

# The Mythology of California: Scene Makers and Cultural Renegades at Edge of 'The West'

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The Athenaeum Music & Arts Library is presenting *The Mythology of California: Scene Makers and Cultural Renegades at the Edge of "The West,"* a three-part lecture series examining the cultural legacy of radical art scenes in California; developed and presented by Charissa Noble, PhD. this fall.

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The series will be held at Athenaeum Music & Arts Library, Joan & Irwin Jacobs Music Room, 1008 Wall St., La Jolla at 7:30 p.m., Thursdays, Sept. 19, 26, and Oct. 3.

Her lectures at the Athenaeum are the stories not yet told: people, ideas, and events retrieved from the margins of our prevailing historical narratives, connected to each other in new, creative ways.

### **Sept. 19: Highway 1—Cults, Wild Parties, and Radical Art Circles from San Luis Obispo to Marin County**

This lecture traces the history of California's progressive culture and arts scene through the lens of Coastal California identity and mythology. The land along Highway 1—ragged shorelines, serrated mountains, sprawling ranches, wide open spaces—cultivated a sense of living on the edge of “the West,” beckoning outsiders, innovators, and mavericks to go their own way. Two case studies epitomize this epic collision between landscape, myth, and art on the California coast in the first half of the 20th century: composer Henry Cowell's establishment of an “ultra-modern” scene within California's unique environment of mystical spirituality and high modernity, and composer/artist John Cages' early formation as the quintessential art rebel through his encounters with different radical artistic communities lining the road from Carmel to San Francisco.

Part I: *Theosophy, Henry Cowell, and the “Ultra-Moderns”*

Part II: *“Travels with John”—Cage's Encounters with the Westons, Lou Harrison, and Anna Halprin*

### **Sept. 26: The Myth of the “Cultural Wasteland”—Starting Art Scenes in Los Angeles**

Los Angeles: the land of cars, Hollywood, hedonists, and cultural plebians, superficial and artificial to its core ... so the story goes. Yet, LA's expansive geography, comingling of pop and high culture, and lack of an established art infrastructure until the late 20th century proved to be unique advantages for this purported cultural wasteland, particularly for visionaries and scene makers. This lecture examines the incredible and under-reported soirees of Betty Freeman and the launch of the Ferus Gallery by art disruptor Walter Hopps, both of whom brought together vibrant artistic communities and invented new models of patronage and support.

Part I: *Betty Freeman*

Part II: *Walter Hops*

### **Oct. 3: DIY Culture—Hip-Hop and “Outsider” Art in Los Angeles**

Historians frequently attribute vernacular art traditions such as hip-hop to New York City. However, new and completely revolutionary modes of cultural expression emerged independently of NYC's influence within LA's east neighborhoods of Compton and Watts. More than just a musical style, hip-hop involves fashion, public art, and identity, negotiated within tightly woven communities yet exercising remarkable cultural reach through

recording technologies. This lecture examines the resourcefulness and cultural triumphs of these traditionally underrepresented communities, exploring landmark public works (such as the Watts Towers) and the specifically LA-based hip-hop culture that emerged in the midst of limited resources and racial oppression.

**TICKETS:** Series: \$30 members/\$45 nonmembers, Individual: \$12 members/\$17 nonmembers

**RESERVATIONS:** 1(858) 454-5872 or visit [www.ljathenaeum.org/special-lectures](http://www.ljathenaeum.org/special-lectures)

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