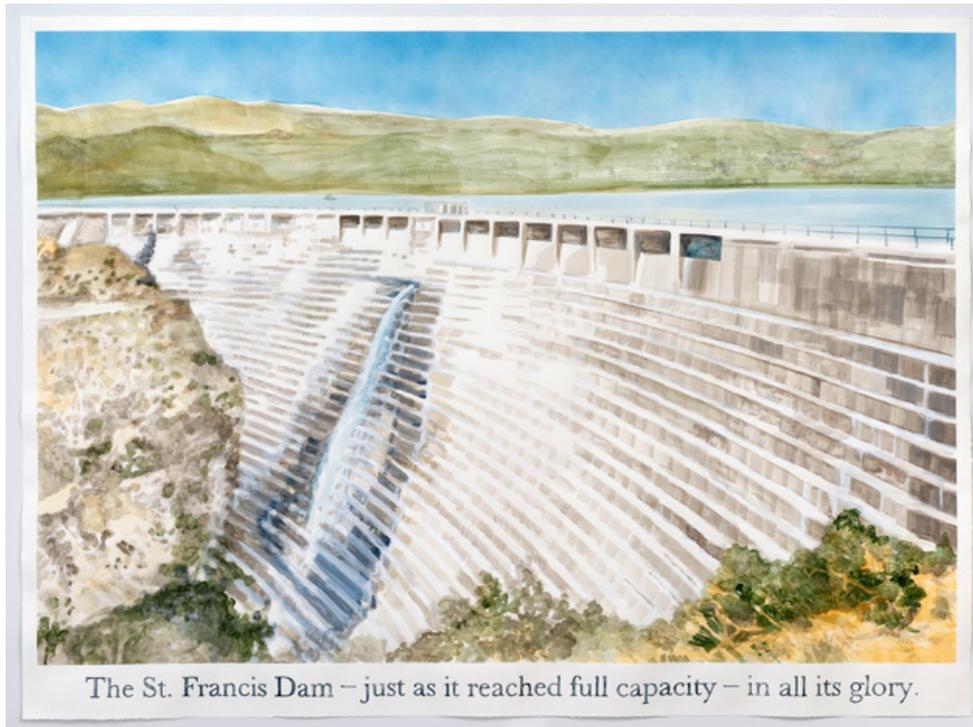


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Environment

Getting a Grasp on Water at the Natural History Museum

By, Carren Jao
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'Photograph of the St. Francis Dam at Capacity,' 2013 | Watercolor by Rob Reynolds, photo by Robert Wedemeyer

During a warm night in Los Angeles, almost a hundred people from all walks of life -- professionals, artists, academics -- gathered underneath the glass box at the Natural History Museum to talk about water from different perspectives.

The museum, in partnership with the UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability and *Boom: A Journal of California*, hosted the third of a five-lecture series on water in Los Angeles, cleverly called "Just Add Water." "It's so simple, yet so complex," says Su Oh, Director of Programs at The Natural History Museum, of the lecture series.

Oh says the process of putting the series together really showed just how much water has become foremost in the minds of Angelenos. Confirming the panelists -- normally the most challenging of tasks -- went quickly. "Everybody was ready to

have a conversation. We got yeses in ten minutes."

That night, panelists included artists **Rob Reynolds** and **Lauren Bon**; the senior assistant general manager at L.A. Department of Water and Power, Jim McDaniel; and journalist Patt Morrison, and was moderated by Jon Christensen, editor of *Boom* and senior researcher at the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at the University of California, Los Angeles.

As Oh promised, the panel that night included the science behind the water, but it wasn't only for academics. It was a lively a passionate discussion from people working around one topic (water), but in various fields. The discussion surprisingly yielded one consistent message: we need to wrap our minds around water.

"How much do I really know about the water that keeps me alive? Why am I relying on government officials to just keep the water flowing? There are people, places, things that help make the water flow in my home," said Bon, whose recent works focus heavily on reconnecting Los Angeles to the far away place that **gave it its water**.

In a similar vein, Reynolds' exhibition at the Natural History Museum also tries to do the same. Ten large-scale watercolors reference moments in the century-old Aqueduct. More poignantly, the 13 banners listing the names of thousands of people affected by the Aqueduct's construction and implementation are a visual reminder of lives that have been changed by this monumental and still controversial construction.

