

COMMENTARY

# LAX won't say who designed murals, but Dodgers will. Why?

BY BILL SHAIKIN, LOS ANGELES TIMES  
The Tribune Content Agency

LOS ANGELES

What would a baseball team in Los Angeles want from a retired artist and designer in New York? Janet Bennett wasn't sure. Generations of Angelinos are familiar with her signature project. You probably have walked right past it. Those colorful tile mosaics that decorate the long corridors toward baggage claim in five terminals at Los Angeles International Airport? She designed them.

You might have seen them in the movies or on television: "Airplane!," "Mad Men" and "The Graduate," just for starters.

You might have memorized the trivia: When you passed the red tiles, you were halfway down the corridor. "Red means halfway" was shorthand for locals in the know, just like "E Ticket" or "the #19 sandwich."

"It just says L.A. in so many ways," said Janet Marie Smith, the Dodgers' executive vice president of planning and development.

The Dodgers wanted to get in touch with Bennett because they were about to install a similar tile wall at Dodger Stadium. Smith could not find Bennett, but she reached out to someone who had liked an article about Bennett that had been posted on LinkedIn. Same last name, same spelling. Smith crossed her fingers.

Turned out to be a relative of Bennett. The Dodgers sent some sketches of their project and asked Bennett for her thoughts.

"I was a little disappointed I didn't work the project," Bennett said over the telephone, chuckling, "but I don't think I could have done it at this stage."

Bennett is 96, happily living one block from Central Park. The LAX project was completed in 1961 - the year before Dodger Stadium opened.

What the Dodgers really were offering was the recognition denied to Bennett six decades ago.

"I realized they just wanted my blessing," Bennett said. "They wanted the connection. And that was very satisfying."

And, yes, she had some thoughts for the Dodgers. She wrote them a letter by hand, the old-fashioned way. The letter got lost in the old-fashioned mail, but Bennett's daughter had thought to take a picture of the letter, and she sent it to the Dodgers via email.

Bennett's advice for the colors of the tiles?

"Don't limit it," she wrote, "to the Dodger blue."

On game days, Dodgers players take an elevator to the lowest level of Dodger Stadium. As they exit, they look to their right to see the



ROBERT GAUTHIER TNS

For the clubhouse walkway, Los Angeles Dodgers executive vice president of planning and development Janet Marie Smith and architect Brenda Levin opted for multiple shades of blue tiles.

Dodgers' World Series championship trophies and most valuable player awards, to their left to see the Gold Glove awards.

When they turn toward the clubhouse, they see Cy Young and Silver Slugger and manager of the year awards on the right, rookie of the year awards and then the Dodgers' retired numbers on the left.

"It's meant to be uplifting and motivating, and a reminder to everyone - our players included, who take that path - of what a storied franchise this is," Smith said.

The fans in the fanciest seats, the ones you see on television right behind home plate, can take that path too - but only until they reach the double doors, the ones with "DODGERS CLUBHOUSE" painted above them.

Pass through those doors, and you used to see a gray wall decorated with signage pulled from storage - signs from events held at Dodger Stadium long ago, and others commemorating milestone seasons. As part of the clubhouse renovations last winter, Smith and her team imagined how to freshen up that walkway.

"We wanted to try to get it out of its funk of just being a concrete wall," she said. "And, once we got tile in our head, how could you not think of the LAX walls?"

The Dodgers' clubhouse features a tile wall "in the hydrotherapy area," Smith said. The tiles there are all Dodger blue.

For the clubhouse walkway, Smith and architect Brenda Levin opted for multiple shades of blue tiles, interspersed with white tiles - a decision reinforced when they received Bennett's suggestion to go beyond Dodger blue. The wall includes more than 714,000 individual tiles, Smith said.

"I think they did an excellent job," Bennett said. "They got the rhythm of vertical stripes, which

has a very athletic look."

To Smith, a fierce advocate of sports venues reflecting their host cities, the tile wall reflects home.

"In many ways, that is a symbol: not just of L.A., but of 'Welcome to L.A.'" she said. "That felt right to us."

"It's not screaming at you. But, if you know, you know. We've always wanted that area to feel like a 'Welcome to L.A.' to our players."

If you know, you know, but the players may not know. Dave Roberts, the Dodgers' manager, said he did not know the story behind the wall until Smith explained it to him.

"It's a great little touch," Roberts said.

Smith said players and team executives have asked about the wall. Many of them did not know about the LAX walls, but she understood why.

"They don't fly commercial," she said.

If you merit an obituary in the newspaper, the first sentence generally includes your claim to fame. In 2007, The Los Angeles Times published an obituary with this first sentence:

"Charles D. Kratka, an interior designer and graphic artist whose Modernist projects included the mosaic walls in tunnels at Los Angeles International Airport, has died."

Said Bennett: "I just about freaked out."

After Bennett had finished the LAX mosaics, she left town. By the time the airport unveiled them, she said, she was in Latin America. Until she saw that Times obituary, it had not occurred to her that anyone else might have gotten the credit for the LAX project.

In the obituary, the airport historian credited Kratka with the design, and so did the director of volunteers at the airport museum. In 2017, so did an official LAX document: "Completed in 1961, Charles Kratka's mosaic murals have become iconic symbols of Los Angeles International Airport."

