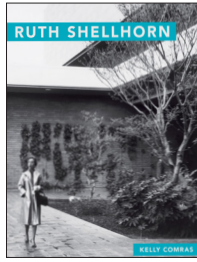


The August meeting featured author Kelly Comras, a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, founding member of the Stewardship Council for The Cultural Landscape Foundation, past-president of the California Garden & Landscape History Society, and author of the book, *Ruth Shellhorn*, who was the subject of Comras' talk as well as a short film she presented.



Esteemed landscape architect Ruth Patricia Shellhorn played an important role in the transition and development of 20th century Southern California landscaping. A documentary short, *Ruth Shellhorn: Midcentury Landscape Design in Southern California*, produced by the Library of American Landscape History (LALH) in association with Florentine Films/Hott Productions, Inc., provided an overview of her life. Comras, who was interviewed in the film, then gave a talk including personal anecdotes from her experience interviewing Shellhorn and detailed information she gathered while writing her definitive biography of Shellhorn. Highlights included photos of and comments about a number of Shellhorn's projects.

Born in 1909, Shellhorn's career coincided with the development of SoCal landscape architecture and the important era between the end of the Great Depression and the rapid development of the Los Angeles area spurred by post-WWII affluence.

Encouraged by her parents to pursue college studies, she first attended Oregon State University and then Cornell University, where her graduate studies in design, engineering, regional planning, and horticulture were cut short by financial circumstances. She withdrew four units short of her degree, returned to California, and embarked on her career during the Great Depression.

Shellhorn's first big break came when she was hired to complete the landscaping for Bullock's department store in Pasadena. Over the course of her career, she worked on nine Bullock's projects as well as pedestrian areas in Disneyland, parks, parking lots, private gardens and trails. She completed nearly 400 projects before retiring in 1996. Her work was characterized by versatility, practicality and innovation. Although she established her career during the "water it and it will grow" era, a time when our Mediterranean

climate was marketed as a sub-tropical climate full of lush exotics, she always maintained what she called "a humble attitude about landscape design". Comras described that as an aversion to the idea of imposing a design onto a space without sensitivity to the land and respect for the client's needs. This attitude led to innovative designs, notably Fashion Square shopping centers—inviting public spaces that welcomed visitors with groups of palms and other features that could be seen from a distance before they even reached the malls. With these public areas, she applied the "California style" notion of incorporating the outdoors as part of the living space. People would visit the mall gardens even when the stores were closed, using them as public parks for recreation and even weddings. She



also sensitive to our native California landscape, and when she was hired to work on the UC-Riverside campus, she fought to preserve the natural arroyos and incorporated native and drought-tolerant plants appropriate for the arid location.

Shellhorn was selected as a Woman of the Year by the Los Angeles Times in 1955 and in 1971, was named a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects. In 2005, more than 70 years after Shellhorn had left Cornell, it was determined that she had in fact completed the requirements for degrees in architecture and landscape architecture and she received both.

Each project Shellhorn completed was individual, elegant and functional—like the designer herself who always wore hats and dresses on site but was not above picking up a shovel and digging in. Ultimately, her passion for landscape design was for employing it as a way to bring other people together. This point was underscored when Comras recalled asking about Shellhorn's personal garden and getting the response that she did not have time for her own landscaping.

Comras' book was available for purchase after the lecture, and the film on Shellhorn can be viewed at <http://lalh.org/films/ruth-shellhorn-midcentury-landscape-design-in-southern-california/>.

🌿 Sandy Masuo

SHARING SECRETS RESPONSES

What "survival lessons" have you learned from the recent heat waves? Which plants are doing well and which are suffering?



My office is in Tustin. So seeing *Raphiolepis indica*, *Pinus canariensis*, *Pinus pinea*, *Pittosporum crassifolium*, *Persea americana* and many others scorched, was truly surprising. Some were well mulched, some not. Some may have had water deficits or root defects or disease, but the large numbers affected seemed to say it was just the heat.

Plants I would have expected to get scorched were not. My *Quercus shumardii*, *Lagerstroemia*, *Harpulia arborea*, *Dypsis lutescens*, *Ptychosperma elegans*, *Coprosma 'Karo Red'*, and *Tupidanthus* were untouched.

Others that burned were not surprising, like *Camellia japonica* or *Kentia* palms in full sun, or *Rhopalstylos baurei* and several *Chamaedorea* species in partial sun, except *Chamaedorea x 'Schippii'*, which was fine.

Of course, common desert trees, like *Jacaranda* and *Schinus molle* were fine. In parts of the San Fernando Valley I understand that even *Quercus agrifolia* were scorched.

Is this a freak occurrence, or something to expect more of? If you have a crystal ball, let me know.

- Greg Applegate

I'm not replacing what didn't make it and getting more of what did! Check out neighbors' yards. A young *Agonis flexuosa* (Peppermint Willow) is doing great.

- Diane Connell

Mulch with pine needles!!! My plants stay cooler and benefit from the acidity.

- Gloria Leinbach

Crape myrtles are doing well in my garden - and all over the San Fernando Valley. So are *Caesalpinia pulcherima* (more widely planted each year) and various *Tecoma stans* (Gold Star, Lydia, Sunrise). Surprisingly, gerber daisies are surviving with watering every 2-3 days depending on maturity and location. Hybrid magnolias are NOT happy and have lost many leaves. Most established plants appear O.K., but younger plants, and most succulents in full sun, have shriveled and/or burned. A more pleasant effect of the heat has been the early appearance of a number of bulbs - leaves and flowers - throughout the garden.

A very unfortunate effect of the heat may be the loss of my 30-year-old cork oak (*Quercus suber*). In trying to keep the plantings below the tree alive, I've been watering 2-3 times a week rather than my usual once a month. This extra water has apparently made the oak susceptible to the ever-present *Phytophthora* fungus. I'm treating the tree with a fungicide, hoping to save this very important garden resident.

- Joan Citron

SCHS 2018 Annual Award Banquet & Silent Auction Saturday, September 22, 2018

Los Angeles County Arboretum • 301 N Baldwin Ave, Arcadia 91007

Social hour & silent auction begin at 6 pm. Auction closes at 7 pm,
followed by dinner and award presentation at 8:15 pm

(Reminder: We are now able to accept credit cards at the auction!)

STILL NEED A TICKET?

Online registration closes Sept. 20, but you may call Laura Bauer
at (626) 437-9459 to check for availability.