



Los Angeles
County
**Arts &
Culture**



**75
YEARS**



Welcome from Director Kristin Sakoda



We know that arts and culture are integral to civic life—vital to our human, community, and economic development, with the transformative power to advance social change. When I came to the Arts Commission in 2018 as Executive Director, I shared the same goal as the Board of Supervisors that appointed me—to expand equity in arts and culture in Los Angeles County. It was an exciting moment to build on the solid foundation of all our work that increases access to the arts, and turn to implementation of the landmark 2017 Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative report (CEII).

This year, we celebrate 75 years of the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture. In this anniversary report, we look back at the origins of the Department, the history of the Arts Commission, the impact we've had, and the milestones we've shared with our cultural community along the way. In the following pages, you can explore how the arts and cultural landscape in Los Angeles County, and the Department's role within it, has evolved and expanded.

The journey of our programs, reach, and cultural partners is nothing short of remarkable, growing from six original grantees at our inception to hundreds of grantees, artists, and partners annually, and over \$100 million awarded to the LA County arts field from 1947 to today. In the past five years alone, we've made several notable achievements. We became the

first-ever Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, with an expanded mandate and mission to advance arts, culture, and creativity throughout LA County. We elevated the role of arts and culture on the civic agenda, and both literally and figuratively provided arts and culture a seat at the leadership table of County services. We developed and launched a progressive suite of CEII initiatives, and made cultural equity and inclusion the lens for all our work. We increased our staffing and budget, and strengthened the infrastructure of the Department for years to come.

And in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, we supported the local arts sector, pivoted our programs, connected arts to health needs, and delivered multiple recovery grant programs, including the administration of federal CARES Act and American Rescue Program funds allocated by the Board. By 2023, we will have delivered over \$40 million in relief and recovery grant funds to the field, an unprecedented investment to ensure an equitable and sustainable arts recovery.

We know we do not do this work alone—none of our achievements, past, present, or future—are possible without you. And there is much more to do as our cultural context, community needs, and aspirations grow. Together, I believe we can continue to uplift the diverse cultural contributions of our communities; achieve equity in arts education for all youth; expand access to careers in the

creative economy; center the work of artists as innovators, problem solvers, and creative strategists in addressing complex civic issues; and build belonging for every Angeleno through the arts.

I am deeply honored and humbled to be part of this legacy, and to have led the Arts Commission as its Executive Director and now serve as the Director of the Department of Arts and Culture during this dynamic and historic time. It's a privilege to work with you, alongside you, and for all our diverse communities of Los Angeles County. Thank you to the Board of Supervisors for believing in the value in the arts. Thank you to our brilliant and dedicated Department staff, Arts Commissioners, and cultural community. Join us in celebrating this incredible milestone, as we invest in LA County's cultural life for the next 75 years to come.

In gratitude,
Kristin Sakoda



From the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

2021/2022 Official Board Photo

“In 2015, I directed a Countywide conversation about how to build equity in the arts. After intense dialogue with members from the field and community, the then-Arts Commission created the groundbreaking Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII). I am very proud of CEII and even prouder that its recommendations are being implemented—with its values taking hold in various programs and initiatives. The Commission is now a Department, and though there is still much to do as we increase access to arts, culture, and the creative sector, there’s a sense of momentum in the Department’s work as it continues to actualize CEII. I wish the Department a happy 75th anniversary, and I want its staff and Arts Commissioners to know how grateful I am for their accomplishments so far.”

— Hilda L. Solis, Supervisor to the First District

“As we celebrate 75 years of investing in the vast spectrum of arts and culture, the County is taking the arts to the next level as a conduit to promote equity. We support the incredible work of small and mid-sized nonprofit art organizations that are serving communities that have historically faced inequitable access to resources. We use arts to deliver essential services in mental health, environmental protection, homeless prevention and intervention, and much more. I look forward to another 75 years of ensuring that every Angeleno shares in the benefits of the arts.”

— Holly J. Mitchell, Supervisor to the Second District

“Seventy-five years ago, the County established an Arts Commission which was tasked with making recommendations on symphonic performances. Fast forward to 2022 and the County has a fully resourced Arts and Culture Department dedicated to bringing vibrant and diverse arts and cultural programming to every resident in LA County. That’s a reflection of the importance of the arts to our residents, communities, and economy.”

— Sheila Kuehl, former Supervisor to the Third District

“The arts are powerful and because of that, they need to be accessible. I want more public art in LA County neighborhoods, and more ways for young people to experience the arts in their schools and care systems, and if they choose, to enter creative careers. It’s important that arts nonprofits be sustained because they are part of the social and service fabric of our County. We are seeing progress being made in all of these areas right now because of the Department of Arts and Culture’s programs and policies. I certainly celebrate its 75-year body of work, but I am more excited to see what comes next.”

— Janice Hahn, Supervisor to the Fourth District

“The arts bring hope, well-being, and creative civic engagement to our communities. I’m especially looking forward to seeing how the arts are integrated in youth development. Investing in the future of Los Angeles County’s young people is imperative, especially now. By making the arts accessible to youth, we strengthen education outcomes and build bridges to careers in the creative economy. The Department of Arts and Culture has been a champion for youth arts programming throughout its 75-year history, and never in a more innovative and ambitious way than now. The Department is bringing the arts into schools, into boots-on-the-ground community-based organizations, into our care systems, and into our neighborhoods. I appreciate those efforts and wish a happy anniversary to the Department and its staff! I’m eager and expectant to see the next chapter unfold.”

— Kathryn Barger, Supervisor to the Fifth District

Cultural Equity and Inclusion

A Roadmap to the Future

In 2017, the then LA County Arts Commission released the landmark *Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative* report (CEII). Catalyzed by the Board of Supervisors' 2015 mandate for a "County-wide conversation about ways to improve diversity in cultural organizations," CEII was the result of an 18-month stakeholder and community workshop process that carved out 13 recommendations to ensure everyone in LA County had equitable access to arts and culture. Supervisors Hilda Solis and Sheila Kuehl authored a series of motions to move this work forward, and center cultural equity and inclusion.

In 2018, under the leadership of its first new Executive Director in 25 years, Kristin Sakoda, the Arts Commission (soon to become the Department of Arts and Culture) embarked on an era of CEII implementation—and bringing the initiative's vision of cultural equity to life. These implementations include the Creative Strategist program, which launched in 2018, placing artists and creative workers in County departments to develop and implement solutions to social challenges. It's been widely successful, with 10 residencies so far. The Arts Internship Program has doubled, with positions for community college students. The Board directed more access

to work-based learning and leadership opportunities for all high school students—and in 2022 the Creative Careers Online platform was launched to help connect youth with sought after jobs in the creative industry. A new ordinance that allocates 1% of building valuation towards arts and culture in LA County was enacted, aligning private development with the County's existing civic art requirement. The program has existed for a year and has generated \$1.24M so far—and it's expected to eventually generate millions of dollars for art in unincorporated areas.

The Department's journey to build equity does not start or stop with CEII, but the initiative is an important marker on a decades-long charge still underway. "One of the things I championed from the very start of my tenure," said Sakoda, "was the idea that cultural equity and inclusion would be more than an initiative. I saw it as a set of values to embed across all of our work—from addressing systemic inequities in arts funding, to uplifting the cultural contributions of our diverse communities, to framing arts as a strategy for antiracism, and redefining the role of arts and culture as integral to every sector of our civic lives."

The Commission: Democratizing Culture

From its origins in 1947 as the Music Commission to its current place in County government, the Department has traveled a long arc towards what former Director Laura Zucker describes as the "democratization of

culture” in Los Angeles. The agency began as a means for the Board of Supervisors, through the Music Commissioners, to exert greater influence on arts and culture in LA County. In the 1940s and ’50s, it was the Music Commissioners’ duty to attend performances, then make funding suggestions to the Board.



Fabian Debora, Executive Director,
Homeboy Art Academy.

European decolonization and American civil rights struggle in the aftermath of WWII led to a widespread critique of Eurocentric hierarchies and cultural assumptions. Locally, this meant questioning whether the model of large, metropolitan arts institutions, supported by government patronage and private wealth, was appropriate for LA County—a culturally diverse region challenged by geographic discontinuity, racial segregation, and economic inequality. While such institutions were, and are, a valuable part of the arts ecology, they were perceived to represent the interests of the social elite, not the whole of Los Angeles County.

In the 1960s and ’70s, consequently, a host of new nonprofit arts and cultural organizations emerged to serve communities that were excluded from and unrepresented by legacy arts institutions. As the newly minted Music and Performing Arts Commission, the agency began funding dance and theater companies, and increased its support for free concerts at parks, libraries, probation camps, senior centers and other County sites. The Commission produced the annual Holiday Celebration from 1959 to 2016, and programmed the Ford Theatres from 1993 to 2016—both diverse showcases for LA County performers.

Under Zucker, who took the helm in 1992, the renamed Arts Commission sought to professionalize the grantmaking process and build the County’s reputation as a trusted partner in the arts, an agency committed to the fair, equitable, and transparent distribution of public resources. Zucker believed that “every initiative had to be one in which all boats rose,” and the Commission pushed the County not for a redistribution of funds, but for more and broader arts funding.

This meant that the County would both continue its support for legacy arts institutions and dedicate resources to small and mid-sized arts organizations that were, at the time, largely invisible to and underfunded by government agencies. Since many of these organizations serve culturally specific communities and promote historically marginalized artistic practices, the Commission’s operating grants and technical support addressed critical inequities in the distribution of public funds for the arts.



Artist Floyd Strickland creating artwork for Jacqueline Avant Children and Family Center.

