

Interview with Karen Stokes

Edited for clarity

Liza Posas: I'm Liza Posas, the LA subject coordinator.

Tyson Gaskill: I'm Tyson Gaskill and I am the Executive Director of Communications and Events at the USC libraries.

Alexandra Hontalas-Adams: I'm Alexandra Hontalas-Adams and I'm the LA as Subject intern.

Karen Stokes: I'm Karen Stokes, and I created LA as Subject.

Tyson Gaskill: Wonderful. So, I'm glad that you went last Karen, because that's a perfect lead-in, since you created LA as Subject. So we're curious, you know I remember how things worked at the Getty Research Institute. You'd have a good idea and a lot of times you would work on it on your own. But then sometimes, there would be people in the administration who would perhaps shape the idea a little bit. And so I'm wondering—was there anybody else at the GRI that helped you shape the original LA as Subject concept. Anybody like Tom Reese or, you know, one of the people in the scholars departments. How much was it your baby entirely versus a collective issue.

Karen Stokes: Well, that's a great place to start. LA as Subject was actually developed by accident. We were at a place in the GRI where we were transitioning to a new GRI director, Salvatore Settis, who had just been selected. Tom Reese at the time was the acting director. In preparation for Salvatore's arrival, Steven Lanzarotta who headed administration, thought that it would be a good idea to begin to transition what were individual freestanding programs exploring Los Angeles—exploring relationships between the Getty and the greater Los Angeles region, in a very general and broad sense at that point. He thought it would be interesting to look at how to tie that work to longer-term research projects, projects that had multiyear research agendas. We went through a brainstorming exercise, looking at possible topics that might be of interest based on what the emerging scholar year themes were, and what we were assuming might be Salvatore Settis's scholarly interests and priorities when he arrived. Salvatore was a noted Italian scholar who was of course coming to an American institution, so it had nuanced complications in terms of projecting what might be of interest. The group, which included all of us working on community relationship-type programs, as well as those working on programs more directly tied to the residential scholar's program were in the room. Ideas were thrown around, most of them within the tradition of art history of course. At some point Los Angeles as a topic was placed in consideration. As the discussion continued, it was thrown into the virtual trash can. People did not think that Salvatore would have any interest in working on a topic dealing with Los Angeles because it wasn't vested in the tradition of art history—or what at the time was considered traditional art historical practice—so the arguments were strong and swift, and it was completely discarded. After some time, we were each supposed to select of the categories left, the topics that we were most interested in. Well, I had decided that my interest was in fact Los Angeles. So, I made a case for pulling

Los Angeles out of the trash can and allowing it to be a topic. The group agreed. When we selected our teams, however, no one would get on my team. In fact, some people pulled me aside and said, “Karen, that’s a bad idea—Salvatore won’t understand it. There won’t be a future in dealing with Los Angeles, you should discard the idea.” But you know, I was used to standing alone. [Editorial note from Karen Stokes: As well, in February 1994, Salvatore Settis gave an opening address to staff on his visions for the Getty Research Institute months before his official arrival in fall 1994. I remember being so impressed with his presentation that I kept a copy of the presentation that he distributed with me to read periodically. There was something about his description of growing up in southern Italy and being sent to a prestigious “prep” school in northern Italy that degraded and trained him out of his southern familial culture and accent, that made me think that he might have a deeper understanding and interest than assumed in topics of diversity, particularly related to research and scholarship.]

