

## 1001SOUL IN THE CITY OF STARS, L.A.

November 2019

Text: Nic Leonhardt – photos: Nic Leonhardt & Reza Nassrollahi

[www.1001soul.world](http://www.1001soul.world)   [soul@1001soul.world](mailto:soul@1001soul.world)



*Nic on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. Everything chic, everything colourful, everything expensive.*



*Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills. Sculpture "Life is beautiful" by Mr. Brainwash.*

✳ **Los Angeles.** City of angels. City of stars. City of the Hollywood Hills. In early November, we flew across the country, all the way from windy Chicago via Denver, Colorado, over to California. The sound of words alone distinguishes sunny soft California from the correct, slightly shady Illinois, Los Angeles from Chicago; at least since ***La La Land***, L.A. is a yellow city, yellow-gold – yet its patina is slightly faded if you look left and right. City of Stars - are you shining just for me?

L.A. is a melting pot of cultures like New York and the second largest city in the United States. When you get off the plane here, your nose doesn't take long to make

sure that here is legalized, which is still forbidden elsewhere: not the smell of bagels or burgers, the breeze of marijuana is omnipresent. The smell of 'grass'.

Apart from New York, is there another American city as clichéd as L.A.? Where do we leave our 1001SOUL footprint, where shall we immerse into the city's core? After some research in Beverly Hills, Rodeo Drive, the Suburbs, Westwood, the monumental Getty Center, we finally select three stations as suitable for 1001SOUL: the legendary **Venice Beach**, the **Griffith Observatory** and **Malibu Beach**. Each place is a colour spectacle in its own right. One could almost say that so much sensual force can only be endured with grass – had not the energy and colour spectra themselves a beguiling effect.

\* We choose **Venice Beach** on a sunny, busy Sunday. Venice is a part of L.A., the beach is a wide and long rolled out sand carpet at the cool Pacific Ocean. There are light tides here, surfers try their hand at the waves, living and letting live in a pleasant way seem even more a motto here than elsewhere.

Venice was founded around 1905 by an American cigarette manufacturer, Abbot Kinney (1850-1920). Like Venice on the Lido, it was to be a seaside resort with canals and Italian-style buildings. Many actors and entertainers came here already in the first years. There was a roller skating rink, a dance hall, theatres, an aquarium, tea parlours, bars, hotels, restaurants. Colourful even then, innovative and international. Over the years, buildings fell into decay and with it the façade of the illustrious excursion destination; and as so often the case: with the collapse, rents fall, artists and independent freethinkers come and revalue the place again. Especially in the decades following the Second World War, Venice began to become the centre of

alternative culture and "Californian Bohemian".



*Soul Painting at crazy and colourful Venice Beach.  
And the sun conjures up light effects like on drugs...*

Venice Beach is especially famous for the Boardwalk. This 2.5-mile-long promenade is a fairground, the road is like a circus, lined with stalls with junk, grass, souvenirs, cafés, restaurants and open air gyms. Street performers and colourfully dressed



locals dance along the alley, they roller skate, skateboard or bike their dogs. Most of the most conspicuous people here belong to the typical image of the strip, are downright old hands, such as the gifted pianist Nathan Pino, who has been playing here daily for more than a decade most beautiful sounds. – Reggae, rock, rhythms everywhere, plus styles and steps, scents of weed and sea air, fries and cinnamon buns, seagulls screeching into the noise. What strikes us is that the colourful diversity also comes in tandem with the gloomy; the paint is off, both the houses and the people seem worn out. Life is colourful, but not easy for everyone, if you look closely. Yet the Show must go on. New game, new luck. That's the circle of life.



*1001SOUL – Soul Painting on the Boardwalk, Circus of Venice Beach, L.A., California.*

Reza paints on a higher strip of green from which he has a view above the water, beach and circus. His live painting blends seamlessly into the hustle and bustle. The history and events of Venice Beach seem to be pulled into the picture. The sun says goodbye early at 5 pm. So we put the painting out to let it dry on the promenade; we freeze, wait, observe and enjoy the conversation with the passers-by who stop in front of the long canvas (which shows all the individual pictures painted in the USA so far), jump off the skateboard, turn their pirouettes. When we return hours later to

our domicile in a densely populated Asian area in the suburb Gardena, the paint is still wet. So we hang 'Venice Beach' over the railing to tire into the cool night. 1001SOUL - Art in architecture. – Not a bad title for the project either ... ;-)

\* Since we had painted at the **Planetarium in Chicago**, we move a little closer to the stars in the city of the stars and roll up our white canvas on the platform of the **Griffith Observatory**, with about 1.5 million visitors annually the most visited observatory in the world, located 300 meters above sea level. Opened in 1935 with funds from the legacy of industrialist and philanthropist G. J. Griffith, the observatory, named after him, is located on the southern slope of Mount Hollywood in Griffith Park, directly above the Los Feliz neighbourhood, and offers a wonderful view of the city and the famous Hollywood Sign.



*Griffith Observatory, Los Angeles. Reza rolls out the canvas. Magic light ...*



*... but where the stars shine, it gets dark earlier.*

It is already 5pm, shortly before sunset, when we spread our canvas on the ground. A challenge for the film and photo shootings, but hard to beat in terms of magic and atmosphere. Here we experience for the first time on our US trip a conflict with the security guards. They show enthusiasm for the 1001SOUL project and are attracted by the screen. On the one hand. On the other hand, they are wearing their official uniform and do not seem to be quite sure whether we are disturbing the visitors and the "safety" by our live painting or not. One curious supervisor after the other visits

our canvas and consults our flyers. At the end there are five uniforms surrounding the painting... An international understanding artistic peace project in conflict with the security? Hardly likely. But in order not to get anyone into trouble, we agree on a shortened painting action high up on the mountain. – And spend a long time under the cool starry sky so that the paint can dry. Our perseverance is rewarded by a "visit" of a group of five coyotes: Not even 10 meters away from our car they are looking for food in the grasses. We have never seen these beautiful predators so close. They wanted to show themselves in peaceful intention. What a nice bridge between heaven and earth. And then a full moon on top of that. ... And again the canvas dries overnight over the railings of our Chinese neighbours in Gardena.



