

Creating Connections

An Arts and Culture

Framework and Toolkit

BY **Sandra de la Loza**

**2019–2020 CREATIVE STRATEGIST
ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE**

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT
OF ARTS AND CULTURE**

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT
OF PARKS AND RECREATION**





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Contributors

I WANT TO GIVE THANKS to the following artists and community organizers whose lesson plans and interviews have brought the ideas and concepts in this framework to life in inspiring and imaginative ways:

LESSON PLANS

Marlené Nancy López

Sarita Dougherty

Jess Gudiel

Pearl C Hsiung

INTERVIEWS

Quetzal Flores, Saludararte Project,
Alliance for California Traditional
Arts (ACTA)

Johanna Iraheta, Co-founder,
Roots in Motion

Reginald Johnson, Willowbrook
Inclusion Network (WIN)

Edited by Robin Garcia

Graphic Design by Still Room

This project came out of the Creative Strategist-Artist in Residence (CS-AIR) program, a program funded by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors that embeds artists as creative strategists in LA County departments to develop artist driven solutions to social and civic challenges. The CS-AIR program is part of the Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII), which seeks to make arts and culture programming accessible to all LA County residents. As such, the primary mandate of the CS-AIR program is for artists to work as strategists around equity-based goals in collaboration with county staff.

SANDRA DE LA LOZA, June 2020

All photos courtesy of Weng San Sit.

Except: pp. 13–17 Marlené N Lopez; p. 18 top provided by Reginald Johnson, middle and bottom Sandra de la Loza; pp. 25–28 Sarita Dougherty; p. 31 (top) Johann Iraheta, (bottom) Sandra de la Loza; p. 35–37 Pearl C Hsiung; p. 38 (top) Timo Saarelma/ACTA 2019, (bottom) Shweta Saraswat/ACTA 2019; pp. 45–47 Sandra de la Loza; p. 49 Sandra de la Loza



Introduction

I WRITE THIS FOR THE FUTURE. The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed much of public life. Park facilities are closed and programming is temporarily halted as the collective chants that Black Lives Matter echo across the nation. This moment provides an opportunity to reflect on where we are, how we got here, and how we want to emerge. While in some ways this moment echoes 1992 when the city erupted after the acquittal of police officers who beat Rodney King, it is also distinct. As a young activist in 1992, the collective response that I participated in shifted my life's course forever, opening unforeseen doorways that led to other worlds of possibility.

Art and cultural expression provided the rhythms and movements that brought us together. It provided the tools and circumstances to reimagine and regenerate. It pointed the way toward the futures that we wanted to inhabit, the selves we wanted to become. It is my hope that this publication can contribute to such creative connections between and amongst park visitors. I am reminded of the great opportunity we have today to emerge from a difficult moment and the vital role that parks, and arts and cultural programs can play for all sectors of society.

This framework and toolkit are a result of my one-year residency at the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), which involved extensive research, collective dialogue and collaborative envisioning. This toolkit includes the basic architecture for making art and culture a core program in LA County Parks and is primarily written to support staff, program providers, community partners, advocates, and supporters of DPR in increasing and strengthening arts and cultural programming in all parks across the county. Nonetheless, I hope that the ideas and contents here can be helpful to anyone who is interested in providing transformative civic art and cultural programming that offers opportunities for creative expression for all, strengthens community bonds, and deepens relationships to place, and the lands and spaces we inhabit.

Before introducing the framework, I want to acknowledge that this publication and all its concepts and ideas come from a collective process that involved deep listening, extensive dialogue and co-envisioning with many people I met and worked with during my residency. As part of the research process, I visited parks in each park agency across the county, met with administrators, supervisors and recreation leaders, attended departmental meetings, participated in staff trainings, and experienced park programs. The process of producing this framework took me beyond

DPR as I reviewed other arts and cultural frameworks, cultural plans, and programs both locally and nationally. I attended conferences on placemaking and art and social change.

As a participant in classes and workshops at community spaces, cultural centers and parks, I danced, made experimental books, baked bread and wrote poems. I met with inspiring and dedicated teaching artists, program coordinators and art directors from grassroots community spaces, art centers and museums across Southern California. I engaged in dialogue with community organizers and advocates and was inspired by the myriad of creative approaches used to strengthen, enliven and grow community bonds rooted in place across the county.

This publication contains a framework for future art and culture programs and provides practical tools to make the themes I will explore here; *Art and Community*, *Art and Nature*, *Art and Wellness*, and *Art and Food* come alive through different programs, workshops and other creative and cultural offerings. Here, you will be introduced to a thematic framework, replicable lesson plans, interviews with local community organizers and cultural workers whose work meaningfully brings this framework to life.

THIS PUBLICATION IS DIVIDED INTO TWO MAIN SECTIONS:

1—THEMATIC FRAMEWORK— This section introduces the themes of the framework and includes profiles of community members and groups whose approaches can serve as creative models in building park programs. It also includes lesson plans that activate each of the four themes and can be implemented by park staff. Recommended activities point the way toward expanding on themes. However, it is no replacement for a curriculum which at this time is beyond the scope of this publication.

2—IMPLEMENTATION PLAN— This section lays out recommendations on building both the content of a program, and the infrastructure needed to support it. It includes how to creatively activate park space and amenities, ways to support staff in the execution of the framework, as well as how to enhance existing programs.

