

## The American National Park Art Expo

Years ago, according to what I've read online, there was something called the American National Park Art Expo. The only evidence I could find of this place is on the Internet Wayback machine. Me and my friend love to go hiking, we are very experienced bushwhackers and have been to over a half dozen national parks together already. When I told him about this expo, he just about damn near jumped out of his seat. Doing paintings and watercolors is a passion of my friend. I don't know much about art but I do like to experience it and see it.

My name is James. James Sutherland. My friend and fellow bushwhacker is Robert Beales. We both met on Facebook, as we both were members of a hiking and outdoor lifestyle group on there. We met back before the pandemic, in 2019. We're both in our mid thirties, I'm 34 and he's 33. We love exploring the outdoors together.

It took me a while to pinpoint the geolocation on OpenStreetMaps, but we were able to track it down to somewhere in Yosemite National Park. The pictures make the art expo look so cool, and it was here only about 15 years ago. We figured we wouldn't be able to see a lot of evidence of the art expo left—all the art was left out in the open except for a few room sized exhibitions. The photos made it seem like each room had an art installation in it. Metal workings. Paintings. Digital Art (all of these exhibitions were stolen for their parts according to rumors on a couple of online forums about the subject, but those were just conspiracy theory sites. Wacko stuff). The weirdest thing I saw when I was looking at the old government website was that there were a bunch of restored classic cars, just left out in the open. Who would allow such a crazy thing? It was all so hard to believe.

Me and my friend both live in Barstow, California, smack dab in the middle of nowhere, so it took us about 7 hours to drive there. I'd rather not focus on the drive, but needless to say me and my friend both freaked each other out when we tried to talk about our destination. We didn't know what to expect when we got to this geolocation in the middle of Yosemite National Park. We brought food for days. Enough to last us a whole week. Same thing with water—me and my friend have been on a lot of trips.

We arrived at our makeshift campground just before total darkness had come upon us, with just tiny bit of sun poking out from behind the mountains. I parked my Ford F-250 in a campground about 15 minutes from the geolocation I had found referenced online. Nothing on Wikipedia, no YouTube videos, no nothing about this place. Just those old archived articles I found when I was looking on a conspiracy theory website. The website could've been fake for all I know. Must've been. I don't see any signs of any art expo here. All I see is big redwood trees, deer, squirrels, raccoons, the usual...No goddamn art expo. My friend insisted..."In the morning, lets head over there. Until then, lets just camp out. When the sun comes up, we'll head down the trail." he said. He snacked on corn chips with bean dip and had a few beers while we sat by the campfire, but my heart was in my throat all night. I couldn't eat, I only took little sips of water while I waited for the sun to come up.

After a whole long night with barely more than about an hour and a half of sleep, my friend woke me up right before the crack of dawn (something I've never gotten used to, but a necessity for nature hikes, especially ones that may take as long as this one). All so we could see this old relic of an art expo in the middle of a national park. A national park where laws are not even enforced hardly at all. The art expo was apparently really huge, just under two square miles, 1200 acres. One of the biggest art expos of all time. I don't know how it was so grand and amazing and yet nobody knows

about it, and only a few conspiracy nuts dare even speak of it anymore. The art must've been so ugly. I bet it was ugly. Either that, or this can't be real.

As we approached the old expo ruins, we started to smell something funky. It wasn't a natural smell like a dead thing or bear scat or anything like that. Smelled like an old beat up car leaked fluids all over the place. Maybe that's what become of these old classic cars they had parked there. The photos I saw on the Wayback machine showed the typical classics—1960s Ford Mustangs, 1970s Corvettes, Pre-war era trucks painted to look real pretty and brand new. I hope to god that the US government didn't just abandon this place and all these cars and designate it as some superfund site. But then they probably couldn't designate it as a Superfund because it's a national park, and they don't have the ability to zone it in that way. But I'm no politician, I have no idea how all that works. All I know is that less than 5 minutes away from the geolocation I have saved from my phone, we're smelling dried up, burnt oil, coolant, gasoline...It's terrible. Like the inside of a car repair shop in a poor town where everyone would rather let their car burn to the ground before they'll dare spend money on anything other than to change the oil and tires on that fucking thing.

