



**EXHIBITION**  
**VOGT Case Studio**

**MODEL LANDSCAPE**  
VOGT Landscape Architects.  
Stampfenbachstrasse 57.  
Zürich, 8006.  
Switzerland.

**SCI ARC Galleries**  
960 East 3rd Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90013

June 15, 2018 - August 26, 2018

How can we understand and build landscape as a new relationship between humans and our environment?

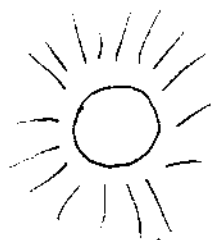
What is the relevance of aesthetics and the role of infrastructure as a mediation tool?

How can this be manipulated in order to create a new perception and thus a reaction towards the uncertainty brought upon us through climate change?

We live in the Anthropocene age, where forces of geological, biological and cultural change have been abstracted by our own relationship to the planet. Environment has ceased to represent the romantic ideal of nature that nurtured during the late 18th and 19th centuries and must now integrate the living, the non-living and the new scales of time that we are now confronted with. Technology has altered our understanding of our surroundings and therefore its symbolic nature. We wish to reconceptualise this idea by bridging together the digital and the analog in an attempt to re-present the invisible forces hidden within the territory by re-contextualizing landscape processes in a post-natural world.







Decreased snowfall  
due to warming.

Drying of  
lakes

More severe droughts  
between rains.

Increased rainfall from  
heavy precipitation levels  
causes flash-floods.

Earthquake activity.  
(fracturing).

drought due  
to farming  
extensively.

bigger  
population =  
more  
water.

Increased  
risk of  
wildfires

increase in  
sediment

Increased  
evaporation.

The point of departure for this investigation is the city of Los Angeles; a place where the forces of nature and culture collide, bringing forward a new kind of ecosystem, one that does not necessarily coexist harmonically with its environment. Nature has ceased to be from a distance and has instead become entangled with the forces of man.

The continuous history of disasters, whether earthquakes, fires, floods or droughts, as well as the accelerated rate of their happening in recent times, forces us to reflect on the origins of the city and the great infrastructures that have been pivotal for its development.

We would like to center our research on one of the spinal cords of the city's growth and a history that through its dramatization has almost become fiction: The Los Angeles River and the city's quest for water in the Californian semi-arid landscape.



