

Enriching Lives



Civic Art

PRESS RELEASE

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Contacts:

Rebecca Banyas, Interim Director of Civic Arts, L.A. County Arts Commission, (213) 202-3944, rbanyas@arts.lacounty.gov

Brittany Gash, Loud Mouth Productions, 805-607-9277, loudbmouthpr2@yahoo.com

James M. Bolden, Press Deputy, Second Supervisorial District, (213) 974-2222, jbolden@bos.lacounty.gov

**NEWLY RENOVATED TED WATKINS POOL SPARKLES WITH
COUNTY-COMMISSIONED MURAL CREATED BY LOCAL ARTIST AND YOUTHS**

LOS ANGELES—May 10, 2008—A major feature of the Ted Watkins Pool House dedicated today is the County-commissioned mural by the entrance designed by artist Robin Strayhorn and dozens of local youths. The mural was created under the County's Civic Art Policy, which allocates one percent of design and construction costs of new County capital projects to artwork.

"Robin Strayhorn's beautiful artwork is truly an inspiration and a wonderful addition to the park," said 2nd District Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke. "The fact that Robin has ties to this community and children from the neighborhood helped create the work makes it all the more meaningful."

The colorful mural, titled "Gifts from Mother," appears on the facade of the pool house and contains images of children diving into blue water surrounded by sky and nature.

"The piece was created to inspire, uplift and unify," said local artist Robin Strayhorn, who hand-made the mosaic tiles with ceramic accents. "I especially like to use vibrant colors when depicting figures that are representative of people from varied cultural backgrounds."

"When I think of pools and pool houses, the playful sounds and energy of children splashing in the water come to mind immediately," Strayhorn said in her design proposal. She wanted to create a link between people and nature, subtly conjuring a deeper appreciation for nature. Her main design reflects movement and water, while the bordering tiles represent elements from nature.

Strayhorn has a history of working with community members and youths from the local area. She taught students who participated in the Ted Watkins Park after-school workshops how to design and make tile. She included their tiles in the new mural. More than two dozen local residents, mostly youths, created these tiles in hands-on workshops.

“It’s a wonderful way for people to develop a sense of contribution and ownership in their community,” Strayhorn said. The participants included Jackie Richardson, Frances Rivera, Cornelio Neri, Maricela Jaime, Desteny Pichardo, Alexis Aguilar, Van D. Troupe, Lindsay Jaime, Dwight LaCroix, Reggie Navarro, Brenda Blanco, Matthew Pichardo, Sabrina Borton, Sharay Washington, Michael Aguilar, Traviell Mike Penister, Iyana Lyvonne, Joshua Rivera, Mario Oakley, Charity Cotton, Katherine Alvarado, Stephany A., Melody Neri and Precious McGowan, age 7, the youngest of the participants.

“This is a chance for me to contribute to a community that I’ve felt connected to in various ways over the years, having spent time teaching at nearby Markham Junior High School on 104th Street, participating in events at [the Watts Labor Community Action Committee], spending time with friends who live in the community and a host of other connections,” said Strayhorn, who lives in downtown Los Angeles.

Strayhorn’s design is true to the spirit of community leader Ted Watkins, who founded the WLCAC in the wake of the 1965 Watts riots. The WLCAC is a non-profit, community-based organization dedicated to reducing poverty and improving the quality of life for residents in South Central Los Angeles through social service programs, affordable housing, and cultural and economic empowerment initiatives. He also was instrumental in rebuilding the distressed community after the 1992 L.A. riots.

Watkins believed that “to create a community that may have a person who is a doctor, lawyer or merchant living next door to a person on welfare ... Our feeling has been, if we change the environment of the people who live in this community, we can change their whole being.”

The Ted Watkins pool is the first of seven pools to be renovated and installed with new works of art by local artists in Supervisor Burke’s Second District.

Ted Watkins Park is a monumental piece of history in Watts. This 27-acre facility, located at the heart of South Central Los Angeles at 103rd Street and Central Avenue, is home to the Burke’s Club that provides after-school recreational activities for youths. The park also is home to the Promenade of Prominence Walk of Fame celebrating the accomplishments of community leaders. In addition to facilities for baseball, flag football, basketball and soccer, the park’s popular swimming pool is open during summer for an extended season through October. The newly renovated Ted Watkins pool facility will open summer 2008.

The Los Angeles County Arts Commission’s Civic Art Program awarded Strayhorn \$36,000 to complete the new mural. She also is working on another art project at Enterprise Park at 13055 Clovis Avenue, scheduled to open in 2009.

A graduate of UCLA, Strayhorn has completed other public art projects commissioned by the Cultural Affairs Department of the City of Los Angeles, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), and the Ontario International Airport. Her work has been published in *House and Garden*, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Artweek*.

More information on the Civic Art Program can be found on the Arts Commission web site, www.lacountyarts.org.

To find out how the one percent art allocation process works, visit www.lacountyarts.org/civicart.htm

To read the Civic Art Policy, go to www.lacountyarts.org/civicart_policy.htm



The **Los Angeles County Arts Commission**, Laura Zucker, Executive Director, provides leadership in cultural services of all disciplines for the largest county in the United States, encompassing 88 municipalities. In addition to overseeing the County's Civic Art Program for capital projects, the Arts Commission provides leadership and staffing to support the regional blueprint for arts education, *Arts for All*; administers a grants program that funds more than 250 nonprofit arts organizations annually; funds the largest arts internship program in the country in conjunction with the Getty Foundation, programs the John Anson Ford Theatres and supports the Los Angeles County Cultural Calendar on ExperienceLA.com. The Commission also produces free community programs, including the L.A. Holiday Celebration broadcast nationally, and a year-round music program that funds more than 40 free concerts each year in public sites. The 2008-09 President of the Arts Commission is Betty Haagen.