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Civic Art

PRESS RELEASE

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MEDIA PLEASE NOTE: More information and photos for download may be found at
http://lacountyarts.org/civicart/02_Second_District/karlsen_lawndalelibrary.htm

GLASS WALL AT NEW LAWNSDALE LIBRARY INSPIRED BY AREA'S VIBRANT HISTORY

From a distance the glass wall on the Burin Avenue façade of the new Lawndale Library seems to be made of intricate geometric patterns like those you would see if you looked through a kaleidoscope. However, on closer inspection, the viewer finds fragments of local history. On one panel, a newspaper headline, "Opening Today – LAWNSDALE," forms a border around graceful shapes from the cover illustration of a Lawndale Poultry Colony brochure. On another panel, the repeated image of an oil well from Lawndale's days as "Black Gold Village" forms spokes of wheel bordered by a line of 1950s automobiles parked in front of the city's old civic center.

The artist who reconfigured Lawndale history into an art glass work called "Subdivisions" is Los Angeles-based artist Anne Marie Karlsen. Among her many commissions across the United States are glass works for the Chicago Transit Authority and Chicago's FBI Headquarters. The Westchester resident has also acted as public art consultant for the cities of Long Beach and West Hollywood. She worked closely with the Lawndale Historical Society to research the historic photographs used in the glass art.

"I really enjoyed working with the community to learn about the area's history," says Karlsen.

"Researching photographic archives provides me with the inspiration for creating site specific public art.

From a distance the images become vibrant abstract patterns that reconfigure integral parts of the neighborhood history. The artwork acknowledges the past, yet envisions a new, bold design for the future. Up close the images will be readable, like a history book."

The new library, part of the County of Los Angeles Public Library, is located at 147th Street and Burin Avenue in Lawndale. Karlsen's wall, in cool blues and greens, is a dominating presence indoors as well as out. The 20-foot high by 15-foot wide floor to ceiling artwork is the focal point of the library's glass corridor and also welcomes visitors entering from the direction of Lawndale City Hall and from Hawthorne Blvd. During the day the panels are lit by sunlight and can be read from both outside and inside. They are illuminated by interior artificial light at night.

The glass panels were fabricated by Franz Mayer of Munich, Germany, a firm that has specialized in architectural art glass and mosaic since 1847. Its work is represented worldwide. The images on the Lawndale Library panels were created by silkscreening powdered glass onto tempered glass, which was then fired at high temperatures in a kiln. This melts the powdered glass and fuses the images onto the tempered glass, creating a permanent glass image.

Anne Marie Karlsen earned her MFA from the University of Wisconsin and has been teaching art in southern California since 1979. She is currently Professor of Art at Santa Monica College. Since 1990 she has been commissioned for numerous public projects throughout the country, including Paseo Colorado Development, Pasadena; North Hollywood Red Line station; and Trailside Elementary School in Anchorage, Alaska. Her work is represented in many museums throughout California and the U.S. and internationally in the Kulturverwaltung Stadt Salzburg, Austria.

The artwork was commissioned under Los Angeles County's Civic Art Program, administered by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. Rebecca Banyas of the Arts Commission was project manager for "Subdivisions." Under the Civic Art Program, one percent of construction costs of all County capital projects over \$500,000 is set aside for the incorporation of civic art.



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. The Arts Commission, in addition to overseeing the County's Civic Art Program for capital projects, provides leadership and staffing to support the regional blueprint for arts education, *Arts for All*; administers a grants program that funds more than 300 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 50 free concerts each year in public sites. The 2008-09 President of the Arts Commission is Betty Haagen.