When I first came to the Getty, the idea was to help the Getty share its resources more effectively with a broader audience, and that was at the direction of Harold Williams—it was exploratory. Harold was of course the first president of the Getty and was the one who transitioned the Getty to the new Getty Center. This was a complicated moment, much like the moment we find ourselves in now in terms of institutions reconsidering their relationships with communities—particularly communities of color—and the issues that spring from those relationships, whether they are academic, economic, social or what have you. In this case, they were academic issues, but it was also a question of resource sharing in more effective ways. You have to also remember that at that time the Getty was a very insulated institution: it was public when it chose to be public and it wasn’t beholden to the public trust, because of course the Getty had its own resource that funded whatever projects or activities that it was engaged in. But with the idea of looking forward to moving to a more public entity like the Getty Center, there was interest and this need to begin exploring how to open the Getty up to more relationship building; how to make the Getty not just an entity with a resource, but to make the Getty an active partner, of course globally, but particularly within the city that it chose to be in. This is an institution with the resource to have chosen to be in any city in the world, but it chose Los Angeles, which inherently suggested a responsibility to be a good corporate citizen and partner in the city. That’s something that Harold understood, but the question was how to get there. And, of course, the backdrop of that moment was the *riots*, or the *uprising* (depending on where you stand) of 1992. There were complexities within communities of color; between the Korean and the African American communities, between Asian communities that were left on the margins of discussion, the Latino community—now LatinX community—again on the margins of the conversation. But in fact all of us were a part of this conversation, East and West Side, North and South, Black, white, brown, red, etc., corporate as well as community. So, the question was how to coalesce those relationships into active functioning partnerships that could bring to the table at the core both the collaborative spirit, and most importantly, mutual respect that could be the conduit for sharing resources and information in both directions.

There were a number of things that the Getty experimented with in a phase prior to this moment. We had a series of different programs where we explored relationship-building.

We also had something that I created when I first came on board at the Getty: the Community Leadership Roundtable, which brought together multiethnic people that were well placed in community organizations, universities, corporations, and public entities at the Getty Research Institute to have discussions with Harold Williams on a monthly basis about the question of relationship-building. And initially, I have to say that there was skepticism on both parts. On one hand, the “insulated” Getty, looked at this and said, “Well, we are not sure if we want these people commenting on or telling us what to do in our programming, these people who we don’t know.” On the other hand, people coming to the table were like, “Well, why should we trust an institution like the Getty that has never approached us before, never wanted our information, never invited us to be participants before; are they just going to sort of pick our brains and then discard us?” Well, my theory was that if you brought these two entities to the table and started having these open discussions, what you would create is a window, a two-way window, where those coming in from the outside would get a glimpse of what was happening inside of the Getty, and the Getty would get a glimpse of what was happening outside of the Getty, and *through* this two-way window the conversations could begin. And that’s exactly what happened!

People came to the table in part because of the integrity and heart of Harold Williams, who came to the table every single time—as busy as he was, he showed up every single time and stayed and discussed whatever the topics were. The people that came—that we invited—were all connected to one of us, to myself or one of my colleagues that were working on culturally-specific projects, and that was the secret. The reason for that is that if you were inviting people connected to you that you had worked with on boards, or staffing boards or what have you in the past, and they knew that you respected their time and respected them, then they knew that you were not going to bring them to a table where their time was going to be wasted or their brains were going to be picked; that it truly was going to be a discussion. And so, they came with that faith, because they were each connected to one of us. And from that, they became some of our biggest advocates and brokers of the vision in the community, and partners in projects that we subsequently did over many years down the road—it was wonderful. I went into more detail about the Community Leadership Roundtable because it was a precursor to the LA as Subject Advisory Forum. It kind of helps you understand how the Advisory Forum was constructed and *why*—with a different sort of caveat, which I’ll get into later.

But let’s get back to “pulling LA as Subject out of the trash can.” So it was pulled out of the trash can, and no one would get on my team. But I have to say I had such amazing colleagues at the time. The idea was that each team would write a proposal that would then be submitted to Salvatore for review when he came. I was a team of one, but three people came to me on the side and each in their own way basically said, “Karen, I’m not on your team. I really think it’s a mistake, but I will comment on the proposal that you write.” So that I would not have to write it in a vacuum with no commentary I said, “Great, that’s wonderful!” So I wrote the proposal. Tom Reese is the person, who along with Steve Lanzarotta, actually hired me to work at the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities (now the Getty Research Institute), so they kind of trusted what I was doing. Tom Reese, of course, looked at the proposal and we had discussions and so forth. But anyway, I wrote the proposal, I got commentary from my colleagues and we discussed it,

and then I completed the final draft. The proposals were submitted, and an interesting thing happened. When Salvatore came [arrived in Los Angeles] one of the first books that he read was *City of Quartz* by Mike Davis. And the LA as Subject proposal was the first and the *only* proposal that he approved for implementation—I kid you not!

