

Hidden Landscapes



Linda Wysong

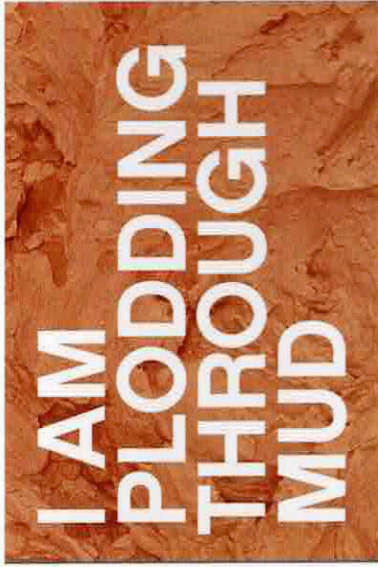
Investigations into place &
the vertical history of Guilds Lake

July 2026

Hidden Landscapes

an on-going body of work by Linda M Wysong

This pamphlet aims to connect *Hidden Landscapes* to the location of the exhibition. NW Marine Works sits on the site of the former Guilds Lake, a place with a hidden history. Reminding us that the full story is often beneath the surface.



Curated by Ahuva S Zaslavsky

NW Marine Artworks
2516 NW 29th Ave, Portland, OR

July 9-31 2026

Opening July 9th 6-9 pm

Mud & Water Chat Saturday July 25th 11am

Luke Armstead
Elizabeth Arzani
Kaitlyn Carr
Emily Ginsburg
Ansley Gwin
James Houghton
Jessica Joner

Ryan Kitson
Taryn Tomasello
Cassie Tompkins
Maya Vivas
Alice Christine Wal
Linda Wysong
Ahuva S. Zaslavsky

statement

Hidden Landscapes

When the water and land slip into each other, a wetland is born. It is a place where the earth is soft beneath your feet and the mud is vibrant. This watery land is sensuous to the touch as it embodies the flux and flow of life. To feel the soft mud as it slips through your fingers is to connect directly with the earth's memory. Shifting maps tell the stories of changing formations, disappearing lakes and lost history. The body feels the power of past lives and looks toward possible futures.

Hidden Landscapes is an installation composed of vessels formed from various clay bodies that are slowly layered over time. Each abstract vessel is formed from the earth, water and the touch of the human hand – searching for buried memories.



Hidden Landscape – a brief history

As one looks around the Marine Works Building it is difficult to imagine this as a green wetland filled with waterfowl, sedges and rushes. It was also home to Chinookan and Kalapuyan people. Many died of smallpox in the 1830s and the rest were removed to the Grand Ronde Reservation in 1856 by the U.S. government in order to free the land for American pioneer settlement.

This watery land that was subject to seasonal flooding became the home to a community of Chinese farmers who provided vegetables to the Portland markets. These industrious immigrants were frequently not welcomed, especially after the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. The following year the community was attacked by vigilantes.

In 1902 this 180 acre wetland was selected to be the site for the Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition of 1905, a world's fair to celebrate industry and attract investors to the city. With the support of federal, state and local government, John Olmsted, the son of Frederick Law Olmsted designed the site with its Spanish Renaissance facades, sunken gardens, a grand stairway, and an esplanade. Over 1,588,000 visitors enjoyed exhibitions from Japan, Europe and multiple states between June 1 – October 15, 1905. Money was made and Portland's star shone brightly.

A World's Fair is a temporary event. The site was largely cleared by 1906, and Guilds Lake disappeared under layers of silt by 1913. The old fair site with the surrounding mud flats were designated as industrial land but remained largely unoccupied. This changed abruptly with the shipbuilding boom of World War II. In 1942 Henry Kaiser came to town and worker housing was developed both on Guilds Lake and in Vanport. Guilds Lake Courts was home to 10,000 people in 1945 and continued to be valuable affordable housing for about five years. By 1950 the residential community was taken down to make way for industrial expansion.