Building Equity in Grantmaking

The Organizational Grant Program (OGP) launched in the late 1990s, tackling a number of intertwined problems. Disparities in arts funding are rooted in Eurocentric ideas about what the arts are, and who they are for. “A lot of the injustice around arts funding is a misunderstanding about what arts funding can support,” said artist and Arts Internship Program alum Kristina Wong. “It’s not a million-dollar sculpture in a museum or \$500 opera tickets....I’m talking about art experiences for youth, music classes in schools, community devised theater projects with recent immigrants.”

OGP doesn’t just impact individual organizations; in combination with other County funding, it can strengthen entire communities. As TAIKOPROJECT Executive Director Bryan Yamami explained, support from the Department not only enabled his organization to grow, but enabled a whole cohort of Japanese American cultural organizations, and by virtue of their locations, the Little Tokyo neighborhood, to “thrive and grow concurrently.”

Grantees emphasize that it is not only what the Department funds that is important, but also how it engages with grantees. Zucker wanted the Commission to be responsive—listening to and addressing community needs, as opposed to prescriptive or top-down in its approach. To assist organizations in their application process, the Department offered technical assistance workshops. To build the nonprofits’ infrastructure and sustainability, the Department provided professional development opportunities, support which many grantees say has had transformative effects on small and mid-sized organizations.

Programs Expand

In the early 2000s, the Commission began to address systemwide inequitable access to the arts through policy and system wide change initiatives. Its Arts Education charge crystallized in 2002 with the Board's adoption of *Arts for All: Los Angeles County Regional Blueprint for Arts Education* and the formation of Arts for All (now called the Arts Education Collective), a group of arts education leaders dedicated to implementing the Blueprint's ideas for in-school arts instruction. As the Arts Ed Collective grew, it became clear that addressing social inequity through the arts would require expanding beyond schools: "If we are to ensure robust arts education is available for all young people—and especially for those who stand to benefit the most from it—then we need to be tackling arts education as an equity issue," said Denise Grande, Director of the Department's Arts Education Division. "And if we are looking to change systems and conditions, then we need to be working hand in hand with the public education, justice, child welfare, and health and wellness systems—as well as with advocates—to realize the change we all want to see."

In 2004, the Board adopted the County's first Civic Art Policy, allocating one percent of design and construction costs of County capital projects to provide for site-based public art installations. The Civic Art Division coalesced the following year and implemented policy mandates to inventory, assess, and document County art. These efforts enabled the Commission to facilitate relationships between County departments, local organizations, and developers, with the goal of encouraging greater accountability and community responsiveness in public development projects.

The Commission also sought to address systems change in the arts leadership pipeline. In partnership with the J. Paul Getty Trust, it established the Arts Internship Program (AIP) in 2000. As the largest paid internship program in the nation, with a mandate to include community

college students, AIP provides opportunity for students who might not otherwise have a pathway into arts leadership. Both AIP alumni and the organizations who work with them locate the transformational power of this program both in its hands-on approach to leadership training and in its cohort model, which encourages peer networking and support among next generation arts leaders.

As a convener and thought partner, the Department addresses systemic concerns by bringing together arts professionals to learn, problem-solve, and develop the field together. This role gained resonance when the Research and Evaluation Division launched in 2013. "The diversity and expansiveness of LA County might naturally create a fragmented arts and culture sector. The Department is important because of the way it serves as a nexus for arts and culture sector support, education, employment, experiences, and insights, as well as an advocate for equity and expanded cultural resources," said Zannie Voss, Director of SMU DataArts, an ongoing research partner. "This isn't a happy accident. It's attributable to outstanding leadership, clear and actionable strategies, and commitment throughout the organization to advancing arts, culture, and creativity."

The Department: Centering Arts, Culture, and Creativity in Civic Life

With the Commission's transition to the first-ever Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture in 2019, its new mission and vision statements centered arts, culture, and creativity as integral to the civic life of Los Angeles. Having a seat at the table of government has enabled the Department to bring its mission and vision to bear across sectors and in collaboration with colleagues across the County.

A suite of policies and programs growing out of CEII aim to institutionalize the initiative's values—the *New Regional Blueprint for Arts Education*, *Arts as a Justice Reform Strategy*, the *Countywide Cultural Policy* and subsequent *Countywide Cultural Policy Strategic Plan*. “The adoption of the *Cultural Policy* signaled an essential shift in our larger understanding of the value of art,” said Grace Ramirez Gaston, Director of the Department's Civic Art Division. “There is increasing awareness of its power to connect people across various divides—socioeconomic, cultural, or political.”

Invertigo Dance Theatre



CEII also enabled the Department to enact transformative policy in the face of a countrywide reckoning with racial violence and a pandemic that highlighted the devastating costs of social inequality. “Had we not done the *Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative*, conversations around anti-racism wouldn't have happened as quickly as they did,” said Leticia Buckley, CEO of LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes and Arts Commissioner. “When we hit that moment of major reckoning in 2020, LA County was in a position to act quickly because those expectations and mechanisms of accountability had already been put in place by the Department, our grantees, and the hundreds of folks who participated in the CEII conversations. When we talk about how the arts can be a tool for social and civic change—the Department has demonstrated that, because it's in a position to shift the system from within.”

“There's a lot happening, and more that needs to happen,” said Angela Gaspar-Milanovic, Director of the Department's Grants and Professional Development Division. “Arts and culture workers need health benefits, a living wage, and access to affordable housing. How arts and culture work is happening is shifting—and we need to meet the moment to support it. Representation absolutely matters and work in racial and cultural equity continues—who is leading orgs, who is in the audience, who is on the stage or leading workshops, who is on the board.”

With more resources, networks, and deeper partnerships we can do more in communities that the County has historically overlooked and is now working to address.”

The foundation for this work is strong. “We’re building on a 75-year legacy of expanding access to the arts and building greater cultural equity—and racial equity—through our work across programs, policy, and practice,” said Sakoda. “It’s incredibly rewarding to be working to support artists, to create the conditions needed for a thriving, equitable, arts and culture

sector, and to leverage the power of the arts for all communities across every sector of civic life. I am proud to be the founding Director of the LA County Department of Arts and Culture, and a woman of color in leadership, in a time of dynamic transition and an evolution of how we support arts and culture as a 21st century local arts agency in the largest, most diverse, county in America.”



Whittier City School District students with Creative Wellbeing Artist-in-Residence from Jail Guitar Doors, a member organization of the Arts for Healing & Justice Network. Photo by Chrysa Saade.



75 Years By the Numbers

CONTRA-TIEMPO

MORE THAN

3,000
STUDENTS

have participated in the Arts Internship Program—contributing over **1 MILLION HOURS** to the field since 2000.

MORE THAN

550

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

throughout LA County were provided with grants this year (compared to six nonprofits in 1948). Since its inception, the Department has granted over **\$100 MILLION** to local nonprofits.

161

ACTIVE PROJECTS

were managed by the Civic Art Division this year, **47 PROJECTS** were completed, and ongoing care was provided for artworks at **90 COUNTY FACILITIES**.

The County's Civic Art Collection has over 526 historic and contemporary artworks by more than **300 ARTISTS**, including new commissions, donations, and art purchases.

35

PROJECTS

related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access to the arts were completed by the Research and Evaluation Division since the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative launched in 2015.



The World Is Yours
by Floyd Strickland.

74

OF THE COUNTY'S 80 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

plus five charter school networks, serving over **722,000 STUDENTS**, have officially joined the Arts Ed Collective since 2003.

In 2022, the Department engaged **24 PHILANTHROPY PARTNERS** and **3 YOUTH ADVISORS** on the Arts Ed Collective Funders Council. The public-private arts education initiative is the largest in the U.S.

1920s on

From the 1920s through the '40s, the LA County Board of Supervisors provides funding for the **Hollywood Bowl** and the **Pilgrimage Theatre**. In 1940, the Board even pays for a County band to play at events, which is criticized by taxpayer groups as an unnecessary expenditure.¹

The County's cultural investments continue through the decades: the Museum of History, Science and Technology opens 1913; the Pilgrimage Theatre is deeded to the County in 1941; the LA County Museum of Art opens in 1965; The Music Center complex—Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Mark Taper Forum, and Ahmanson Theatre—in 1964; Walt Disney Concert Hall in 2003; LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes in 2011; and Grand Park in 2012.



1925

The **City of Los Angeles'** Municipal Arts Department forms, with one employee and a charge to improve the appearance of buildings and streets.²

“Now we have an opportunity to bring culture into the equation, and realign the systems that are out of sync. I'm going to be just very blunt here. Our society is based on white supremacy, and the systems are made in that image. Getting rid of white supremacy is important because everybody has a different way of being, a different culture—and having one way of being right, one way of delivery, is going to get you disparities. Systems should be designed with the community, based on who's in that community. If you start to introduce culture into the system, it gives people an opening to be themselves, and to move their vision forward.”

—Karen Mack, Founder and Executive Director, LA Commons

1932

San Francisco establishes the first Arts Commission in California, to oversee public art and municipal music.³

1933

Responding to the Great Depression, the New Deal launches with the Federal Emergency Relief Act. Between 1935 and 1943, the **Works Progress Administration** supports art, music, building projects, and writing programs—employing artists along the way.⁴

L to R: Hall of Records, County Courthouse, and Hall of Justice in 1928. The Board of Supervisors conducted business in the Hall of Records from 1911 to 1960. Security Pacific National Bank Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

LA Commons' 2021 Willowbrook Memorials Project. Courtesy LA Commons.



“Los Angeles is rich with transformative art experiences that can completely boost the health of our communities. I am talking about art experiences for youth, music classes in schools, community-devised theater projects with recent immigrants. If we can understand the larger immeasurable impact the arts have on all sectors, I think it will help voters understand why it’s so vital to keep alive.”

