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Take Me Out to the Ball Park

by SAM CATANZARO

New park pays homage to Venice's baseball history.

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As baseball season gets started, the Dodgers and the Angels are the teams most in Venice will root for. A little over 100 years ago, however, people were cheering for another baseball team: the Venice Tigers.

The Venice Tigers were a short-lived Venice attraction, playing in the area for only two seasons in 1913 and 1914 at a ballpark on the southwest corner of Abbot Kinney and Venice Boulevard. Before moving to Venice, the Tigers played in Vernon, but a gambling scandal forced the owner to move. At the time, Venice and Vernon were the only parts of Los Angeles allowing the sale of alcohol. After the 1914 season, the Tigers moved back to Vernon, and the team was largely forgotten in Venice.

Corner Ball Park, a new green space on the corner of Venice Boulevard and Ocean Avenue, is reviving this special piece of history, by paying homage to the Venice Tigers.

"It's a contemporary earthworks version of a ballpark," said Robin Murez, the creator of the park and a local artist. "There was so much going on here and I feel we need to be proud of that."

Murez got the idea while commuting by bike from her home to her studio on Abbot Kinney. At the time, the corner space was enclosed by a gate that the owner of the adjacent property had put up. This created a dangerous blind spot, and when Murez informed the City of Los Angeles, she learned that the corner lot was actually public property. The owner sued the City for possession of the property and lost, giving Murez the opportunity to create this park.



A player for the Venice Tigers slides into home. Photo: Courtesy Robin Murez.

After a lengthy permitting process, the park is now complete. Five concrete baseball-shaped mosaics are spread throughout the space, each with Venice themed imagery. Five mounds of grass are also spread throughout the park, each the shape of a pitcher's mound.

"I made the mosaic balls to be sculptural seating. You can sit on them, kids can climb on them, but you can't hide behind them or sleep on them," Murez said. "I've thought it all through in ways to make it hopefully not just aesthetically pleasing, but hopefully to endure and be something that is cool and enjoyable for the community."

One of the concrete baseball mosaics in the park. Photo by Sam Catanzaro

The new park is just one of many green spaces Murez has created throughout Venice, and like the rest of her artwork pays homage to the Venice that Abbot Kinney created at the turn of the 20th century.

"He wanted to make it a really unique and special area, and not just your average beachfront community," Murez said. "This was such a wonderful lively place and so colorful in so many ways."