Now we stand on flat land with deep layers of time and memory.



This 1899 photo shows seasonal flooding at Guilds Lake with the rustic homes of Chinese produce farmers. OHS 36769



The location of this Chinese fisherman is dispute. It is either Guilds Lake or the Columbia River. circa 1890. (OHS bb016278)

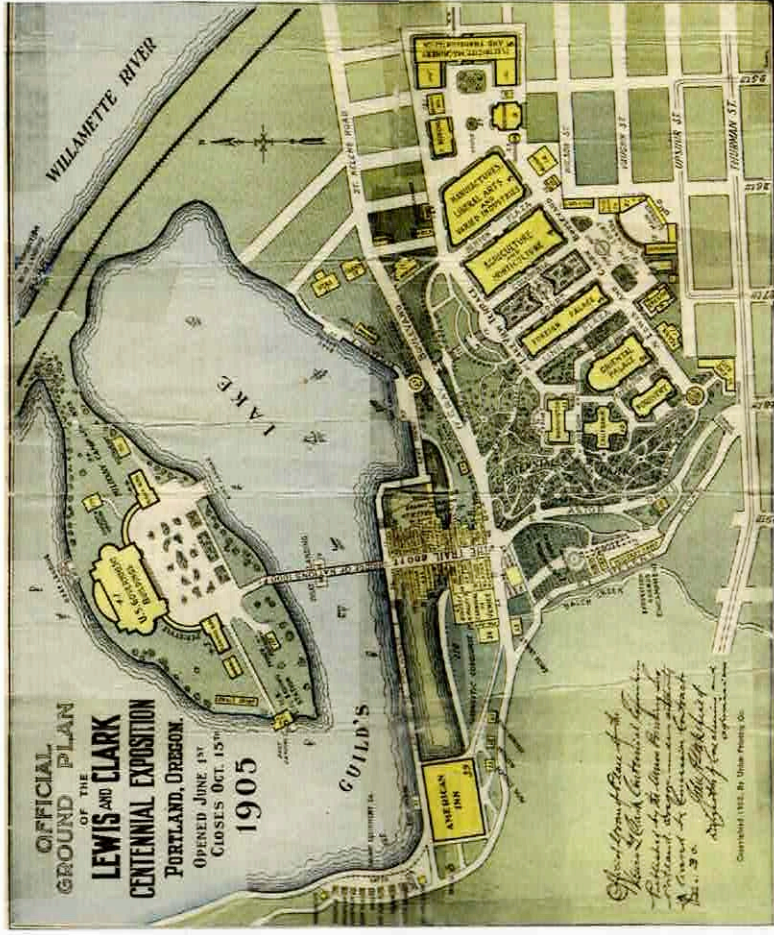


Topographic map from the Portland City Archives. Port of Portland Survey September 1922. This represents a transition time between when the 1905 Lewis and Clark Expo was demolished and when the land & water were completely filled and flattened. The color is my contemporary addition for clarity.

Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition Portland, Oregon 1905



Top view of Lake and from the Band Stand toward Main Exhibitions. (OHS 28137) . Bottom Looking South toward gardens and additional exhibitions. (Portland City Archives)



The map of the Lewis and Clark Expo gives a sense of the projects and type of exhibitions typical of a turn of the century Fair. It also show the extent of Guilds Lake when the natural slow moving wetland was kept sparking with fresh water pumped in from the Willamette River. Montgomery Park is located approximately where the Oriental Palace was in 1905.

