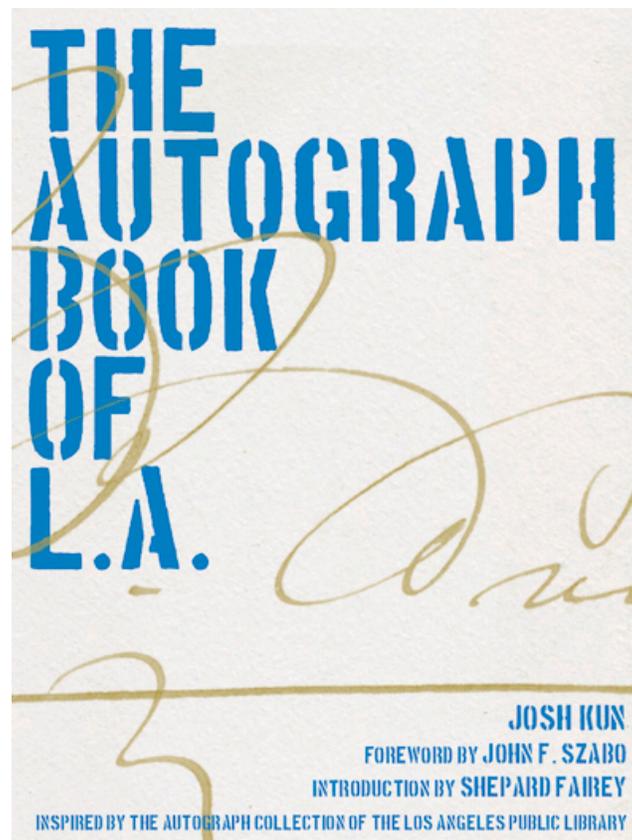


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



LIBRARY FOUNDATION OF LOS ANGELES AND LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY LAUNCH *THE AUTOGRAPH BOOK OF L.A.: IMPROVEMENTS ON THE PAGE OF THE CITY* WITH MACARTHUR FELLOW JOSH KUN AT CENTRAL LIBRARY

New Book Published by Angel City Press, Public Programming, and Exhibit Highlight Library's Historic Autograph Collection, Kick Off September 26, 2019



(Los Angeles, CA — July 11, 2019) Library Foundation of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Public Library announce [The Autograph Book of L.A.: Improvements on the Page of the City](#), an exploration of the Library's unique Autograph Collection, initiated by City Librarian Charles Lummis in 1906 when he first solicited hundreds of notable people nationwide for signatures, poems, artwork, and other ephemera for the Los Angeles Public Library's permanent collection.

The collection, which ultimately grew beyond Lummis' tenure and original scope to encompass artifacts from over two thousand individuals, is now being reexamined and activated in a project curated by MacArthur Fellow and Director of the USC Annenberg School of Communication **Josh Kun** and City Librarian **John F. Szabo**. This exciting initiative comprises three distinct elements: a new book by Kun titled *The Autograph Book of L.A.: Improvements on the Page of the City* from Angel City Press; an exhibit at Central Library featuring significant items from the collection; and a series of public programs relating to the collection and the themes of remembrance and what it means to leave your mark. Following [Songs in the Key of Los Angeles](#) and [To Live and Dine in L.A.](#) (which brought to life the library's sheet music and restaurant menu collections, respectively), *The Autograph Book of L.A.* is the final volume of a trilogy from Kun which surveys the social and cultural history of Los Angeles through special collections housed in the Los Angeles Public Library.

"*The Autograph Book of L.A.* was born from an early 20th century archival collection, but its goals are very 21st century," says Kun. "I was inspired by the early collection to ask key questions of the L.A. of right now. Whose voices matter? Whose names are remembered? To use Lummis' own phrase, who are the 'people who count' when it comes to the life and memory of L.A.?"

Adds Kun, "My hope is that, especially in the face of so much gentrification, displacement, and redevelopment, the book and its exhibition and programs help push these questions to the forefront of our collective conversations."

In *The Autograph Book of L.A.*, forthcoming from Angel City Press, Kun traces the contours of Los Angeles through the autograph as both a unique cultural artifact and as an idea: the writing of the self, the leaving of an individual mark. While the book offers a detailed social and cultural examination of Los Angeles, Kun expands this investigation beyond the parameters of the autograph collection, reflecting more broadly on the politics and practice of memory, questioning who gets remembered and why, from the handprints at Grauman's Chinese Theatre to Los Angeles' prolific street and graffiti art scenes.

Highlighting collection items from prominent figures such as naturalist John Muir, *The Wizard of Oz* author L. Frank Baum, author and activist Helen Keller, and poet Langston Hughes, *The Autograph Book of L.A.* also includes submissions from the 2018 Autograph Day, when all Library patrons were invited to leave their mark and become a part of the collection. The book also features an introduction from **Shepard Fairey**, the preeminent illustrator who received international acclaim for the 2008 "Hope" poster he designed for then-Presidential candidate Barack Obama, and contains additional contributions from graffiti expert **Susan Phillips**, professor of cultural anthropology at Pitzer College, and **Chaz Bojórquez**, painter, graffiti icon, and godfather of the L.A. cholo style. In tying the autograph collection to a larger, rich narrative about the history of L.A., Kun's new work reanimates the collection, creating a book that leaves its own mark on the City of Angels.

The exhibit for the "Autograph Project" will be on display beginning September 26 at the Central Library's First Floor Galleries. Programming for this project to be announced.

“More than anything, public libraries are about the people they serve, and preserving special collections is one of the ways they can ensure that the stories of their communities will be told,” says City Librarian John F. Szabo. “This is true of the autographs in this book and the improvements to the page.”

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About the Los Angeles Public Library

A recipient of the nation’s highest honor for library service—the National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services—the [Los Angeles Public Library](#) serves the largest and most diverse urban population of any library in the nation. Its Central Library, 72 branch libraries, collection of more than 6 million books, state-of-the-art technology accessible at lapl.org and more than 18,000 public programs a year provide everyone with free and easy access to information and the opportunity for life-long learning.

About the Library Foundation of Los Angeles

The [Library Foundation of Los Angeles](#) provides critical support to the Los Angeles Public Library resulting in free programs, resources, and services available to the millions of adults, children, and youth of Los Angeles. Through fundraising, advocacy, and innovative programs, the Library Foundation strengthens the Los Angeles Public Library and promotes greater awareness of its valuable resources.

About the Author and Curator

Josh Kun is a professor in the [Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism](#) at the University of Southern California, where he directs the Popular Music Project of the Norman Lear Center. He is the author or editor of several books, including *Audiotopia: Music, Race and America*, and his writings on music and culture have appeared in *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The American Prospect*, *Los Angeles Magazine*, and many other publications. As a curator and consultant, he has worked with The Getty Foundation, the GRAMMY Museum, the Santa Monica Museum of Art, the Autry Museum, the Skirball Cultural Center, and others.