*Nic with Rezas Soul Painting in front of the Griffith Observatory, L.A.*



\* The third and final station for 1001SOUL in California was **Malibu Beach**. A beach like magic, below the coastal road, lined by old, half ruined bungalows next to exclusive hotels and restaurants. We set up our '1001SOUL workshop' near the **Malibu Pier**. Its poles rise beautifully out of the water and release at the head of the pier a brightly lacquered wooden building, in which restaurants and small boutiques are located. Again we spend a Sunday at the sea, it's warm, sunny and thus a guarantor for many like-minded people at the beach. We lay the entire canvas of our previous US tour on the fine sand like an oversized towel. One surface is still white...



*Soul Painting at Malibu Beach, California.  
Preparing by meditating.*

*Reza with Debbie. And the beach.  
And the sand. And the sea...*

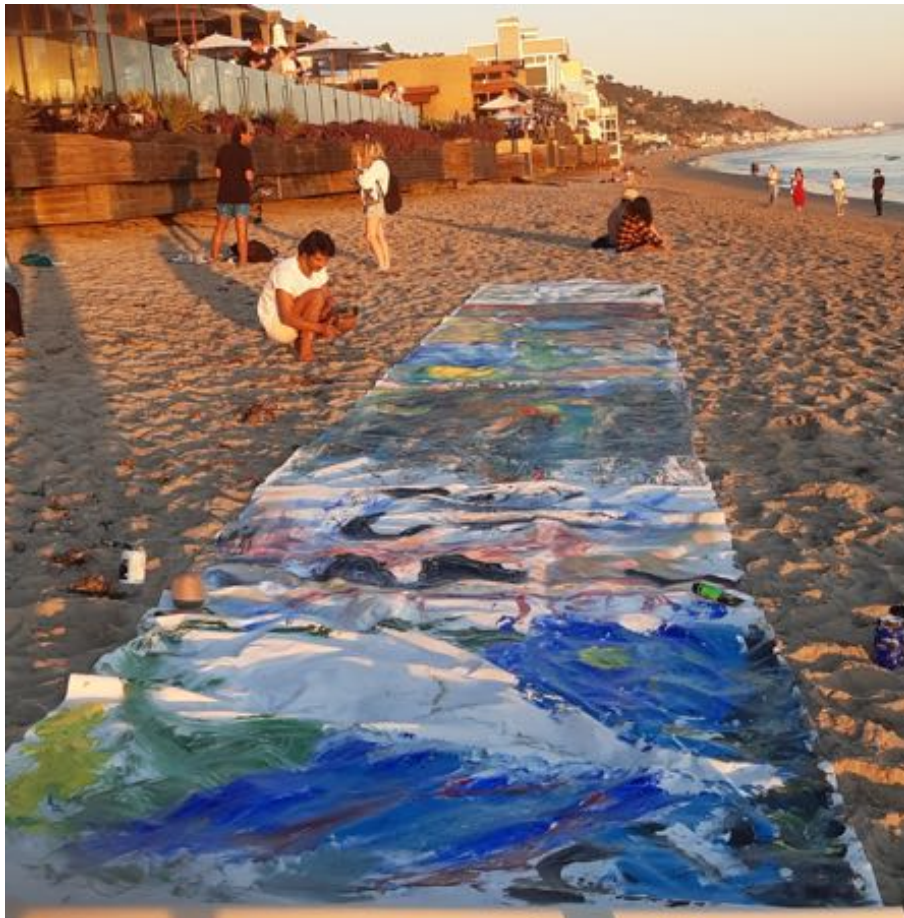
In front of the sea, under the screeching of the seagulls and the relaxed vibes of the chilling Sunday guests and beach walkers, this soul painting is once again dedicated to a human being, Debbie, who wanted to be painted. It is touching that Apple, her dog, does not like to see her lying alone on the canvas and without further ado, the little one becomes part of the painting process. An alluvial piece of wood serves us perfectly as a sign for **@1001SOUL**. Those who travel the world need to work with the local conditions. Sand mixes into the colour, the traces of the sea and its inhabitants, the sun of the coast and Debbie's energy find their way onto/ into the

canvas. We return to our temporary domicile. And once again 'Art in architecture' in the Asian neighbourhood. The paint dries at night. The stars watch out.

And then what? Bye, California Dreaming, bye, La-La-Land.

Keep protecting this city and its stars, colours and coyotes, dear angels!

Los Angeles needs you more than ever – in the plural.



*Micro and Macro:*

*In the evening light of Malibu, Reza takes a close look at details from his US-Soul Paintings.*

(\*For their support, help, advice and good conversations in L.A. we thank the following people and friends: Ashkan, Debbie, Pejman, Roxy, Zari, the staff of the Getty Center, the Griffith Observatory and all visitors of our events. You have become a part of 1001SOUL, how wonderful that is!)



Next stop: Miami, Florida, last stop in America for now.

What do you think we will meet there ? Whom and why?

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**But first and foremost: be good to yourselves !**