LANDSCAPES OF UNCERTAINTY OWENS LAKE OIL FARMING SIMULACRA CONCEPT TECHNOLOGY

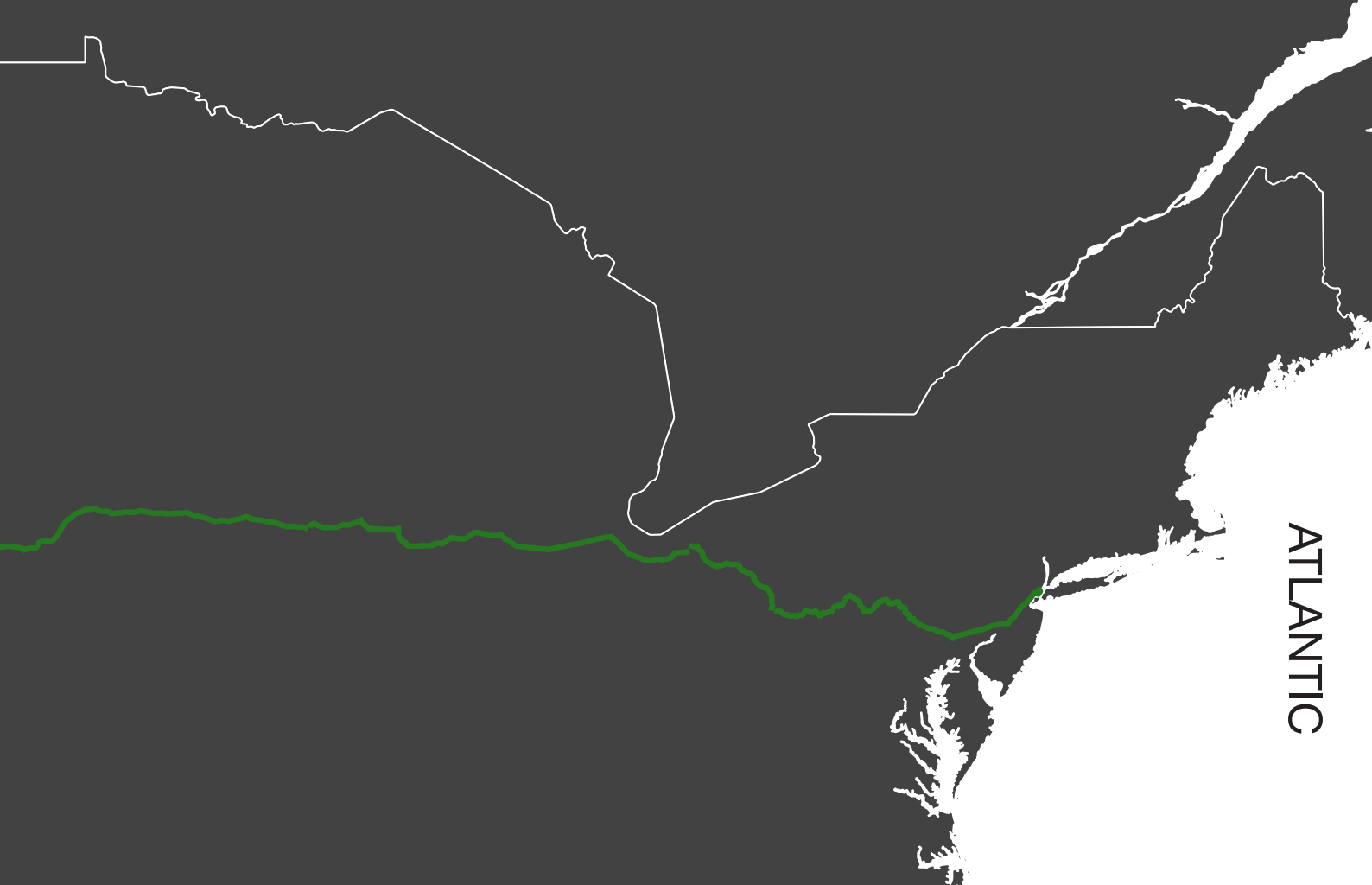




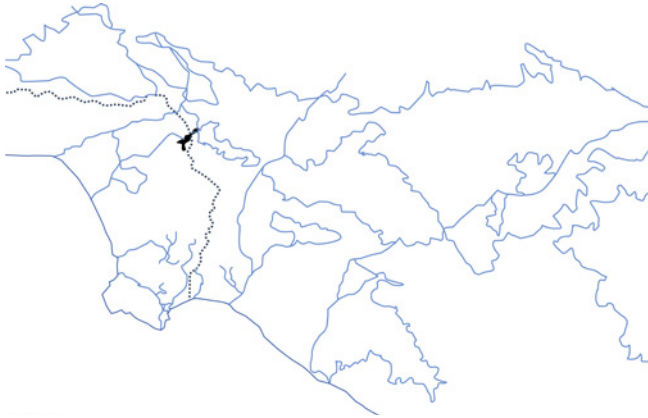


PACIFIC

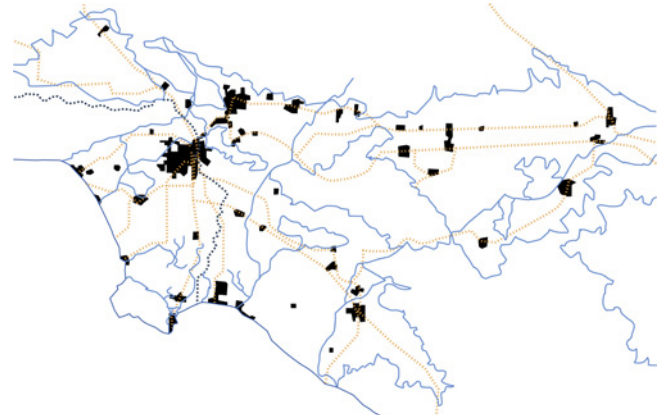
GREAT SALT LAKE  
Robert Smithson



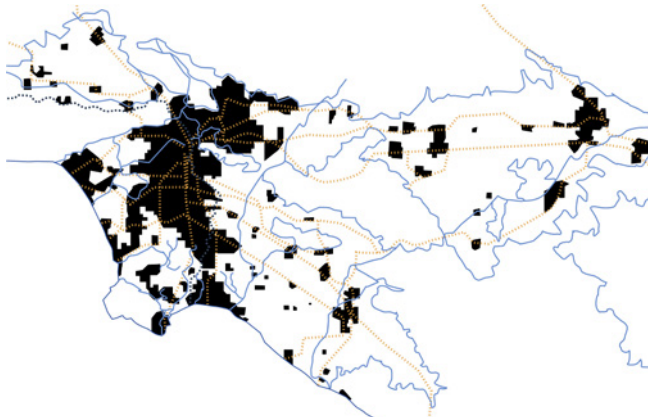
ATLANTIC



1781-1880

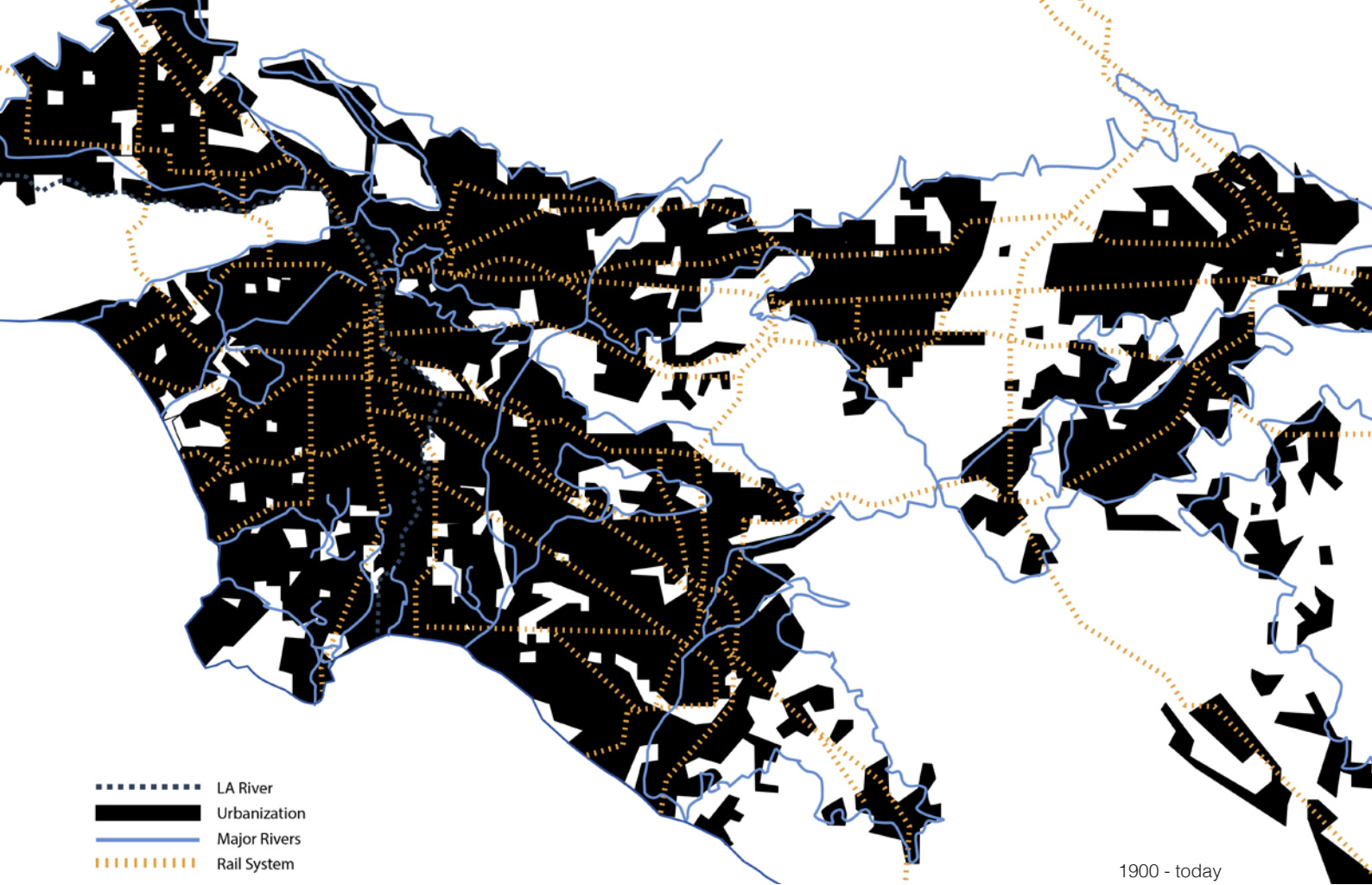


1880-1900



1900-1940

Located in a coastal basin surrounded by mountains, the city of Los Angeles begins its history as a colonial town founded by 11 Mexican families that established in the area in 1781 and became the foundation for what would later become one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world. The time was followed by a wave of immigration, first led by the gold rush and later reinforced by the construction of the California Southern Railway System. The newly built connection enticed people from all over the country to settle in what was sold as a land of green gardens, cinematic wonder, rich in oil resources and real estate opportunities. The amount of people that rushed into the city, hungry for a new life, brought upon the need for more water resources. It is at this point that the history of the Los Angeles River takes a turn, leading to the destruction of an ecosystem which although located 300 Km away from the city is one of the main reasons why the city has managed to survive throughout the years: the Owens Lake.



1900 - today



FORBES

Owen's Lake, Cal. 1933.

Once 19 Km long and 13 Km wide, the Owens Lake dried up completely around 1926 and since 2013 has become the largest single source of air pollution in the United States.

As water was diverted to satisfy the hungry needs of a rising metropolis, the lake was left to wither and became covered in a thin layer of salt. The dust travels up and down the valley carried by the wind, lifting up a toxic brew of arsenic and carcinogenic fine particles.

The project was operated by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Construction of the Los Angeles aqueduct began as voters of Los Angeles approved the purchase of land and water from farmers in the Owens Valley in 1908. The divergence of water caused farmers and inhabitants alike to be displaced, leaving behind an ecological ruin and a reminder of the accelerated changes in the environment caused by the hands of man.



LANDSCAPES OF UNCERTAINTY OWENS LAKE OIL FARMING SIMULACRA CONCEPT TECHNOLOGY









The presence of oil in Los Angeles also played, and continues to play, a significant role in the development of the city as an elemental driver of the state's economy.