—Kristina Wong, artist, activist, Pulitzer Prize finalist, and former intern in the Arts Internship Program



Kristina Wong. Courtesy the artist.

1945

The LA County Board of Supervisors promotes symphony performances through a special publicity fund—it’s illegal to support the performances themselves.⁵

1947

The idea of local governments subsidizing the arts is still new. **Supervisor John Anson Ford and Ida Koverman**, a player in film and political circles, convince state legislators in Sacramento to permit the County to fund performances. Anti-tax crusaders continue to protest arts funding.⁶

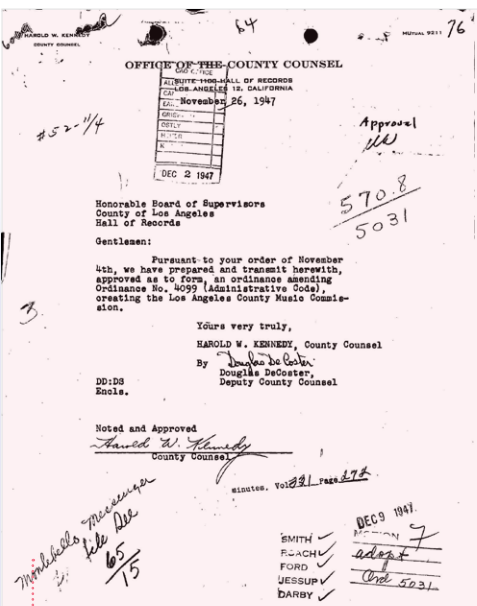
Supervisor Ford introduces a motion to create the **Los Angeles County Music Commission** as “the vehicle through which the Board of Supervisors shall further its participation in music and related cultural activities.” The Board adopts the ordinance on December 9, creating the forebearer of today’s Department of Arts and Culture.

The Music Commission consists of 15 members—three Commissioners appointed by each of the five Supervisors, which ensures representation throughout the County. That structure is the same for the Arts Commission today.

The Commission recommends operas, symphonies, band concerts, and historical pageants and plays. “Commissioners studied the number of persons who were expected to attend a concert or musical affair, the type of music which had been requested, the number of musicians required, and the cost per capita of the anticipated attendance,” three Commissioners reflected in 1968.⁷

“As I reflect on my 20 years of public service in the County, I’ve been excited to see the evolution of a small arts division successfully navigating the County’s systems to become a leading local arts agency. I think we’ve shifted the needle from a position where arts were on the sidelines to now becoming a resource for creative thinking across County sectors.”

—Miriam Gonzalez, Executive Assistant, Department of Arts and Culture, and longest-serving staffer at the Department



Ordinance 5031 from December 9, 1947, the day the Los Angeles County Music Commission was born.

1948

The **Commission awards its first six grants** totaling \$171,500 to the Southern California Symphony Association (for 13 youth concerts), the Los Angeles County Band, the San Francisco Opera Association, the Los Angeles Civic Light Opera Association, the *Pilgrimage Play*, the Hollywood Bowl Association, and a placeholder fund for upcoming commissions.



Campaigning for the Southern California Symphony Association's annual fundraising drive, 1948. Otto Rothschild, Herald Examiner Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

ARTS IN THE LIVES OF YOUTH: THEN AND NOW

“We piloted a sixth grade curriculum with Conga Kids. The kids became engaged with Latin ballroom dancing and learning the steps. What I heard from the teachers was, a lot of the kids were students that weren’t as successful in traditional academics, and this boosted their self-esteem so much that they started trying harder in the academics because they had more confidence. That school won regionals, and then the parents got together a few days before the County competition and made dresses for the girls and cummerbunds and bow ties for the boys. It was such a sight to see how good they looked—and they won. The next year, those now-seventh graders came back to support the sixth grade team, giving them pointers. Seventh graders don’t do that. And then that school won! I get emotional just talking about that.”

—Jefferey Lagozzino, Ph. D, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, Mountain View School District

1956 on

The first all-boy **Youth Band Festival** is held at the Hollywood Bowl and becomes an annual event. In the *Herald Examiner* in 1958, conductor Walter Laursen describes the music as varied—Bach, Gershwin, and swing—but one genre is prohibited. “Rock-and-roll, says Laursen, has a violent but numerically small following—contrary to a widespread belief. And for some reason, rock-and-roll always spells trouble.”⁸

Parkview Elementary’s sixth grade Conga Kids dance team, at the 2019 LA County finals (which they won!). Courtesy J. Lagozzino.



The late Roz Wyman was a tireless advocate for the arts in Los Angeles, and served on and off the Arts Commission since 1970.



“Today’s Department of Arts and Culture is built on decades of increasing County support, but also, the vision of some incredible arts leaders and staff. In the 1950s, Dorothy Chandler had the tenacity to build a cultural center for the County. The late, great Councilwoman and my Arts Commission colleague Rosalind Wyman championed the arts for everyone. Laura Zucker was a driving force in the arts ecosystem for 25 years, and I think Helen Hernandez and Leticia Buckley were two big reasons the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative succeeded. And though all of the current Department staff is incredible, I admire Grace Ramirez Gaston’s tireless devotion to placing civic art throughout the County, and to involving community in art projects. I’m so proud to be the President of the Arts Commission as we celebrate this anniversary.”

—Eric Eisenberg, Arts Commission President

1958

When the Music Commission reaches its **10th anniversary**, *Herald Examiner* music editor Patterson Greene writes that the organization “has justified its ten years of existence by helping good music permeate the notorious widespread division of the county.” Commission wins include the support of youth orchestras and bands, 60,000 elementary school students who experience live opera every year, and with help from Musicians Union Local 47, concerts at probation camps and the County Museum.⁹

1959

The first **Holiday Celebration**, produced by the Commission, unfolds at the Sports Arena on December 24.

1960s on

Throughout the 1960s and ’70s, nonprofit arts and cultural organizations are founded to serve the increasingly diverse populations of LA County and explore new art forms. Many reflect artists and communities denied equal access to cultural resources, or whose art is not presented by large institutions.¹⁰

Supervisor Kenneth Hahn at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 1964. Courtesy The Music Center.



“When my dad, Supervisor Kenny Hahn, heard Dorothy Chandler’s proposal for an incredible cultural center, he said, ‘If you want my support, here’s what I’m going to ask: That one day a year, we have a holiday program on December 24 and it’s free of charge. On that one day, anybody can walk into this Music Center and enjoy the beauty of what you’re going to build.’ She, on the spot, agreed.”

—Supervisor Janice Hahn, 60th Annual LA County Holiday Celebration video



The *Pilgrimage Play* at the Pilgrimage Theatre, 1957. Seaver Center for Western Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

1964

After 32 seasons, **the Pilgrimage Theatre** stops presenting the *Pilgrimage Play*, because a lawsuit prohibits local government from funding a religious play. It's a turning point, and then Director John teGroen starts the venue on its new life with a series of jazz concerts. Throughout the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, the theater hosts **free jazz** with artists including Chet Baker, the Joe Pass Quintet, Willie Bobo, local supergroup Turbulence, and trumpeter Gerald Wilson.¹¹

The Holiday Celebration moves to the **just-opened Dorothy Chandler Pavilion**, its home ever since.

“Jazz is generally underappreciated and often presented in small subpar venues with less-than-ideal production abilities. Putting first rate Jazz ensembles on the Ford stage was such a rare and much appreciated opportunity to elevate this style of music and allow its fans to experience it in all its glory.”

—Rocco Somazzi, Angel City Arts

1965

KCET begins televising the seven-hour Holiday Celebration. (Future shows in the '60s would stretch to 12 hours. Today they are three.)

National Endowment for the Arts and **National Endowment for the Humanities** are established to support the arts at the federal level. Many state arts agencies, then local arts agencies, follow.

1966

With a name change, the now **Los Angeles County Music and Performing Arts Commission** starts to fund dance and theater organizations.

Dwight Trible rehearses for the 2011 Angel City Jazz Fest. Courtesy Ford Theatres.



“Today we unveil and dedicate the artwork that recognizes and expresses apologies to more than 200 mothers who were coercedly sterilized at the Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center between 1968-1974. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to make the most meaningful artwork I will ever create in my lifetime.... The name of the artwork is Sobrevivir, which means to survive, to keep alive. The spirit of sobrevivir is rooted in the very words of the mothers, and I want the artwork to include the perspectives and expressions of the survivors....This is a haunting story, and dark histories will continue to haunt unless we do something about them. This is the beginning of the effort to repair and heal.”

—Phung Huynh, *Sobrevivir* Civic Art Dedication, July 11, 2021



Sobrevivir by artist Phung Huynh, at the LAC+USC Medical Center. Photo by Steven Lam.

1976

The Pilgrimage Theatre is renamed the **John Anson Ford Theatre**, honoring the late Supervisor and his contributions to the arts.

California’s state arts agency is restructured by Governor Jerry Brown as the **California Arts Council**, to put greater emphasis on local artists and community involvement.¹²

Courtesy Self Help Graphics.



“Our founder in 1970, Sister Karen, was an artist that was addressing inclusivity and equity. We’ve had a mission for going on 50 years now that is really rooted in supporting a community that has been marginalized and relegated—as if, ‘Oh that’s community art, that happens over there, not in the institutional white wall spaces.’ Or when it happens in institutions, it’s the story of the exceptional, as in, that artist has overcome so much and now they’ve left the community to ‘make it’. The idea of Self Help has been to nurture and assert the value of the Chicano and Latinx community’s creative and artistic expression, in the face of an art and culture sector that has not valued that.”