At this point, me and my friend had both taken a piece of clothing out of our backpacks to cover our mouths and noses. The acidic smell was not just burning our throats but our eyes as well, and made our eyes water quite a bit.

Less than a minute away, according to the OpenStreetMaps app on my phone. Suddenly, the automated navigation assistant tells me "you have arrived." Let me tell you, hearing that voice when you're in the middle of Yosemite National Park and there's nobody around but you and your friend and there's no civilization for miles? It hits differently. You have arrived sounds like "you're about to fuck

around and find out”... Me and my friend were looking at each other, wondering what the fuck we were doing, when we saw what all the fuss was about.

We were at the bottom of a ravine, with a fire access road to the east leading to the top of the mountain for those crazy fucks that dare try to live around here (or more likely, just to serve the people who were here for the permanent art expo, which lasted from, apparently, June 2005 to February 2006). At the bottom of the ravine with us was, indeed, like some kinda fucked up superfund site. Battery acid, oil, coolant, gas, all relatively fresh and looking like it was dumped here in the last couple of weeks. All of it just pooled up on the ground for the length of two soccer fields. Looked like a flash flood of chemicals. And that’s when it hit us. My friend vomited from the terrible smell, his eyes watering profusely. The only reason I didn’t vomit (but certainly dry heaved several times) is because I didn’t get a chance to eat anything since yesterday morning—I was disgusted by the fact that the government allowed this kind of dumping to happen in the middle of a national park and besides that the smell hit me like a freight train. National parks are the pride of our nation, why are they doing this to what little bit of untouched nature we have left in this country? Clearly it wasn’t government policy to allow dumping of these kinds of chemicals here. Something just wasn’t right. We decided to head up the fire service road in an attempt to get away from that horrible smell.

We could see a couple of hippy dippy looking vans and RVs parked along the road. One was a little Volkswagen combi camper van that had a sign taped to the rear window “I love the American National Park Art Expo!” with an old hand drawn smiley face at the bottom of the note. The spare tire on the back also had a cover with the same hand drawn smiley face on it.

At the crest of the road, which flattened out about midway up the mountain, there was an RV parked with all of its wheels facing the wrong way. Like some kinda AI art monstrosity. Every single

wheel pointing perpendicular to the direction of the actual car. The tires looked like the car had only parked there no more than a year or two ago, it didn't look too beat up but it had swirls of rust starting to form on the white and teal paint job on there. All the 18 wheels on the RV were chocked with little pieces of plywood. Strangest thing I've ever seen.

After we passed the weird looking recreational vehicle, we came across what looked like barracks. These barracks were as plain as can be. Me and my friend thought, this can't be for an art expo! It's just plain gray concrete barracks! With short ceilings! How are you supposed to show off your art in little rooms like that? The government really needs to stay out of the art business.

However, the photos we found on the Wayback machine looked similar—so we kept trekking on. The barracks were leaned up against the mountainside, which curved out into a Hoover Dam shape with nothing but dry, sandy mountains on the south, west and east sides while we're about 600 feet up on this service road.

At first, we couldn't find any entrance. We only saw just bland, gray concrete. Eventually, we saw that the first room is actually on the easternmost side (which we came from) but you had to walk about 30 yards west along the curvature of the barracks to find the walkway—again, this walkway was nothing but gray concrete! What were the creators of this expo even thinking?

