

'What was is' in La Jolla

Provocative Historical Society exhibit offers glimpse of what might

By [James Chute](#) [\(/staff/james-chute/\)](#) 3 p.m. March 25, 2015



Jean Lowe: "Carnegie Library," 2014 (inspired by the Andrew Carnegie San Diego Free Public Library)

If only we could just say the magic words, "What was is," and it would be done.

The Carnegie Library downtown, the first Carnegie Library in California, would have avoided demolition and v on E Street.

Or the Windemere Cottage, the first Craftsman cottage in California and Irving Gill's earliest work in La Jolla, the bulldozer in 2011 and would still be a comfort on Virginia Way.

In all, the La Jolla Historical Society assembled a list of 24 historic or potentially historic structures citywide th destroyed. Then it commissioned artists, architects and writers to perform their own magic and reconsider the

Each picked a structure from the list, and the thought-provoking and often evocative result, "What Was Is," is La Jolla Historical Society's Wisteria Cottage gallery.

Here's who picked what:

- Jean Lowe: Carnegie Library — Historic preservation doesn't have to be highbrow; inspired by the decided! Galleria in Los Angeles, Lowe's "Carnegie Library" shows how the repurposed building could have fit into E S circumstances.
- James Brown: Red Roost, Red Rest — Brown has invented an elaborate, thoughtful, century-long scenario Rest" that gets into many of the issues that pit preservation against development.

- Mathieu Gregoire: Klauber House — In his imaginative appropriation of the space's architectural details in "The Spirit of the House," Gregoire evokes the spirit of one of Gill's most inspired houses.
- Jennifer Luce: Pacific Coast Steamship Co. — Like Gregoire, Luce is content to evoke a sense of the place shaped sculpture "Lost Limb."
- James Enos: Green Dragon Colony — In "Have It Your Way," Enos has deconstructed these bungalows (in drawings) and then put them back together again (in another set).
- Roman de Salvo: San Diego High School — The iconic building was torn down in 1973, but in "Seismic Ivy," the climbing fig that took over the structure might have provided its own earthquake protection.
- Bruna Mori and Kylie King: Cozy Cottage Brothel — Mori and King take a VIP tour of the soon-to-be-under-Stingaree nightclub (named after the infamous district that housed the Cozy Cottage). It reveals a lot more at than you might expect.
- D. Emily Hicks: Douglas Hotel and El Cortez Hotel — You get the feeling Hicks had been waiting for this opportunity to create a "homage to mixed ancestry populations and cultures" that includes two related paintings and a timeline (published in an accompanying catalog).
- David Jurist: Oxley House — In Jurist's extended essay "Re-neutral," which accompanies his digital lenticular installation, "The House of the Future," it's hard to tell what's fictional and what's real, or even autobiographical.
- Roy McMakin and Tom Mulica (Domestic Architecture): Windemere Cottage — McMakin has long been fascinated by Gill, and his mission here couldn't be more practical: Create a set of renderings that show how to build a 4,000-square-foot house on the property, could have achieved that goal and kept the historic cottage.

Like most of the artists, McMakin leaves you with another set of magic words: "What if?"

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