A Thematic Arts and Culture Framework

THIS FRAMEWORK AND TOOLKIT were designed to draw on the artistic and cultural expressions of Los Angeles County, from the traditional to experimental, ancestral to futuristic, and natural to urban. It envisions programming that creates space so that the stories, struggles and dreams of all residents can be told, shared and enjoyed. It approaches creative expression as a vital tool for inward and outward, personal and collective transformation. If we think of the themes of this framework as spokes on a wheel, we can see that each theme: **COMMUNITY, FOOD, NATURE, WELLNESS**; can stand on its own. However, together they contribute to the integrity and possibility of a holistic arts and cultural program that has the potential to deepen relationships to place and the building of cross-cultural intergenerational bonds.

FRAMEWORK GOALS

The framework themes can guide the planning and development of art and cultural programs that:

- Work towards increasing the role of parks as sites of social, cultural and environmental connectivity where individuals and families of all ages can participate.
- Share and deepen park user's relationship to their own cultures and learn and enjoy the diverse cultural practices of the local and larger community.
- Provide structures to enhance our connectivity to nature and strengthen our understanding and awareness of the larger ecosystems that we are a part of.

CORE QUESTIONS TO GUIDE ART AND CULTURE PROGRAM PLANNING

- How can programs offer opportunities for joyful and creative experiences that awaken and enliven all parts of our beings?
- How can art and cultural programming provide a space for personal and collective nurturing, well-being, and growth?
- How can art and culture help us connect with each other and with the larger ecosystems that we are a part of?

SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CULTURAL RELEVANCE— Park users cultural backgrounds, interests and lived experiences are reflected in the content, forms and styles of art and cultural programs. Park program offerings promote the self-knowledge of participants own cultural identities as well as others in a language that is reflective and accessible.

EQUITY— Ensure that each park visitor receives what they need to fully participate and thrive in programs and workshops. Art and cultural practices are intentionally designed with recognition of current and past social inequalities.

INCLUSION— Park programs and activities are available and enjoyable to all regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical ability, and/or preferred language.





Art and Community

THE THEME OF “ART AND COMMUNITY” EXPLORES the many ways that creative opportunities can strengthen community bonds, deepen relationships to place, and support the rich and diverse cultural wealth that our communities hold. It seeks to enhance the role that LA County parks play as hubs for the local community to gather and learn together. Arts programming that activates this theme provides tools for our communities to share their stories and creates opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural exchange.

SOME KEY QUESTIONS

- 1.— How can art and cultural programming provide platforms that deepen relationships with each other and to our neighborhoods?
- 2.— How can parks provide accessible programs that honor, support and sustain local cultural and artistic practices?
- 3.— What activities, performances and programs can celebrate and make visible local community histories?
- 4.— How can uplifting and welcoming environments allow for joy-filled collaborative experiences?
- 5.— How can art and cultural programming support processes that empower our communities in collectively recognizing, addressing and transforming the social issues that impact them?

Themes and Recommended Activities

CELEBRATING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS — Encourages creative expression that represents and honors our communities in the visual, sonic, textural, linguistic, spatial and embodied languages that reflect our neighborhoods.

TELLING OUR STORIES — Taps into the dream’s, histories, myths, and legends of people in relationship with place, through images, sounds, and words.

CREATING TOGETHER — Provides space to collectively create projects where participants can share ideas, work alongside each other and problem solve together.

UPLIFTING EACH OTHER — Meets people where they’re at while providing support, tools and encouragement to explore what one can become through experimentation, risk-taking and play.

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

- 3-d paper or cardboard sculptures
- Paper cutout landscapes of your neighborhoods
- Pop-up books
- Drawing/painting
- Collage
- Poetry
- Collective songwriting
- Portraits of community heroes
- Sharing our Histories
- Storytelling through weaving projects
- Movement exercises
- Community art exhibitions
- Murals
- Community Theater
- Dance
- Installations
- Facilitated community storytelling
- Talking circles
- Community choreography

LESSON PLAN

District Storytelling Collage

BY MARLENÉ N LOPEZ

TIME FRAME: 1 hour – 3 hours

AGE LEVEL: All ages, children under 5 will need parental supervision

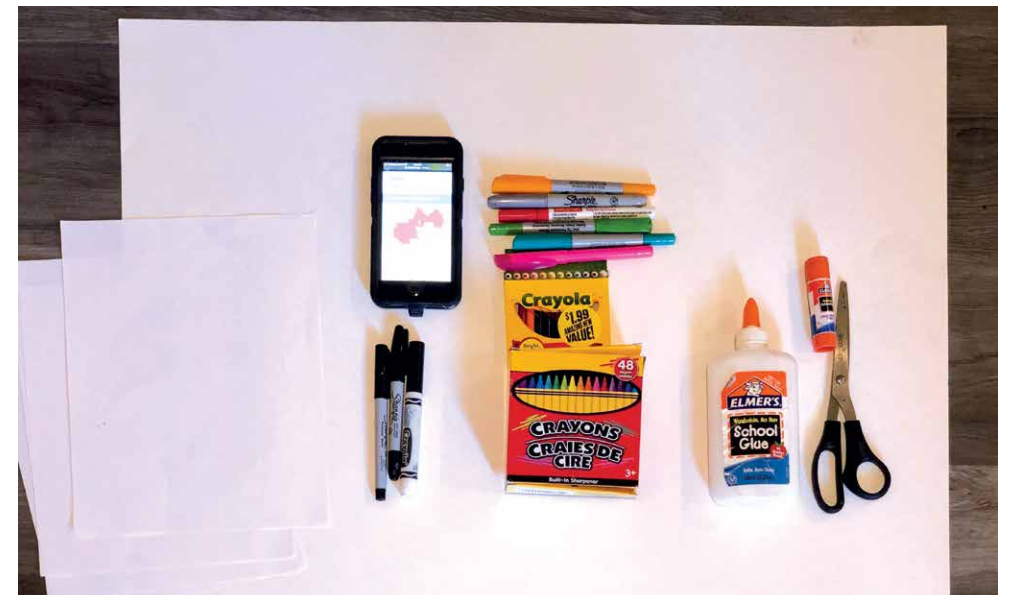
OVERVIEW: By the end of this lesson, community members will have completed a collaborative storytelling collage together.