"The names are more intense than the paintings," said Reynolds. The artist's intensive research brought him face to face with the descendants of those who were impacted by the Aqueduct. The artist drove up to Owens Valley, the Mono Basin, and talked with anyone that had something to say. "It was a conversation with paranoia and sophisticated knowledge of water riparian issues and hydrodynamics among lay people," said Reynolds.



'South Tufa, Mono Lake at 7:12 AM, June 18th', 2013 | Watercolor by Rob Reynolds, photo by Robert Wedemeyer

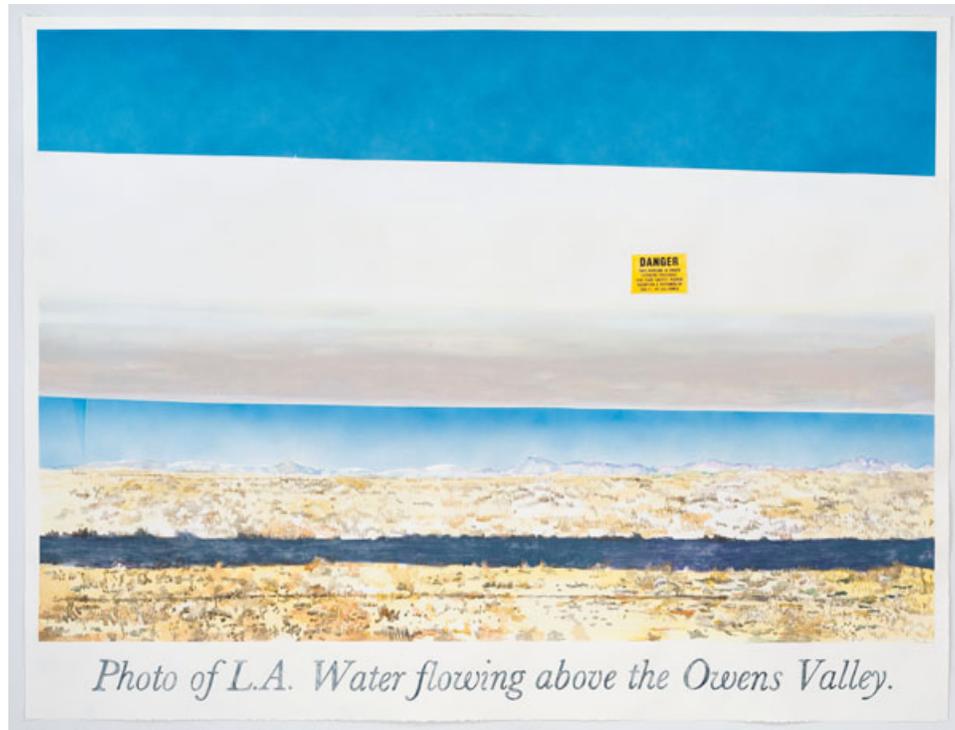


Photo of L.A. Water flowing above the Owens Valley.

'Los Angeles Water Flowing Over the Owens Valley', 2013 | Watercolor by Rob Reynolds, photo by Robert Wedemeyer

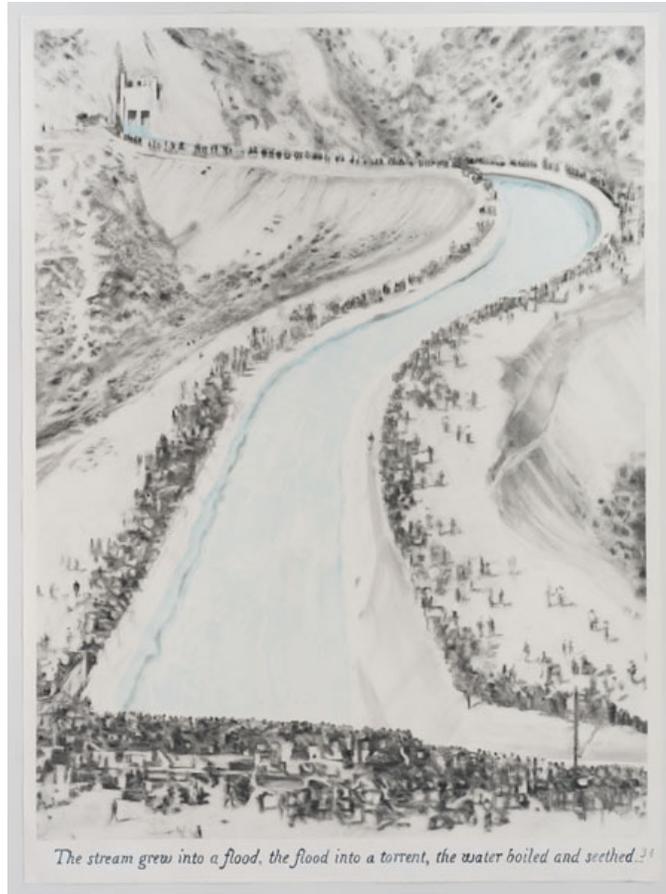
The residents of Owens Valley have realized the role of water in their lives. Does it take a similar ecological damage before Angelenos do the same? One hopes it doesn't need to come to that.

