

THE WATTS TOWERS COMMON GROUND INITIATIVE: ART • MIGRATIONS • DEVELOPMENT

UCLA Conference: October 22-24, 2010
Los Angeles Festival: September 25, 2010 – March 19, 2011

For more information and updates go to: www.WattsTowersCommonGround.org



The extraordinary Watts Towers were created over the course of 3 decades by a single-minded artist-artisan, Sabato (Simon, Sam) Rodia, an Italian immigrant who wanted to do "something big." Now a National Historic Landmark and internationally-renowned icon, they are both a personal artistic expression and a collective symbol of *Nuestro Pueblo*—Our Town/Our People. The **WATTS TOWERS COMMON GROUND INITIATIVE: ART • MIGRATIONS • DEVELOPMENT** seeks to celebrate the common ground of the Towers, a locus of creativity, of sustained resolve in adversity and of positive public transformation. With an eye to renewing civic commitment to art in community contexts, this **INITIATIVE** will encompass a range of public events throughout the city, including an international conference at the University of California at Los Angeles and Watts, and a festival of art, film, theater, music, communal food tables and city tours. Our goal is to address modes of sustaining art and community development within a civic environment of meager resources. We also aim to promote hospitality and partnership across geographic, social and other boundaries.

©Debbie Marr, www.lazydogstudio.net

Both festival and conference carry forward the conversation begun at the international conference, **ART AND MIGRATION: SABATO RODIA'S WATTS TOWERS IN LOS ANGELES**, jointly sponsored by the University of Genova and the UCLA International Institute (Italy, April 2009), which examined the monument's multiple resonances within the milieu of local and global migrations, of contested social and urban spaces, and of the rapport between art and economic development. How are these divergent discourses and goals best bridged? How is "common ground" fostered around the Watts Towers? The continued well-being of the Towers and their adjacent Art Center, as well as the divergent communities which sustain and are sustained by them depend upon how well we answer these questions.

Festival events and UCLA Conference are free, open to the public, and require no registration.
"Day in Watts" Tour (Oct. 24) requires online reservation and pre-payment.
All events are on a first come, first served basis. Space is limited.



Philly Joe Jones performing at Day of the Drum Festival, 1986 ©WRMiddelbrook

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

(29th Annual Watts Towers Day of the Drum Festival: www.myspace.com/drumjazz)
Charles Mingus Youth Art Center (Watts Towers Arts Center campus)
1727 East 107th St., Los Angeles, 90002
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

MIGRATING TOWERS: THE GIGLI OF NOLA AND BEYOND. Exhibition opening. Sept. 25, 2010 – Jan. 2, 2011. Curated by Felice Ceparano, Dir., Museo Etnomusicale, I Gigli di Nola; Katia Ballacchino, Ph.D. Università di Roma, Sapienza.

The Watts Towers strikingly recall the festival spires or "gigli" of Nola, a town situated approximately 35 miles from Rodia's birthplace near Naples. Here, every June 22nd, for the feast of St. Paulinus, the city commemorates the bishop's safe return from slavery. Eight 80-foot tall obelisks, or *gigli*, and a ceremonial "boat" are carried on the shoulders of hundreds of crew members from the community. Supporting a musical band, the massive structures are then danced through the narrow streets of the town's historic center. Emigrants from Nola have remained loyal to this tradition and re-enact it, with towering *gigli* not only throughout Campania, Italy, but in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and in East Harlem, Manhattan. This exhibition features images from the Ethnomusicological Museum of the Gigli of Nola as well as images of the Nolan diaspora from the Nola County Archive, and from Cono Corvino.



Gigli of Nola, during WWII

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

(34th Annual Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival: www.myspace.com/drumjazz)
Charles Mingus Youth Art Center (Watts Towers Arts Center campus)
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Formal Inauguration of **WATTS TOWERS COMMON GROUND INITIATIVE**, with Consul General of Italy in Los Angeles, **Nicola Faganello**, 12:00 p.m.

MUSICANTICA: Music of Mediterranean Italy, in live performance (featuring southern Italian frame-drum and "fina," thumb piano), Charles Mingus Youth Arts Center, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 18

Istituto Italiano di Cultura, 1023 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, 90024
6:00 p.m.

SABATO RODIA'S TOWERS IN WATTS. Exhibition opening. October 18 - November 3. Curated by Rosie Lee Hooks, Dir., Watts Towers Arts Center, Jo Farb Hernandez, Dir., S.P.A.C.E.S.

