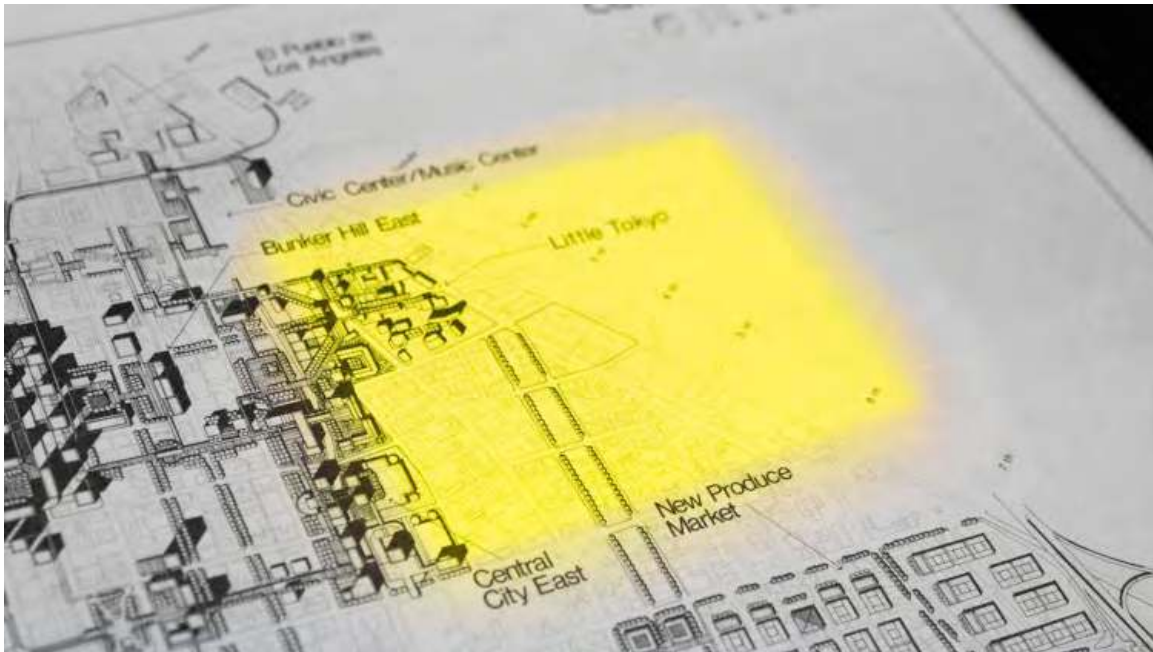


<http://www.timeout.com/los-angeles/blog/why-you-should-visit-the-new-skid-row-history-museum>