We figured we'd have to go into some dark, unlit rooms in abandoned buildings for this trip, so we brought flashlights. We've done plenty of urban exploring before, so we know what we're doing, like I keep telling y'all! As we head into this alleged Art Expo room, we just see a bunch of flies swarming all over the place. Then, we finally see something—an "art room." My god, what happened to it? I see an art easel with no artwork on it, a light bulb hanging from the ceiling that's not powered

on, a little natural light coming in through a rectangular hole on the eastern wall that looked more like it was meant for a machine gun to fit through than for any sort of artistic purpose, and something else caught my eye—On the ground someone wrote a message in chalk. The message went a little something like this (I don't remember the exact words):

*“This was my first big chance to show the world my paintings. I’ve been a painter since I was a boy and as of the time of writing this, I’m 55 years old. I don’t know if I’ll still be alive when you read this, but this whole expo was a mess. We’re expected to stay here and show off our art all year round, to try to bring awareness and all that. There’s no running water! Where’s our fucking food? We were promised all these things. To top it all off, some people ran off with my art and all my supplies. I can’t well drive the goddamn classic cars off the lot exactly, I don’t know how to hot-wire a 1966 Chevelle but have fond memories of riding in one with my family as an adolescent. I am gonna start hiking out of here in the morning, try to make it outta this hellhole. That’s the only option I have left anymore.”*

Jeez, now I can see why the government doesn't want us to know about this place. Sounds like some kinda failed-art-expo-turned-superfund-site to me. My friend was barely even paying attention to that, he was chugging his water, trying to make up for the fluids he lost from vomiting earlier (don't worry, he has mouthwash too).

I talked to my friend about this room. The flies all over the place, the faint but still ever-present smell of leaky car fluids permeating through the air. The chalk writing which was oddly perfectly legible for being written over 15 years ago. My friend said “I figured it would have turned out something like this. The government is not known for giving artists a fair shake. I wanna keep going, so we can document all this. We’re gonna put all this stuff on wikiLeaks later when we make it outta here.””

We marched out of the room, militantly. Furious at what we had seen. How can the US government do something like this in our name? We made it back out in to broad daylight. It was about 7am at this time according to my fancy pants shockproof analog watch I had on. We were determined to see every room in this little bunker, that was about three quarters of the length of the Hoover Dam, all on one floor apparently. Not very extravagant for an art exhibition space. I imagine some people felt cramped in those little bunker rooms with short ceilings, being expected to live and exhibit their art in these tiny areas no more than 15x15 feet.

Again, we had to follow the length of the building for what seemed like an eternity before we found another sequestered entrance towards the middle of the bunker. We followed that walkway for about 75 feet before we saw a thin hall that spread out in three directions. One was a room directly across from the entryway, which had no door knob, door, or anything of the sort. All the rooms were completely open and free to the public—that was part of the gimmick of this whole art expo to begin with.

We start off with the room directly across from the entryway. In the middle of this room was a table with uneaten food on it that was all rotten and rancid by now, had been sitting there probably since 2006 I bet. Behind the table to the east, we found what looked like a ritual circle for pagans or Satanists. Not a problem to me and my friend, we're both atheists, we don't believe in that crap anyway so it doesn't scare us. What really struck us was how quickly it seems like the people who were here wanted to get the fuck out real fast, or were forced out against their will. The last little detail we saw in the room was a heavily weathered pram that had become discolored from age and torn apart by moths, rats, or both. God, another ugly sight. This time, with no message at all. No signs of any human life since at least the time of the expo.

We walked out of this room and into the hall that went all the way up and down a large stretch of the building. Again, all unlit, so we needed to keep our flashlights on the whole time just to see what the hell was going on. We decided to head east again, in our completionist effort to see the whole facility. As we head east with our flashlights on, we see red paint scattered across the wall on the outermost wall of the hallway. Somebody took a shit, too. I know because my friend was walking ahead of me, he stepped on it and told me to watch out.