THEMES: Community Building, Story Circles, Drawing Challenges, Civic Awareness, & Collaborative artwork. (*Art & Community*)

ARTISTIC INSPIRATION: Jean Michel Basquiat

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Large background (butcher paper, poster boards —depends on desired size of project)
- 3 pieces of paper per participant
- Pencils, colors (markers, crayons, etc.), Sharpies (black markers)
- Scissors for participants
- Glue sticks
- Drawing challenge prompts
- A map or photo of your neighborhood or city



ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

STEPS

0 — (PRE-SET-UP)

HAVE ONE FACILITATOR or community member draw and color in your neighborhood district for your background. If you are unsure of what district you live in or what it looks like visit: <https://lacounty.gov/government/geography-statistics/maps/>.

— **SET UP CHAIRS** in a circle.

— **I HIGHLY RECOMMEND** that the facilitator of this lesson either pre-draw or participate in the drawing session to encourage community members to draw.

1 —

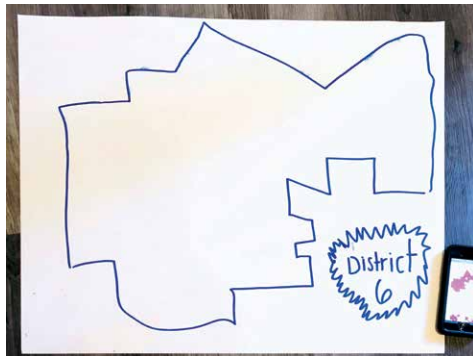
WELCOME PARTICIPANTS and let them know that today they will be completing three ten-minute drawing challenges based on their memories and stories from the neighborhood. Reassure everyone that perfection is not important, flat, 2-D styles are encouraged, what matters is they are having fun and getting their message across with a simple symbol or a complex drawing, it's up to them. Remind them that they only have ten minutes to complete each challenge. Later they will pick their favorite drawing and it will become part of a bigger community project called a District Storytelling Collage.

2 —

READ ALOUD one drawing challenge of your choosing and set a timer for ten minutes. Walk around and encourage/help anyone who seems like they are struggling. Encourage the use of cell phones for photo references or copying (which many professional artists do, copying is not bad!). If a participant is done early have them write their name and drawing prompt on the back of their papers. Repeat two more times.

3 —

GOING AROUND THE CIRCLE, everyone shares one picture and its story with the group. Encourage talking circle rules which include: one person speaks at a time and respectful listening.



DRAWING CHALLENGE PROMPTS

- 1 — Draw someone you consider a neighborhood hero that is not in your family.
- 2 — Draw something memorable that happened in your neighborhood.
- 3 — Draw something small and familiar from your neighborhood. Something big.
- 4 — Draw something you miss about your neighborhood.
- 5 — Draw how your family came to this community.
- 6 — Draw something you would want more of in your community, not less of.
- 7 — Draw what your community sounds like or smells like?



(SESSION 2 OR HOUR 2)

4—

EACH COMMUNITY MEMBER picks their favorite drawing and works on it to make it presentation ready. They should outline their picture with black markers and color.

5—

CUT OUT drawings.

6—

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

ARRANGE drawings on pre-made background. Try to make the images connect and flow with each other so the final piece looks interesting.

7—

GLUE PIECES onto background.

8—

REFLECTION CIRCLE:

IN THE CIRCLE, community members answer the following questions: What did you learn new about your neighborhood or neighbors today? How many of you knew what district you lived in before this project? How many of you knew

what it looked like? What can we do with our collage? Display it? Make it into a mural? Send it to our city representative? Attach it to a campaign? Add your own reflection questions.



Marlené N Lopez Self-taught artist, with a background in Political Science & Human Rights. Born and raised in MacArthur Park, deeply impacted by the defunding of the arts in the 1980s and 1990s. Designs curriculums and activities that highlight the role of art in community building and justice. Currently a teaching artist at the Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA) and co-founder of the art collective CrewNative.

lopez.nml@gmail.com, IG: @artfullmarlene & @crewnative, 310.936.5905



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Reginald Johnson

Founder of the **WILLOWBROOK INCLUSION NETWORK (WIN)**

SANDRA — Can you introduce the work of WIN?