Tar seeps have been found around this area since pre-historic times and can still be seen today in places like the „La Brea Tar Pits“. But it was not until the first oil well was drilled by Edward Doheny that the real oil boom began. By 1930 California was producing around one quarter of the world's total oil output as the population grew to 1.2 million.

Doheny's success attracted more people to the city, and soon houses began to be built around oil wells and camouflaged machinery. With no regulation or planning, derricks began to sprout everywhere as Los Angeles grew into the largest urban oil field in the country.

Nowadays, fracking techniques used to extract oil, not only pose a threat to the earth's stability and to citizen's health, but also require large amounts of pressurized water. The impacts of these practices are still largely unknown but point to ground and surface water contamination, toxic methane emissions, as well as triggering of earthquakes.



LANDSCAPES OF UNCERTAINTY OWENS LAKE OIL FARMING SIMULACRA CONCEPT TECHNOLOGY



The completion of the Southern Pacific Railway also marked the beginning of a new era for agriculture in the city and began to change the image of the semi-arid landscape forever.

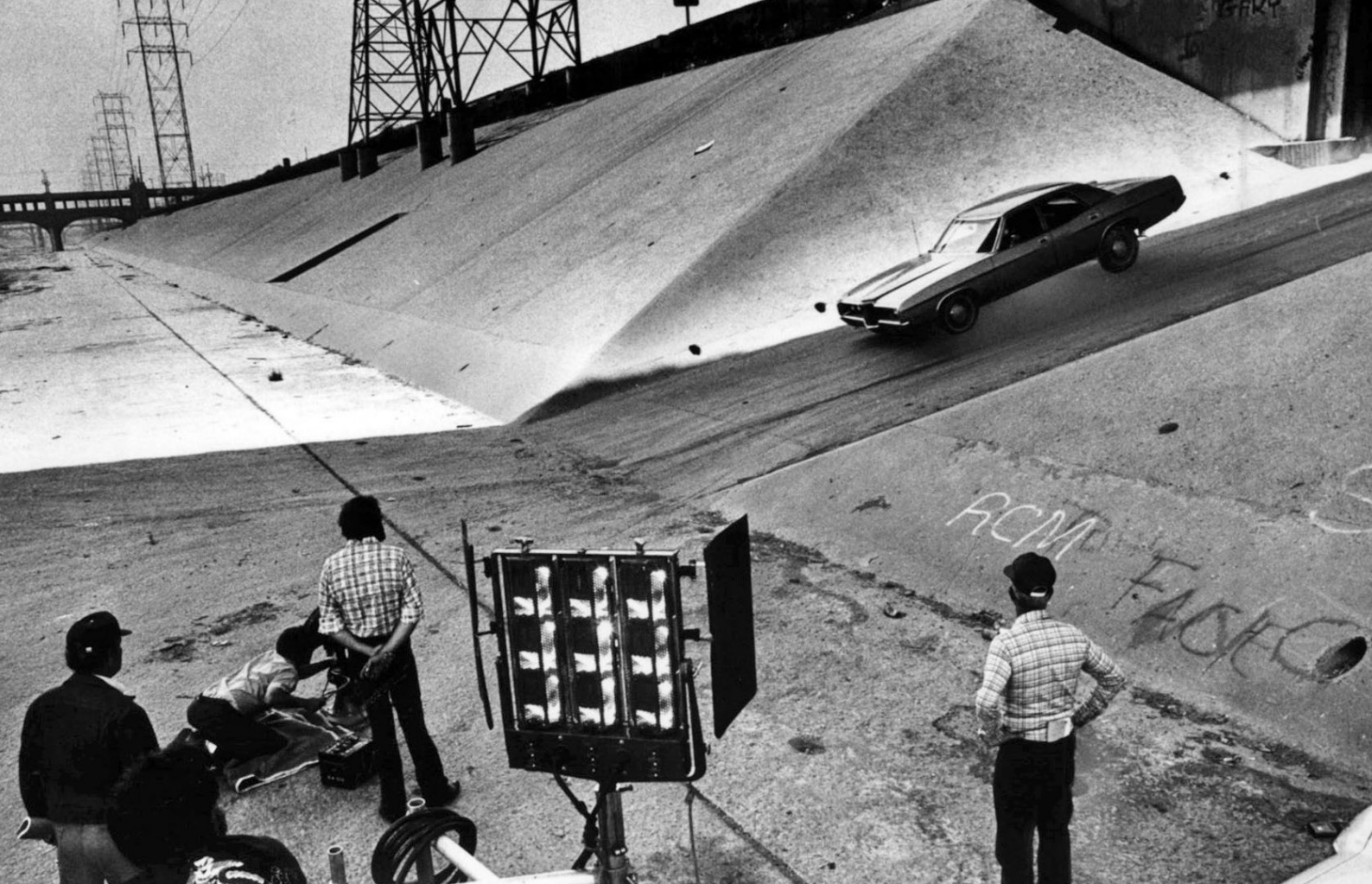
The first citruses were planted by Spanish missionaries in 1700 in the San Fernando Valley, a site that remained largely rural until the 20th century, when the valley was transformed into a suburban wonderland of single family homes and green gardens.

After a series of droughts affected the area between 1862-63, farmers began to adopt dry farming practices as a way of adapting to the semi-arid environment of the valley. Cattle practices were replaced by farming and Los Angeles became the largest and most successful farming territory in the nation between 1909 and 1949. Nevertheless unpredictable weather continued to affect farmers and irrigation systems were installed to ensure the productivity of the land. Extended irrigation was also a major cause for the impending need of water that led to the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

Parallel to this farming development, an abstract idea of what native vegetation really is as palm trees became the face of a new suburban dream and an icon to the city. These trees, of which only the California fan palm, *Washingtonia filifera*, is native to the area, require large amounts of water and provide very little shade. They represent the ornamental and cultural practices that also contributed to the lack of water in the Valley.



