

Sixth College is excited to be moving to the North Torrey Pines Living Learning Neighborhood, not least because it will also be the new home of our newest Stuart Collection piece, Alexis Smith's wonderful mural "Same Old Paradise". A powerful representation of California, this mural was the inspiration for another Stuart Collection piece by Alexis Smith, our famous "Snake Path". Here is a description of "Same Old Paradise" by Mary Beebe, Matthieu Gregoire, and Meg Belichick.

Same Old Paradise

Alexis Smith

The Stuart Collection's *Snake Path* was finished in 1992, as part of the Geisel Library expansion. The mural that inspired it, after a spectacular installation at the Brooklyn Museum in 1987, was crated up and put in storage in Los Angeles, where it remained for 30 years. We looked and asked in vain for a wall that could accommodate this gigantic work – a wall that would be accessible up close for its smaller scale collages, as well as from far away – admittedly a tall order. Fast-forward to mid-2017 when plans for the North Torrey Pines Living and Learning Community were coming to fruition. A wall at a new auditorium arose and was ideal.

We had no idea what condition *Same Old Paradise* would be in after all this time. In January 2018 we unrolled it. A small group, including Alexis and her husband, Scott Grieger, and their close friend and Alexis' former assistant Meg Belichick, were astounded by the pristine condition, vibrancy and overall vision of the work. It was an emotional moment. Seeing the mural up close is like entering the landscape itself, with the orange trees aligning and realigning in the way they do when one speeds along an actual highway. The associations are specific (Sal Paradise is Kerouac, the main character through whom we experience the journey) and universal.

At this writing the building that will enclose *Same Old Paradise* is under construction. A glass-fronted linear space along the north facing side of a new auditorium will let it be seen close up, as well as at a distance from outside in the courtyard.

Alexis loved to drive, and when you drive and look out the window you are experiencing something akin to her work -- an ongoing visual collage. You see one thing after another.

She also used to talk about "freedom and will, and how much control human beings have over their destinies." Alexis was both reading about and practicing Zen when she was creating *Same Old Paradise*. Just as Kerouac had, she also became fascinated with the idea that instead of having paradise be a place, paradise might be a state of mind.