Tyson Gaskill: Wow.

Liza Posas: So, two things that I found in the Getty institutional archives. One, the information about the riots and the connection between LA as Subject and the riots and then the second was a panel discussion that was moderated by Mike Davis and it had Octavia Butler and Kevin Starr and had the five-star hitters of L.A. history and L.A. fiction. It was amazing.

Karen Stokes: That was done as part of LA as Subject. LA as Subject was up and running by then and included a lecture series. Tyson was involved in it. In fact, the design on the lecture announcement was a Tyson design. The interesting thing about that program is, first of all, the stellar panel of presenters included Mike Davis, Octavia Butler, Carolyn See, and Gerald Horne, and the moderator was Hector Tobar—who was the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. And second, it was the very first program of any kind to take place in the Harold Williams Auditorium at the new Getty Center, and it had the distinction of taking place before the Getty Center officially opened to the public. We were given special permission to host that program prior to the Getty Center opening—I think the Getty was scheduled to open in December.

Tyson Gaskill: Correct.

Karen Stokes: And this happened in

Tyson Gaskill: Summer, I believe.

Karen Stokes: No, October or November.

Karen Stokes: I think it was October 28th. Anyway, it was prior to the Getty officially opening, so it inaugurated programming at the Getty, which is interesting.

Liza Posas: So, it inaugurated the programming at the Getty?

Tyson Gaskill: At the [new] Getty Center up on the hill.

Liza Posas: Right.

Tyson Gaskill: There was programming before that.

Karen Stokes: Oh, yeah!

Liza Posas: But also it was the inaugural event for LA as Subject?

Karen Stokes: No. In fact, the inaugural lectures and panels for LA as Subject explored a number of questions. The first were three exploratory panels presented as part of the discussion series *LA Archives and Collections: In Search of Urban Histories* that happened in 1995, at 401 Wilshire—the old Getty site. They looked at different segments of archive and collecting practices and uses, including: collections and archival repositories; artists and scholars as users of archives and collections; and, public and private collectors. They brought together Getty curators, private collectors, artists, scholars, and librarians—in fact, that’s when I first met Mayme Clayton. I invited her as one of the private collectors. And Mike Davis was invited as a user of collections—I think it was user.

Liza Posas: We have them. Actually, one of my favorite documents in looking at the institutional archives was from the discussion series: *Personal Preference, Collection Policy, and the Historical Record: Public and Private Collectors*. One of the questions that I think—in fact, a lot of the questions resonate with today. So, it talks about technology, living in the increased demands of access in a technological world, but the other one about the community, how are new institutional attempts to respond to requests to locate material narratives of diverse cultures influencing and/or transforming formal and informal relationships between institutions and community . . . I love this question because I really liked how you phrased it: How are private and public collectors today responding to the increasing desire of researchers and the general public to locate the history of diverse groups of citizens that are demographically visible yet rendered relatively anonymous in the official historical record. That’s still a problem today.

Karen Stokes: Yes, it’s a double-edged sword in a sense. When the project first started and the vision was clear, and then when the first phase of the vision was accomplished—meaning the initial database was complete, the publication was out and available for people to access these materials the thought was; “Ah-ha! People will now have access and no longer will these communities be rendered invisible, particularly within institutions that have the resources and the responsibility to illuminate them.” And the double-edged sword part of it is that as access is accomplished here, and progress—let’s look at in terms of technological progress—continues to happen, there is an assumption that technology and the initial access created are continuing to create this groundswell of visibility, when in fact what’s happening is that initial access is getting pushed down further, because of other priorities being placed on top of new technology capabilities and demands from other sources. It’s sad in a sense, but it’s not something that can’t be managed. It’s just unfortunate that it takes so incredibly long. Who could have imagined—not me certainly—that we would still be having this kind of conversation twenty-five years later That is unfortunate and, in a sense, outrageous—that’s my animation you’re seeing and my loss of words—it’s just so striking! On other hand, when life is given to entities like LA as Subject and what USC has done with LA as Subject, that’s where the hope lies. There may be a space, I mean it hasn’t been 25 years for USC. It’s been what, 15?