—Betty Avila, Executive Director, Self Help Graphics

1976

The first **Dance Kaleidoscope** festival is staged at the Ford Theatres. It features many companies led by artists of color including Cleo Parker Robinson Dance, Floricanto Dance Theatre, Rudy Perez, and Eiko & Koma.

1978

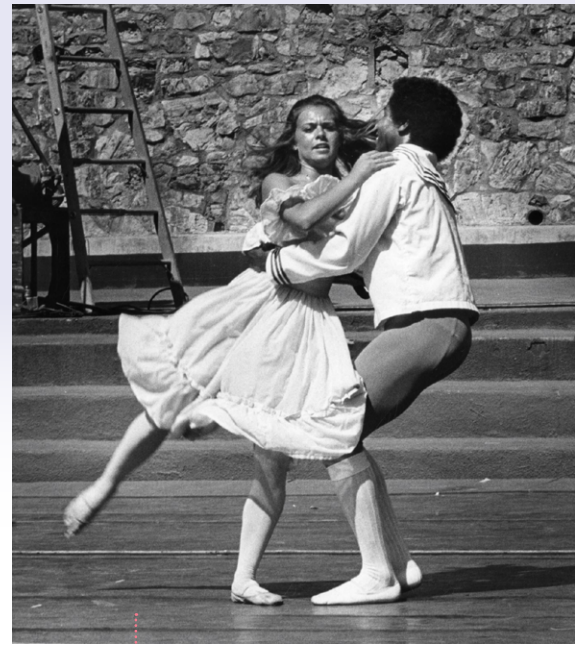
California voters pass **Proposition 13**, the landmark property tax cap, which reduces funding for public education including arts instruction.

“If it hadn’t been for the County, Kaleidoscope never would have happened. [Executive Director] J. Foster and the Commission took a big gamble. They had no idea what we would do. Dance was in its infancy here and the County gave the companies what they needed—and an opportunity to perform.”

—Betty Empey, former Executive Director, Los Angeles Area Dance Alliance

1981

California Arts Council begins to decentralize its programs, setting aside funds to be regranted through local arts agencies.¹³



The Valley Concert Dance Theatre performs in the Ford Theatre’s “Dance Kaleidoscope” in 1979. Gus Gregor, Herald Examiner Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

“My parents are the founders of the Lula Washington Dance Theatre (LWDT) which was founded in 1980. I listened to my parents and their Board members discuss grants. Now 42 years later, I am being invited to share my relationship to the Department!

As a child, I attended dance performances throughout the city that LWDT was performing in but I also got to see other companies from out of town that the Department helped fund. As an emerging artist and choreographer, I was granted opportunities to teach, perform, and create.

In my development as a leader and cultural bearer, the Department gave me critical foundational opportunities for professional development through

a range of panel reviews, projects, and scholarships to the Southern California Leadership Network and Arts for LA’s ACTIVATE program.

The Department is a critical resource for the LA performing arts sector and specifically dance, because there are only a handful of foundations that have dance in their giving programs. It has made it possible for us to pay our dancers, and it has enabled Lula, myself, and hundreds of other local artists.”

—Tamica Washington-Miller, Associate Director, Choreographer, Dancer, Lula Washington Dance Theatre

1984

As Los Angeles hosts the Olympics, the 10-week **Olympic Arts Festival** features 400 performances by 145 theater, dance, and music companies, representing every continent. This helps shift the Commission's understanding of LA as a global arts apex, with more diversity needed in its cultural programming.

Courtesy Lula Washington Dance Theatre.



Metamorphoses (2022).
Photo by Craig Schwartz,
courtesy of A Noise Within.

1985

The Commission receives its first grant from the **California Art Council**, enabling it to support more **small, community-based arts organizations** that have “since grown into important cultural institutions of both national and international repute.”¹⁴



“For almost 20 years, the Department has been a key organizational partner for A Noise Within, offering critical support as we expanded from a small community theater to a midsized regional theater with a national reputation, and the largest theater in LA County led by a woman of color...”

—Zach Davidson, Assistant Director of Development, A Noise Within

Long Beach in Sunglasses by artist Renee “Karrtune” James. Courtesy of Arts Council for Long Beach.



“I come from the Boyle Heights side of East LA and East Los. So I’m very familiar with the County’s services in those unincorporated areas. I participated in some arts services as a young person and it cultivated the creative side of me that my family could not afford to do. I think free art exposure definitely impacted a generation.”

—Griselda Suarez, Executive Director, Arts Council for Long Beach

“Arts for All, which became the Arts Ed Collective, is the most important legacy of the Department. It was the most comprehensive undertaking for putting the arts back into the schools at every grade level, and made more challenging because of the 80+ separate school systems in Los Angeles County. Well into our ten-year Arts for All plan, signs of success were happening in schools, and we were receiving national accolades which generated other school systems in America to ask for our blueprint for adding the arts. As an artist and former teacher, I am proud to have served on the Arts Commission during this important time, eventually affecting the lives of so many.”

—Phoebe Beasley, artist and first African American President of the Arts Commission



L to R: Arts Commissioner Phoebe Beasley and Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke at Phoebe’s 1997 swearing in ceremony. Courtesy P. Beasley.

1992

Yvonne Brathwaite Burke is elected to the Board of Supervisors, the first Black woman on the Board. Gloria Molina, the first Latina, was elected the year prior. They represent a shift in the composition of LA County’s governing body.

Longtime theater producer **Laura Zucker** joins the Los Angeles County Music and Performing Arts Commission as Executive Director. With one other staffer, Cindy Mendoza-Torres (now with the County’s Office of Protocol), and a part-time contractor, the team works out of a converted closet at The Music Center. With fellow arts leaders, they push for multicultural arts programming in LA County.

Laura Zucker, courtesy of the Department of Arts and Culture.



“The 21st century will be about the democratization of culture.”

—Laura Zucker

1993

The Commission's **Arts Organization Stabilization Initiative (AOSI)** funds five mid-size, community-based nonprofits—the **Bilingual Foundation of the Arts, East West Players, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Lula Washington Dance Theatre, and Plaza de la Raza**. It's a recognition that an organization's infrastructure is as important as its public facing work. AOSI teaches the Commission about what its role in nonprofit development could be, and leads to Organizational Grant Program in 1998.

“Taking the helm of East West Players in 1993, there were ambitious goals. The most lofty was to advance the organization from a 99-seat blackbox to a mid-sized theater that paid artists a living wage through a professional union contract. EWP, one of five culturally-specific organizations, received the prestigious Arts Organization Stabilization Initiative multi-year grant from the Commission which offered both funding and technical assistance to build infrastructure to stabilize the organization financially and to strategically plan three to five years out, including a capital campaign, to provide sustainability. In 1998, EWP successfully moved into the David Henry Hwang Theatre in Little Tokyo, strengthening its mission and nearly tripling its annual income. In the decades to follow, other organizations advanced to the mid-sized level with EWP serving as a model for success.”

—Tim Dang, Artistic Director Emeritus of East West Players, former Arts Commissioner

Program from the 1998 Holiday Celebration.

East West Players' inaugural production of *Pacific Overtures*. Courtesy Tim Dang.



“Pity the harried stage manager of the Los Angeles County Holiday Celebration (‘We’re ready for you, Long Beach Ballet! Somebody get the klezmer ensemble off the stage! Where’s the Gay Men’s Chorus?’), the annual six-hour entertainment showcase that truly deserves to be called an extravaganza. While it seems like a dauntingly ambitious program, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission, in cahoots with KCET, has managed to pull it off every Christmas Eve....It’s kind of a citywide talent show for one helluva talented city.”

—Libby Molyneaux, LA Weekly, December 17, 1998

THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
presents



39th ANNUAL LOS ANGELES COUNTY
HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

Thursday, December 24, 1998
3:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Dorothy Chandler Pavilion at the Music Center



The Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County is pleased to present its 39th Annual Holiday Celebration at the Music Center. We thank KCET and the Music Center Operating Company, who together with the County, make this beloved community tradition possible. Inaugurated in 1959, this celebration has continued uninterrupted. Today more than 1600 performers from throughout the County will participate, performing not only for the audience in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, but also for the hundreds of thousands of viewers of KCET and listeners to KPCC-FM.



Since 1967, The Arts Commission was established in 1947 by the Board of Supervisors to foster excellence and vitality in the arts, and to insure diversity and accessibility to the arts in the County. Among its many accomplishments in support of the arts, the Arts Commission has produced the Annual Holiday Celebration since the program's inception. The Supervisors extend their best wishes for a joyous holiday season and a happy new year to you and your family.



A young fan is invited onstage when LA-based Korean pop-rock group Run River North performs at the Skirball's *Sunset Concerts*. Courtesy of Skirball Cultural Center.

*“For 25 years, Los Angeles County has provided unwavering support of the Skirball’s free summer music series, *Sunset Concerts*....The Skirball’s mission is inspired by the Jewish ethical imperative to welcome the stranger. Our roster of international and American roots music performers at our *Sunset Concerts* manifests this commitment and facilitates connection among the diverse communities of Los Angeles.”*

—Jesse Kornberg, President and CEO,
Skirball Cultural Center

1997

In celebration of its 50th anniversary, the Commission is renamed the **Los Angeles County Arts Commission** to signify its support of all arts disciplines.

1998

Supervisor Gloria Molina authors a motion directing the Arts Commission to work on **Civic Art** projects in the County.

1998–1999

The Arts Commission restructures its grant framework and launches the **Organizational Grant Program** (OGP). Visual and media arts organizations become eligible for funding—before, grants were for live performances. Peer review panels are implemented, so the selection process is transparent and not driven by the personal patronage system that the Commission began with—aligning with a broader shift in public arts funding in other cities nationwide. The changes help address a growing tension between the needs of small and mid-size culturally specific organizations, and larger legacy organizations.

