

# subterranean convergence

*subterranean convergence*, by artist LaRissa Rogers, is a sculptural installation and score for performance at Los Angeles State Historic Park. Rogers uses the train as a vessel and a metaphor to trace the geographies of the railroad between the American South and West, investigating how liberation has been conceptualized—and where it might still be. The artist assumes the roles of caretaker, archivist, and laborer to build a simulated railroad complete with tabby-cast objects reproduced from archives and individuals. This project explores collective memory by archiving the movements of people and goods across generations and geographies.

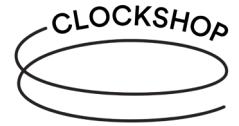
The Sunset Limited rail route has connected New Orleans and Los Angeles since 1894, representing possibilities for Black Southerners and new immigrants to resettle in the West. Some came through the Southern Pacific River Station, which is now the site of this installation. The repetition of routing and rooting within and across generations has become a grammar for Black life, one that Rogers contends with here. Over 50 community members and institutions along the historic route were invited to contribute objects of personal or historical significance, some of which were reproduced. This invitation questions what it means to be at home in America and whether liberation lies in holding in tension all of the complex histories of rooting and uprooting, voluntary and forced migration, and hope and mourning. For Rogers, these objects can unearth what it means to endure, to reposition what it means to be carried, and to journey through the passage of time toward a new destination.

The steel form of the railroad traces the route across two dirt medians, and its interior wooden tracks echo the chinoiserie designs found in architecture in the American South and in Los Angeles's Chinatown. Chinoiserie, a decorative style that appropriates East Asian aesthetics, was popularized in Greek Revival architecture by Enlightenment-era thinkers to visually encode the founding values of the nation through governmental and domestic buildings. In LA's New Chinatown, chinoiserie appears in the exoticized, Hollywood-inspired version of Shanghai, reimagined by the immigrant community themselves as a gesture of belonging—revealing how the repetition of an aesthetic can take on new meanings.

Anchored within the tracks are cast objects constructed with tabby, an ancient building material of lime, sand, and oyster shells originating in northern coastal Africa and used by enslaved peoples in the South. Through the process of reproduction—scanning, 3D printing, mold

## LaRissa Rogers

October 24, 2026–March 7, 2027  
Los Angeles State Historic Park



making, and casting—the objects adapt to and join the archive's visual language of tabby while retaining their core sentimental essence.

Through a collaboration with artist Michelle Sui, a visual score for the performance invites visitors to engage with the installation. Accompanying the installation will be a website containing the score, an ArcGIS map of all contributed objects and their information, and a curriculum coproduced with scholar Angel Adams Parham. This project offers strategies for examining the tensions between the fantasy of flight and groundedness, considered here as a communal memorial.

## About the Artist

LaRissa Rogers (b. 1996) is a multidisciplinary artist whose work investigates how personal and shared memory and history impact the perpetual evolution of cultural identity formation and placemaking. She has exhibited at Documenta 15 (Germany); Weserburg Museum (Germany); Lilley Museum (NV); the Wattis Institute of Contemporary Art (CA); the California Museum of Photography (CA); the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art (VA); Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (CA); California State University, Fullerton; The Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MA); Torrance Art Museum (CA); and the Fuller Craft Museum (MA). She received the Visual Arts fellowship at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (2022) and the Fine Arts Work Center Fellowship (2023–2024). Rogers has also held residencies at the Bemis Center of Contemporary Art (2022), the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2024), and MASS MoCA (2025). Rogers is a tenure-track assistant professor and sculpture area head at the University of Virginia. She is currently represented by Super Dakota.

## Programs

### **Opening Reception and Performance**

October 24, 2026, 2:00–4:00 PM  
Los Angeles State Historic Park

### **Film Screening: Curated by Jheanelle Brown**

December 3, 2026, 6:00–8:00 PM  
Now Instant Image Hall

### **Reading Room**

January 27–30, 2027 (Hours variable)  
Los Angeles State Historic Park

### **Closing Reception and Conversation**

March 6, 2027, 2:00–4:00 PM  
Los Angeles State Historic Park

## About Clockshop

Clockshop is a nonprofit organization based in the Elysian Valley of Los Angeles that works to deepen the connection between artists, communities, and public lands to co-create a culture of care. We do this by building long-term collaborative relationships with artists, like-minded partners, our neighbors, and public lands throughout our region, such as the Bowtie along the LA River and LA State Historic Park.