REGINALD — We are a social enterprise nonprofit dedicated to community planning, civic engagement, economic growth and workforce development. We saw the need to have this type of community/business structure so that we can have more community-led projects and have a voice and elevate it for Willowbrook and other connecting communities like Compton and Watts. We do base-building. Historically, Willowbrook hasn't been engaged in these types of investments. I remember when Magic Johnson Park was first built and not really knowing what was going on there. A park popped up. Twenty-five years later, the park is disinvested in. And so now it's in redevelopment. It's on the same track as our Metro development. Been there for 25 years, no upgrade. Now it's time to upgrade. So, we have seen the investment come in and I'm talking about an investment of over a billion dollars in the last two or three years. We are really concerned about community input and the needs of our community and that's where the bulk of our work is.

SANDRA — Can you share WIN's vision and approach to on the ground community empowerment and what community advocacy looks like in your work?

REGINALD — Our vision is to develop a sustainable and dynamic future by transforming Willowbrook through arts and culture. We want to generate an educated community that can maximize their economic potential. Our vision for Willowbrook is for folks to understand that art and culture is a catalyst for economic development and a means for our community to come together and stand strong against adversity.

We are continuing to build a network to support arts education and to enforce cultural policy to promote a secure and creative economy in Willowbrook. Our next steps focus on investment and development projects in our community. We want to be comprehensive and able to provide arts and culture services to everyone. I think the best way to get information and knowledge across is to create intergenerational circles to connect youth with our elders. That's something we're working on right now.

In the beginning of February, we launched our community envisioning project that focused on a corridor where development is happening. At the end of the day, historic preservation is something that we really want to advocate for as things are changing in Willowbrook. Willowbrook has a strong and healthy history that I think a lot of people don't know about. I would love to share that with people. We're looking at a completely

different future for Willowbrook, that'll take us into a whole different direction and we're figuring out how to stay true to the community's origins.

SANDRA — How can arts and culture empower communities like Willowbrook? What creative and cultural practices in your community do you feel can be better valued and celebrated?

REGINALD — Well, for me personally, a lot of my empowerment came through arts and culture in regard to my understanding of my culture, my relationship and connection to Africa and the origins of its arts and culture. That's probably been one of the most empowering things for me is just understanding my own culture and being able to have that as a basis to go and connect with other cultures and feel comfortable. You know, a lot of times when you don't have information about your own self, it's hard for you to connect with others.

I also think that celebrating our ancestors is a good way to connect. There's been a lot of violence in the Willowbrook community, especially on 120th street between Central Avenue and, Wilmington, which is where we're looking to do a lot of this programming. You have Martin Luther King Hospital which for years had, you know, taken care of so many people when it comes to gang violence, drugs being put in the neighborhood and different things like that. So, to really have a space in that area where we've seen so much violence and death, I think to have a celebration of our ancestors would be probably the most beautiful thing that we could have in that area.

Our organization is currently developing what we're calling Willowbrook weekend which will consist of a two-day arts, culture, food and music festival. It will showcase all the cultural assets available to Willowbrook residents and visitors without having to leave our neighborhood to enjoy. That's something that we're actively working towards. We have been missing the arts and culture piece.

SANDRA — Having this conversation in the midst of the pandemic and given the anticipated social economic challenges we'll likely face in the future, what role do you see parks playing?

REGINALD — I really think it comes down to providing residents and visitors with open green spaces and placemaking opportunities. There's a stigma around parks in South LA. I think that stigma is due to, you know, it being gang territory. Things have changed over the last few years. The parks have been redone based on some of the community plans in the city and the county. People are starting to come out a little bit more. The demographics are changing in each community, so parks are really becoming important places for people to get out too. I've always enjoyed Magic Johnson Park, being able to go there when things were good, you know? I think parks play an important role. They are free or low cost. In parks people can come together who may be neighbors and don't even know it.





Art and Nature

PUBLIC PARKS ARE A VITAL RESOURCE that offers invaluable green and open space as well as opportunities for respite and a connection with nature. Art can be a vehicle to share knowledge that connects us with the land and its environmental attributes that shape our cultures and identities. Through the theme of *Art and Nature*, park spaces can be transformed into classrooms, laboratories, and canvases for art-making that explore biological, environmental and astronomical themes and ideas.

SOME KEY QUESTIONS

- 1.— How can art and cultural programs enrich park visitors' connection to the natural world?
- 2.— How can creative activities and programs provide opportunities to deepen awareness and connection to the larger life processes and ecosystems that we are a part of?
- 3.— The county's diverse populations host cultural practices that contain knowledge which builds relationships to the intricate web of life. How can we invite this practice in to the park contexts?
- 4.— How can we find creative ways to activate all areas of park space, encourage exploration and increase access to these environments?

Themes and Recommended Activities

CONNECTING WITH THE LAND

Deepens understanding of our relationship with the natural environment and the varied ecosystems that have shaped our histories and their connection to the lands we live on.

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

- Garden workshops
- Nature journal
- Scavenger hunt
- Plant/tree rubbings
- Printmaking
- Botanical drawings
- Plein air painting
- Cultural uses of plants
- Weaving

HONORING LOCAL AND GLOBAL CULTURAL PRACTICES

Explores the diverse cultural knowledge and practices that are connected to and inspired by nature.