2000

The Arts Commission joins the J. Paul Getty Trust to launch the **Arts Internship Program**.

Guided by a coalition of LA arts leaders that advocates for public arts support (which later becomes Arts for LA), the Commission launches **Arts in Focus**. It's the first survey of arts education in LA County and reveals a lack of a systemic approach to teaching the arts and great disparities among students who receive it.

“Laura was very concerned that the museums and visual arts had this fabulous Getty internship program, but the performing arts weren’t involved. She had the idea of partnering with the Getty, and we really modeled our program on the Getty’s. I think the exciting thing is how many people have gone through it that subsequently went into arts administration. We also always thought that if they didn’t go into the arts as a career, we could develop them as people who support the arts in other ways, as audience members or board members.”

—Andrew Campbell, former Arts Administrator, West Hollywood, and former Director of Organizational Development, Arts Commission

Arts Internship Summit, 2015



“I was an intern over 20 years ago, with grantee TeAda Productions. That internship set up the foundation of how I understand how a small BIPOC arts organization works in the ecosystem of the greater Los Angeles arts. It also gave me a lot of tools to understand how the arts can impact other communities, and how to build my career as an artist.”

—Kristina Wong, artist, activist, and former Arts Internship Program intern

L to R: Mayor-elect Karen Bass, Debbie Devine, Jack Black, and Jay McAdams. Photo by Cooper Bates, courtesy 24th Street Theater.

2001

The Commission launches the **Arts Leadership Initiative** to support arts leaders of mid-sized arts organizations.



2002

The **Arts for All: Los Angeles County Regional Blueprint for Arts Education** is adopted by the Board. Developed under Ayanna Hudson, then director of Arts Education (and now Chief Strategy, Programs, and Equity Officer at the NEA). Funded by a California Arts Council Challenge Grant, it's a roadmap to restore K-12 arts education. The Board directs the Commission to partner with the Los Angeles County Office of Education to launch a collective impact initiative, also called **Arts for All**, to implement the Blueprint.

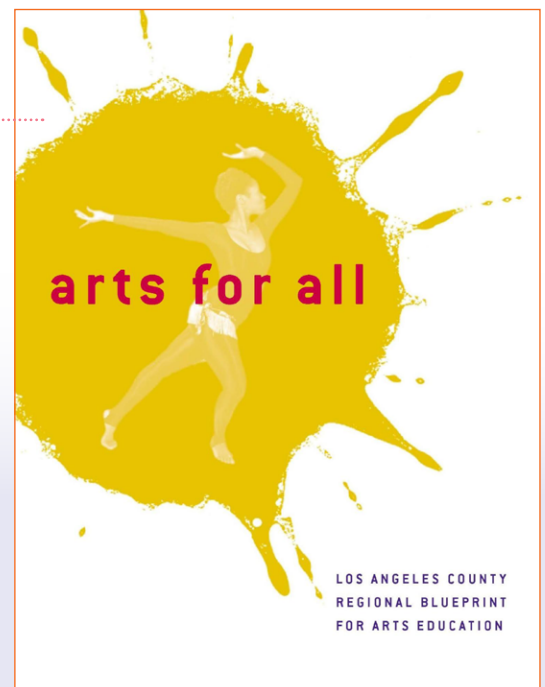
“One of the things that the Department did for us that was a real game changer was a scholarship for the Art Leadership Initiative program for nonprofit leaders. It was taught by Stanford and Harvard business professors, adapted for nonprofit arts managers. We learned organizational theory, psychology, how to run a meeting—all these pieces of management that as arts leaders, we would literally never get. It was a profound thing for me, and it shaped how we run our nonprofit.”

—Jay McAdams, Executive Director, 24th Street Theater

The 2002 Los Angeles County Regional Blueprint for Arts Education.

“This was not about advocacy. This was about making it happen.”

—Laura Zucker, of Arts for All



2004

A group of corporate and philanthropic partners led by Janice Pober (then Senior Vice President, Corporate Social Responsibility for Sony Pictures Entertainment) establishes a pooled fund to support implementation of Arts for All. Partnership with philanthropy continues in the Arts Ed Collective today—its **Funders Council** has contributed more than **\$19M** to advance arts education in the County.

The first formal **Civic Art Policy** in the County’s history is adopted, allocating one percent of design and construction costs of County capital projects for public art. An additional mandate of the policy directs the Commission to survey the civic artworks that the County already possesses. The Commission’s Civic Art section forms the following year.

Big World Fun:
Grandeza Mexicana
Folk Ballet Company,
2017. Photo by
Future Collective.



Arts Ed Collective community forum. Photo by Monica Almeida.

“The Dwight Stuart Youth Fund joined the Arts Ed Collective Funders Council because of our belief in the value of the arts and our strong desire to reach young people with limited access to arts education. This was back in the early days of public-private partnership—and the Funders Council offered a rare opportunity to learn and work alongside colleagues who were also interested in affecting long-term change. We know that systems change can only be achieved through collaboration. It’s in the doing. And its strength is in the diversity of people and experiences—from across the field—that help to form the building blocks and fine-tune next steps for continuing to move this agenda forward, over time.”

—Wendy Chang, Director, Dwight Stuart Youth Fund

“To me, the Department is a group of passionate arts and culture leaders who work tirelessly to support arts and culture in our region. Arts for LA and the Department share a commitment to advancing anti-racism and sustainability within our field. Arts for LA’s very roots, dating back to 2005, are in fighting systemic inequities, including funding threats to local arts agencies like the Department.”

—Gustavo Herrera, Executive Director, Arts for LA



“After the first Blueprint came out, we started to see that one of the big barriers was that the teachers themselves hadn’t been exposed to the arts. They were afraid of it in their classrooms, they didn’t understand how to integrate them into the academic curriculum. So we often find ourselves teaching educators and their students about theater at the same time.”

—Debbie Devine, Artistic Director, 24th Street Theater

Robin Strayhorn’s art at Ted Watkins Memorial Park, installed in 2009, was one of the first commissions from the new Civic Art section. Courtesy Julie Silliman.

“I came to the County having worked in the arts in just about every branch of government and with a few national and local nonprofits. Immediately, I knew the County was going to require different thinking. First, it is truly enormous, both in landmass and population, and in the number of cultural communities. And second, it has unique responsibilities. I found myself thinking about how art and artists could contribute to County facilities such as prisons housing thousands of men and women, or the Coroner’s Office processing bodies, some unclaimed. And I wondered how we might reach out and meaningfully involve community members. With my staff we visited, listened, and thought about the experiences not only of members of the public visiting facilities, but of neighbors and County employees as well.”

—Julie Silliman, former Civic Art Director, Arts Commission



“The Department has supported our marketing and outreach efforts, and exhibitions and auxiliary programming since 2009....It has created opportunities for hundreds of artists to have paid exhibition opportunities at Angels Gate, and for us to expand our reach. The exhibitions have broadened the diversity of artists, ideas, and cultures that our local communities engage with in our gallery, often providing a platform for underrepresented artists in Los Angeles to be exhibited.”

—Cecelia Koger, Director of Exhibitions, Angels Gate Cultural Center

2009

The first Civic Art report chronicles 68 inherited artworks to add to the **County Civic Art Collection**. The collection “is not like a museum’s; its artworks are spread throughout the County’s 4,700+ square miles, in its hundreds of buildings and sites, and in its dozens of departments.” Using the County Library’s art inventory and the Save Outdoor Sculpture survey conducted by the Heritage Preservation, the Civic Art team pursues paper trails and County staff about the art in their buildings and facilities.¹⁵

The Commission collaborates with public and private arts funders across California as early adopters of the **Cultural Data Project**, a national arts data project now known as **SMU DataArts**. This allows for collection of consistent data about the size, scope, and complexity of the nonprofit arts sector.

Raised as Roosters at San Pedro’s Angels Gate Cultural Center featured work by local artists Abel Alejandro and Guerra, who explored themes of Chicano identity, masculinity, and traditional Mexican visual motifs. Photo by Jose Cordon, courtesy AGCC.



Creative Strategist Deborah Aschheim’s cross-sector voter engagement activity with Registrar Recorder. Photo by Monica Almeida.

“I’ve been with the County for nearly 13 years and have been part of a transformation that extends beyond just the work we do. I count myself lucky to have been here during a time when cultural equity and dismantling white supremacy was talked about as foundational to our work. It guided us at the Ford Amphitheatre when we programmed those first few seasons after it reopened in 2016. And, it’s at the center of the Department’s work as we roll out the Countywide Cultural Policy. I look forward to the next chapter as we build relationships with our County colleagues to meaningfully find ways for all people and communities to have access to the benefits the arts provide.”

—Kim Glann, Manager, Cross Sector Initiatives

“I was lucky enough to get an internship with the Los Angeles Music and Art School. Under the mentorship of the former Executive Director, I completed my 10 week full-time internship. I gained experience that you don’t get taught in school, and it opened up my eyes to the field of arts administration and arts education. Fast forward from my internship: I led LAMusArt as Executive Director for seven years, and am now the Director of Education of the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts. I’ve seen students grow and blossom as arts administrators and we have cultivated a network of passionate and amazing leaders that are champions for the work that I do, and for each other’s visions and voices. And it was all thanks to that summer of 2011. I don’t think I could have been an Executive Director without that opportunity.”

—Manny Prieto, Director of Education, Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts. Former Executive Director, LAMusArts



Opening night of *Black Butterfly, Jaguar Girl, Pinata Woman & Other Superhero Girls, Like Me* at the Los Angeles Music & Art School. Photo by Cristina Burgos, courtesy LAMusArt.