Liza Posas: 20.

Karen Stokes: Sorry, 20 years at USC. But you know, on one hand, you want it to move faster. On the other hand, you have to look at what it has done and what it's doing. And think about it this way; If it didn't exist, where would we be? If it didn't exist where would the visibility be? If there was a way to trace all the research and scholarship and artistic production that has happened as a result of the resources being accessible through this mechanism, through presentations like the Archives Bazaar, and through the collaborative mechanism of the Archives Forum—think of all the scholarship and everything that's been created as a result of it, and what would be missing if it wasn't there. So, it's double edged because yes, it should have moved faster and it's unfortunate that it hasn't. And part of that has to do with institutional priorities and how those priorities are set. Some of it simply has to do with the movement of technology and just priorities of life in general being placed on top of those priorities—and part of that you can't control. But here's the good news: like in 1992, when we were at a moment that created energy for change, we're at a moment again, which has a different energy now. It's asking institutions to do the very thing that you're talking about. And that's to stop rendering communities, and everything those communities and people of color represent, invisible. To make them part of the central conversation, not the sidelines, not the perimeter, but part of the *central* conversation. So, there's a new energy, and I'm pleased to say that my observation is that so many corporations, organizations, and universities are stepping up and trying to rise to the occasion. So this could be the moment, Liza, where invisibility is renegotiated and hopefully eliminated. That's the hope . . .

Tyson Gaskill: Every conversation with you is like a revelation. There's so much to unpack. You know you talk for 10 minutes and then I have an hour's worth of questions based off that. But we also want to be cognizant of your time and just going back to your answer to my first question. There were so many elements of that about the Getty wanting to reaffirm its place in the city. The very notion that LA as Subject was in the trash can and you fished it out and saved it. What the heck? How did I not know that?

Liza Posas: A saved-from-the-dumpster story! That's amazing.

Tyson Gaskill: And the role of Harold Williams, I had no idea how much he was involved. I honestly thought this was very much internal to the Getty Research Institute, not the Trust as a whole, I did not know that Harold Williams had such a presence in it. And that is, that's so reaffirming. I already knew the guy was amazing, but this has just added another level of respect for him from me. I had a quick branch question to that though. I believe 1996 was the scholar year devoted to Los Angeles. And that was the first time that the Research Institute at the Getty, instead of having their scholars [being] European history specialists—the vast majority were all European history specialists for the previous 10 years—that was the first year [they weren't]. And I believe that a lot of them got involved in LA as Subject in the 12 months that they were at the Getty, is that correct?

Karen Stokes: That is absolutely correct. It's one of those "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" moments. And you know, Tom Reese, the acting director, had brought up the idea of an L.A. scholar year sometime before it happened, but it was just cancelled—it was like, "Oh no, that's not going to happen!" And then the LA as Subject project proposal was

developed and designed to merge with all of the other L.A. work we were doing and it resurfaced, but this time it had traction. Steve Lanzarotta could speak on the exact LA scholar year timeline much better than me, because he was much closer to it. But when it did happen, a lot of those who were invited to be on the LA as Subject Advisory Forum were also invited as scholars for the LA scholar year. And some whom we didn't know about later became involved in LA as Subject, and part of the Advisory Forum.

Tyson Gaskill: Do you want to talk about the end of the project at the Getty and how it got transferred to USC—who was involved on the Getty end and how it was accomplished and why? Why did it need to go to somewhere else from the Getty?