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

- Cultural uses of plants
- Weaving
- Plant based dyes
- Herbal body care
- Nature-themed paper masks
- Cultural/modern/experimental dances connected to season harvesting, and earth relationships
- Mapping cultural cosmologies

USING PARK SPACE CREATIVELY

Experiments with ways of activating park space and amenities

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES:

- Installations
- Nature walks
- Movement exercises that respond to the environment
- Community Gardens as classroom

LESSON PLAN

Plant Maps

BY SARITA DOGHERTY

TIME FRAME: 1 hour – 2 hours

AGE LEVEL: 4 and up

OVERVIEW We will be mapping our relationships to plants, identifying the ones living in our neighborhood, as well as the ones living in our memories and the ones we bring into our bodies as food! This is an ethnobotanical mapping project, or a research project that helps us to connect to the plants that are in our cultures, neighborhoods, and lives. This project engages Art & Nature and is inspired by Olivia Chumacero's class that teaches us how to create relationships with plants, called everything is medicine, (e.i.m.).

MATERIALS NEEDED

- A long piece of paper: tape three 8.5" x 11" pages together, if needed, or you can cut a large roll a paper strips of approximately 8.5" x 33". Really, any horizontal-orientation of paper will do!
- Colored pencils
- Pencil sharpener
- Regular pencil (optional)
- Black pen (optional)
- Colored inks with dip pen (optional for older students)
- Internet/phone for research (optional)



ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

STEPS

1—

BRAINSTORM: Close your eyes and think about the plants that you have memories of. What plants represent where you grew up? What plants are important to you, culturally? Do you know of any plants that may have been important to your ancestors? You might want to text an older relative to find out.

2—

START at the left side of the horizontal paper, and draw these plants from your memory, your family's memory, or your ancestral memory. You can play with size in terms of importance: for example, if there is one plant that stands out, you can draw it larger, or smaller for plants for that showed up from time to time.

3—

BRAINSTORM: What plants do you eat regularly? What plants are in your food or beverages? Where does your food originate? For example, if you eat pizza, what plants are the pizza crust and sauce made from? You might want to research online for the source of your food!

4—

AFTER YOUR ANCESTRAL DRAWINGS moving towards the middle, draw these plants from images on your phone if you would like, or from your memory. Again, you can play with size according to the plants you regularly consume (draw them larger), to the ones you don't eat as much but still like (smaller).

5—

BRAINSTORM: What plants are around you at home, in the park, on your daily walks to school, etc.? If possible, walk around outside and sit in front of the plants lining the park, neighborhood or dwellings around you.

6—

PRACTICE A DRAWING TECHNIQUE CALLED CONTOUR LINE DRAWING by pointing your finger to the top of the plant and tracing an outline of it going clockwise in the air with your finger until you arrive back at the beginning.

7—

NOW, PUT YOUR PENCIL TO THE PAPER, keep your eyes mostly on the plant you are looking at, and draw the outline you just traced with your finger, now with your hand, moving clockwise down from the top point until you arrive back to where you started.

8—

CONTINUE DRAWING CONTOURS of found plants, plants that are your neighbors where you live or play and fill the rest of your plant map with these friends!



9—

IF YOU'RE CURIOUS about who the plants are, ask around you, or you can try looking it up with a plant identification app like inaturalist.

10—

COLOR IN YOUR MAP! Have fun filling the whole page with impressions and designs of the plants in your life. You can label your plants with their names or leave them as drawings. Celebrate your ethnobotany, or culturally relevant plant life! If you're interested in learning more about ethnobotany in California, *Tending the Wild* by M Kat Anderson, is a great resource for learning the indigenous plants of California and the way Native Californians have, and continue to steward ecosystem balance for food, medicine and cultural purposes.

Sarita Dougherty is an artist and educator for the Ecocene, an imagined and emerging era where humans live in reciprocity with their habitats again. She creates paintings, books and curricula like the DIY PhD to connect humyns to our home planet.

saritadough@gmail.com, <https://theecocene.org/>



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Johanna Iraheta

Co-founder, **ROOTS IN MOTION**—education rooted in ancestral teachings designed to cultivate intergenerational health and resilience.

SANDRA — Can you introduce **Roots in Motion**? How do you cultivate roots and put those roots into motion?

JOHANNA — Our educational model or circle teachings, as we call it, focuses on an exploration of the past and the present around the care of land, healthy bodies, practices and discipline through bike mobility, and community cohesiveness. We approach history in a way that centers our ancestry. Our work is meant to uplift LA's rich diverse cultures. When we began, everything seemed monoculture and was taught through a heteronormative lens. Therefore, we decided to diversify and highlight the histories and cultural roots of communities of color in order to provide a better representation for our young people to see themselves through. We started in 2010. The other co-founder, Rio and I, were just starting our journey as teachers. Personally, growing up in LA, I felt, as many, first-generation people of color often feel, like we're not here nor there. So, this journey back to our ancestral lands really helped ground me. We wanted to pass that knowledge on to young people. We felt that if we as adults experience this disconnection then young people may also be feeling something similar. Another thing that guided us is that often people of color feel as if we are working from scarcity as if we don't have everything we need. So, we decided to tap into our network of elders, artists, teacher chefs, and people who had all these different talents to come in and teach the youth.

SANDRA — I'm inspired by the way **Roots in Motion** approaches environmental knowledge by centering the histories and cultural traditions of its participants. Can you share how you approach earth-based learning?