Illustrating the history of the "Watts Towers," built by Rodia from 1921-54, from construction, through abandonment, "discovery," and conservation up to the present. Soon after being purchasing the Towers, William Cartwright and Nicholas King organized the Committee for Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts as official guardians of the Towers and

mobilized an international campaign to save the Towers from a demolition order. On October 10, 1959, a "load test," devised by Aerospace engineer, Bud Goldstone, proved to municipal administrators, incontrovertibly, that they would stand. As it tells this story, the exhibition also shows how the Watts Towers continue to inspire as well as to present challenges of guardianship and conservation, while the Watts Towers Arts Center (the "heart of Watts") perseveres as the focus of community arts and development efforts.

FERTILE GROUND: STORIES FROM THE WATTS TOWERS ARTS CENTER. Film screening 2005; 60 min. The first visual documentation of the Watts Towers Arts Center, adjacent to Simon Rodia's Watts Towers, as a creative hub in Los Angeles' Watts community which has nurtured young and established artists in all media. William Cartwright, five former Directors of the Arts Center, including Noah Purifoy and John Outterbridge, Curator Emeritus Cecil Ferguson, along with other visual and literary artists and community members reveal the dynamic history of the Arts Center's first 40-plus years. Hosted by Congresswoman, **Maxine Waters**. Executive Producer: **Rosie Lee Hooks**. Writer and Director: **S. Pearl Sharp**. Produced for the Dept. of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles' Channel 35. Q & A with Rosie Lee Hooks and S. Pearl Sharp. Followed by the **Paganini Trio** in concert, and reception.

Events at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura are part of the annual Italian government-sponsored "Settimana Italiana della Lingua" - Italian Language Week.

OCTOBER 18 – DECEMBER 10, 2010
Powell Library Building Rotunda, 2nd Floor, UCLA

"COMMITTEE FOR SIMON RODIA'S TOWERS IN WATTS" – UCLA SPECIAL COLLECTION No. 1388. Exhibition curated by **Luisa Del Giudice** and **Susan Anderson**. Highlights from UCLA Special Collection No.1388 traces the history of the official guardians of the Towers from 1956-1965, including the purchase of the Towers, the formation of the CSRTW, the battle to save the Towers from city-ordered demolition, through an international letter-writing campaign, the dramatic "load test" of Oct. 10, 1959, which proved that the Towers were structurally-sound, the genesis and evolution of the Watts Towers Arts Center.



Roger Guenveur Smith

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21
UCLA Armand Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, 90024
7:00 p.m.

THE WATTS TOWERS PROJECT, a one-man theatrical production, created and performed by award-winning, **Roger Guenveur Smith**, surveys Rodia's LA masterpiece from the "Hollywatts" perspective of his youth in an intimate meditation on history and the solo endeavor. Smith's work for the international stage includes the Obie Award-winning *A Huey P. Newton Story*, which he adapted into a Peabody Award-winning telefilm, and *Inside the Creole Mafia*, named Production of the Year by LA Weekly.

UCLA CONFERENCE: OCTOBER 22-24
Free and open to the public. No registration required

CONFERENCE SESSIONS:

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22, Sequoia Room, UCLA Faculty Center, 2:00 – 8:30 p.m. (includes evening reception).
Parking in Lot 2 - Westholme/Hilgard entrance, \$10.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, UCLA 121 Dodd Hall, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (includes lunch reception at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 580 Hilgard Ave., LA 90024). Limited free parking at St. Alban's, first come, first served. Additional parking in Lot 2 – Westholme/Hilgard entrance, \$10.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24, Watts Labor Community Action Committee, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
(includes "Day in Watts" morning tour and lunch. See following.)