LANDSCAPES OF UNCERTAINTY OWENS LAKE OIL FARMING SIMULACRA CONCEPT TECHNOLOGY



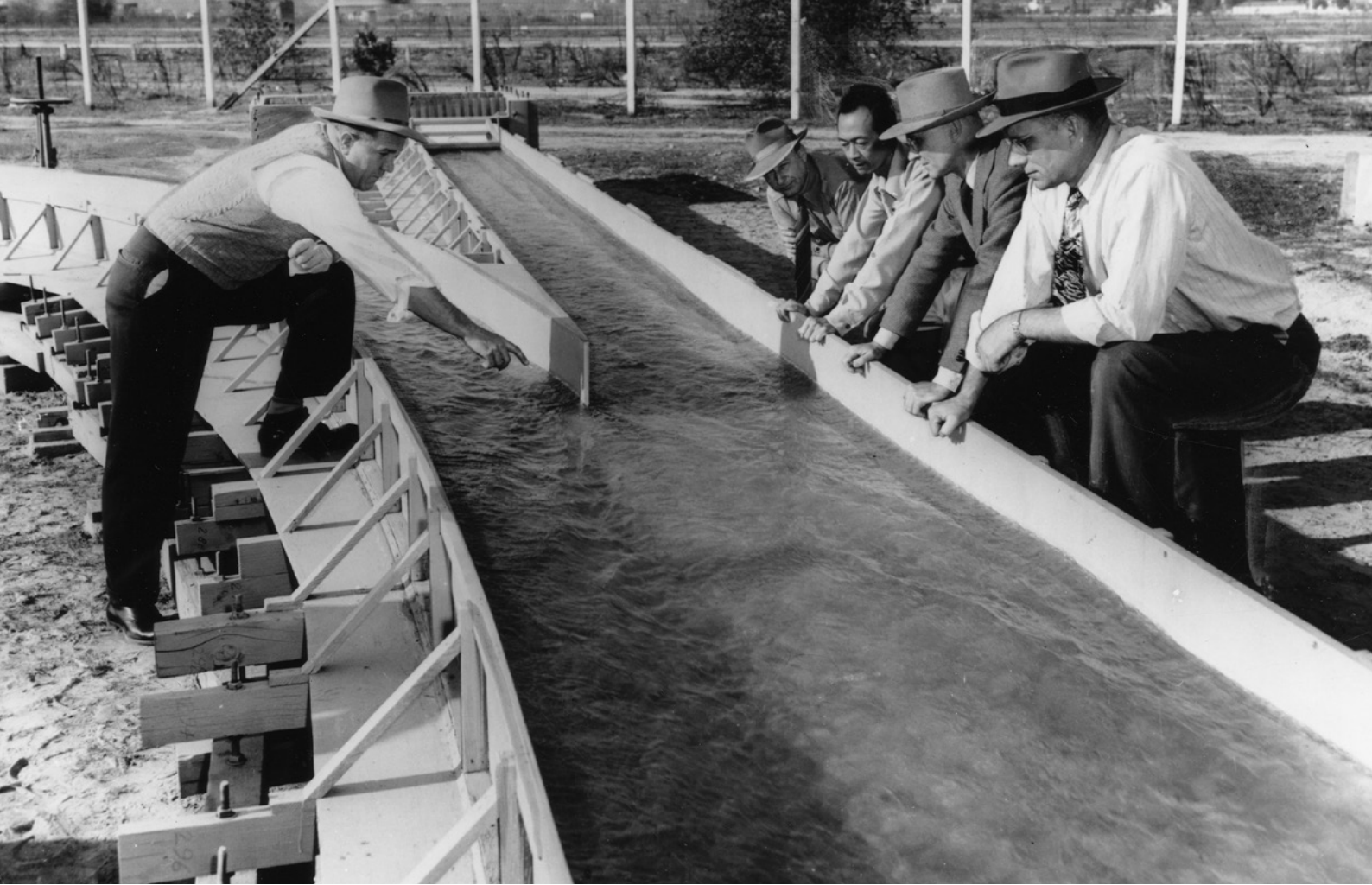
Film can be described as the science of illusion and dates back to the end of the 19th century when Edward Muybridge created the first motion picture. Soon after, with the invention of the cinematographe by the Lumiere brothers, film began to become an elemental part of everyday life.

The centers for early film production in The United States were concentrated on the east coast, where patents were controlled by Thomas Alva Edison and his Motion Pictures Patents Company, known as „The Trust“. The restrained environment and high prices forced many filmmakers to flee towards the West Coast, far away from „The Trust“ and where good weather and cheap labor gave birth to the face of American cinema: Hollywood.

The city became a place of movie studios, empty buildings only to be used as movie sets, fake facades and car-driven mania. The image of Los Angeles became one that filmmaker Thom Andersen would later describe as „Los Angeles Playing Itself“. A city that built its own imaginary by concealing the very nature of itself.



LANDSCAPES OF UNCERTAINTY OWENS LAKE OIL FARMING SIMULACRA CONCEPT TECHNOLOGY







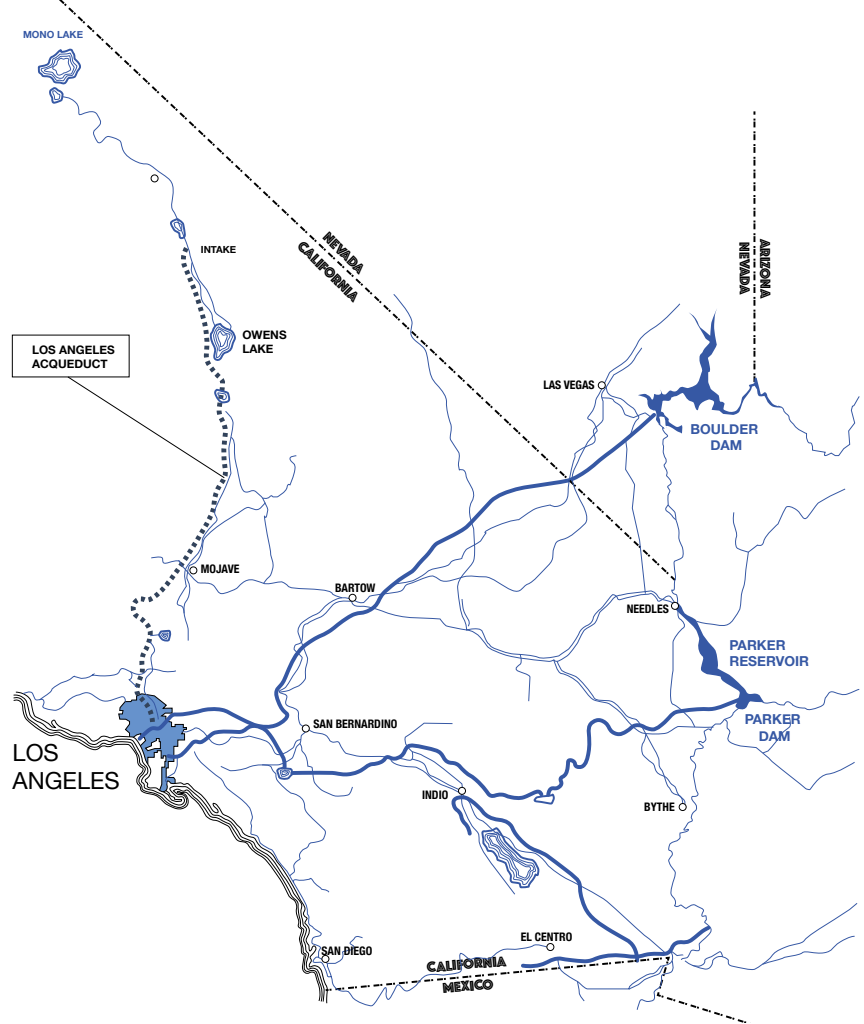
## LOS ANGELES ACQUEDUCT REGIONAL SCALE

The Los Angeles Aqueduct system was designed and built by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power under the administration of the department's Chief Engineer; William Mulholland.

The original project comprised 356 Km of conduit, which was then further extended to include the Mono Extension and the Second Los Angeles Aqueduct.

Construction began in 1908 and was inaugurated in 1913 before a crowd of 40,000 as Mulholland uttered the words that would mark history, „There it is - Take it!“.

The aqueduct runs from the Owens Valley to the city and diverts water using gravity alone. In 1913 the city covered an area of 172 Km<sup>2</sup>, expanding to more than 585 Km<sup>2</sup> in less than 7 years. The aqueduct fostered the rise of suburbia and incited the fractured urban structure, now characteristic of Los Angeles. It also made it impossible for the farmers of Owen's Valley to continue with their agricultural practices, forcing them to leave their territory and home.