JOHANNA — We believe that education should be done outdoors and engage diverse ecosystems. The ground is diverse. Plants thrive in diverse settings. Most of our activities happen outside and begin with the plants and soil. Our programming emphasizes not just connecting with the plants but seeing humans in relationship to the plants. That is a guiding force that we sowed into all our teachings. From starting seedlings to getting to know what organisms are inside the soil, we focus on how plants work with each other, and at the same time, how humans have historically interacted with our native plants in Southern California. With that we push participants, not just young people, to see themselves within the growth of, say a garden. We start with activities that the young people or our participants can delve into. An activity could be cutting clippings, drawing these plants, stamping

them onto paper, or creating offerings. Throughout the years, we've created a curriculum that allows participants to just get to know the land. And with that said, it's not just that they can see themselves in the plants, but also, we learn to be advocates and develop an awareness of why it's important to take care of the earth.

SANDRA — One thing I appreciate about your pedagogy is how you draw from the rich cultural knowledge and traditions of the youth, and how you collaborate with different community groups and practitioners. Can you talk about how you fold in a wide span of ancestral traditions?

JOHANNA — I think that it's important for people to see themselves within their landscape and their ecosystems. There is this lack of representation within the mainstream media or even history books. Our participants are very diverse and so we pull from that. We've worked with people from the Chinese diaspora who've come in and taught both their ancestral medicine as well as their history. They share stories of resilience within the LA landscape. We've worked with the Tongva, the first nation communities in this land. They have really pushed our education. We had guests come in from diverse African American communities to teach both medicine and physical practices. One would be the history of Capoeira that comes from Angola. They learned how that tradition traveled through the enslavement of African people into the Americas. They learned about the songs, the movement and how capoeira was used to fight colonization, and how it is still a way to fight back.

SANDRA — How have you used and activated park space?

JOHANNA — **Roots in Motion** started at a park. We realized that being indoors was not the best way to allow creativity and learning to occur. There are so many ways we can pair learning with the earth. Through **LA Rooted**, our summer youth program, we travel to different parks and use the parks as our classroom. We've had classes on soil remediation, conversations on healthy bodies, reproductive rights and gender fluidity. We've done art projects deriving from plants and the landscape. We've had yoga and capoeira classes and made music at the park. The youth have led engagements at parks where they've talked about situations that are happening in their community such as gentrification. Parks have provided the space to delve into a multidisciplinary education that is accessible, outdoors and that gives youth the opportunity to move, expand, and dance. Parks proved to be a point of unity, and also a space for play and expression in a way that traditional classrooms don't do. There are so many different types of programming that can happen at the park and that's where it should be happening. In dense urban communities, young people go from house to work or to school. They're indoors all the time. So, having programming available at a park is just beneficial. We still have a lot to capture from our diverse cultures and hopefully Parks and Rec can go into our neighborhoods and get to know the people and bring them together.





Art and Wellness

LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS come to parks to reconnect with themselves, each other and with nature. This impulse can help foster personal, familial and social wellness.

Programming around the theme of *Art and Wellness* can provide quiet spaces for personal introspection, reflection and regeneration. Opportunities for social connectivity, recognition, and exchange are equally important and can be supported through physical, aesthetic and social environments that are open, uplifting, welcoming, and inclusive. It is important that activities invite and support participants in sharing their own personal, cultural, and historic identities and experiences.

Implementing the *Art and Wellness* thematic spoke entails an acknowledgement that larger social issues impact the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. Artistic tools and processes can help folks name, understand and actively transform the social issues that impact them.

SOME KEY QUESTIONS

- 1.**— How can art and culture further support wellness through programs that activate and align our bodies, mind and spirits?
- 2.**— What activities can we offer that help nurture our voices in the linguistic, visual and aesthetic languages that we feel most at home in?
- 3.**— How can parks invite in and enhance wellness activities that the community already practices?

Themes and recommended activities

HOLISTIC APPROACHES can enrich and enliven the body, mind, and spirit. This includes activities that activate our visual, oral, hearing and tactile senses.

ANCESTRAL HEALING ARTS centers on cultural knowledge, histories, stories and tools of resiliency embedded in various cultural practices. All our cultures have healing practices. Let's share and learn from each other.

CREATIVE SELF CARE involves understanding wellness as an inner and outer process. Creative offerings provide opportunities for introspection and reflection as well as opportunities to share space and interact with others.

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

Role playing to process personal, cultural and social struggles.

STORYTELLING

Supporting micro economies- local artists, crafts people and small businesses.

LESSON PLAN

Wellness Mandala

BY PEARL C. HSUING (pronounced *SHUNG*)

TIME FRAME: 20 – 60+ minutes

AGE LEVEL: 9 years and above

OVERVIEW

We will be making Wellness Mandalas which are designed to remind us of our connection to ourselves and the world around us.

Who, what, and where are you connected to? We are connected to ourselves: our body, our mind, our emotions, and our thoughts. We are also connected to the natural world around us. The earth we live on is home to all people, plants, and animals. The air we breathe is thanks to the plants and sunlight. The water we drink comes from snow, rain, lakes, rivers, and the ground. We are also connected to our family, friends, people, as well as the animals and plants we are neighbors to and surrounded by.