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- Susan D. Anderson**, UCLA • *Preserving the History of Watts as a Progenitor of the Avant-Garde*
- Katia Ballacchino**, Univ. of Rome Sapienza • *Towers of Memory: Images and Visual Community Symbols Between Italy and the United States*
- Monica Barra**, Rutgers Univ. • *Teaching the Watts Towers, Learning Los Angeles: Public Art, Storytelling, and Urban Pedagogy*
- Linden Beckford Jr.**, Los Angeles • *The Black Southern Migration in Watts: Post-World War II Facelift*
- Guglielmo Bilancioni**, Univ. of Genova • *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere: Simon Rodia and Fantastic Architecture*
- Gail Brown**, "Where I'm Standing," Los Angeles • *From Where I'm Standing Photo-Documentary Workshops at Watts Towers Arts Center: Building Community Through Self-Awareness and Self-Expression*
- Steve Colton**, Art Conservator, Los Angeles • *Conservation Work at the Towers: A Brief Overview of Conditions, Causes, Treatment Campaigns, and Results Over Five Decades*
- Alessandro Dal Lago** and **Serena Giordano**, Univ. of Genova • *Art Without Nation*
- Mark Gilberg**, and **Frank D. Preusser**, Conservation Center, LACMA • *The Watts Towers – Preservation Impossible?*
- Luisa Del Giudice**, Los Angeles • *The Watts Towers Common Ground Initiative*
- Paul A. Harris**, Loyola Marymount Univ., Los Angeles • *Local Monument to a Global Imaginary: Rodia's Watts Towers, Marco Polo, and Italo Calvino*
- Jo Farb Hernandez**, S.P.A.C.E.S. & San Jose State Univ. • *Local Art, Global Issues: Tales of Survival and Demise Among Contemporary Art Environments*

Jeffrey Herr, Hollyhock House/Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts, DCA • *Simon Rodia's Towers: A Status Report*

Darnell M. Hunt and **Ana Christina Ramon**, UCLA • *Watts This About "Black Los Angeles?" An Anthology on Space, People, Image, and Action*

Laura E. Ruberto, Berkeley City College • *A California Detour on the Road to Italy: The Hubcap Ranch, the Napa Valley, and Italian American Identity*

Kenneth Scambray, Univ. of La Verne • *California and the Italian Immigrant Experience: The Artistic and Literary Contexts of Simon Rodia's Watts Towers*

Joseph Sciorra, John D. Calandra It. Am. Inst., Queens College, NY • *"Why a Man Makes the Shoes?": Italian-American Art and Philosophy in Sabato Rodia's Watts Towers*

Richard Cándida Smith, Univ. of California, Berkeley • *An Era of Grand Ambitions: Sam Rodia and California Modernism*

Timothy Watkins, Watts Labor Community Action Committee, Los Angeles • *"Don't Move, Improve!" Watts Labor Community Action Committee, Past and Present*

Amit Wolf, UCLA • *The Open Macrostructure: Umberto Eco's Semiology of Architecture and the Watts Towers*

And two special panels:

Artists in Conversation: Panel discussion including **John Outterbridge**, **Betye Saar**, **Judson Powell**, **Augustine Aguirre**, **Charles Dickson**, and others

The Committee for Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts: Rare Reflections by Original Members: **William Cartwright**, **Bud Goldstone**, **Jeanne Morgan**

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23
Istituto Italiano di Cultura
1023 Hilgard Ave. Los Angeles, 90024
6:00 p.m.

I BUILD THE TOWER (Film) 2006; 86 minutes. Q & A with filmmakers, **Edward Landler** and **Brad Byer**, along with members of Rodia's family, **Virginia** and **Leonard Sullivan**, **Mary Lou Byer** (present for this showing only). Followed by reception and viewing of **SABATO RODIA'S TOWERS IN WATTS** exhibition.

A comprehensive documentary film on the life and work of Sam Rodia. Made with exclusive access to Rodia's family, the cooperation of the Watts community and the town of Serino (prov. of Avellino, Italy), the film reveals how Rodia single-handedly fashioned these monumental mosaic-covered spires of reinforced cement on his property in South Central Los Angeles. Once condemned to demolition, the Watts Towers survive today as an embodiment of natural structural principles and as a symbol of freedom and initiative for the community of Watts and beyond. Written, directed and produced by **Edward Landler** and **Brad Byer**.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24
DAY IN WATTS TOUR

Includes return transportation to Westwood, guided tour & lunch.

Online reservation and \$15 pre-payment required. Send name, telephone number, and email, **with check** (payable to "Italian Cultural Institute") to "Day in Watts" c/o IIC - Istituto Italiano di Cultura, 1023 Hilgard Ave., LA, 90024
Payment must be **received** by October 18.

8:30 a.m. Departure from the **IIC - Istituto Italiano di Cultura**, 1023 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, 90024

Guided Tour of the Watts Towers; **MIGRATING TOWERS: THE GIGLI OF NOLA AND BEYOND** exhibition, Charles Mingus Youth Arts Center, Watts Towers Arts Center; Watts Labor Community Action Committee (including Civil Rights Museum); and more. Afternoon Conference session at WLCAC optional.