Karen Stokes: It's actually in the foreword that I wrote in the publication—the vision of LA as Subject. I always “viewed” LA as Subject as a *prototype* project. I always “described” it as a *demonstration* project. And I did that deliberately because in my first professional life I was a grant writer—and ironically in the last part of my professional life at the Getty I ended up being a grant writer. But anyway, in my first life as a grant writer I would write demonstration projects, occasionally, and most of them were national demonstration projects. The intent of those demonstration projects was to identify what has been learned for the purpose of replication. And so, I deliberately defined LA as Subject in the originating proposal and in the text of the foreword in the directory publication as a demonstration project and prototype because the intent was twofold. First, to ask “What has been learned?” and second to replicate it—and there was a plan for replication. When LA as Subject was developed, it was at a time when there was no forum for custodians of LA archives to convene, to talk about the archives, to share resources, etc. And so, the LA as Subject Advisory Forum became the first consistent network for custodians of less-visible archives and collections about the Los Angeles region—meaning librarians, curators, archivists—as well as scholar users, and those who were privately collecting LA archives to get together and to network, and again, share techniques, resources, you name it. At the time, there were also very few projects focusing on LA. One happened to be *ISLA* that was developed by Phil Ethington, at USC. He was just starting the development of *ISLA* and it was technology-based. Another was *Shades of LA*, developed by the late brilliant Carolyn Kozo Cole. In fact, Carolyn's project, *Shades of LA* was developed through the Los Angeles Central Library, where she managed a Los Angeles photography archive. Her project brought together people from all over greater Los Angeles to contribute photographs to the archive, to expand the archive, and to make it representative of—or to begin to make it representative of—Los Angeles and the complexity of Los Angeles. When I first wrote the LA as Subject proposal, I did research what was currently happening. And when I found out about *ISLA*, *Shades of LA*, and a couple of other projects, such as Hynda Rudd's project, and so forth, I met with each of them to find out what their views were, what their strategies were, etc. And of those, it was Carolyn Kozo Cole's project that gave me the most insight for how this could be broadened and pulled together—though ours was different. She was inviting people to contribute photographs. Archives of course, had to be solicited through a survey format, and so forth. But the inherent question was the same, even though she could retain the first voice because she was dealing with the people directly bringing photographs. That element, we were able to build into the survey process, and we had standard questions, of course, that would be on any archival survey form. But there were

other questions that we deliberately constructed to preserve and to pull forward the first-voice response of each respondent. I mean, it took a lot of time for follow-up and hence that's why we ended up with 178 in the publication, even though we solicited something like 700, because the follow-up was intense. But, you ended up getting more of the first-voice representation, where you didn't have an institutional overlay onto what these archives and collections represented to the institutions and the people that were the custodians or the collectors of the archives and collections. Anyway, okay I digress...

Tyson Gaskill: If I can, just as a quick aside, Karen, I think you were the first one to teach me about the importance of that first voice. Because I think we had a few mild disagreements, perhaps. I wanted to put more of institutional editorial stamp on things and you were very firm and said, "No, this is in their voice and we need to keep it that way." And I think I disagreed with you early on, but you swayed me, you brought me around to your way of thinking. So thank you . . . but did we actually tie this together with USC?

Karen Stokes: OK, I'll finish my thought. So it was always seen as a prototype, there weren't many of these kinds of projects, but there were what we thought were emerging centers for a study of Los Angeles, it seemed, at certain universities. One was at Loyola Marymount, one was CSUN, the Pat Brown Institute at Cal State LA, and USC. It was USC coupled with the ISLA project that was the anchor at that point. And of course we didn't know where the ISLA project was going, but we found through the LA scholar year that a lot of the scholarship was coming through USC initially, which was fascinating. But anyway, so we thought, okay, this is a strategic project connection. Remember the idea was to bring these resources together, on behalf of the community not to be owned by an institution but to bring them together for the benefit of the broader LA regional community. And the theory was that if that's the case there should be some way to symbolically ensure that it's always vested "symbolically" in the community. So, it was never intended for the project to stay at the Getty after the prototype was finished—meaning, the publication was finished and the symposium announcing it was complete. The intention was initially to have it rotate every two years between each of the centers for the study of Los Angeles. Well, when it was time for it to transfer, we were looking at which institution it would transfer to first. And the question of course, you know, had to do with what institutions had the resources to support it initially, what institutions would respect the intention of it and allow it to grow because that was the other thing that was clearly stated. The idea of moving it each year was so that the question of "What has been learned?" could continue to be asked, and LA as Subject could continue to grow and expand, again, on behalf "symbolically" of the community—or the broader Los Angeles regional community—and now a broader global community that it was created for. Okay, so when it was time to transfer it, we had CSUN at the table, we had Loyola Marymount at the table, and we had USC at the table (but differently). USC was at the table in a different way at that moment. In this moment of serendipity and that's enough said about it, Lynn O'Leary Archer, who was a dean at USC before she came to the Getty—and in fact, it was, it was Lynn O'Leary Archer who left the voicemail on my answering machine offering me the Getty job in 1992.