Index

Main Exhibits

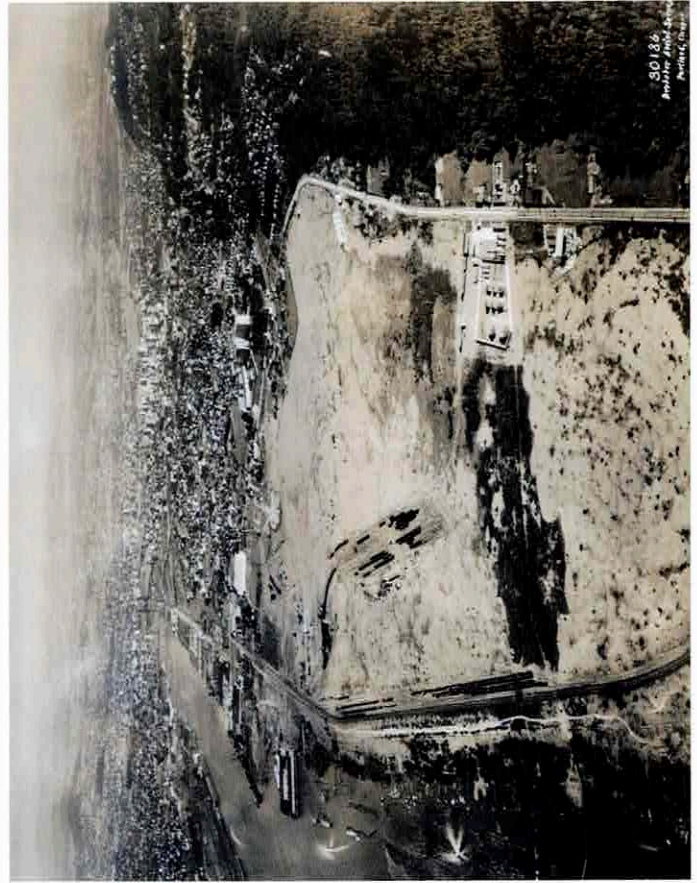
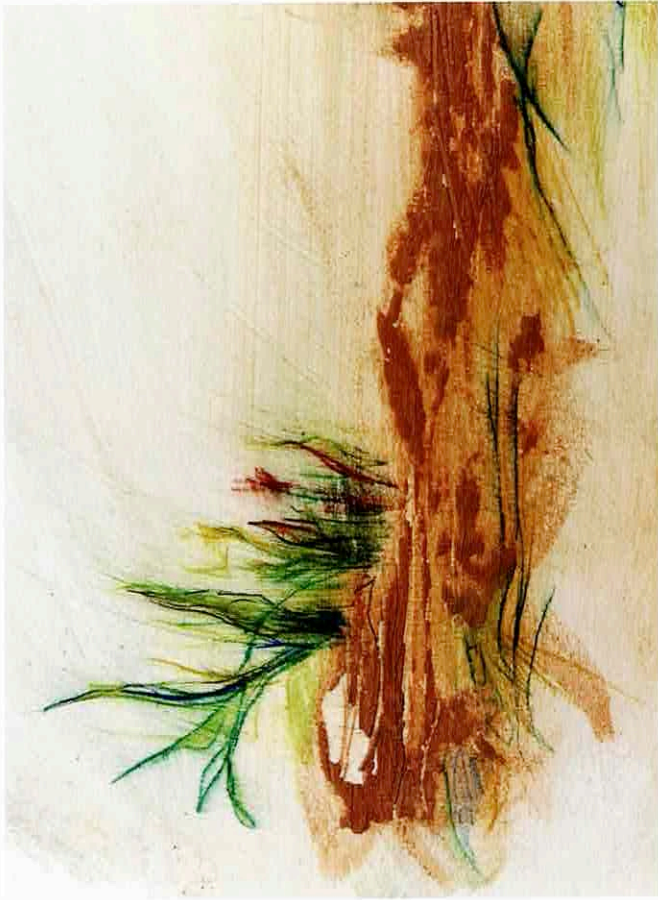
- 1 - Forestry Building
- 2 - Oriental Building
- 3 - Foreign Palace
- 4 - Agriculture & Horticulture
- 5 - Manufactures, Industries
- 6 - Electricity/Transportation
- 7 - Mining Building
- 8 - Auditorium
- 16 - Fine Arts
- 13 - Administration
- 153 - YMCA