## LOS ANGELES RIVER URBAN SCALE

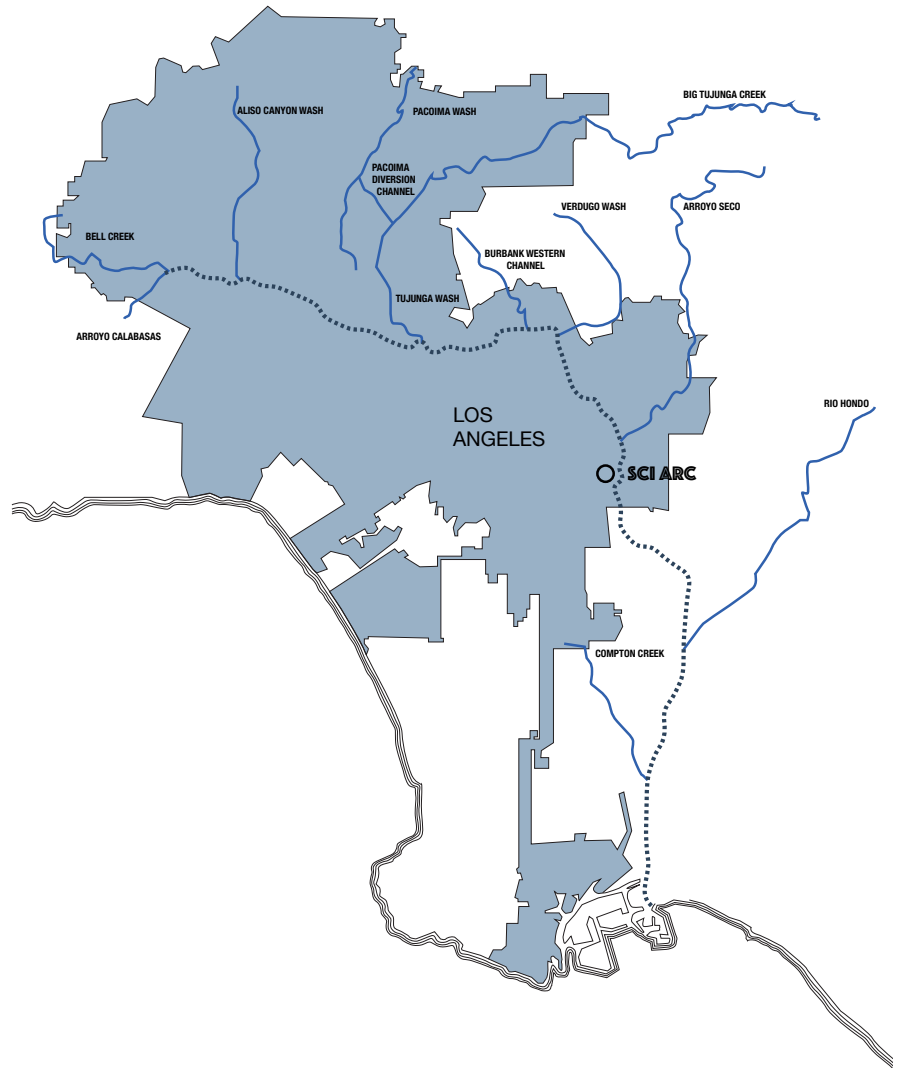
The water rushes through ducts from the Owen's Valley through the Mojave desert until it reaches the city in what is known as „The Cascade“ and follows its course through the city of Los Angeles as a viaduct.

After the floods of 1914 and 1934, which caused the destruction of homes, bridges and infrastructure, channelization of the river became a priority. 20 years later, the river had been completely encased with more than 3.5 million barrels of cement.

The construction of the „flood control channel“ began in 1938, the same year that another flood brought the city once more into chaos. The city continued to expand as walls were raised higher and more measures were taken to control the water flow. Simulations and models were constructed in a quest to control the force of nature.

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With water being such an important element in the history and growth of Los Angeles and due to its close proximity to the site of intervention, it became clear that it had to play the center role of our proposal. Water has and will always be at the center of our existence as human beings and is a topic that requires ever more attention if we wish to take into consideration the new challenges exposed by human intervention in our environment.





SCI ARC GALLERY  
LOCAL SCALE





Los Angeles River  
Sci Arc

Google

**Landscape  
Ecology**



**Society  
Culture**



**Infrastructure  
Technology**

**ENVIRONMENT**







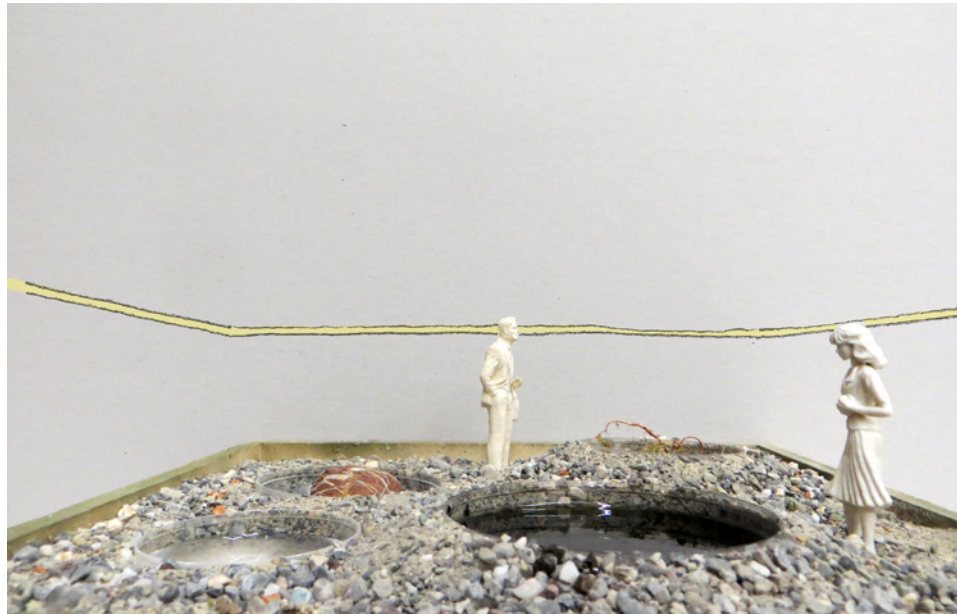




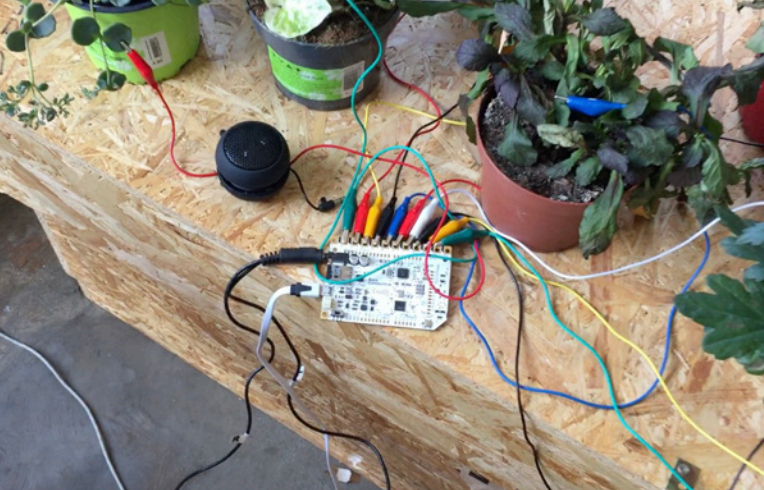
For the Sci Arc exhibition Environment[a], Vogt Landscape Architects have planned an all-encompassing space where different works by the participating architects (Estudio Carme Pinós, Gilles Retsin, Izaskun Chinchilla Architects, Enric Ruiz Geli and Coop Himmelb(l)au) will be articulated around an artificial landscape where different elements articulate and revitalize the history of water in Los Angeles.

