

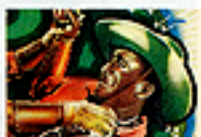
ARTS & BOOKS

A LOOK AT HOW
U2'S SET WILL
CHANGE THE
ROSE BOWL.
POP, E15



ROCK HALL
IS UP FOR
DEBATE
POP, E16

HOT TIMES
ON CENTRAL
AVENUE AND
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ART, E10



THE PHOTO FILE



STUDENT BARNIA: Curious Marguerite Bird regularly commutes to Santa Monica College from Hollywood on her bicycle.



PERFORMER: Kristina Wong has been without a car since her registration of a 1965 Mercedes caught fire on the West Coast Freeway.



WRITER: Vision impaired D.J. Waldie hasn't driven since 1985. He's in the Santa Monica Center's "Without a Car in the World" exhibition.

Auto-immune L.A.

BARNIA

The people in these Meyer's photographs are doing what they fight against: that automobile. They are living in L.A., without a car.

That's Linda Marguerite Bird, a photography professor at Santa Monica College, who spent a year ago to document the often ignored population. The resulting exhibition, "Without a Car in the World: The Car-Free Los Angeles: The Stories of Living in L.A.," runs through Dec. 12 at 18th Street Art Center in Santa Monica. It includes 160 portraits, some with more than one person, each paired with a quote about the joys and trials of living without a car.

"I think the assumption is people without cars are poor or have no choice," said Meyer at the Santa Monica exhibition. "I wanted to show that there are professional people with artists, busy ones who take the bus."

Some of those featured in Meyer's exhibit and single ones Paula Ross, who stopped her two young sons from driving in 2007 to save money for their families' education. Jeffrey Skolnick, a computer programmer, said that his co-workers "think" when they hear he doesn't have a car. And Jeff de Groot, assistant director of UCLA's Center for the Study of Women, a journal that has paying work-related expenses will be so a couple.

Meyer, 44, came up with the project after



ARTIST: Melissa Thorne is one of Linda Meyer's 100 subjects. "I wanted to show that there are professional people with serious busy lives who take the bus," the photographer says.

going car-free herself in January 2008 to save money. "I just made the last month that I made in a city," she said. "It makes me feel really independent."

Striving to reduce as many points of stress as possible, Meyer started with car-free friends and artists who work through environmental blogs. To find those for whom being car-free was not a choice,

she turned to the "gig" service of Craigslist, where people often advertise services. She also began approaching strangers on the bus. She had wanted to be recruited but found that "people were sort of glad to talk about their experiences and make contacts about issues they had with the transit system," she said.

She got a grant from the California Council for the Humanities and initially planned to include about 50 people but soon realized that the story was much bigger. Through her subjects, she saw how transportation problems related to resources and opportunities. One woman she interviewed, single student Jessica Ingalls, spends six hours a day on a series of buses to home, school and work because there are no alternatives through her South Central neighborhood.

By giving voice to such stories, the project is a form of advocacy. "Reading the text and seeing the images made me want to get out of my car," said Thomas Wittig, an art history professor at UCLA. He sees the work as an example of how art that seeks to raise awareness of environmental problems. "It's also part of a tradition of L.A. artists who are interested in environmentalism," he said. See the books and DVD at Meyer's. But for Linda Meyer's project offers significantly from their world, which have opened a window on car culture.

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L.A. indies
are tops
on Twitter

These authors are gaining not in the publishing realm, but in a different one: social media. Los Angeles is a highly literary city, and that's what of the 50 most popular independent bookstores on Twitter. Four are based in Los Angeles.

A recent check showed Booklight Books with 1,322 followers, Downtown Book Shop with 1,230 and independent 24th Street Books in downtown Los Angeles with 1,193. "We know that by the time you read this, these numbers may have changed dramatically — such are the vagaries of writing about an ever-changing medium such as Twitter in print — but you get the idea."



LOCALS: Book Shop is one of four independent bookstores in Twitter's top 50.

We're not better in the top 50 indie bookstores on the Twitter block, though, that place is mostly by Phoenix, the independent Portland, Ore.-based bookstore that went online early and in a big way. Portland's independent online presence is reflected in its 2,842 followers. It's a close race.

The second-most popular bookstore is Twittered Down in Denver (2,822 followers), the only Twitter bookstore on the list. Second Book Store in Cambridge, Mass. (1,968) is the only bookstore on store. And Newpage in Austin, Texas, (1,816) is the lone independent on the West Coast. Five New York bookstores made the top 50 — Word and Book Culture, together totaling only about 1,500.

By 2009, the top 50 bookstores in the top 50 had followed that trend: 8,000 followers, they still made an impressive number. Interestingly enough, if you look into the names top 50 list, more New York and Boston bookstores figure prominently — such stores as New Bangor shop, Maryland, Minnesota and Vermont. But so much Los Angeles — it appears we have a healthy local presence that has already established themselves as strong Twitter players.

Which means that next time you go to a meeting, don't just talk about your company, write about what you've read, and off you go. You'll be in the top 50. Or, at least, you'll be in the top 50. Or, at least, you'll be in the top 50. Or, at least, you'll be in the top 50.



NEW PLAYERS: Portland, Ore., store is a close by with 2,842 followers.