"We need to understand the actual exchange of water and cost to our wallet," said Morrison, who related her strong position on water conservation. Morrison is in favor of tiered pricing for water, reducing the **number of times you flush**, and even a rolling "brownout" schedule for plumbing where water will not be flowing during certain times of the day.

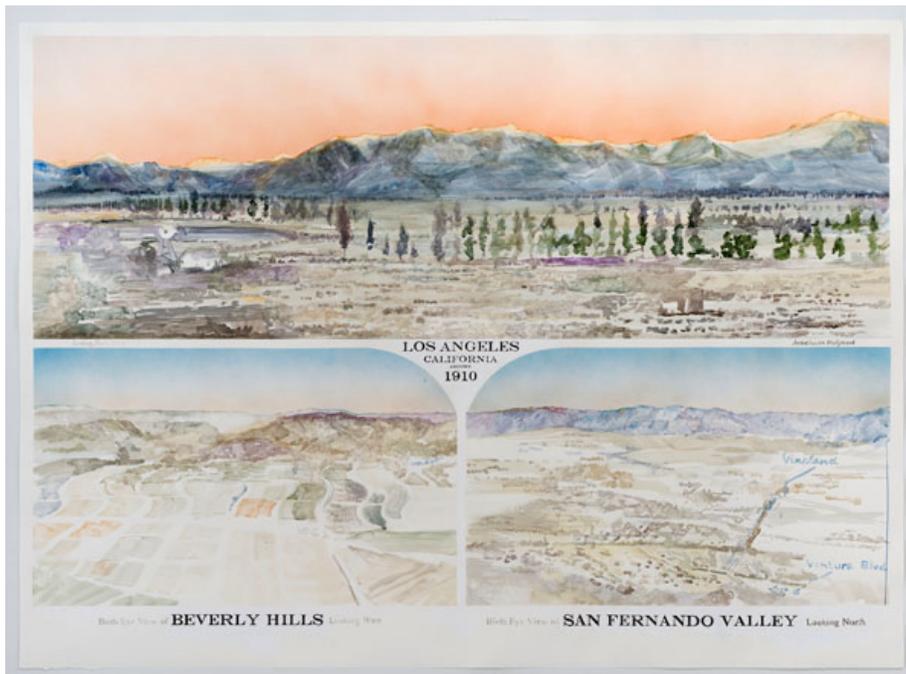
While there are outspoken advocates like Morrison, there are still many who don't know how far behind Angelenos are when it comes to water conservation. LADWP's McDaniel shared this statistic: a single Los Angeles resident uses about 89 gallons of water per day. In comparison, a single London resident uses 43 gallons per day; Paris, 42 gallons; Melbourne 39 gallons. The city that comes closest to Los Angeles is Sydney, at 78 gallons per day. The agency hopes that by providing \$3 per square foot to **remove grass**, or perhaps going door to door explaining comparative water consumption to neighbors, will help lower this staggering figure, but as McDaniel said rightly, "We're engineering guys, not storytellers." It's up to the public to help educate their fellow Angelenos.

Other ideas on the table included setting up competitions for water efficiency between neighbors (Boyle Heights versus Echo Park) or universities (USC versus UCLA). Or, as Morrison pointed, "Maybe Ashton Kutcher can **tweet it**." Do you know where your water comes from? How can we increase awareness for water usage and its consequences to the rest of Los Angeles?

Join the rest of the "Just Add Water" lectures at the Natural History Museum: The July 31 panel will discuss leaner, healthier, safer water, from Mono Lake to South and East L.A. The August 7 panel will discuss how climate change affects our stressed water supplies.



'Opening', 2013 | Watercolor by Rob Reynolds, photo by Robert Wedemeyer



'Three Views of Los Angeles Before Water', 2013 | Watercolor by Rob Reynolds, photo by Robert Wedemeyer