2010

The **Arts Internship Program** drops from 123 positions the year prior to 75 interns, due to the 2008-2009 recession. Advocacy from the Commission and action from the Board saves the program from being cut entirely.

2013

The Arts Commission hires **Research and Evaluation** staff, one of few local arts agencies in the US able to collect data and conduct applied research studies to support the field.

The 54th Holiday Celebration, produced by the Commission, wins an **EMMY Award** for L.A. Local Color.

“While the Research and Evaluation division primarily conducts research, evaluation, and data analysis to support the Department and our local arts ecology, we also share our work nationally, everything from reports to methodologies to tools. Laura Zucker made it clear that in LA County, we don’t have to prove the impact of the arts. We’re lucky in that it’s widely understood here. My primary job was to measure who is—and isn’t—receiving the benefits of the arts, so that we could improve our programs to ensure everyone could experience those benefits.”

—Bronwyn Mauldin, Director, Research and Evaluation Division, Department of Arts and Culture

WORLD PEACE THROUGH METADATA

by Bronwyn Mauldin



LOS ANGELES
ARTS DATATHON
COLLECTIONS
edition

artsdatathon.org

Datathon
zine cover
by Bronwyn
Mauldin.

2014

When funding from the **Campus Kilpatrick** capital project is used to support arts instruction for youth in detention, it shapes the future of the Department's arts education work—expanding its scope beyond K-12 school, and beginning to connect arts education and justice reform. Arts for All and the Department of Public Works build a stage and amphitheater at the juvenile detention camp, allowing teaching artists to serve youth in many arts disciplines.

The Arts Ed Collective Funders Council launches **Advancement Grants** to help school districts expand arts instruction for all students, in all their schools.

The Commission publishes **Salaries in Arts Nonprofits in LA County**, the first study utilizing data collected from Organizational Grant Program grantees by DataArts.

The **Civic Art Baseline Inventory** begins. It's the first large-scale survey of the County's art collection ever attempted. By January 2016, it catalogs nearly 800 artworks eligible for the County Civic Art Collection (exceeding expectations after 68 artworks were discovered in the 2009 inventory). It was also noted that the field registrar walked over 419 miles on County property during the project. ¹⁶

“As a volunteer president of the World Stage Arts and Cultural Center in Leimert Park, the Black cultural arts center in Los Angeles, we were awarded multiple Ford Theatre summer partnerships...We produced well received jazz concerts that allowed us to showcase amazing emerging and seasoned talent from our community. If ever there is a review of the emergence of the LA jazz scene, the performances at the Ford during the summers of 2013 and 2014 must be included!”

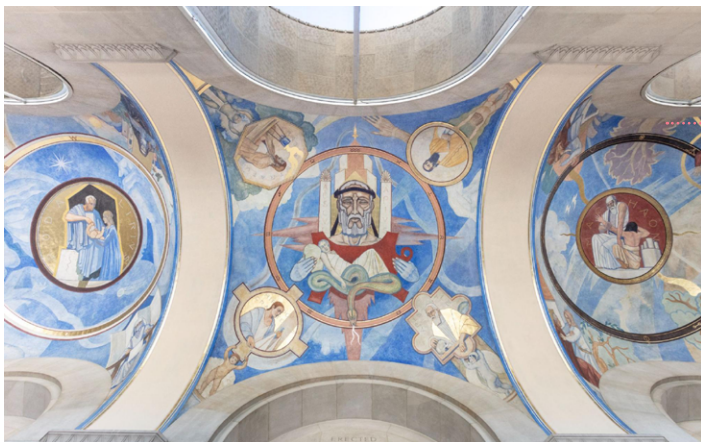
—Wiley J. Brown, CEO, GoGrantsGo



TaikoProject performances. Photo by Kim Nakashima, courtesy TaikoProject.

“We were supported through the OGP program, and our regular participation in the Ford's Summer Partnership program helped increase our LA community and audience. They were both integral to our growth from a small to a mid-sized nonprofit arts organization. I believe the other grantees in our community—Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, the Japanese American National Museum, and East West Players—have all benefited from the Department, and have thrived and grown concurrently. It's created a healthy arts ecosystem in the Little Tokyo community.”

—Bryan Yamami, Executive Director, TAIKOPROJECT



Looking up at the restored Hugo Ballin 1932 Medical Sciences fresco at the historic General Hospital, LAC+USC Medical Center. Photo by Joshua White.



An Arts Ed Collective TEAL workshop at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

2014

Arts for All collaborates with the Los Angeles County Office of Education to develop **Technology Enhanced Arts Learning (TEAL)**, online and in-person professional development to help K-6 teachers integrate the arts into other core subjects.



Artwork by Daniel Williams, part of the Armory's Artful Solutions program for adults and families struggling with homelessness and housing insecurity. Courtesy the Armory.

“With the Arts for Healing and Justice Network, we were one of the founding members that played a critical role in forming that collective. We’ve been working in the detention camps and halls for about 10 years. As the justice system changes, we are shifting into more prevention work, and we’re focused on making sure that the teaching artists match the populations that they’re teaching, so that they can connect. We spend time on a weekly basis with small groups of youth in different art-making practices that help them to tell their stories, be in touch with their feelings, learn coping mechanisms and really tap their creativity.”

—Leslie Ito, Executive Director, Armory Center for the Arts

2015

The **Commission joins the Probation Department** and a cohort of community-based arts organizations, including the Arts for Healing and Justice Network and Spirit Awakening Foundation, to launch teaching artist residencies in the County’s juvenile detention facilities and day reporting centers.

The **Community Impact Arts Grant (CIAG)** program is created to support arts projects at social services and social justice organizations and municipalities whose primary mission is outside the arts. The Department’s research finds that CIAG complements its longstanding grant program, reaching some communities that traditional arts organizations do not.

Supervisors Hilda Solis and Mark Ridley-Thomas introduce a resolution that directs the Commission to conduct **“a constructive County-wide conversation about ways to improve diversity in cultural organizations”** for all County residents.

Development begins on the **Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative**. The **CEII Advisory Committee** forms to shape its vision, goals, and recommendations to the Board. It’s led by three co-chairs: Tim Dang, the former Producing Artist Director at East West Players; Helen Hernandez, President and Founder of The Imagen Foundation and executive producer of the Imagen Awards; and Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson, then the Institute Professor, Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, Arizona State University (and now the Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts).

2017

The Commission releases the **Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative**. It contains 13 recommendations for ensuring everyone in LA County has equitable access to arts and culture. In the same year, Supervisor Hilda Solis introduces a motion to implement a private developer requirement for civic art in unincorporated areas of LA County, and the Board approves two motions to fund five CEII recommendations.

The Commission publishes the first-ever study of **The Demographics of the Arts and Cultural Workforce in Los Angeles County**, conducted by DataArts. (It's updated in 2019.)

The first **Arts Datathon** is held, bringing together arts administrators, artists, educators, students, community members, and self-proclaimed data nerds to explore how to use and share data to improve access to the arts.

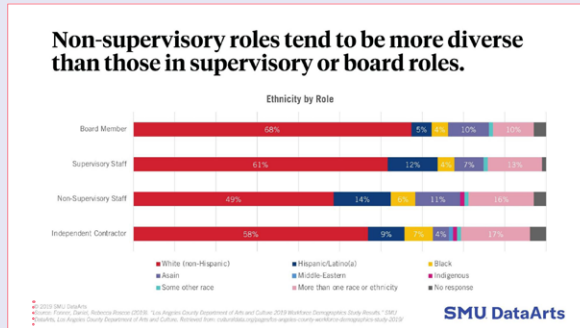
After Arts for All is rebranded as the **Arts Education Collective** to better reflect its collective impact approach, the **LA County Arts Education Profile** and a companion online data tool that shows arts education at all 2,700 public schools in LA County are published.

Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson



“I’m so grateful and proud to have participated in the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative work. It has so many of the things that I believe in, in its DNA....And certainly the idea of ‘arts in all’ or ‘arts at the intersections’ is also reflected in CEII, and in the aspiration to have cultural vitality be everyone’s concern.”

—Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson, Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts.
Former CEII Advisory Committee Co-Chair.



From *Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture 2019 Workforce Demographics*, a collaboration between the Department and SMU DataArts.



The first Datathon in 2017. Photo by Alexia Lewis, courtesy Zannie Voss.

“Part of what we’re trying to do is to actually look at the data and see if there are gaps in there—either in the services that we provide, or in the grants that we give, or in the public art that we produce. Are there areas of vibrancy? Are there art deserts? If there is a desert, we want to actually be able to redeploy our services in a meaningful way.”¹⁷

—Umi Hsu, former digital strategist with LA’s Department of Cultural Affairs



The Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative Advisory Committee on January 25, 2017, the day the group voted for CEII’s final recommendations. Taken at Art Share LA, courtesy Miriam Gonzalez.



Kristin Sakoda at the Department's Grantee Reception, 2019. Photograph by Monica Almeida.

2018

Kristin Sakoda is appointed Executive Director of the Arts Commission. A performing artist, Broadway veteran, attorney, and local arts agency leader, she is the first woman of color to lead the arts for LA County.

Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Sheila Kuehl co-author the motion that transitions the Commission into the **Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture**.

A CEII recommendation, the **Creative Strategist program** launches with its first artist residencies. Since then, 10 artists have been placed in County departments.