We cannot do this without acknowledging that the land we occupy was originally and still is inhabited and cared for by the Native First Peoples of this region. Read our full statement and how we are going beyond land acknowledgment on our website under “Location and Land Acknowledgement.”

[www.clockshop.org](http://www.clockshop.org)  
[@clockshopla](https://www.instagram.com/clockshopla)



Learn more and RSVP on our website.



Visit the project website to view the ArcGIS map of the contributed objects, performance score, artist reflection, and more.

A few feet below the surface of Los Angeles State Historic Park, the ruins of the River Station lie in a state between preservation and decay. Once operated by Southern Pacific, it served as Southern California's rail hub from 1875 to 1904, and it played an important role in the region's population and economic growth. It connected to the Sunset Limited, the southern transcontinental passenger train, in operation since 1894, whose route travels across the Southwest and Texas to New Orleans. At the height of westward expansion, it was one way that millions made their way west, set on Los Angeles as a landing place.

These movements were part of multiple larger patterns of migration. During the Reconstruction era, the period immediately following the Civil War (1861–65), the United States sought to reintegrate former Confederate states into the Union and address the social and financial harms slavery caused to Black Americans. There were many reasons why Black individuals and families moved west in large numbers, including resettlement incentives like the Homestead Act, systematized violence in the South, and the construction of the Sunset Route. Later during the Jim Crow era, five million Black Americans left the rural South for the urban Northeast, Midwest, and West between 1910 and 1970, a period called the Great Migration.

These underlying conditions are part of what scholar Fred Moten calls "the hold," a metaphor for the historical ruptures that began during the transatlantic slave trade, in the hold of the slave ship, and continue into the present. The idea of becoming a fugitive, he suggests, goes beyond escaping a physical place: it is a constant motion of connecting with others who have been dispossessed and creating new ways of sensing and being together. subterranean convergence recognizes these same ruptures but questions whether a shared wound should be the starting point of relation. Rogers instead asks what happens when we shift our attention away from individuals and toward the larger frameworks that create division between them. If we first become aware of how these frameworks shape our perception, we can redefine the boundaries of relation beyond predetermined categories. Liberation, then, involves not only resisting injustice but also recovering the capacity to recognize a shared human essence.

This care for what exists beneath the surface connects to Angel Adams Parham's concept of the racial palimpsest, where traces of earlier histories remain legible beneath the layers laid over them. Rogers similarly considers objects as forms capable of holding multiple and even contradictory histories at once. For example, Rogers first encountered blue-and-white porcelain in a Black Southern home, where it functioned as a material connection to her Korean heritage before understanding chinoiserie as a product of colonial trade routes and the West's interpretations of Asian aesthetics.

Its historical conditions are still present, but they do not

exhaust what the object can mean. Beauty therefore becomes important not as an escape from history but as a means of examining how perception shapes what we recognize, inherit, and make meaningful.

The installation's tabby objects extend this idea by taking on the appearance of keloids, a kind of scarification. Anne Anlin Cheng references a scene in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, where Sethe's whipping scars are compared to the branches and blossoms of a chokecherry tree. Beauty alters the terms through which the wound is encountered without erasing the violence that produced it; Sethe becomes more than what was enacted upon her. Rogers builds upon this by focusing on what the body itself produces in response to injury. A keloid forms through repair, when the body generates new tissue that extends beyond the boundaries of the original wound. The scar holds evidence of rupture and is also a new structure in its own right. Here, freedom becomes material: the wound becomes a passage through which another form can emerge.

Through the contributions of communities along the Sunset Limited route, this proposition becomes a question of collective life. During an open call, participants shared the stories of their objects and considered the responsibility of unearthing and holding the memories they were entrusted with. The narratives they shaped, along with their corresponding 3D renderings, are preserved as a digital archive on an ArcGIS map that traces their journeys across the world. Rogers positions these communal acts through the lens of civic friendship, a form of relation that does not depend upon shared identity, shared injury, or even agreement, but rather upon the recognition of one another's humanity. As a result, home becomes more than refuge among those who share the same conditions. subterranean convergence asks whether home might instead describe a space where difference can remain present without becoming grounds for separation: What does it mean to be at home in these conditions? How can we build a home place that invites belonging and is characterized by beauty and justice?