

Educator Notes

Zoe Crosher: Prospecting Palm Fronds

December 15, 2017–May 13, 2018



About the Artist

Zoe Crosher was born in Santa Rosa, California, in 1975, and lives and works in Los Angeles. She studied at California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, and the University of California, Santa Cruz. Recent solo exhibitions have taken place at LAXART, Los Angeles, and Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Desert (both 2015). From 2013–15, Crosher collaborated with Los Angeles Nomadic Division on the Manifest Destiny Billboard Project—a series she initiated of artist-produced billboards and activations that unfolded along the Interstate 10 Freeway, for which she received the 2015 Smithsonian Ingenuity of the Year Award. In 2012, she took part in the Museum of Modern Art's New Photography show. She is also the recipient of the Art Here and Now Award, awarded by Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2011). She is the Founder and President of the Los Angeles branch of the Fainting Club and a fellow at the Royal Society of the Arts, London.

About the Exhibition

These sculptures are the newest iteration of Crosher's ongoing series *LA Like: Prospecting Palm Fronds*, presented on the AAM's Roof Deck Sculpture Garden. Crosher began collecting the discarded fronds she found on the city streets after discovering that Los Angeles's iconic palm trees were nearing the end of their natural life span (75–100 years) and slowly disappearing. She cast the fronds in bronze using a lost-wax casting process that evokes the history of monuments and memorials. Each frond is titled after the intersection where it was found, creating both a map and archive of Los Angeles's disappearing cultural history. The palm fronds—spread across the roof-deck as if they have fallen directly from trees—are an elegant, poetic reminder of the intricate details that can emerge from looking closer.

Questions for Discussion

- I What are the distinctions between icon, memory, and truth?
- I How does documenting an object change its perceived value?

Suggested Activities

Permanently Impermanent

Invite your students to collect a variety of natural objects with interesting details, textures, and shapes, such as pinecones, leaves, seedpods, acorns, and sticks, and record the location where the objects were found.

Gather plaster of Paris, gold or bronze acrylic paint, small acrylic brushes, disposable gloves, nailbrushes, toothpicks, and a ball of Play-Doh for each student.

Cover the tables with a protective sheet and mix the plaster.

Invite students to flatten the ball of Play-Doh into a thick pancake shape and create a mold by pressing one of the natural objects into the Play-Doh, being careful not to push through the bottom of it. Pull the object out and discard.

Then, wearing gloves, carefully pour enough plaster to fill the impression and let it harden for about forty-five minutes.

Gently pull the Play-Doh mold away from the hard plaster cast. Clean off any remaining Play-Doh with a nailbrush or use a toothpick in the hard-to-reach places.

Invite students to paint the plaster object with bronze or gold paint to give it a different appearance and title the new sculpture with the location it was found.

Scatter the sculptures around the classroom or school, where other classmates might observe these objects from nature in a new way.

Following page: Installation view: Zoe Crosher, *Prospecting Palm Fronds*, 2017.
Photo: Tony Prikrýl

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