Tyson Gaskill: Oh how lovely.

Karen Stokes: An ironic moment. But I have to say this too, that, well I'll go back to that. At that moment of transition—the Directory publication release was 1999, this was 2000, and we're looking for the home, the next home for LA as Subject—the Advisory Forum is having meetings about where is it going next, and you know, all those discussions. Right around that time Lynn O'Leary Archer leaves the Getty, goes back to USC, and heads . . .

Tyson Gaskill: She was deputy, or second in command at the libraries essentially.

Karen Stokes: Yes. Well, anyway, at that moment, it's enough to say that she knew the history of LA as Subject, and she knew both the pitfalls and the value. If you wanted to be cynical you could say it was a marriage of convenience, because it just dropped in everybody's lap. She had the money. She wanted a project for USC libraries. We wanted the database to grow and become . . . Oh, and ironically, the person who had previously worked at the Getty, and on the development of our LA as Subject database and website was also at USC.

Tyson Gaskill: Is that Barbara Shepherd?

Karen Stokes: Yes, Barbara. She was on staff at USC at that moment. She knew the ins and outs of the database and could navigate it—because it was complicated and needed some serious navigation to take it to its next level—and Barbara was a master at that. It literally dropped in everybody's lap. So like I said, cynically—and some have been cynical—it was said “marriage of convenience.” Others said: “This is correct!” In fact, the LA as Subject Advisory Forum had a number of meetings about it before the Advisory Forum agreed and voted to have it go to USC, and to have the Advisory Forum transfer with it because we wanted that to stay intact as an entity that was a functioning networking body of custodians of LA archives that was becoming bigger than it had initially been. So, there were the cynics. But the reason I was a profound advocate for this and did my best to assist the other Forum members in seeing the rationale, is because in all the years that LA as Subject existed at the Getty, it was one of a number of projects dealing with topics that were not within the art historical tradition that often were called “special projects” and, you know, or “special initiatives.” And like I've said on other occasions, I'll be glad and jumping for joy when the day comes that projects dealing with communities of color are no longer called special initiatives, they're just projects because it's just what we do as a society. That's my hope. But anyway, at that time it was a special project. So as special projects go, you get the crumbs of what's left regarding budget allocations. And LA as Subject wasn't by itself getting the crumbs in the allocations. I'm not saying, “Oh, poor LA as Subject.” But thank goodness for the background I came out of because my United Way background taught me all about volunteerism, and when I worked at one of the largest community-based organizations I learned all about grants development and finding ways to *make things work*. And so, we didn't have the budget to make this project actually work. But you know what we had? We had the expertise of all those amazing scholars and experts on the advisory board. And guess what they did? They stepped up to the plate, and when we didn't have enough staff to process things like the survey, they utilized classes of students. And students processed the survey follow-up fieldwork and got class credit for the work they were doing. We had interns that were given to us by different universities,

and sometimes from museums that happened to have interns, and sometimes from our own museum, not our own museum, but from our foundation through the multicultural internship program. So, there were so many ways that we made this work. But you know, we still needed a foundational budget. And guess who was in charge of making sure that happened: Lynn O’Leary Archer. Every single year there were moments when people did not “get” LA as Subject and guess what, the late Lynn O’Leary Archer made sure that there was a functioning foundational budget. So, when this happened, it was like serendipity. And it was like, Yes, that’s where it needs to go because she knew the history. Not only did she know the history, but she put her professional reputation on the line to make sure it kept moving forward—quietly—but she did it.

