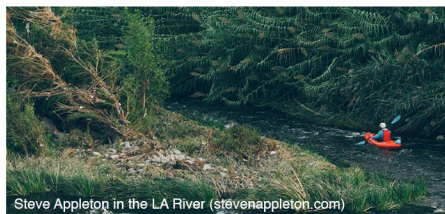


FUTURE CURRENTS: LA RIVER

A collaboration between students of the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication at California State University Northridge (CSUN), the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya), and local and national artists will bring interaction with and awareness to complexities surrounding the Los Angeles River.

Seen by many as a concrete canal, the river is far more than meets the eye -- it has a vital ecosystem, a prominent role in the city's history and geography, and a bright future envisioned by city leaders. The river balances between its natural character as a river and its role in controlling flood waters, always impacted by natural events and human action. The challenges and opportunities surrounding the river stand as a microcosm of issues facing the region – the scarcity of water and other resources, sustainability, pollution, inclusion and equitable revitalization. This project focuses on repurposing waste materials and invasive plants as the material of creative activity. The resulting performances and sculptures serve to focus educational dialog and social exchange in a series of informal gatherings and events.



Steve Appleton in the LA River (stevenappleton.com)

After several years of prominence in local media, however, questions remain about the river's future. Future Currents aims to new perspectives and approaches to the LA River dialogue. The combined force of one of the city's most innovative arts organizations and one of the state's largest universities will inspire engagement and awareness about the river. Leading these efforts will be one of the nation's leading eco-artist, Lynn Neuman alongside Steven Appleton, an artist with a long history of engagement with the LA River.

Future Currents has four phases:

1) In summer 2018, the project started with the clean-up of plastic trash and the harvesting of *Arundo donax*. The *Arundo donax* harvesting process is done carefully by hand in contrast to more aggressive techniques used by Army Corp of Engineers for *Arundo* removal that includes spraying of herbicides that can harm native amphibians.

Lynn and Steve worked with student dancers, artists, and filmmakers at the river site where they began a creative process using the reclaimed materials in art works.



CSUN Dance Students workshoping with Lynn Neuman at LA River

2) The second phase will occur in studios and classrooms around the CSUN campus, as students work on sculptures, documentary video clips, musical instruments and similar projects. This phase was 'Kicked-Off' at an event on October 27th at the LA River in Frogtown.

Students have used the *Arundo* to create sculptures, percussion instruments, and flutes - with plans to model temporary housing structures, bio-char prototypes, and many more innovative creations with the harvested material.



Global Currents Festival at The Soraya, 2016

3) The third phase will be a multi-disciplinary festival and performance at CSUN on April 5th, bringing together the work of dancers, musicians, and visual artists, whose work shares the river as a common theme.

The festival will feature a culmination of all of the dances, musical performances, and sculptures that were created through the life of the project, as well as displays of other items created with the *Arundo* and interactive activities for attendees.

4) The final phase is ongoing. CSUN film-makers will have captured the entire project and their video docuseries will tell the ongoing story of the river and the positive collective action of a group of students and artists.

Future Currents asks several questions. What does the river need? What can it teach us? What are the ramifications of our behaviors? And how can we engage with the river not as a far off ideal of restoration, but as an already beautiful and imperfect public space?

In addition to bringing greater visibility and positive associations with the River, it is aimed at engaging youth and students, local artists, local audiences, and overall, to demonstrate the value-add of artists to important local issues. The student artists and film-makers and The Soraya's artists and audiences can shine a light not only on the River, but on the important role CSUN plays in sustainability and other local issues.

With 40,000 students, CSUN is California's second largest university.

- The Mike Curb College boasts two of the nation's top ranked programs in music and film.
- CSUN President Harrison places Sustainability on the list of the campuses' strategic priorities. Between 2013-2015, the campus achieved a 24% reduction in water consumption.
- In the heart of the San Fernando Valley, the 356-acre campus was ranked by the Sierra Club two consecutive years as one of the top 100 campuses in the United States for its "Green" practices.
- The CSUN Institute for Sustainability was founded in 2009 to integrate sustainability into all aspects of the campus, from operations and infrastructure to research, outreach, and education.



The Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya) opened in 2011 to serve both the CSUN community, the 1.9 million residents of the Valley, and the broader regional market in Los Angeles.

- The 1700-seat venue was awarded LEED Gold certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), and consistent with university priorities, places sustainability among its key objectives.
- In addition to 50 presented and produced performances in 7 different series, The Soraya offers free performances and community festivals. In 2016, the Global Currents Festival brought together artists from 13 nations and cultures to share perspectives, ancient and modern, about water conservation.

The Soraya also counts student engagement as its top priority, working with students across all academic disciplines - on and off stage alike.

Lynn Neuman is Artistic Director of Artichoke Dance Company. She describes Artichoke as an eco-arts action organization that specializes in performances in public spaces such as parks, playgrounds, and festivals.

- Lynn is widely known for her multi-year program to mitigate plastic pollution on Coney Island Beach.
- Her site-specific work has been presented across America and internationally, designed to engage communities on local issues, and enthralling diverse audiences and spurring on their joyful curiosity.
- Lynn is an American Association of Performing Arts Professionals Leadership Fellow, a Marion International Fellow for the Visual and Performing Arts, and an American Littoral Coastal Clean Up Associate.



Steven Appleton is an artist and community activist who is widely recognized for his work on environmental projects, public arts installations, and social enterprises.

- As a longtime Elysian Valley resident and community organizer, Steve is devoted to a wide variety of advocacy projects on behalf of the Los Angeles River.
- Steve has brought first hand-awareness of the river by leading thousands on kayaking trips through Elysian Valley.
- He brings community and environmental perspectives to his work with non-profit river organizations and government agencies, including the Los Angeles Department of Sanitation, Los Angeles County Vector Control District, and the Los Angeles City Council.

Frogtown is a neighborhood just a few miles north of downtown Los Angeles. Inhabited by a mix of light industry and bungalows, the area is adjacent to a section of the river that most closely resembles its wild past, where water cascades over rock and birds' nest within a verdant landscape. Nature's delicate balance, however, is constantly threatened. Trash pollutes the river after rains, and it is also plagued by some non-native plants such as *Arundo donax*, an invasive plant species that is as resilient but harmful to the native ecosystem. It is here where Neuman and Appleton will explore ways to shift the perceptions of the river through artistic with the river's natural and introduced materials -plants alongside the plastics and other materials that invade the natural environment.