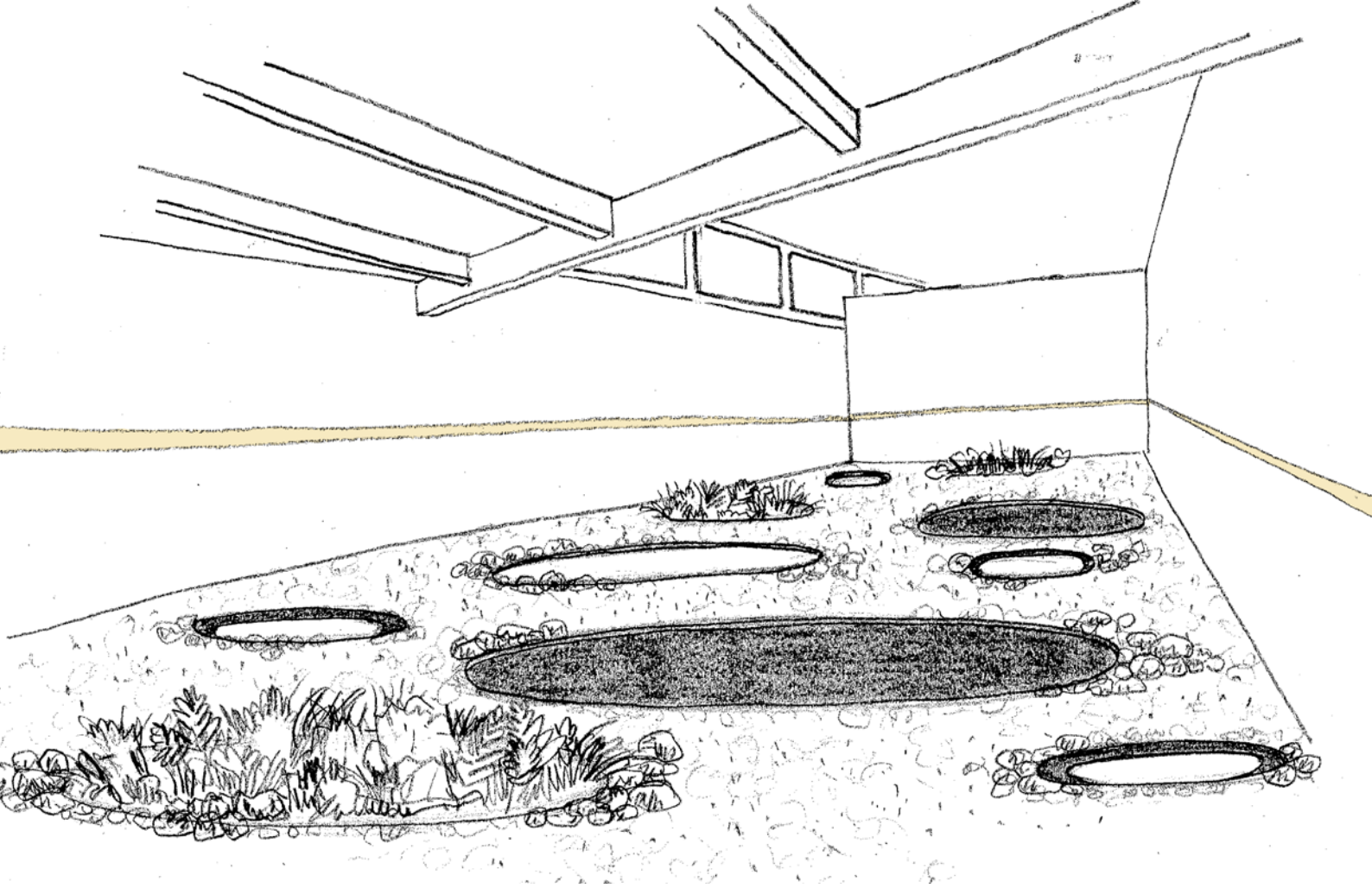
The arrangements and Elements are found not on eye-level but inside the ground itself, forcing the viewer to look down and into the earth for questions and answers. The different elements found in the ground correspond to the major players in the growth of the city and their relationship to water, while the landscape itself alludes to another site, and the origin of a turn of the century ecological disaster as well as the source of water from the city: The Owens Valley. Simultaneously, a light horizon stretches along the space at eye level as a blinding reminder of the dangers and possibilities implicit in the landscape which we fail to see.

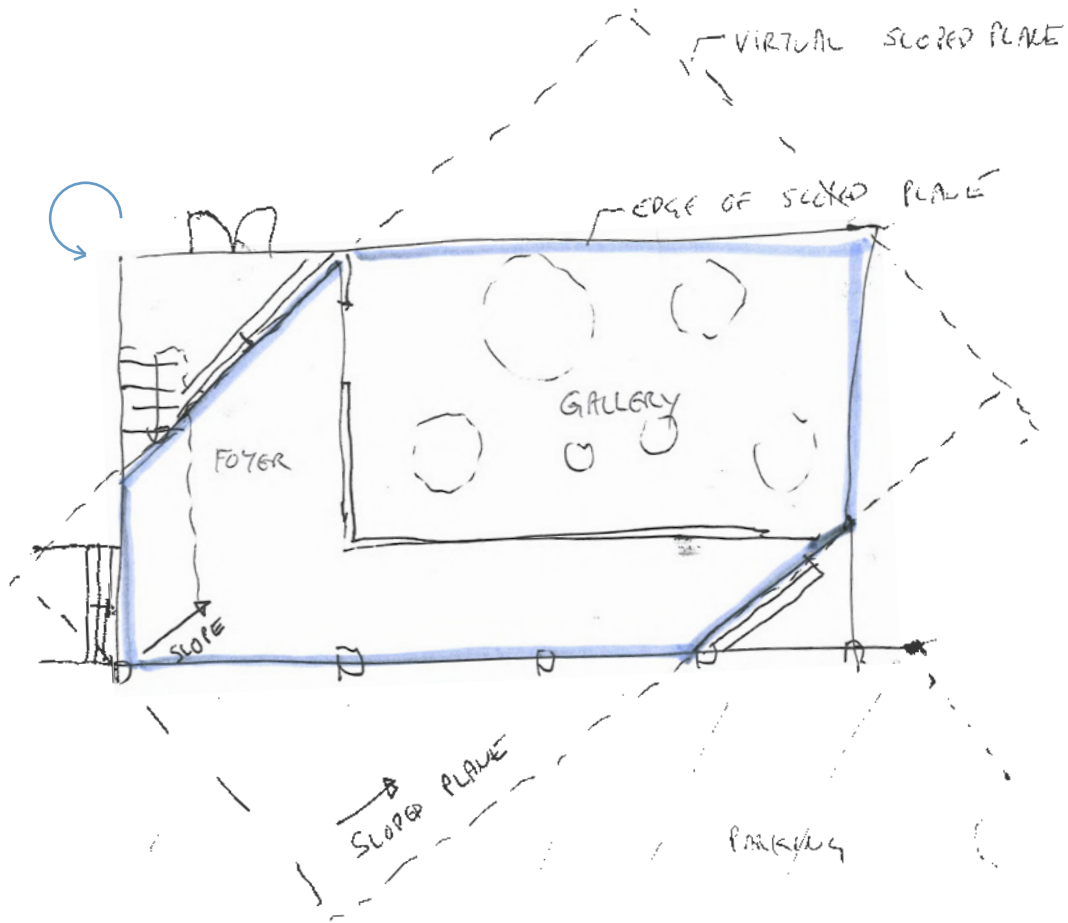
This new setting or parallel ecology seeks to bring together these different elements ( oil, water, light, vegetation and soil) to construct, through these, a new ecology based on a new concept of nature; one where the future of coexistence is based on man's acknowledgement of an impending environmental collapse.