Watts Labor Community Action Committee
10950 South Central Ave., Los Angeles, 90059
4:00 p.m.

I BUILD THE TOWER Film by **Edward Landler** and **Brad Byer**. See above. Q & A with filmmakers.



Triumphant "load" test supporters, 1959 (S.P.A.C.E.S. Archive)

Coming in March, 2011...

COMMUNAL TABLES: PRACTICING HOSPITALITY, SUSTAINABILITY
March 13 – 19, 2011

ST. JOSEPH'S TABLE IN WATTS: Based on Sicilian tradition, St. Joseph's Tables are meant to feed the poor, practice hospitality, and welcome the stranger. In the Sicilian diaspora these tables both commemorate a time when Sicilian immigrants represented a community in need, and celebrate abundance. Sponsored by Italians in Los Angeles and the Italian Academy of Cuisine. Includes a communal meal. Donated foods will be distributed through a food pantry for local residents.

ST. JOSEPH, SAN GIUSEPPE, SAN JOSÉ. Lectures: *Rituals of Charity and Abundance: Sicilian St. Joseph's Day Tables and Feeding the Poor (Luisa Del Giudice); The Cult of St. Joseph in Spain and the New World (Charlene Villaseñor-Black, UCLA); St. Joseph Tables in the Black Spiritualist Tradition of Louisiana* (to be announced).

"BEIJING CIRCLE": SEEKING COMMON GROUND. Community women leaders in dialog on the U.N. Millennium Development Goals and the platform for action of the World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995

PROJECT COORDINATOR: Luisa Del Giudice

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF: Thomas Harrison, Edward Landler, Rosie Lee Hooks, Jo Farb Hernandez, Edward Tuttle, Rudy Barbee, Janine Watkins

UCLA CONFERENCE COMMITTEE: Thomas Harrison, Luisa Del Giudice, Jo Farb Hernandez, Paul Harris, Alessandro Dal Lago

SPONSORS: Department of Italian at the University of California at Los Angeles; UCLA International Institute; City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA); Italian Cultural Institute of Los Angeles (IIC); Consulate General of Italy in Los Angeles; Armand Hammer Museum; Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments (S.P.A.C.E.S.); Watts Towers Arts Center (WTAC); Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC); Museo Etnomusicale, I Gigli di Nola (Gigli of Nola Ethnomusicological Museum); St. Alban's Episcopal Church; Dept. of Special Collections, Young Research Library, UCLA

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Willie Robert Middlebrook
WEBSITE DESIGN: Hilde Rivosecchi

TOWERS IMAGES COURTESY OF: Felice Ceparano, Luisa Del Giudice, Thomas Harrison, Willie Robert Middlebrook, Leo Politi Family, Debbie Marr, S.P.A.C.E.S.



Watts Towers, signed "SR, Nuestro Pueblo" (Photo by Thomas Harrison)

THE WATTS TOWERS COMMON GROUND INITIATIVE: ART • MIGRATIONS • DEVELOPMENT

UCLA Conference: October 22-24, 2010

Los Angeles Festival: September 25, 2010 – March 19, 2011

For more information and updates go to: www.WattsTowersCommonGround.org

EXHIBITIONS

MIGRATING TOWERS: THE GIGLI OF NOLA AND BEYOND (CHARLES MINGUS YOUTH ARTS CENTER, WATTS TOWERS ARTS CENTER, SEPT. 25, 2010 – JAN 2, 2011). Curated by Felice Ceparano (Director, "Gigli of Nola" Ethnomusicological Museum) & Katia Ballacchino, University of Rome.

SABATO RODIA'S TOWERS IN WATTS (ISTITUTO ITALIANO DI CULTURA, WESTWOOD, OCTOBER 18 - NOVEMBER 3). Curated by Rosie Lee Hooks (Director, Watts Towers Arts Center) & Jo Farb Hernandez (Director, S.P.A.C.E.S.).

"COMMITTEE FOR SIMON RODIA'S TOWERS IN WATTS" – UCLA SPECIAL COLLECTION NO. 1388 (POWELL LIBRARY BUILDING ROTUNDA, 2ND FLOOR, UCLA: OCTOBER 18 – DECEMBER 10). Curated by Luisa Del Giudice and Susan Anderson, UCLA Special Collections.