Honoring ourselves and our connections to the world around can help us feel peaceful, safe, loving, and loved. Our Wellness Mandala can always remind us of these connections and how that makes us feel well.

Paper-cutting is a craft that dates back to 4th century AD in China and has been a tradition of many other countries such as Mexico, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, France, and Germany among others. Paper-cutting was practiced to make decorations which celebrated holidays, festivals, marriages, and births.

A **MANDALA**, which means 'circle' in Sanskrit, has been historically used by Eastern religions as a tool for focus and meditation.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Construction or colored paper
- Scissors
- Pencils
- Pencil sharpener
- Black marker
- Glue stick



ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

STEPS

1—

FOLD PAPER in half diagonally and cut excess paper to create a square.

2—

OPEN UP paper and fold in half into a rectangle.

3—

FOLD IN HALF again to make a folded square.

4—

DRAW, then cut a line for the outside edge of your mandala shape. This line can be curvy, geometric or both.

5—

SIMILAR TO MAKING PAPER SNOWFLAKES, cut shapes out of the folded sides of the paper. Save these shapes in case you want to use them later.

6—

KEEP PAPER FOLDED in fourths. Now fold diagonally so that new creases radiate from center of mandala.

7—

CUT NEW SHAPES out of this fold. You may need to unfold once and refold a new diagonal crease separately as the paper gets too thick to cut through. Trace shapes to repeat where helpful.

8—

UNFOLD paper to see your mandala design and if you need to adjust any cuts.

9—

USING OTHER COLORS of paper, draw and cut a 'self' for the center of the mandala. You can do just a circle or a face and hair.

10—

THINK about a peaceful and calm facial expression and draw it onto your 'self'.

11—

CONTINUE TO CUT various shapes of different sizes and arrange them on your mandala. Create shapes that make you feel happy and good. Since most mandalas are contiguous and symmetrical, make sure your cut shapes are repeated in the circle and arranged evenly.

12—

GLUE all the elements down.

PEARL C. HSIUNG (pronounced *SHUNG*): The inseparable relationship of **HUMANS** and **NATURE** is central to my art practice and in this art activity. By studying this interconnection, I feel grounded, inspired, and further curious about our role **WITHIN** and as **A PART** of nature.

www.pearlchsiung.com, pearl@pearlchsiung.com





Restorative Justice Through Art Making workshop led by BHC Artist Fellow Juana Mena at the Wellness center in Boyle Heights.

Participants in Juana Mena's restorative justice workshop at Roosevelt High School.



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Queztal Flores

Program Manager, **THE ALLIANCE FOR CALIFORNIA TRADITIONAL ARTS (ACTA)**.

Queztal Flores shares insights from the **SALUDARTE PROJECT** in Boyle Heights, a multi-year project as a part of the California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative. The project supported traditional artists to explore collective solutions to community based political and social needs by experimenting with and utilizing cultural practices.

SANDRA — What is cultural asset mapping? Why did you use that methodology? Can you share what you learned from this process?

QUETZAL — Participatory cultural asset mapping is exactly that. It's identifying what people value, what they see as important particularly with respect to cultural practices in their community. We've been conditioned to value certain things: Fame, money, accolades, higher education. We forget that there are many people in our communities doing extraordinary things and that those extraordinary things can be leveraged to build out an ecosystem that benefits people in these communities. So, the things that I remembered to value in this process were people who know how to make clothes, people who have culinary skills that go back thousands of years and who are able to adapt to different situations. I think of street vendors who sell corn and their cultural impact in creating a sense of home and creating a sense of belonging. It's those things that we look at as maybe so simple and every day that were actually lifted up during this project and understood as important not just to the community people, but in changing an entire narrative. It's these symbiotic units that can then be looked at as a holistic practice in our community.

SANDRA — One thing I really appreciated about the project was that you foregrounded local community knowledge and creative practices to shape the direction of the arts and cultural programming in *Saludarte*. Why was this the starting point?

QUETZAL — That goes back to the way that colonialism works, the way that capitalism works, and the way that white supremacy feeds on this idea of "the need narrative", of making people believe that they are in need. You can flip that switch and say, well actually we "have". The Zapatistas did this so beautifully and brilliantly. They began to look at themselves as having and built an entire movement based on what they had. And so, when we look at our communities and we look at the need, there is definitely need, but we also see, particularly in Boyle Heights, that there is a tremendous amount of resources, particularly cultural resources. And when we look at those resources, we're able to really meet many of those needs in very tangible ways. And through that process

we can become a community that is wealthy with practice and knowledge and cooperation and all these other important things.

SANDRA — How can the process used for the *Saludarte* project be adapted to a park context? As we emerge from the Covid-19 era and deal with the economic repercussions, can cultural asset mapping be a viable approach to developing arts and cultural programming? Would this approach and methodology be helpful? If so, how and why?

QUETZAL — Parks essentially are neighborhood resources, right? Every neighborhood should have a park. And that park should be a site of recreation, of convening, of connection, a safe space, a liberating space. I think about children running around and feeling free and meeting other kids. In order for this to happen, there has to be an investment in all of those things.

DPR can partner with an organization to do some sort of asset mapping. That would be very useful for them to find ways to activate park space without having a huge budget. They can just provide space and let people know the space is available to them and that it could be staffed, you know, by encouraging people to create programs like women who do knitting circles to come to the park and knit. This would encourage the number of ways in which our community sustains culture. Also, for a local park and the park system to understand what exists in a neighborhood, it will be really valuable to see that they have a tremendous amount of resources to pull from.