## Robo-umps: MLB All-Star Game to feature ABS challenge system

BY ALEX BUTLER  
UPI.com

MLB will use the automatic balls and strikes (ABS) challenge system -- often referred to as robo-umps -- at the 2025 All-Star Game on Tuesday in Atlanta, a source familiar with the decision told UPI on Wednesday.

Each team will be granted two challenges, with the ability to keep them if the challenges are successful. Only pitchers, hitters and catchers can ask for a challenge, which

must be requested immediately after a pitch. Players can trigger the challenge by signaling with hat or helmet taps directed to the umpire.

MLB commissioner Rob Manfred previously said the robotic umpire system could be used as early as the 2026 regular season. The league also has tested the system throughout the minor leagues and in spring training.

The league announced in March that 52.2% of ball-strike challenges were successful during the spring training trials.

Pitching teams produced a 54.4% overturn rate, compared to a 50% clip for hitters. Catchers succeeded at a rate of 56% on their challenges. Just 2.6% of spring training pitches were challenged.

MLB uses the Hawk-Eye tracking system for ABS, which monitors pitches and immediately relays ball and strike decisions.

The American League will take on the National League in the 2025 MLB All-Star Game at 8 p.m. EDT Tuesday at Truist Park. The game will air on Fox. MLB sluggers will head to the plate for the 2025 Home Run Derby at 8 p.m. Monday in Atlanta. The annual slugfest will air on ESPN.

At the start of the Jet Age, when airplane travel was a glamorous affair and even passengers in the

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Legals

Legals & Public Notices

**INVITATION FOR BID**  
1. Sealed bids will be received for the **Falcon Crest Apartments Security Upgrades** Project in Lexington, Kentucky, 40505, until **1:30 p.m.** local time on **August 5, 2025**, at the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Housing Authority, 300 West New Circle Road, Lexington, Kentucky 40505, at which time and place all bids will be publicly opened and read aloud. Faxed or electronic bids will not be permitted.

2. Bids must be received in triplicate.

3. Contract Documents may be examined at the following location:  
Lynn Imaging Online Planroom, 328 Old East Vine Street, Lexington, KY 40505

4. Copies of the Contract Documents may be purchased at **Lynn Blue Print dba Lynn Imaging, 328 Old East Vine Street, Lexington, Kentucky, (859) 255-1021**. Bid documents are to be directly purchased by bidders.

5. **Pre-Bid Meeting:** A Pre-Bid Meeting for GeneralContractors proposing to submit bids, will be held at **1:30 p.m., local time, on July 22, 2025**, at the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Housing Authority, 300 West New Circle Road, Lexington, Kentucky 40505. Attendance at the Pre-Bid Conference is recommended for those making a proposal.

6. Bids shall be accompanied by Certified Check or Bid Bond, payable to the Owner, in an amount not less than 5% of Bid.

7. A lump sum bid is desired for the project.

8. The successful bidder shall provide an acceptable 100% Performance and Payment Bond within ten (10) days of receipt of a Notice of Intent to Award

9. Owner reserves the right to reject any or all Bids, and to waive any informality.

10. Bids may not be withdrawn for sixty (60) days after Bid date. Faxed or electronic withdrawals will not be permitted.

Lexington Fayette Urban County Housing Authority  
Lexington, Kentucky  
Michele Lee  
Development and Modernization Coordinator  
IPL0253725  
Jul 13 2025

Misc. Legals

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cheaper seats enjoyed in-flight meals served with silverware, Bennett said the murals were designed to evoke the wonder of a cross-country trip: blue for the ocean at each end of the corridor, and in-between green for the forests, and yellows, oranges and browns for farmland, prairies and deserts.

Bennett freely admits that Kratka was involved in the project. The city hired Pereira and Luckman as architects for the LAX expansion, and Kratka was the firm's head of interior design.

"He was my boss," Bennett said.

Bennett said the mosaic design was hers, although she said she did not recall whether she had chosen to use glass for the tiles.

"Everything from that point on was mine," she said.

Bennett and her family have pushed for LAX to recognize her as the designer. Airport officials acknowledge Bennett's participation in the project but, amid a search for records from six decades ago and without Kratka to provide his version of events, they believe a conclusive determination would be difficult. And,

back in the day, credit was more commonly attributed to a firm rather than to an individual designer.

When I asked for a statement saying whom LAX currently credits with the design, an airport spokeswoman said, "LAX has no official comment."

In 2017, Design Observer investigated and ultimately supported Bennett's claims, citing two primary findings: one, an acclaimed designer of the same era "vividly recalls Bennett doing the murals," and, two, Bennett installed similar tile murals for two Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stations in San Francisco.

That was good enough for Smith and the Dodgers.

At LAX, there is no sign crediting anyone - not Bennett, not Kratka, not Pereira and Luckman, not anyone else - for the murals. However, the Dodgers have given Bennett her due at Dodger Stadium, on a sign directly across from their tile wall.

"This mosaic wall draws inspiration from architect Janet Bennett's iconic mosaic murals at Los Angeles International Airport," the text begins, "that transformed a transit space into a work of art."

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