the exhibition include her deerskin dress, doctoring suitcase, and the lunch box she carried to her job at a cannery. The exhibition also reveals the "Life of a Basket," introducing the many stages of cultivation, harvesting, and processing necessary to prepare materials, as well as a variety of weaving techniques used in Pomo basketry. Punctuating this section is a dramatic wall of over 50 Pomo baskets, including examples incorporating feathers, shells, and beads. Across from the wall, a selection of some of the world's tiniest baskets—several the size of a kernel of corn—are displayed and reproduced on a video screen for up-close observation.

As explored through more than 200 cultural materials and original multimedia storytelling, McKay credited her weaving talent to her relationship with the Spirit, and she shared her healing practice with both Native and non-Native patients. She also lectured widely on Pomo traditions, and the exhibition features examples of Pomo material culture, as well artworks from fellow California Indian artists Harry Fonseca, Frank LaPena, and Dugan Aguilar. The exhibition marks McKay's political activism with installations on the American Indian Movement occupation of Alcatraz and protests against the Warm Springs Dam on Lake Sonoma, which flooded grasslands used for basket-making.



Left: Pomo feather sun basket, early 1900s. Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection, Autry Museum
Right: Coiled basket bowl made by Mabel McKay, loan courtesy of Sharon Rogers and Marshall McKay

Human Nature Garden

In the outdoor ethnobotanical garden, visitors may explore some 60 native California plant species and learn about their past and present uses. Designed by landscape architect Matthew Kennedy (Ponca), the 7,000-square-foot space comprises seating and relaxation areas, a

wetlands cove, pond, waterfall, basalt columns, and a large California Oak tree. Integrating culture with the environmental story, the setting reminds visitors that they are standing on Tongva lands.

To augment the visitor experience, the garden is supplied with listening stations, interactive stations such as an acorn grinding stone, and a downloadable digital publication with detailed information on the garden's many elements. Connections are made throughout to Native cultures and their varied uses for plant-life, and many of the plants referenced in the galleries are available here for inspection.



Rendering of the *Human Nature Garden*

California Roadtrip

Set alongside the garden, the *California Roadtrip* room is a destination for rest and inspiration. Through the six-hour panoramic and close-up dual projection film, visitors are invited to discover California's most scenic and varied landscapes and biomes. Sights include: the extreme desert climate of Death Valley, the lowest point in North America; the idyllic ocean bluffs of Big Sur and the central coastline, an exemplary feature of California's topography; the starry skies of Joshua Tree; the majestic giants of the California Redwoods, the tallest trees in the world; and the supreme elevation and jagged granite faces of Mt. Whitney, unforgivingly the highest summit in the contiguous United States, reaching 14,505 feet into the clouds.



Left: Film still of Big Sur from *California Roadtrip* **Right:** Film still of Joshua Tree from *California Roadtrip* Photography by Suzanne Mejean

Public Programs and Events

Following the Autry's [California Continued Gala](#) on October 1 and **Member Preview Days** on October 7 and 8, *California Continued* opens to the public on Sunday, October 9. Later that week, on October 13, the Autry will celebrate the winning banner design of the museum's second annual [High Five Art Contest](#). Themed to the opening of *California Continued*, the winning design will be placed on the Autry's Griffith Park building, in full view of the Interstate 5 freeway.

Many new programs will debut in 2017, including **California Yarnscape**, an outdoor fabric art installation and activities presented in partnership with Yarn Bombing Los Angeles; basketweaving workshops taught by award-winning master-weavers; and a series of environmental discussions and field trips. **Not Just a River**, a program devoted to the Los Angeles watershed, features speakers and a kayaking trip in the summer months. **Urban Nature**, a program focusing on Angelenos and nature, includes speakers and a tour of the LA State Historic Park. In June 2017, the Autry will host the annual gathering of the **California Indian Basketweavers Association**, a full weekend of workshops, exhibits, and cultural demonstrations. During the fall 2017 fire season, a panel and field trip will focus on "burning" questions of Southern California wildfire. An **eating series** will feature meals with historic ingredients and recipes, including from indigenous and California Rancho roots, among others.

Throughout *California Continued*'s inaugural year, several ongoing Autry programs will incorporate themes connected to the project's content, including [Native Voices](#) theater productions, [What Is a Western?](#) film series, the **One Book, One Autry** reading series, and [Autry Explorers](#) family activities. Event details and reservations will be available at TheAutry.org/Events.

IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Sponsors and Supporters

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Human Nature is presented by



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About the Autry Museum of the American West

The Autry is a museum dedicated to exploring and sharing the stories, experiences, and perceptions of the diverse peoples of the American West, connecting the past to the present to inspire our shared future. The museum presents a wide range of exhibitions and public programs—including lectures, film, theatre, festivals, family events, and music—and performs scholarship, research, and educational outreach. The Autry's collection of more than 500,000 pieces of art and artifacts includes the Southwest Museum of the American Indian Collection, one of the largest and most significant of Native American materials in the United States.

Hours

Museum and Autry Store:

Tuesday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Crossroads West Cafe:

Tuesday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

The museum, store, and cafe are closed on Mondays. Visit TheAutry.org for more information.