Tyson Gaskill: You know, Lynn O’Leary Archer is one of my favorite people of all time and I was the emcee at her memorial when she passed a couple years ago, and I was so gratified her husband asked me to do that because I looked up to Lynn as a model of the kind of administrator that I would hope to be someday. When she saw a project that she knew was right, that she championed, she was like a pit bull and she would fight and fight and fight and make damn sure that that thing saw the light of day. So, that’s great to hear, Karen.

Karen Stokes: And she did it well. When I first came, there were moments . . . let’s say I was more assertive when I first started at the Getty—not aggressive, just more assertive. And Lynn was **always** assertive, and aggressive at moments.

Tyson Gaskill: Oh yeah, she knew how to curse like a sailor.

Karen Stokes: Initially we had our moments, and at some point, something happened and we both saw it at the same time and said truce—crazy truce—that was it. And you know, as out front as she could be on things, she just would quietly do this, and do it, and do it . . . and that’s why LA as Subject exists to this day. So, it wasn’t payback. But it was when she said “Yeah, I want LA as Subject to come here to the USC Libraries” that I actually had a conversation with her and asked her, “Why?” And she explained why, I thought, “Oh, okay.”

Tyson Gaskill: That’s great.

Karen Stokes: But the Advisory Forum also saw it as the right thing because a difference was that if it went to USC, it was not going to transfer to the other schools—the other universities. So the Advisory Forum knew what they were giving up, including those representing the other universities. And one of those was Robert Marshall, who headed the Urban Archives Center at CSUN, and was the first chair of the LA as Subject Advisory Forum. And they all agreed, it was unanimous. The rest is history.

Liza Posas: I didn’t realize that it was that they knew going in that that rotation element would mean that that’s what you’re forfeiting if it goes to USC.

Karen Stokes: It’s in the agreement, and we also sent a letter to the Advisory Forum thanking them for their service, when the project transferred. It’s in there too, so they all knew.

Tyson Gaskill: I don't know if it's mandated but the chair of the Executive Board for LA as Subject is never somebody from USC, for that very purpose. We don't want to be seen as the overlords, we're the administrative home of it, but we don't want to be seen as dictating everything about it, so we really try to make sure that we're not the ones making all the decisions for LA as Subject. There's that whole independent board and it's not somebody from USC who is leading it.

Karen Stokes: The intention of the transfer, the transfer itself, and the subsequent development have all been done with such an ethical foundation that has been consistent even in the tricky moments that were early on. It's always been consistent, which is wonderful. That's probably why it's been so successful and amazing, because what USC and your team have done with this has been so amazing to witness. In fact, I served as a member of the Advisory Forum Executive Committee, for a number of years, after the transfer. And in fact, the last line of the *Thank You Letter* from the Getty Research Institute to the Advisory Forum membership, is that "I will now participate as a *member* of the Advisory Forum," to make it clear that these projects that are born out of vision and are prototypes for the purpose of growth, are for that purpose to be handed over. And those participating in developing the vision, or whatever, become eventually the participants. And that's how it works . . . that's the sustainability factor in these kinds of projects. So, anyway, it's been wonderful watching and witnessing.

Tyson Gaskill: That's really gratifying to hear *you* say all that Karen. It really is. Because we look at you as LA as Subject's mother—you've just sent the baby off to college!

Liza Posas: Or it's going to be graduated. And it'll be an adult.

Karen Stokes: I think the baby's in graduate school.

Tyson Gaskill: Well, I'm certainly mindful of everybody's time and we've got a lot to digest from that. So I'm happy wrapping things up right there if everybody else is.

Liza Posas: That was a great final sentiment. Like Tyson, I have so many questions too. But I think how you wrapped it up for us, just led us to this organic and wonderful end of the interview. Thank you so much, Karen. You were always an inspiration, but now, even more so that we've heard more of the story. So thank you for your time.

Karen Stokes: Thank you. And nice meeting you, Alexandra.

Tyson Gaskill: We will let you know when the website's up and it's going to be up before the Archives Bazaar this year—we're going to be previewing it at that.

Karen Stokes: Good work, you guys. Thank you.