THEATER

THE WATTS TOWERS PROJECT (ARMAND HAMMER MUSEUM: OCTOBER 21), by Roger Guenveur Smith, Obie and Peabody Award-winner, reflecting on history and the solo endeavor.

FILM

I BUILD THE TOWER (ISTITUTO ITALIANO DI CULTURA, WESTWOOD: OCTOBER 23; v: OCTOBER 24). Film by Edward Landler and Brad Byer.

FERTILE GROUND: STORIES FROM THE WATTS TOWERS ARTS CENTER (ISTITUTO ITALIANO DI CULTURA: OCTOBER 18). Executive Producer: Rosie Lee Hooks; Writer and Director: S. Pearl Sharp; hosted by Congresswoman, Maxine Waters.

Music

MUSICÀNTICA (WATTS TOWERS CAMPUS: SEPTEMBER 25 & 26). Music of Mediterranean Italy (southern Italian frame-drums and hypnotic thumb piano).

TOUR

DAY IN WATTS TOUR (OCTOBER 24). Guided visits to the Watts Towers and its Arts Centers (Charles Mingus Youth Arts Center & Watts Towers Arts Center), the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (including Civil Rights Museum), stay for lunch, conference sessions, and film.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

(UCLA, OCTOBER 22-23)

(WATTS LABOR COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEE, OCTOBER 24)

Speakers include: Cultural, Art and Architectural Historians, Literary Scholars, Folklorists, Conservators, Archivists, Municipal Administrators, Community Activists, Original Members of the CSRTW, Artists, Photographers, and others...

Susan D. Anderson, UCLA • Katia Ballacchino, Univ. of Rome • Monica Barra, Rutgers Univ. • Linden Beckford Jr. • Guglielmo Bilancioni, Univ. of Genova • Gail Brown • Steve Colton • Alessandro Dal Lago and Serena Giordano, Univ. of Genova • Mark Gilberg, and Frank D. Preusser, LACMA • Luisa Del Giudice • Paul A. Harris, Loyola Marymount Univ. • Jo Farb Hernandez, S.P.A.C.E.S. & San José State Univ. • Jeffrey Herr, Dept. of Cultural Affairs • Darnell M. Hunt and Ana Christina Ramon, UCLA • Laura E. Ruberto, Berkeley City College • Kenneth Scambray, Univ. of La Verne • Joseph Sciorra, John D. Calandra, It. Am. Inst., Queens College, NY • Richard Cándida Smith, Univ. of California, Berkeley • Timothy Watkins, Watts Labor Community Action Committee • Amit Wolf, UCLA

Special Panels: 1. *Artists in Conversation*, John Outterbridge, Betye Saar, Judson Powell, Augustine Aguirre, Charles Dickson, and others • 2. *Original Members of the CSRTW*, William Cartwright, Bud Goldstone, Jeanne Morgan

COMMUNAL TABLES, PRACTICING HOSPITALITY & SUSTAINABILITY MARCH, 2011

ST. JOSEPH'S TABLE IN WATTS (WATTS, MARCH 19) & **ST. JOSEPH, SAN GIUSEPPE, SAN JOSÉ**. Lectures by Luisa Del Giudice; Charlene Villasenor-Black

LOCATIONS

Armand Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., LA 90024

IIC – Istituto Italiano di Cultura, 1023 Hilgard Ave., LA (Westwood) 90024

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 580 Hilgard Ave., LA 90024

UCLA – Sequoia Room Faculty Center, Powell Library, Dodd Hall, Westholme/Hilgard Ave., LA 90024

Watts Labor Community Action Committee, 10950 South Central Ave., LA 90059

Watts Towers & Watts Towers Arts Center, 1727 East 107th St., LA 90002

UCLA INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE



Italian Department, UCLA



Consolato Generale d'Italia
Los Angeles



Watts Towers Arts Center



Watts Labor Community
Action Committee

THE WATTS TOWERS COMMON GROUND INITIATIVE: ART • MIGRATIONS • DEVELOPMENT

UCLA Conference: October 22-24, 2010

Los Angeles Festival: September 25, 2010 – March 19, 2011

For more information and updates go to: www.WattsTowersCommonGround.org



PRESORTED
FIRST-CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Los Angeles, CA
Permit N0. 33