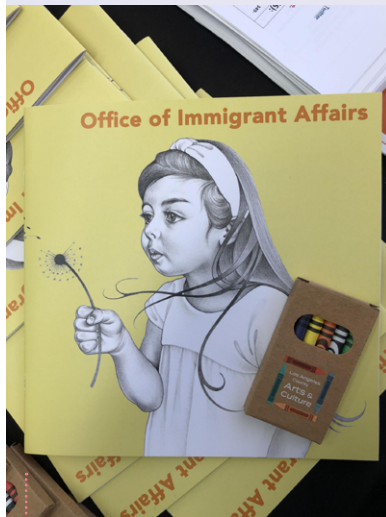
The County's first **Developing Opportunities Offering Reentry Solutions Center (DOORS)** opens, offering services from housing to mental health support. Its murals from artist Olalekan Jeyifous were commissioned through the Department, which also coordinates artist in residence, Fabian Debora of Somos LA Arte - Homeboy Art Academy, to manage arts-focused reentry activities at the site.

"My background is in community organizing, and once an organizer, always an organizer. When my friend, Supervisor Hilda Solis tasked me with something she really cares about—and I want to be clear that the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative was her brainchild—I did not take it lightly.

CEII's foundation was the town halls, where we went out into the community and asked, 'What do you want?' We based the 13 recommendations on those meetings. When we first started, I heard many community activists—African American, Latino, AAPI—say, 'We've all been down this road before, and all we're going to get from CEII is another white paper.' But the Advisory Committee said, 'Hang on, give us a chance.'

What is critical to effecting change is understanding the politics of it all. The committee's co-chairs were Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson, Tim Dang, and I. I was the political one, Maria was the educator, and Tim was the artist. It was the perfect grouping, because we respected each other's expertise."

—Helen Hernandez, CEO and Founder, The Imagen Foundation, Arts Commissioner.



"Every department should have the benefits of a creative strategist to inform and strengthen the work they do for our communities."

—Rigo Reyes, Executive Director, Office of Immigrant Affairs

Creative Strategist Phung Huynh collaborated with Office of Immigrant Affairs staff on a coloring book for immigrants and refugees. Courtesy P. Huynh.



Artist Olalekan Jeyifous with his murals at the DOORS facility. Courtesy O. Jeyifous.

“One very practical thing we did with Department support is the redo of our artist registry, which had very few people of color in it when I came to the Arts Council. Now we have a robust POC registry, because Long Beach is majority POC. But there were several more steps. Some of our artists did not have the expected artistic documentation. We opened up our gallery so they could have their art professionally photographed. We hired a writer to help artists edit their bios. For panelists who are used to docking points for certain things, it takes away those stereotypical assumptions like, ‘Well, they didn’t pay enough attention to how they presented themselves.’ Which I think is representative of other types of barriers—we take barriers away, so the panelists can focus on the work itself.”

—Griselda Suarez, Executive Director, Arts Council for Long Beach



The Arts Council for Long Beach’s Project Covid Cover Up. Photo by Jose Cordon, courtesy ACLB.

Mural workshop with Oak Tree Learning Center. Courtesy of Able ARTS Work.



“One of our beliefs at Able ARTS, and this is where we hold hands with the Department, is that regardless of the functional capability that people have, they have a right to the vocation of their choosing. When the Department funds us, we can continue to fuel the vision that it’s the right and responsibility of all people to have access to the creative arts and to their humanity.”

—Helen Dolas, Founder and CEO, Able ARTS Work

2019

The Department receives a \$1.75M grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation to develop a **Public Artists in Development** program to promote the career growth and economic empowerment of underrepresented artists.

The **Arts Internship Program** grows from 178 to 203 interns, and adds a new staff position to expand the participation of diverse and deserving community college students.

To improve access to creative careers for youth of color and who face participation barriers, the Department gathers insights from creative economy stakeholders and publishes **Building Creative Career Pathways for Youth: A Field Scan for Los Angeles County**.

The Arts Ed Collective launches the **Youth Advisory Council**, 23 young leaders with a passion for the arts and civic engagement. It becomes a model for other youth-focused advisory bodies in the County.

The Arts Commission transitions into the **first LA County Department of Arts and Culture**. **Kristin Sakoda** is reappointed by the Board as founding Director.

“Diversity through staff hiring and partnerships is really important to community outreach. You can’t always have every person, every place, or every experience represented in this County—it is so vast and diverse. But often, an organization’s first interaction with a marginalized community is, ‘Oh I don’t know your community, but come engage in our programs!’ And then they’re surprised that engagement is low. The issue is how the outreach is being done. That’s why a program like the Youth Advisory Council is great, because it is starting to address that, and works with nonprofits, teachers, and community members.”

—Danielle Galván Gomez, Youth Advisory Council



Danielle Galván Gomez was a member of the first Arts Ed Collective Youth Advisory Council and more recently, a grant panelist and Creative Wellbeing curriculum advisor. Courtesy D. Galván Gomez.

Cast from *Pure Native*. Photo by Craig Schwartz, courtesy Native Voices at the Autry.



“Today we’re the only equity theater in the country that is devoted to developing new plays by Indigenous playwrights....Of course, we talk about our culture and what it means to maintain it, and the struggles that we’ve faced, which is true for so many other people.... But our plays deal with global issues too. They’re not just Indian issues. We talk about climate change. We talk about the treatment of women and body sovereignty. These Indigenous ways of being in our plays are helping the audience understand issues differently. It creates a new form of activism, and we’re seeing our audiences becoming deeply engaged in community work and in finding out how they can be better caretakers of this land and of each other. That’s how we make an impact.”

—DeLanna Studi, Artistic Director, Native Voices at the Autry



Commissioner Eric Eisenberg, Director Kristin Sakoda, and then-Commission President Helen Hernandez at the 2019 Arts Summit. Photograph by Monica Almeida.

2020

The Board adopts the landmark **Countywide Cultural Policy** in a motion by Supervisor Solis and co-authored by Supervisor Kuehl.

Following an **Arts for Justice Fund** grant received by the Department for its work at the intersection of arts education and youth justice, the Board adopts the goals of the **Countywide Plan for Elevating the Arts as a Justice Reform Strategy**, which directs collaboration between the Department and other County agencies to benefit youth of color and those most impacted by County systems.

Arts for All Children, Youth, and Families: Los Angeles County's New Regional Blueprint for Arts Education is also adopted, setting an ambitious vision for equity and access to arts learning for youth in schools and in communities.

The **Arts Internship Program** celebrates its 20th anniversary, the over 2,500 interns who have gained access to creative careers, and the one million hours they've contributed to the arts field.

The Department awards **\$12M in CARES Act Funds** to 337 local arts organizations through its LA County COVID-19 Arts Relief Fund.

The **World Cities Culture Forum** selects the Department and the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs to participate in a leadership exchange with their Paris counterparts for the 2024 and 2028 Cultural Olympiad.

Artist Kim Abeles at *Citizen Seeds*, an artwork consisting of six large-scale seeds placed at sites along the Park to Playa Trail. Photo by Joyce Kim, courtesy K. Abeles.

“The Department inspires and nurtures a broad variety of approaches to art for the public. A look at my three commissions shows just how different the goals can be. There is an open-minded consideration for the ways that art can deliver ideas and meaning....The support from the Department’s professionals made all the difference in the quality of the outcomes. Large public artworks are endurance tests, and the project partners from the Department gave me a solid footing so that I could push the work further, better, more attuned to the people that would ultimately receive it.”

—Kim Abeles, Artist



“Art inspires us to convey ideas that cut beyond linguistic boundaries and serves as a catalyst for important discussion about the world we live in, and the limits of our experiences and what we think we know to be true.

For Civic Art projects, these ideas take various forms. Sometimes they are two- or three-dimensional works of art, often informed by community engagement, or a conservation project that offers mentorship to learn about its science. Our colleagues in County departments are increasingly recognizing the role we can play as an incubator for creative solutions and a co-conspirator in positive change-making as they seek to serve their communities in new ways.”

—Grace Ramirez Gaston, Director, Civic Art Division, Department of Arts and Culture

“Our devised ensemble theater practice is working with immigrant refugee and Indigenous communities to collect stories....

With our current project about the Micronesian community, I’ve had more than a few Latinx folks come up to me after the show and tell me they were in tears, relating to losing culture and adapting to living in the United States, losing your language, having your cultural practices misunderstood. There is so much transformation, whether it’s as an audience member or a performer—feeling less isolated, feeling empowered by telling their own stories on stage and having the audience respond and react with recognition.”

—Leilani Chan, Artist Director, Teada Productions



Cast and community members from *Master of Currents*, 2016. Photo by Momi Marla Music, courtesy Teada Productions.

Community arts programming at the Lancaster Museum of Art and History. Courtesy MOAH.



“We are committed to spreading this vision through outreach and expanded programming opportunities available to all of our community members, and we seek to do so while guided by the cornerstones of diversity, equality, and inclusion. In particular, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, support from organizations including the Department facilitated the transition of our Young Artist Workshop program to a takeaway craft kit, which ultimately served over 29,000 residents of the Antelope Valley, many of whom are recognized as underprivileged or without a home.”

—Lauren Lien, Museum Coordinator and Collections Manager, Lancaster Museum of Art and History (MOAH)

2021

A motion by Supervisor Mitchell and co-authored by Supervisor Solis makes the **Community Impact Arts Grant program** permanent.

KCET releases the EMMY-nominated **ARTBOUND: Arts Education** documentary, developed with the Department and commissioned by the Arts Ed Collective's Funders Council.

The Department supports the **LA Arts Recovery Fund**, initiated by the J. Paul Getty Trust, which awards \$36.1M to 90 small and mid-sized arts organizations to recover from the pandemic. It's the largest ever pooled grant fund in LA, and includes support for Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous organizations.