Why you should visit the new Skid Row History Museum

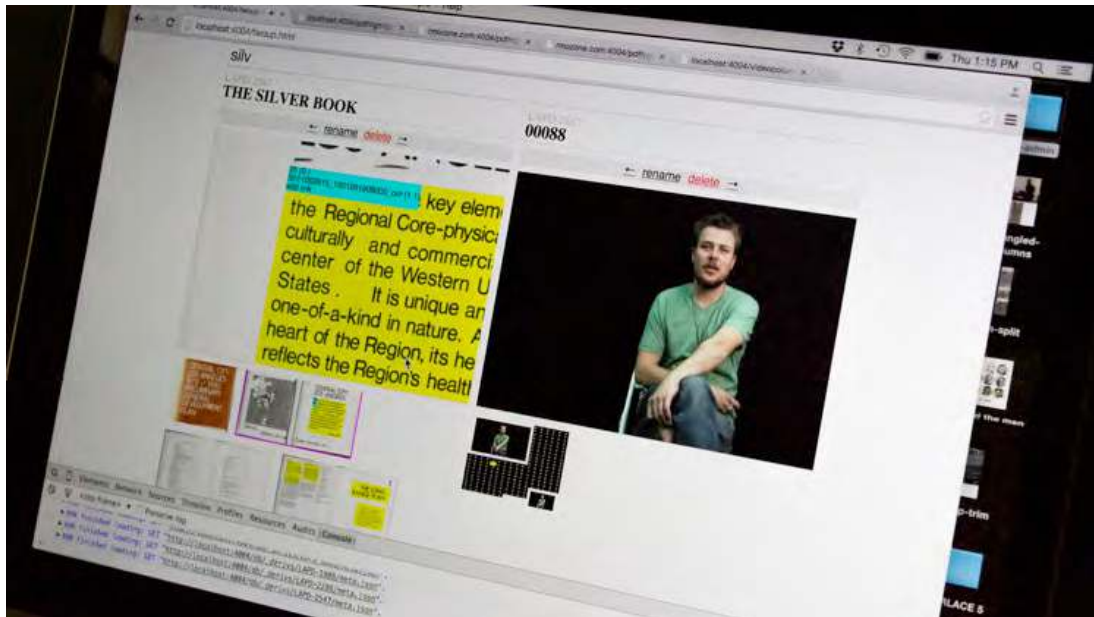
By [Michael Juliano](#) Posted: Friday April 10 2015, 1:27 PM



Photograph: Michael Juliano

The Skid Row History Museum doesn't look anything like your typical museum. At one end of a vacant mezzanine—above a mall, below a parking garage—sits two small rooms occupied by the artists and activists at the [Los Angeles Poverty Department](#). You'll fight a distinct "maybe I've made a wrong turn" vibe as you approach the museum. Walk into the space and you'll see nothing more than two books sitting out on a table. But start flipping through them and, with a bit of projection wizardry, relevant passages glow yellow on the page as they're cast onto the wall for everyone to read.

It's part of the museum's inaugural installation "Blue Book, Silver Book," which opens Saturday. Those two books *are* the exhibit; together with an ongoing digital archive of documents and interviews, they reanimate the role urban design played in cementing Skid Row's fate.



Photograph: Michael Juliano

After the Victorian slums on Bunker Hill were cleared in favor of a modernist cityscape, a plan emerged in the '70s—the Silver Book—with a similar vision for the rest of Downtown. But community activists insisted the plans for "Central City East" paid no heed to the plight of the homeless and low income residents. Skid Row was already a thing—cheap housing, tenement-style hotels—but the development proposal would've put all of that into jeopardy. So the activists came up with their own plan—the Blue Book—that would keep profit seekers from coming in. That the Blue Book plan confined the city's most impoverished citizens into a single area certainly nudged along its passing, but it also empowered a community to act in its own interests—it's something you'll get a much more nuanced explanation of at the exhibit.

The little known history in these books is simply fascinating, especially during a time of such significant change in Downtown LA. Look to the museum's street front for simple proof: A line of discount stores that serve low income residents, Skid Row or otherwise, brush up against luxury lofts within a block of [Grand Central Market](#), [Art Walk](#) and swanky spots like [Perch](#) and [Bar Amá](#). The dynamic between Skid Row and the rest of Downtown is incredibly complex, and we as leisure-loving Angelenos play a role in it, whether we know it or not. That's the exhibit's strength, though: It lets history speak for itself, leaving room for open discussion about the future.

"Blue Book, Silver Book" opens Saturday, April 11, from 6-9pm at the Skid Row History Museum (440 S Broadway; enter through the Broadway Mall and take the elevator to the second floor). Admission is free and regular hours are Thursday and Saturday from 2-5pm and Friday from 3-6pm. The installation is the first in an ongoing series of shows about activism and the neighborhood to be held in the space.



Staff writer ~ By Michael Juliano [39 Posts](#)

Michael oversees the Things to Do section along with comedy coverage as associate editor at *Time Out Los Angeles*. He has a soft spot for deli sandwiches and Disneyland. Follow him on Twitter at [@mjuliano](#).

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