Whoever designed these barracks was an idiot. There was only one room at the end of the hall and it had four beds, all eaten up by rats and moths just like the pram in the last room. But someone had left a little leather-bound book on one of the beds. My friend picks up the book and starts reading from it:

*“Louise Sherman*

*January (illegible), 2006*

*The government contractors told me that if I agreed to sign on for this Expo, I'd be guaranteed food, water, and be awarded handsomely for taking part in all of this permanent art exhibition. I'd be able to sell plenty of my handmade jewelry. Well, I brought all my three kids down here with me and we're starving. We made a well down at the bottom of the ravine, but I think the water is not any good to drink because it's making us sicker than dogs. I shot out my flare gun last night, hoping that someone would come find us. This place is deserted and has been since just after Christmas, when just about everyone got sick and tired of waiting for supplies to be delivered. They all hiked out of here with whatever they could carry that wasn't stolen by those gosh darned bandits. Unfortunately for me, I can't exactly go hiking out of some ravine with Jim, Jeremy, and baby Kim in tow. There's got to be a*



*way outta this. Some way. I know sure as the day is long I'm not gonna be driving out of here in the happy van—it broke down some weeks ago and I already had a hard enough time getting it parked up where it is now. I'm gonna bring my journal with me so I can tell everyone my story when I get out of here. This art expo was no good from the start. If some traveler finds this journal, find my family and tell them I love them. I only say this to you because I don't go anywhere without my journal.”*

Jewelry maker, in the middle of the Yosemite national park? In some little bunker? What kind of desperation would lead someone to volunteer for that? Is being an artist in America really that hard these days that an old country gal and her three kids would come and live here indefinitely, just to try to bring themselves out of poverty? Those are the kinds of things my buddy kept on asking me as we left out of that big, mostly empty room with out flashlights on full blast—the whole building was darker than hell!

We walked up towards the entryway again. All of a sudden, we heard a man scream. A scream that sounded really far away. Like the person was screaming at the top of their lungs but too far away to be of any threat to us. Miles away probably. None of our concern, and if we tried to find the source of it we'd probably end up lost ourselves. We were “packing” anyway, with hunting knives strapped to our waistbands, and for each of us a pistol in our backpacks for protection, so on and so forth. So even if some crazy feral wild child comes around here we'll be able to defend ourselves just fine. We head west down the hallway past the entryway we came in from, again...All pitch black. Here at the end of this side of the hall were two rooms, One on the inner facing side of the building, much like the room at the other side of the entryway from before. And next to that, separated only by a partial wall, was another, bigger room. Our curiosity brought us to the bigger room first, which had another machine-gunner type porthole in the inner facing wall that would have been terrible for any kind of art, leaving it exposed to the elements every day and every night. I wonder how these people would have kept warm

in a place like this. In this larger room were three bunk beds and three little recliner chairs, which all faced a square shaped glass coffee table coated in caked-on dust.

The table was empty. The only thing left showing any signs of human life in the room were cigarette butt marks from whoever was living in there putting out their cigarettes on the little glass coffee table. There was a calendar in there set to the month of February, 2006. On the calendar a date was marked—February 17<sup>th</sup>. The only note on that date was simply “eviction date.” Not only were these artists living in squalor, but they were also going to be evicted after being promised a permanent art exhibition space. This was madness to me and my friend. This was gonna end up on wikiLeaks for sure. I know how to upload on there, I’ve done it before—whistle-blowing on the government is easy if you know what you’re doing. Ask Chelsea Manning.

In the room directly next to the big one, on the inner facing side, we decided to check out one last room and call it quits. This place was so fucked up and we had all the proof we needed that it was all a government cover up. A goddamn art expo turned illegal superfund site in the middle of Yosemite National Park. All of this was nothing but a cover up, just as me and my friend expected. The conspiracy theory was not all that far fetched after all, it seems.

In this final room, we finally smelled signs of life. On the wall, someone had a canvas painting that had a knife slice through it in the shape of a forward slash on a keyboard, the guts of the canvas hanging out in the middle like a beer belly. There was a whiteboard installed on the outer-facing wall of this room. It said “FUCK ART!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

There was also a sleeping bag on the ground with a copy of The Turner Diaries, the infamous white supremacist rag that inspired felons like Timothy McVeigh and others to commit unspeakable

cruelties, resting on a pillow at the edge of the sleeping bag. There was also what appeared to be homemade beef jerky stacked up on top of his sleeping bag, and a few dead, skinned animals, possibly squirrel or raccoon (hard to tell when they don't have any skin on). Clearly, whoever had been here was not mentally fit. Maybe he was the guy in charge of this whole operation...Maybe that's why this whole thing didn't work out after all. If you don't have the right mindset when you're going into a project, it's doomed to fail. Just my two cents. Anyways...