Amusements

- 77 - Bridge of the Nations
- 60 - Streets of Cairo/Village
- 63 - Diving Elks
- 75 - Japanese Village
- 78 - Haunted Castle
- 64 - Niagara Falls
- 69 - Temple of Mirth
- 66 - Carnival of Venice
- 113 - Mirror Maze
- 54 - Water Chutes
- 23 - Band Stand

Concessions

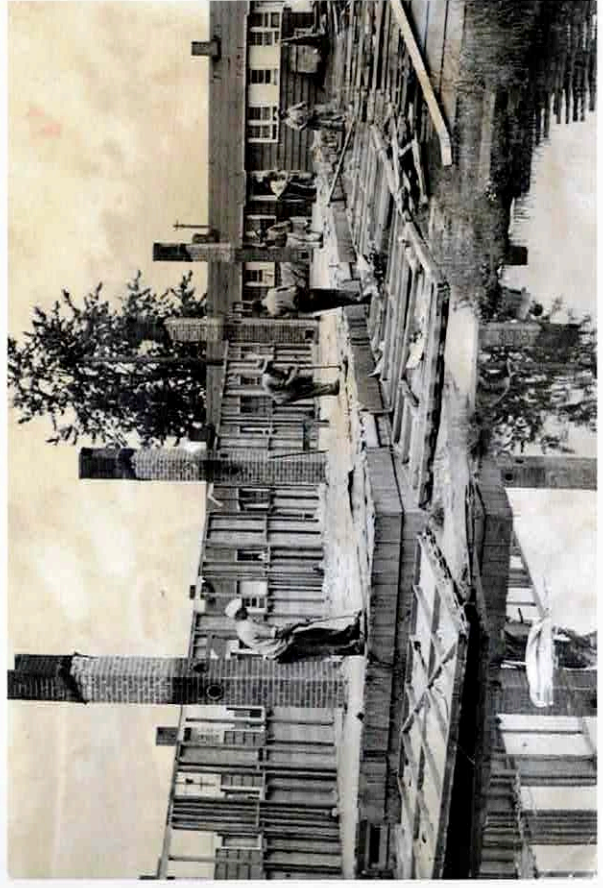
- 32 - Davenport's Farm
- 37 - Excelsior Stoves
- 39 - American Inn
- 40 - Gasoline Building
- 110 - Aeronautic Concourse
- 111 - Coos County Exhibit
- 114 - Road Oiling
- Machinery
- 116 - Stump Puller
- 119 - Windmills
- 122 - Tractor Engines
- 155 - Railway Equipment



Expo and Guilds Lake area filled by 1930 and barren. Although it was designated for industrial use, it stayed in this condition the Kaiser housing was constructed in 1942.



Guilds Lake Court, housing built by Kaiser for shipbuilding workers and their families 1942 - 1950. For a short time this was refuge for some of the family who lost their homes in the Vanport Flood of 1948. (Portland Archives)



Guilds Lake Court housing coming down to make way for industry. June 1948 (OHS 67183)

Mud is water and earth.

Hidden Landscapes connects to the layers of time and history that rest beneath NW Marine Works. This patch of land was a watery marsh known as Guilds Lake. It has had many faces including wetlands, vegetable farms, a Chinese community, the Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905, ship workers' housing, and an industrial sanctuary. Now the people of Portland are dealing with the explosive tank farm sited on a liquefaction zone just down the river. This place asks how value, equity, and power are reflected in the landscape .

Thank you to Ahuva S. Zaslavsky for including me in this exhibition and for NW Marine Works for hosting. The Portland City Archives, the Oregon Historical Society Library, *The Great Extravaganza* by Carl Abbot and *Tribal Histories of the Willamette Valley* by David G. Lewis were key to my research. There are so many more stories than could be included in this small pamphlet.

Appreciation to friends and colleagues -
Horatio Hung-Yan Law and Liz Harris

Linda Wysong www.lindawysong.com