

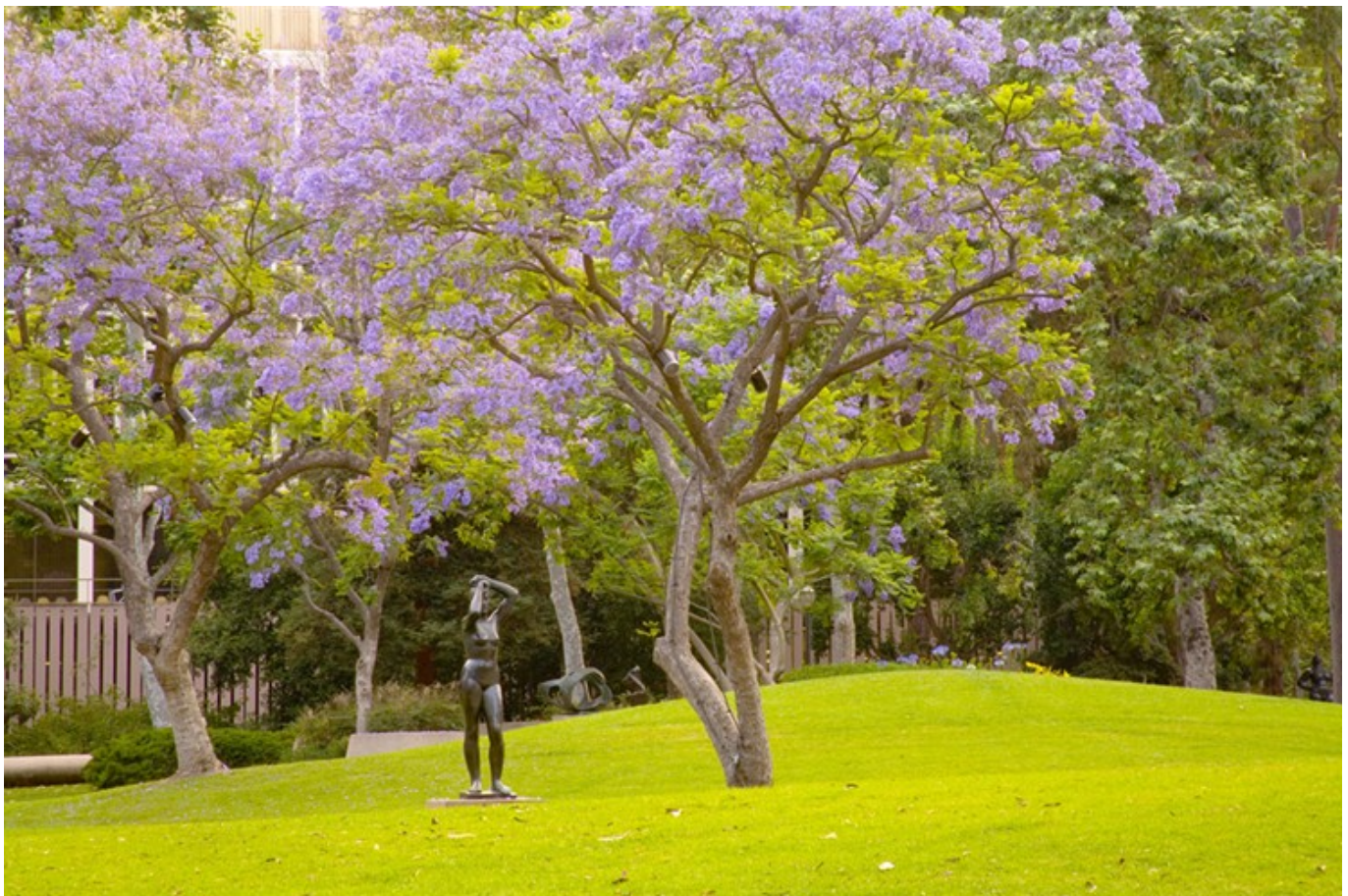
# Winning Bronze: Public Sculptures Put People in Their Places

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EXPAND

Marck, *Maja* (1941) at the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden at UCLA

Photo by Joshua White/Courtesy Hammer Museum

Shana Nys Dambrot | March 14, 2019 | 6:00am

Los Angeles is blessed with its share of public art, cultural monuments, civic statues and landmark murals, from the abstract to the narrative, interactive, commemorative and cause-based. The popular appeal of the Hollywood Sign, the lore of the Watts Towers, the creativity in appropriating billboards, and the grandeur of the city's many historical murals from Crenshaw to Historic Filipinotown to Olvera Street are all undeniable. But some sculptures and statuary

activate space on a more human scale, by simply imagining folks moving through it. So from Chinatown to Staples Center, the Huntington to Hollywood, Venice to Westwood, here are some of our favorite real and symbolic people to encounter in the landscape.



