



CIVIC ART AT AC BILBREW LIBRARY

150 EL SEGUNDO, LOS ANGELES, CA 90061

A project of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission Civic Art Program
Extraordinary Experiences in Everyday Places

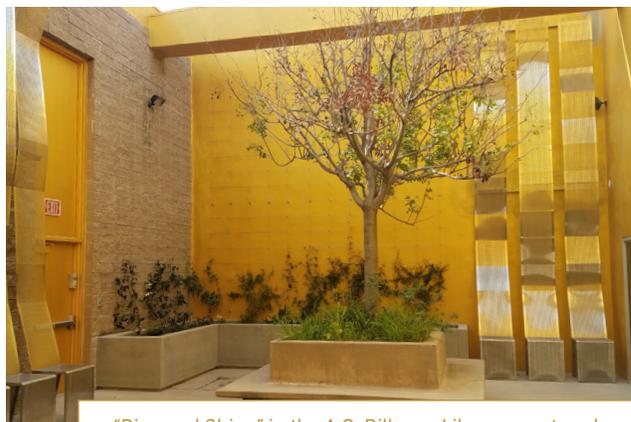
ABOUT THE ART

RISE AND SHINE

The renovation of AC Bilbrew Library began in 2015 and called for updating much of the interior and exterior using environmentally friendly materials and sustainable design techniques. Built in 1974, the library was named after Madame AC Bilbrew, a community leader, poet and musician. Bilbrew, a pioneer in radio, was the first African American to have her own radio show in the United States. The building was designed by architect Vincent J. Proby and is also famous for housing the Black Resource Center that includes collections relevant to the social, historical and cultural aspects of African American history.

As part of the renovation, artist team Greenmeme was commissioned to develop an artwork for the interior courtyard. In keeping with the goals of the renovation library project, staff expressed their desire to integrate native landscaping into the design of the artwork. In addition, focus groups with the Friends of AC Bilbrew Library and local teens prompted a cross-generational exchange about how the library's history could be made relevant to new audiences.

Greenmeme also conducted a series of studies documenting the building's architecture and the tiles that are prominently featured on the exterior. The pattern in the tiles became the inspiration for the design of gold ribbons that provide seating in the courtyard. Planters and a trellis were also added so that the courtyard would become an outdoor garden and gathering space that could host poetry readings, performances and discussions. The artwork is a part of a series of projects funded by a grant from the Los Angeles County Parks and Regional Open Space



"Rise and Shine" in the A.C. Bilbrew Library courtyard
Photo: LA County Arts Commission

District that use arts-based solutions to promote the value of civic spaces and deter vandalism at County properties. This artwork aims to demonstrate how design and integrated landscaping can be a physical deterrent to vandalism, and also promotes the continued preservation of AC Bilbrew Library, an important community asset.

To learn more about the artists: <http://greenmeme.com/>
Greenmeme, comprised of artists Freya Bardell and Brian Howe, operates in a territory between art, architecture and landscape, taking a process driven and community focused approach to design. In each project, they include the community in the making and stewardship of the artwork. They strive to make pieces that are integrated, thought provoking and capable of generating engagement.

In December 2004, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopted the County's first Civic Art policy, which allocates one percent of County capital projects to civic art. The policy allows for integrated permanent public art enhancements, temporary art commissions, restoration of historic artworks, and the creation of cultural spaces or activities. The Los Angeles County Arts Commission is responsible for the administration of the Civic Art policy.

The County's Art Collection belongs to everyone. If you notice an artwork is damaged, lost or in need of care, please notify the Los Angeles County Arts Commission Civic Art division at 213-202-5858 or civcart@arts.lacounty.gov.

For more information, please visit www.lacountyarts.org. Facebook.com/lacountyarts. Twitter/@lacountyarts

ART AS INFRASTRUCTURE

An Evaluation of Civic Art and Public Engagement in Four Communities in South Los Angeles

Greenmeme's artwork was part of a series of projects designed around the idea that better engagement in the development of artworks would promote community value for civic spaces and deter vandalism at county properties, led by the LA County Arts Commission and funded by a grant from the Los Angeles County Parks and Regional Open Space District. Artist Sara Daleiden of s(o)ul supported the artists in developing engagement programs at each site and produced a documentary titled *Civic Art: Four Stories from South Los Angeles* that follows the development of the artworks and engagement programs at all four sites.

Along with the three other project sites, the LA County Arts Commission evaluated the success of these artworks in

- ▶ shifting perceptions about the sites
- ▶ increasing positive activity
- ▶ reducing graffiti vandalism
- ▶ building a sense of community ownership
- ▶ building capacity for future arts and culture activities

The projects were successful at shifting perceptions of place through beautification and encouraging new use.

- ▶ Community members interpreted the installation of artwork at these public facilities as positive investment in their neighborhoods and as signs that the government cares about their community.
- ▶ Community members shared that a well-maintained appearance, through artworks and a lack of graffiti vandalism, and the presence of family-oriented activity can foster the perception that a place is safe and welcoming.



Video still from "Civic Art: Four Stories from South Los Angeles"
Photo © Mark Escribano and Sara Daleiden, s(o)ul, 2017

- ▶ Pairing art projects and new infrastructure increased the impact of both kinds of investment. The "energy" that artwork brings to a place spurred maintenance, stewardship, and increased activity.

East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center experienced a reduction in requests for graffiti removals, which suggests highly visible placement of artworks may be especially effective for graffiti abatement.

- ▶ Engagement strategies enhanced attachment and the sense of ownership of public facilities when the artists involved community members in design or fabrication
- ▶ Provided opportunities for interaction with artists during the artwork development
- ▶ Created space for social interaction among participants to foster bonds important for social cohesion and civic engagement
- ▶ Investigated and worked with the attachments to place that already existed in the community

The projects built capacity for future arts and culture programming by generating new ideas and strategies for public engagement among parks and libraries staff.

In the end, the project demonstrated that government investment in artworks at neighborhood parks and libraries that include artist-led engagement programs can lead to better outcomes for communities. Agencies planning similar projects should consider

- ▶ Increasing investment in artistic engagement throughout physical artwork development and through multi-year artist-in-residence programs.
- ▶ Creating a "maintenance" plan that continues the communication and relationships built for temporary participatory artworks to enhance the impact of artistic engagement
- ▶ Partnering directly with community-based organizations such as a neighborhood association or Friends of the Library group to increase civic engagement

For the full evaluation report and information about the other projects in this series, visit www.lacountyarts.org