Make or Break: Race and Ethnicity in Entry-Level Compensation for Arts Administrators in Los Angeles County is published with the Claremont Graduate University's Center for Business and Management of the Arts. It finds notable differences in income between BIPOC and White entry-level staff.

The Department collaborates with County Parks and Recreation and Library to produce 209 **free concerts** over the summer to offer a safe, outdoor way to experience music and art.

The Board adopts the **Public Art in Private Development ordinance**, which allocates a one percent fee from eligible private sector development projects to fund public art, cultural facilities, conservation, and arts programs. It's poised to bring art and cultural resources to unincorporated communities for decades to come.

“Since our inception, we have been incorporating arts and music as a way to organize, inform and unify our community. With the support of the Community Impact Arts Grant, we will use music to facilitate organizing, build worker power, and inspire community.”

—Ishell Linares, Co-Director of Development, National Day Laborer Organizing Network



Courtesy of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network.

“When we started paying our summer camp volunteers as employees we were looking for some guidance. I was able to take an HR course offered for Department grantees. Having access to a professional who I was able to ask questions to was instrumental in our transition to paying our staff. And last year I was a panelist for the Community Impact Arts Grant program. This helped me learn how applications and grantees are discussed, and it assisted my own grant writing for CRSELA.”

—Vikki Gutman, Chicxs Rockerxs South East Los Angeles



Chicxs Rockerxs Southeast Los Angeles 2019 Showcase. Photo by Daisy Noemi, courtesy CRSELA.

“The Museum of Latin American Art and the Department both look to advance arts, culture, and creativity while valuing equity and an inclusive diversity of thought, practices, and experiences, with art. Recent grants allowed us to expand our outreach and our programming to increase art awareness in our community, provide a venue for upcoming Latinx artists, and provide our community with more activities that encourage families and the general public to engage in arts education and cultural awareness.”

—Solimar Salas, Vice President Content, Innovation & Outreach, Museum of Latin American Art



Courtesy Museum of Latin American Art.

“We know that the arts have a profound impact on the overall health and wellbeing of individuals everywhere, but we also know that so many communities do not have access to the arts. Seventy-five percent of our audience members are people of color, with 60 percent being Asian American, who don’t often see themselves represented in the arts. The Department remains committed to supporting organizations like EWP so that we can change this narrative. It has helped get us through some tough times and allowed us to think, dream, and create space for our community and the next generation of theater artists in Los Angeles.”

—Snehal Desai, Executive Director, East West Players



The cast of *Interstate* at East West Players. Photo by Steven Lam, courtesy EWP.

“Trust based philanthropy is a hot button issue right now in the funding world, but I think that the Department has been doing this for years. It’s been really good about listening, keeping their ear to the ground, and knowing and understanding what’s going on in the field.”

—Leslie Ito, Executive Director, Armory Center for the Arts

“The Department allows all of LA County to experience art in ways that are impactful and important, especially for our historically disenfranchised Angelenos. It’s had substantial impact in the arts career programming that we provide for our youth who are involved in the justice system. We’ve been able to introduce pathways to careers and create culturally responsive and equitable programming for LA County youth and their families.”

—Carmelita Ramirez-Sanchez, Executive Director, Boyle Heights Arts Conservatory



Kontrapunktus, post concert, 2022. Photo by David Andrade, courtesy Kontrapunktus.

“Without the funding the Department provides us, we wouldn’t be able to stage a number of our concerts. What is more, given the stellar reputation the Department has locally and throughout the State, we’ve been able to elevate our stature as a nonprofit performing arts organization and procure grant funding through other civic and private grant organizations. The Department provides legitimacy that small, struggling performing arts organizations need to survive and prosper.”

—Raymond D. Jacobs, Executive Director, Kontrapunktus

“Equity and inclusion work is hard. I commend the County for creating opportunities for artists to be embedded in different County departments in the form of social practice residencies. I also commend the framing it did to help those departments understand why having an artist in their midst could be valuable—making them operate more equitably for the people they serve. It’s important to have artists in government because artists maintain cultural traditions, methodologies, and skill sets. Cultural expression and cultural experiences are the ways that all our social goals for wellbeing and healthy communities get implemented the most naturally. There can be a lot of alignment there if we can tee up both sides of the equation, right?”

—Jan Williamson, Executive Director, 18th Street Arts Center

“One of the things I noticed when I started was that there was a lot of arts therapy in the camps and halls for kids who had been arrested. The programs were heavily evaluated and working well. But I was interested in taking a step back, and providing it in the schools to build robust protective factors for the kids. In other words, could we use the arts as prevention, in addition to using it as treatment? There seemed to be a missed opportunity.

We have now come to the point where we have programming for adults—teachers, parents, caregivers—providing self-care for them, and we have direct services for the youth, in schools and in shared living facilities. We have great support from the Board, from school districts. It’s been a snowball effect as we build partners.”

—Stefanie Gluckman, former Director, Education Coordinating Council, Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection

2022

The **Creative Wellbeing Curriculum Guide** is released to support educators, mental health practitioners, and teaching artists in healing-centered arts instruction for youth facing trauma.

The Board adopts the **Cultural Policy Strategic Plan**, developed with community input and includes tactics to expand cultural resources for the people of LA County. Folded into it are the remaining recommendations from the 2017 CEII report.

The Arts Ed Collective debuts **Creative Careers Online**. It’s a resource that allows young people to explore and pursue creative careers in industries like film, TV, gaming, and graphic design.

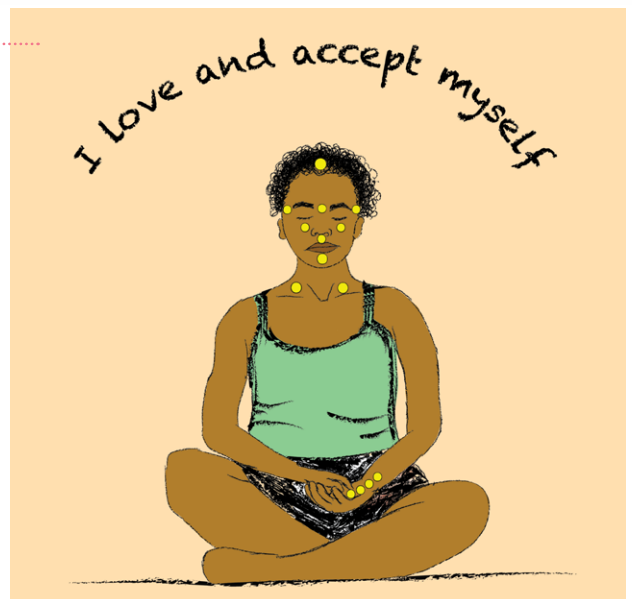
In addition to diverse arts disciplines, venues, locations, and budget sizes supported through the **Organizational Grant Program**, the County’s grantees serve highly diverse communities. Though the number of grantees has risen to its highest levels, program funding has remained unchanged for over a decade.

From the “Creative Wellbeing Curriculum Guide.” Original artwork by Danielle Galván Gomez.

The Department becomes the administrative home of the **Los Angeles City/County Native American Commission** and expands further with new staff positions in Civic Art, Grants, Research and Evaluation, Communications, and Commission Services.

Starting with a charge to ensure young people have access to the arts, and evolving into a national model for broad-scale change in arts education, the **Arts Ed Collective celebrates its 20th anniversary**.

A motion authored by Supervisors Solis and Hahn to adopt a formal **land acknowledgment** passes. The Department and the **Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission** work with leaders from six local tribes to develop the acknowledgement, and the guidelines for its use. It’s the most recent, but far from last, implementation of the Countywide Cultural Policy.



“The Department now sits at the table with 38 other County departments which together make up a workforce of over 110,000 providing public services that shape the region. How we grow and continue to serve and respond to the needs of all our County residents, in complement with our County agency partners, will be our greatest challenge and opportunity for the next 75 years.”

—Heather Rigby, Chief Deputy,
Department of Arts and Culture

“Much of what we do is behind the scenes. You could walk by one of our Civic Art division’s murals or attend a concert or a workshop funded by one of our grants, and never know we funded it. Your child might experience an art class from a teaching artist who’s been through one of our trainings. As public servants, we are fine with this.... But I hope that this 75th anniversary raises the curtain a little so folks can see us at work. We love the people, the organizations, and the communities that make up our arts ecology.”

—Bronwyn Mauldin, Director, Research and Evaluation Division, Department of Arts and Culture

Resiliency Hub Community Day screen printing workshop. Courtesy Boyle Heights Arts Conservatory.



“During my 15 years with the Department, I’ve had the privilege to regularly see and experience the work of hundreds of nonprofit arts organizations. I love the LA of summer festivals and concerts, the LA of neighborhood community programming, the LA of intimate theater spaces and pop up galleries and film and dance festivals, the LA that celebrates rich cultural heritages from around the world. We’re funding over 100 more arts organizations than when I started and social service and social justice orgs with arts programming have been receiving support from us too—that’s huge.”

—Angela Gaspar-Milanovic, Director, Grants and Professional Development Division, Department of Arts and Culture

“Since launching in 2002, the Arts Education Collective, the countywide initiative coordinated by the Department, has been repeatedly cited as a national model for effectively impacting broad-scale change. To us that means working to change the social conditions and the public systems that will allow all young people to grow up with the arts, both in schools and in communities.”

—Denise Grande, Director of Arts Education, Department of Arts and Culture

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*Thank you to all who contributed
to our anniversary report,
especially Kristin Friedrich,
Jesse Ruskin, Bronwyn Mauldin,
Miriam Gonzalez, Megan Moret,
Kim Glann, Laura Zucker, and
Linda Chiavaroli.*

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