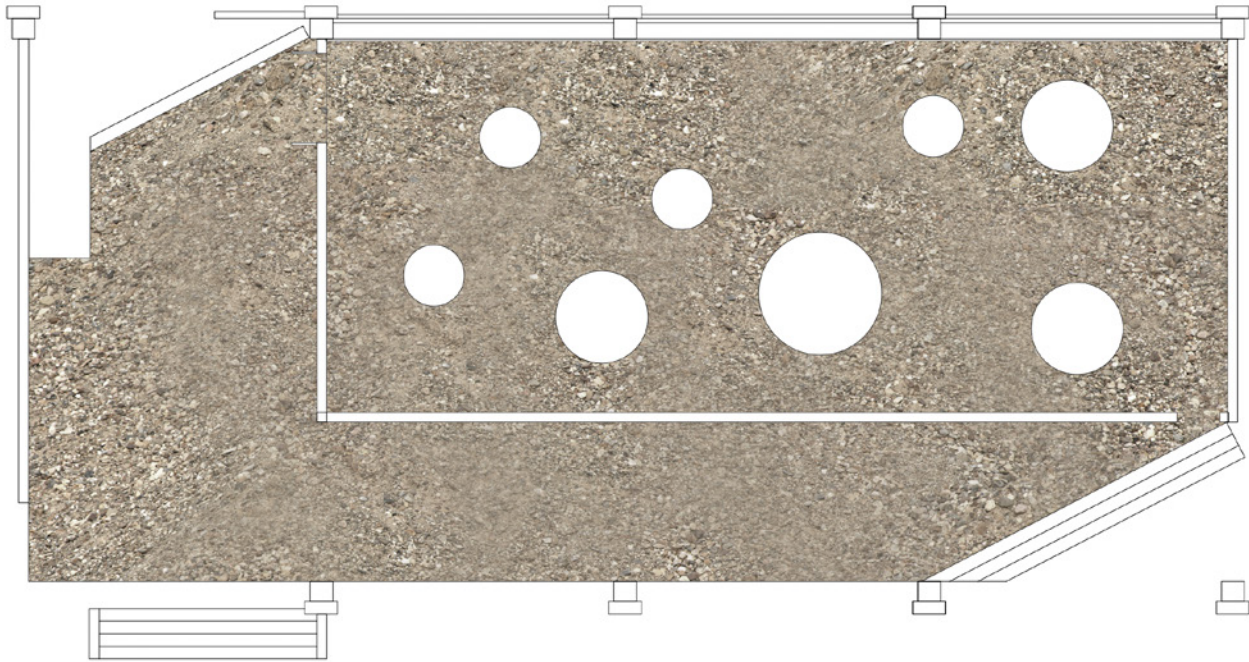
LANDSCAPES OF UNCERTAINTY OWENS LAKE OIL FARMING SIMULACRA CONCEPT TECHNOLOGY











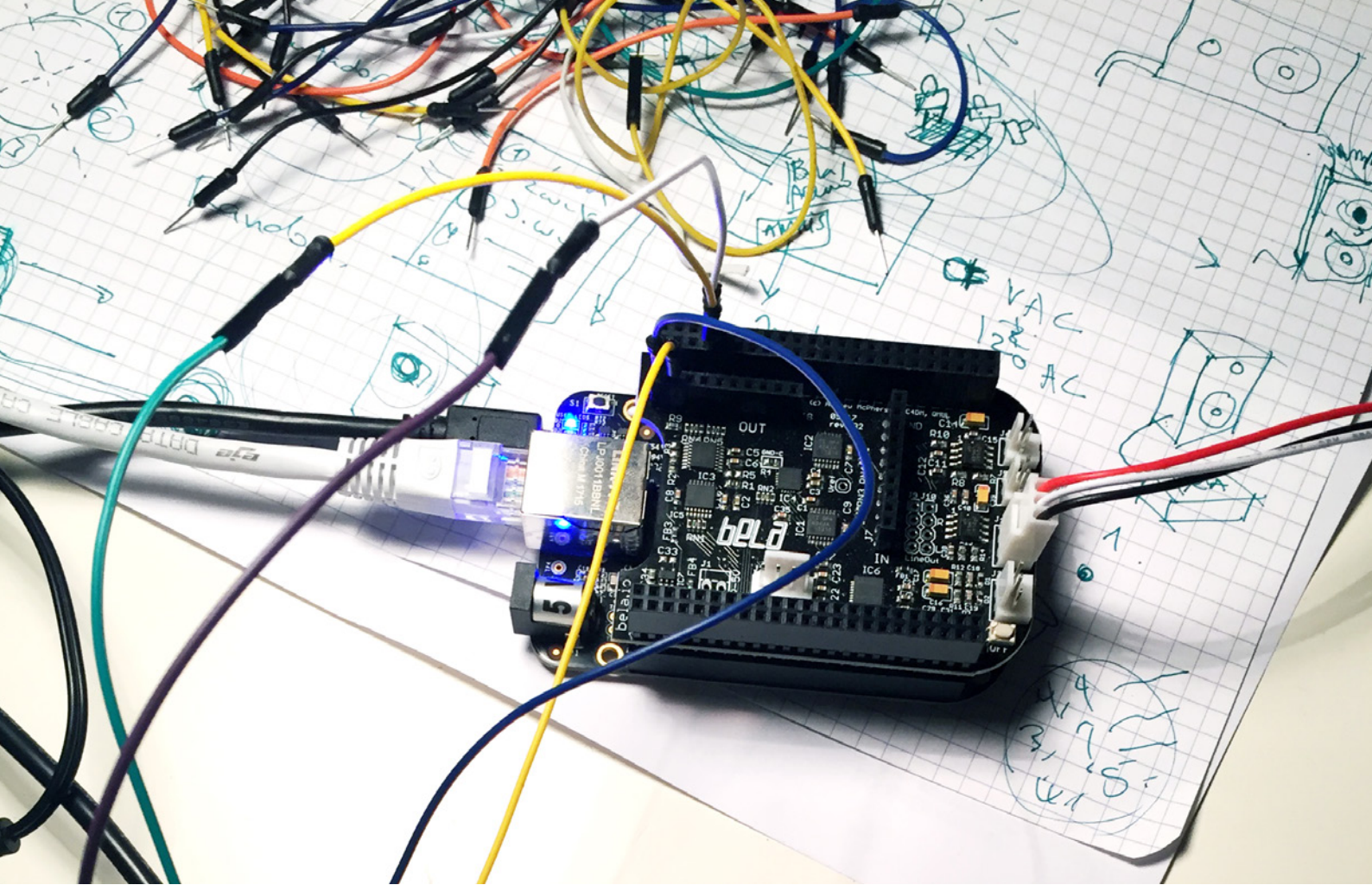
**PF**

- Tank 1 - 4ft / 1.2m diameter
- Tank 2 - 4ft / 1.2m diameter
- Tank 3 - 4ft / 1.2m diameter
- Tank 4 - 4ft / 1.2m diameter
- Tank 5 - 6ft / 1.8m diameter