When we walked out of the entryway of the barracks, that's when we heard scrambling footsteps coming towards us. Me and my friend took our backpacks off and fished inside of them for our pistols. "WHO THE FUCK IS THAT?" I screamed. I couldn't compose myself enough to find my pistol in my bag. The steps got louder and louder... "HEY! HEY HEY!!! STOOOOP!!!!!!!" we shouted as loud as we could. He let out a fiendish shriek, this tall, heavy-set figure dressed in brown and tan camoflaugue from head to toe, with his big, loud combat boots stomping towards us, and charged at us with a gigantic paring knife, howling like some kind of feral beast as he came at us right down the center of this long walkway into that god forsaken pitch black art exhibit.

My friend finally got his pistol out, clicked off the safety and fired off a round at this deranged lunatic. The stranger made it about 15 feet from us before the first shot hit him. Then another, and another, and another. Because pure evil can never die hard enough. His blood splashed on our clothes and faces and he fell to the ground with a loud thunk-sound. Our hearts were pounding out of our chests.

We looked over the body. The guy had on a realtree camo neck gaiter that covered all the way up to his nose. The man had long, straight blonde hair, blue eyes, and a black beanie cap on. His eyes

glazed over from being, well, ya know, dead. Good thing there are no laws out here in these woods, otherwise my buddy would have to do 25 to life.

We saw that the guy had a necklace on. Upon further inspection, it was some kinda dog tag. Jonathan Hammerslag – US Army 115<sup>th</sup> battalion. A “Christian” man, according to the tags.

In one of his breast pockets on his army desert camo fatigues, we saw a little tiny notepad. Like the kind you use to write down what kinda groceries you’re gonna get at Stater Brothers or Albertsons, with college lining.

On the notepad, on the farthest page to the back that was filled out, it said this:

*“I finally got rid of all those car parts on the black market. I used every last piece of these motherfuckers’ drawing paper to wipe my ass with. I stole ALL their shit. I sucked every last bit of value out of this place that I could and now it’s my shitter. My fucking toilet. The only thing I left behind is the fluid I drained out of all the cars—it would’ve made it harder to ship out the cars to the chop shops if I didn’t lighten the load first.*

*Artists are nothing but a bunch of fucking kikes. Fucking woke FAGGOTS. I spit on their graves.*

*Aryan Nation Brotherhood Forever*

*January 8th, 2023.”*

He wrote that note only a couple of days ago. Me and my friend ran as fast as we could after we saw that. We screamed and screamed. We screamed so hard we could barely breathe as we scrambled back to our camp site.

When we drove off, I floored it as hard as I could. I didn't let off that pedal until I saw a paved road about an hour later. When I finally saw that little sign of civilization, I cried. Not that long after, my friend started crying too. I didn't know if I was crying from relief of being out of there or fear of what we had seen. I didn't have much of a chance to process it all--But I dared not stop driving. Me and my friend never went to Yosemite National Park ever again after that. In fact, my friend is in a mental institution now, and he's been transferred so many times to so many different places that I've lost track of where he even is anymore.

I never could muster the courage to post this on wikiLeaks like I said I would. In fact, you're the first person I've ever told this story to. And as a matter of fact you will be the last one I ever tell anything to.

Now that I have just enough sense to find my pistol, cock it, load it, you name it...I'm gonna blow my fucking brains out. This country hates us all. Tell my sister that I'm sorry. Tell my mom that she can keep my truck. Everything else, bury it with me so the thieves will never be able to take it away. The bastards will take anything that isn't tied down. I know that now.

I can't take this anymore. Now I see why we weren't supposed to know about that fucking Art Expo. America is a fucking LIE!!!!!!!! DEATH IS ALL I WANT ANYMORE. FUCK IT ALL. FUCK IT ALL.

James Sutherland

2-22, 2024