

Hollywood Bowl 100:

Fountain

As you first enter the Hollywood Bowl, off Highland Avenue, you may miss it, but look closely to your right and you will be greeted by a "statue." We call it a "statue," but it's actually three statues—all mounted on a 220-foot-long pedestal, which is itself a four-tiered fountain, illuminated by dozens of lights hidden inside.

Kneeling and strumming a lyre, the Muse of Music hovers above the entrance to the Hollywood Bowl on Highland Avenue. Statues of her two sisters, the Muse of Drama and the Muse of Dance, are perched below her, on either side of the fountain.

Built into the curve and slope of the surrounding hillside, the 1,000-ton structure practically disappears into the landscape. (At one point in its history, it almost did.)

Though you might not even notice The Muse on your first or second visit to the Bowl, once you stop and really take in sculptor George Stanley's 1940 Streamline Moderne masterpiece, you can't help but be drawn to this deceptively simple monument to the power of art.

As the Great Depression raged on in the late 1930s, the Hollywood Bowl continued to mount performances, but the facility itself had fallen into a state of disrepair. The Bowl's leaders—its President Charles Toberman and the powerful County Supervisor John Anson Ford—lobbied for hundreds of thousands of dollars to restore the Bowl from the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.), FDR's New Deal-era program to put Americans to work.

In 1937, Toberman used \$125,000 in W.P.A. funds to hire sculptor George Stanley. He asked Stanley to build a work of public art, which he called a "fountain complex," to mark the Bowl's entrance. Stanley was most famous for designing the 13 ½-inch Academy Awards "Oscar" statuette. He was also one of the designers of the Five Astronomers statue that towers above the nearby Griffith Observatory.

Unlike the Observatory, a paragon of Art Deco design, the Muse statue belongs to a lesser known off-shoot of Deco, Streamline Moderne. Simpler, more grounded, more horizontal, and more utilitarian, Moderne reflects the

decade of the 1930s, as Americans found ingenious ways to economize without compromise.

The Muse was unveiled on July 8th, 1940, before the start of the Bowl's 19th season. Though the community and country had been battered by a decade of Depression and were about to enter yet another world war, on that July afternoon, Ford cited the Muse as an example of the good that can be achieved when people work together for a common cause. He quoted, as he often did, his favorite author, Edward Everett Hale:

"Look outward and not inward
upward and not downward
forward and not backward
and lend a hand."

Ford went on to add: "To me, that is the important thing for the future of Bowl history—to lend a hand."

Ford saw to it that all the construction workers and artisans who lent a hand on the project were given free tickets to attend the Bowl that summer. Hopefully some of them were able to see the highlight of the year—Igor Stravinsky conducting his own Firebird Suite, with choreography by the renowned Adolph Bolm.

The statue was an immediate success as the gateway to the Bowl, quickly becoming an icon celebrated on posters and postcards. But time was not kind to the Muses. By the late 1970s, pollutants and bird droppings eroded and discolored the surface of the sculptures. Mineral deposits built up in the fountain pools.

Weeds began to overgrow the fountain, and the Bowl's managers, lacking the funds to do a proper restoration, planted hedges to cover up the statue which had become more of an eye-sore than an icon.

In the 1990s, George Stanley's son, Maitland, lived in San Francisco. Once a year, he would drive down with his family to visit his favorite of his father's works, bringing gardening shears to cut back the shrubs growing over his father's name, which was etched into the Fountain's base.

In 2006, the LA Phil and the County finally had the resources to do a major reconstruction project on the fountain, carefully restoring Stanley's design to its original luster and adding modern waterproofing and plumbing upgrades. Maitland was in attendance for the second unveiling. He said, "People aren't gonna believe that that enormous thing has been here this whole time!"

Not only was the Muse restored, but it became a defining structure for the Bowl architecturally.

At about the time of the Muses' restoration, the LA Phil—in partnership with the County of Los Angeles—created the Bowl's first Design Guidelines. The Guidelines, which are more than 150 pages, explore questions about what elements are historically significant within the Hollywood Bowl and propose strategies for how to preserve them.

Although they do not require and actually discourage building in a specific style, the guidelines identified Streamline Moderne as the Hollywood Bowl's prevailing aesthetic. If you look around the Bowl today, you'll see horizontal lines, rounded corners, natural embedded lighting, all these touches that come directly from Stanley's creation and now give the Bowl a real Hollywood heyday vibe.

While it was built as a testament to the muses of music, dance, and drama, George Stanley's 1940 creation has become a muse unto itself, inspiring 15 years of redevelopment at the Bowl, and delighting the thousands of audience members and millions of drivers who pass by it every day—if they happen to notice it.