

November 15, 2022

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL**

**Commemorating 75 Years of Arts in Los Angeles County**

The benefits of the arts are many, and everyone deserves to have equitable access to them. In a County as ethnically and culturally diverse as well as geographically sprawling as Los Angeles, it is our responsibility to ensure that all the benefits of, and opportunities provided by, the arts are available and accessible to all residents, no matter who they are or where they live.

From arts education for young people to arts programming for senior citizens, the arts have proven to make individual lives better and to strengthen communities. They improve health and well-being, and they improve cognitive skills. Even more, the arts can bring people together across demographic, economic and social lines. The arts provide spaces where people can both see and express themselves, their communities and their cultures in public performances and exhibitions. The arts also offer important career and leadership opportunities. Arts and culture play a critical role in the economic and social resiliency of Los Angeles County (County), not just in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in the long-term vitality of our communities.

The Board of Supervisors (Board) created the County Arts Commission in 1947 - first called the County Music Commission - to recognize the importance and necessity of music and arts for the communities of the County. Over time, the name of the Commission changed from the Music Commission, to the Performing Arts Commission, and finally to the Arts Commission, to broaden the County's support for a wider range of artistic disciplines as the arts in the County grew.

Since then, a dynamic evolution has been underway in the County. In February 2018, the Board appointed the first woman of color to lead the arts as executive director for the Commission. In May 2018, the Board approved the historic motion that transitioned the Arts Commission into a stand-alone County Department. This highlighted the County's recognition of

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the vital role of arts and culture, the importance of ensuring access to the arts, and support for the broader arts ecosystem in the largest and most diverse County in the country and one of the nation's creative capitals. The new Department of Arts and Culture (Department) was created with a charge of comprehensive policy and programs on arts and culture aligned with its distinct role as the local arts agency for the County.

Over the course of its 75-year body of work, the Arts Commission and now Department has dramatically increased the scale and reach of its work, framed by a longstanding commitment to access to the arts and a lens of cultural equity born of the County's Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative. The Department has granted, in total, over \$100 million to the arts and culture field. In addition, more than 2,500 students have received paid internships through the iconic Arts Internship Program, contributing to over 1 million hours of work in the field. The Civic Art Division oversees and cares for over 500 artworks at over 90 County facilities, including new civic art commissions, donations, and art purchases, and has commissioned 182 artists since the Board's adoption of the Civic Art Policy in 2004. The Arts Education Division engaged 74 of 80 school districts plus 5 charter school networks through the Arts Ed Collective, serving 722,244 students.

The Department has supported hundreds of nonprofit arts organizations that promote the health, wellbeing, engagement, and education of our communities and that collectively provided over 13 million visits - arts experiences at museums, performances, arts centers, and arts activities - to our communities each year, pre-pandemic. Through the Department's work, the County has helped the region's creative economy grow to a \$200 billion annual sector, with an arts and cultural ecosystem that continues to expand and evolve.

The County has invested meaningfully in arts and culture for more than a century, including through its County-owned cultural venues. However, more work is necessary to solidify gains made, expand our programs, resources, and investments, and increase access to the arts and its many benefits for all residents - as part of our ongoing expansion and dynamic shift toward cultural and racial equity. We celebrate all that our Arts Commission and Department have

achieved and look forward to continuing to build for the next 75 years and beyond.

To help celebrate three quarters of a century, the Board honors five arts entities and individuals. The selected artists and arts entities are lesser known but have a strong commitment to equity.

The honoree for the First District is Alison Saar, a sculptor, mixed-media, and installation artist. Her sculptures and installations explore themes of the African cultural diaspora and spirituality, informed by her studies of Latin American, Caribbean and African art and religion. Saar's sculptures and paintings evidence a fascination with vernacular folk art and an ability to create beauty from cast-off objects. Her sculptures are marked by their emotional candor and a high degree of cultural subtext. Saar worked closely with the Department's Civic Art Division for her commissioned work entitled *Embodied*, which is located at the Hall of Justice.

The honoree for the Second District is Kristina Wong, a Pulitzer Prize finalist in Drama, performance artist, comedian, writer, and elected representative who has performed in North America, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong and Africa. As told in her book, "The Auntie Sewing Squad Guide to Mask Making, Radical Care and Racial Justice," Wong founded the Auntie Sewing Squad, a national mutual aid network of volunteers that sewed cloth masks for vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her role in the Squad is the subject of "Kristina Wong, Sweatshop Overlord," a "New York Times Critics Pick" that premiered at New York Theater Workshop. Wong not only represents the Department's Arts Internship Program as an alumnus but is also an accomplished artist in her own right.

The honoree for the Third District is Pukúu Cultural Community Services (PCCS). Its mission is to invest in programs that bridge and improve opportunities for American Indians with culturally based community services for current and future generations. PCCS believes in every person achieving their full potential and improving the quality of life within their inter-tribal community. Derived from the Fernandefño Tataviam language, the word pukúu means "one." PCCS is a two-time recipient of the Department's Community Impact Arts Grant, supporting "Tribal/Indigenous art forms, improving program accessibility to constituents, and helping to

promote community health and wellness through culture."

The honoree for the Fourth District is SELA Arts, a community-based arts festival presenting local artists, musicians, vendors, and more. This special event provides the space for Southeast Los Angeles families and communities to come together and celebrate the power of art and creativity. This honoree serves a critical area that the Department is building a strong relationship with to ensure access to the arts.

The honoree for the Fifth District is the Armory Center for the Arts (The Amory), a provider of community-based arts education and contemporary art exhibitions. The Armory believes that an "appreciation of the arts is essential for a well-rounded human experience and a healthy community," and is committed to social justice through arts education. The Armory has been a recipient of the Department's principal grant program - the Organizational Grant Program - for nearly 20 years, and they represent the Department's Arts Education division through their work with youth.

**I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

1. Commemorate and congratulate the Los Angeles County (County) Department of Arts and Culture (Department) and Arts Commission for 75 years of impactful work advancing arts, culture, and creativity throughout the County.
2. Acknowledge and honor all artists and arts organizations that work with the Department, including the following artists and arts organizations as a representation of their commitment to equity and arts in the County:
  - a. Alison Saar, First District Honoree
  - b. Kristina Wong, Second District Honoree
  - c. Pukúu Cultural Community Services, Third District Honoree
  - d. SELA Arts Festival, Fourth District Honoree
  - e. Armory Center for the Arts, Fifth District Honoree
3. Instruct all County Departments to share information about the 75th Anniversary of the Arts

in the County to their staff and constituents throughout the year in partnership with the Department.

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