- Tank 6 - 6ft / 1.2m diameter
- Tank 7 - 6ft / 1.2m diameter

**OIL DISPLAY**

- Tank 8 - 6ft / 1.8m diameter



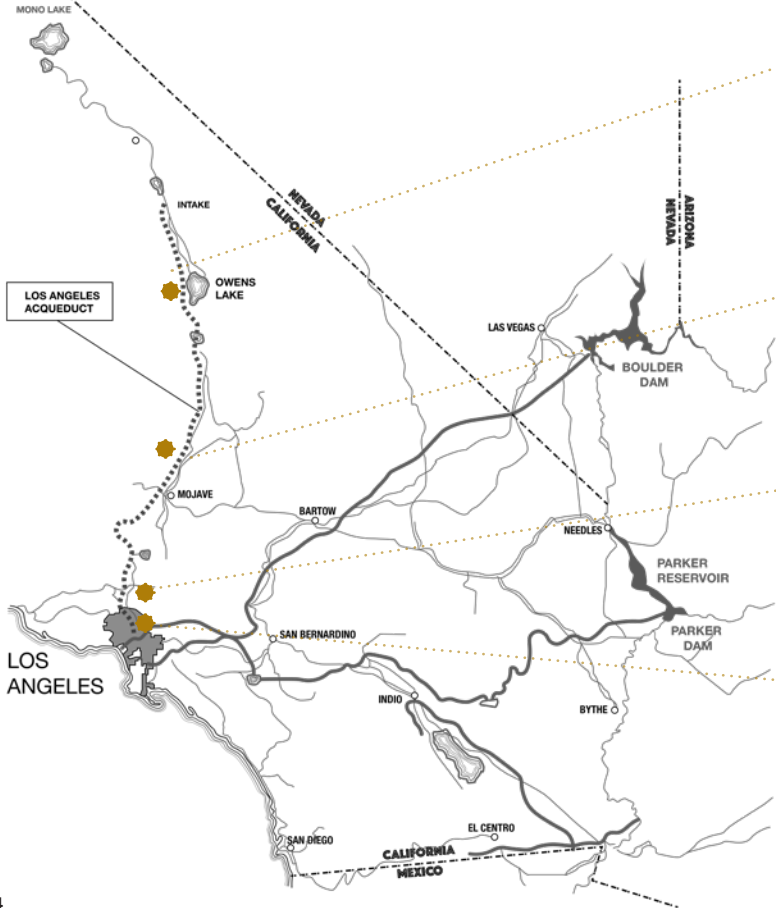
It is precisely that which has given us the tools, and has allowed us to transform and influence our surroundings, that which also can provide us the tools for change.

Within the exhibition space, the plants embedded in the landscape are also connected to sensor devices that trigger a sound mapping made of the Los Angeles River from its source way up in the Owen's Valley until its final destination: the sea. As visitors interact with the plants a sonic and invisible landscape is created, where the different layers and qualities along the river's path come to life. An auditory visualization of movement and flow through a cacophony of sounds and an interplay at the thresholds between the analog and the digital.



LANDSCAPES OF UNCERTAINTY OWENS LAKE OIL FARMING SIMULACRA CONCEPT TECHNOLOGY

# SOUND MAPPING



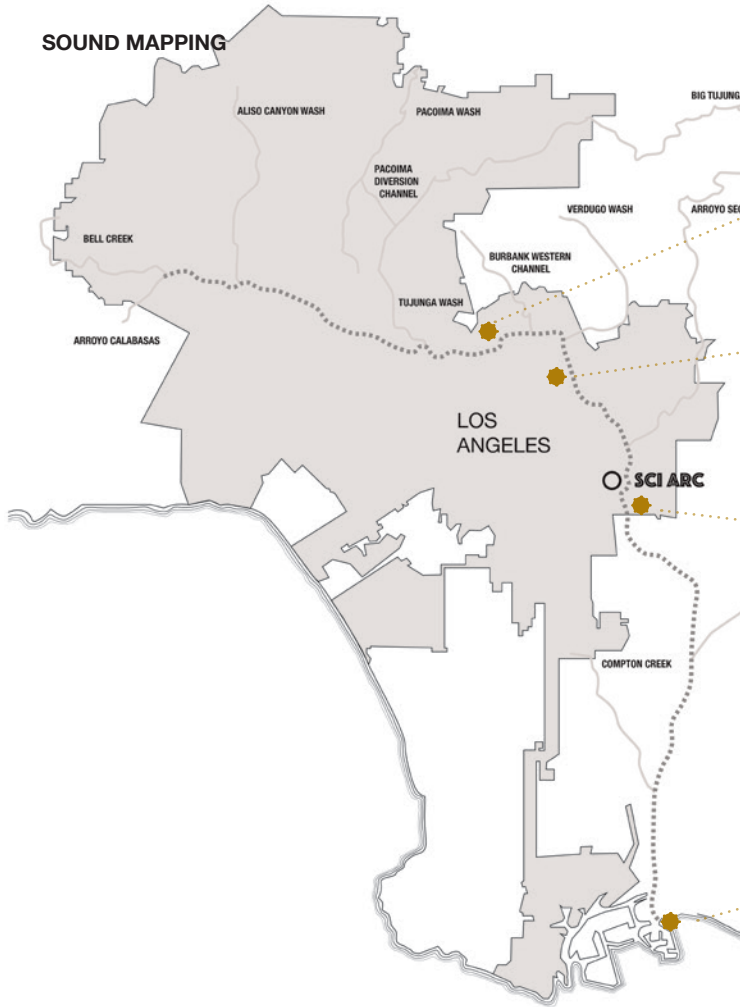
Owens Lake

Jawbone Canyon „Siphon“

St. Francis Dam Site

The Cascades

# SOUND MAPPING



Warnmer Brothers Studios

Griffith Park

4th Street Viaduct Bridge

Junipero Beach











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- p.44-45 Locations of different water recordings along the Los Angeles River/ © VOGT Landscape



## **AWKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank the following institutions, organizations and individuals for all your support and time:

- Center for Land Use Interpretation.
- Inyo County Water Department.
- Los Angeles Public Library.
- American Reclamation Inc.
- Rich McCutchan Archives.

### **Publication Design**

- Violeta Burckhardt
- Simon Kroll

### **PRINT**

- Berliner Buchdruck.

### **EXHIBITION**

#### **Exhibition Design, Concept**

- Günther Vogt
- Violeta Burckhardt
- Simon Kroll

#### **Curatorial Team**

- Herwig Baumgartner
- Marcelyn Gow

#### **Exhibition Recordings**

- Danny Wills
- Leah Wulfman