

**Nix Nature Center  
Laguna Coast, California**

**2007 Exhibit Design Award, National  
Association for Interpretation**

The James and Rosemary Nix Nature Center is located in Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, a 6,600-acre park adjoining the 10,000-acre South Coast Wilderness in Orange County.



Working with the Laguna Canyon Foundation and Laguna College of Art and Design, The Acorn Group and SoLa Creative set out to design an exhibit program that used a different approach to interpretation. They combined sounds, stories, tactile experiences, and rich imagery to address the learning behaviors and interests of adults and children alike.

Floor-to-ceiling windows frame four dramatic views, or portals: Peaks of Saddleback, Little Sycamores, Bunchgrass and Buckwheat, and Stories in Stone. These portals form the cornerstones of interpretation as seen through the lens of American Indians, artists, and scientists. Their stories enrich the visitors' experience and provide them with a "full view." Each exhibit portal within the Center moves from a panoramic vista to specific landmarks and icons that tell a story, such as the canyon's geologic formations, the art it inspires, and the Acjachemen spirit animals it supports. Interpretive panels, oral histories, hands-on displays, and other engaging media are presented throughout the center.



At the Nature Station, a colorful tabletop display features a flipbook, Wentz scope, biological specimens, dome compass, and binoculars. Young visitors are challenged to go on a nature quest in the building, as well as along a nearby trail.



The Fossil Discovery Station functions like a colorful sandbox, filled with gravel and replicated fossils. Its bold graphics and flip lids raise curiosity about the adaptations of unusual wildlife that once roamed this land, such as the bone-crushing dog and false saber-toothed cat.