Alison Saar, *Embodied*, installed at the Hall of Justice in DTLA

Courtesy of the artist and L.A. Louver Gallery

At the Hall of Justice downtown, artist Alison Saar's powerful sculpture **Embodied** has commanded poetic attention since the building's renovation in 2015. Standing a regal 12 feet tall, its depiction of the Lady of Justice archetype reflects, as does all the artist's work, a profound and spiritual appreciation for the beauty and strength of women in history, and especially women of color. As a dove takes flight from one hand and the other holds a law book, her garment is stitched with hundreds of words on justice, in a plurality of locally spoken languages including Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese. The message is clear in its image and artistry, emphasizing diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of public life as being always worth striving for. *Hall of Justice, 211 W. Temple St., downtown.*

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## EXPAND

Dr. Sun Yat-sen in Chinatown

Shana Nys Dambrot

Nearby, Chinatown is home to two particularly popular statues. First, on Sun Mun Way, a 7-foot-tall bronze likeness of **Bruce Lee** in a power-pose signature stance, which at its installation in 2013 was the first and only such statue recognized by the Bruce Lee Foundation. It's

photographed about a million times a day, especially when the Grand Star is lit or the plaza hosts a music festival. Just around the corner in Chinatown Central Plaza is an equally popular selfie-stick opp, tour bus stop and ceremonial site destination; one with a deep geopolitical backstory. Installed in 1966, **Dr. Sun Yat-sen**, founding father of the Republic of China, is represented in a 6-foot-by-4-foot bronze statue atop a 6-foot-high base, in recognition of the role the neighborhood played in planning the revolution that brought him to power.



## Elgin Baylor at Staples Center's Star Plaza

Rotblatt-Amrany Studio

Staples Center's Star Plaza has been home to an ever-growing family of statues of L.A. sports world greats, since it first installed likenesses of **Wayne Gretzky** and **Earvin "Magic" Johnson**, who, although they played at the Forum, are early pillars of the city's sporting legacy. In 2008 they were joined by boxer **Oscar De La Hoya**, and Lakers announcer **Chick Hearn** — complete with his broadcast desk — arrived in 2010. Continuing their work with the impressive Rotblatt-Amrany Studio family of artisans, **Jerry West** mid-dribble (2011), **Kareem Abdul-Jabbar** mid-hook shot (2012), **Luc Robitaille** joyfully post-goal (2015) and **Shaquille O'Neal** in a gravity-defying dunk (2017) all have taken up residence. In 2018, they were joined by Kings announcer **Bob Miller** and, most recently, Lakers great and longtime Clippers general manager **Elgin Baylor** in a rather avant-garde, futuristic sort of melting-ball motif that expresses the speed and power of his throw. Up next, perhaps LeBronze? 1111 S. Figueroa St., downtown.

Auguste Rodin, *The Walking Man* (1905), in the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden at UCLA; gift of the UCLA Alumni Association and an anonymous donor as a tribute to Franklin D. Murphy.

Photo by Joshua White/Courtesy Hammer Museum

At the UCLA campus, a 5-acre oasis of rolling lawns contains the **Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden**, peppered with more than 70 works from the abstract to the avant-garde, classical to conceptual, by renowned historical and contemporary artists including Deborah Butterfield, Alexander Calder, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, Auguste Rodin, Gerhard Marcks and David Smith.

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Lebron Sets A Big New Record



Across the city at the **Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens**, a more palace-inflected garden displays a vast array of romantic, mostly 17th- and 18th-century statues representing the panoply of deities and mythological figures from antiquity. This collection has



more recently been augmented with majestic modern works such as a Sam Francis, but the whimsy and finesse of the statuary and architectural elements in the cultivated gardens has the distinct magic of another time and place.



EXPAND



Enrique Martinez Celaya, *The Gambler*, at the Huntington Library

Courtesy the artist and the Huntington Library

And the story of sculpture at the Huntington continues to expand, as just this month, a pair of new bronze works by esteemed Los Angeles artist Enrique Martinez Celaya has been installed on the grounds. ***The Gambler*** depicts a new variation on one of the artist's recurring characters, a young boy who fights through his pain, explores the world but keeps his own council, sometimes longs to be king or, as in this case, is weighed down by the memory of a home he carries on his back. It's a pensive, literary work that will be right at home at this classics-centric collection.



EXPAND

Enrique Martinez Celaya, *The Landmark*, at the Huntington Library

Courtesy the artist and the Huntington Library

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Elsewhere on the grounds, ***The Landmark*** promises something rather more surreal but no less romantic. A sleeping head of monumental scale with the rough-edged broken neck of a ruined colossus, an Ozymandian treasure barely rescued from the sands of time, *The Landmark* has a weathered texture and mysterious expression; its appearance in any setting has the disorienting spatial effects of a Dali or de Chirico painting. Despite its postmodern scale, its iconography derives from the same spirit of the classics that inspired Mr. Huntington in the first place. In fact, it's on long-term loan from U.K. collectors Stuart and Bianca Roden, who themselves began as connoisseurs of antiquity but have, like the library itself, recently branched out to the contemporary.



EXPAND

Enrique Martinez Celaya, *The Gambler*, at the Huntington Library (studio rendering)

Courtesy of the artist

The works are on-site already but, in a sense, they will not be fully realized until later this spring, when the grasses, groundcover and flowers currently seeded in the surrounding soil bring forth their promised bloom. Martinez Celaya tells *L.A. Weekly* that although he worked with the curators to site the works, the true collaborative aspects of the installation happened with the garden and landscape staff. "They are true scholars," he says. "Experts beyond anything I could come up with." The grounds staff did multiple studio visits with Martinez Celaya, and they talked through every choice, building on their knowledge to create an informed intervention in this beloved public space.

"The die-hard Huntington visitors," as Martinez Celaya discovered, are a dedicated community. "There are so many people who really feel it's their garden. The community is intimate with it, they have a mind-blowing affection for it, and we worked to honor that." For now, use your

imagination, but do plan a trip for late spring, when nature's own exuberance will truly complete these sculptures. *1151 Oxford Road, San Marino.*

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