SANDRA — How can building arts and cultural programming that centers the cultural practices of community members: the street vendors, the restaurant workers, the knitting circles, generate community wellness, particularly in the parks?

QUETZAL — So when you're, doing this work, part of the situation is that you're not just making decisions, right? Everything has a process, and everything involves community. When it's led by a community, then there's an investment. And when there's an investment by community, then automatically there's alternative criteria that is enacted. For there to be wellness, there has to be an intentional space where people can engage and engage under their own terms.





Art and Food

FOOD IS A POWERFUL CONNECTOR and a popular activity at our parks. It is not only rich in sustenance and nutrition, but food also holds our memories, stories and ancestral cultural wisdom and practices. Food is a creative and social activity. Workshops and events organized around food-related themes can be a catalyst for creating knowledge about our inherent connectivity.

SOME KEY QUESTIONS

- 1.— How can we cultivate, make and learn through edible creations?
- 2.— How can we gather, learn, share and enjoy our culinary creations together?
- 3.— How can food-related programs activate the many park amenities such as BBQ, picnic tables, kitchens?

Themes and recommended activities

CONNECTING THROUGH FOOD – Brings people together while exploring the stories behind food.

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

- Food-themed events, festivals, and community picnics.
- Food inspired dance performances, poetry, storytelling, recipe swaps, space design, soundscapes, DJ's and live music to accompany food.
- Circles of food systems- food access and food justice.

FROM PARK TO TABLE: CULINARY ARTS explores the full circle of food production: from soil, to seed, to plant, to harvest, to food making, and food preservation. Approaches community gardens, kitchens and/or park sites as experimental laboratories and classrooms.

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES: soil building, seed propagation, cultural plants and uses, herbal tea mixes, eating green, culinary arts, learning about pollinators, ecosystems, eco processing, harvesting, preparing and preserving food: fermentation, canning, and pickling.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES SPROUTING FROM FOOD — Uses food items as material to make art, includes art activities that are inspired by food or to enhance a meal.

- Still life painting and drawing
- DIY napkins holders, tablecloths, floral arrangements
- Potato Prints
- Creating and painting with color tints from items in your kitchen
- Sculptures to decorate a garden

LESSON PLAN

Have a Cup of Corn Silk Tea!

BY JESSICA GUIDEL

TIME FRAME: 5 minutes

AGE LEVEL: 2 and up

OVERVIEW

Participants will be engaged with a few facts about the nutritional benefits of making tea out of Corn Silk, or *Barba de Elote* in Spanish. They will be given a taster to enjoy. The tea can be made with fresh silk from the corn or with tea bags making it widely available at local grocery stores!

CULTURAL TRADITIONS: Using ancestral knowledge for health.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Corn silk, either raw or tea bags
- Filtered water
- Small paper teacups
- Electrical pot to bring water to hot, or
- Stove and pot



ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

STEPS

1 —

Each participant should be provided with a cup and cautioned that the tea is likely to be warm.

2 —

Once everyone has a cup, discuss a few of the health benefits of corn silk tea.

3 —

Carefully pour warm tea into their cups and enjoy!

MAKING THE TEA:

2 tablespoons of fresh corn silk for 1 cup of water, or

2 teaspoons of dried corn silk for 1 cup of water

- Bring 1 cup of water to hot, boiling is not necessary
- Place 2 tablespoons or 2 teaspoons of corn silk in tea pot
- Add boiling water to the tea pot, put the lid on and let sit for 5 – 10 minutes.

Drink up to 3 x a day with the last cup taken 3-4 hours before bedtime. Stop drinking tea after a week to give your body a break.



CONVERSATIONAL PIECES

CORN IS INDIGENOUS to

Mesoamerica and was domesticated in Mexico some 9,000 years ago, then it spread throughout the American continent. It is now a staple plant food throughout North and South America. In traditional American medicine Corn Silk is used to treat a variety of ailments, including prostate problems, malaria, urinary tract infections (UTIs), and heart disease. More recent research indicates that it may also help reduce

blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, and inflammation.

It has anti-inflammatory properties: Inflammation is part of your body's natural immune response. However, excessive inflammation is linked to a variety of illnesses, including heart disease and diabetes.

Helps manage blood sugar: Some research indicates that corn silk may lower blood sugar and help manage diabetes symptoms.

JESS GUIDEL has worked to develop the art of designing and installing veggie and native gardens as well as designing and teaching shadow puppet theatre. Her love for nature has led her to become a certified outdoor leader and instructor.

jguidel33@gmail.com



COMMUNITY ORGANIZER PROFILE

Johanna Iraheta

Co-founder, **ROOTS IN MOTION**

Education designed to cultivate intergenerational health and resilience rooted in ancestral teachings. iraheta.johann@gmail.com

SANDRA — You have a holistic approach to food programming. I would describe it as from soil to table. You go full circle. Can you share your approach?

JOHANNA — We created a mantra called: MAIZ. M stands for movement or masticate, meaning that food first starts by breaking down in your mouth. The second letter “A” stands for ancestral, meaning the best foods for your body are the ones passed on from your ancestral lineage. “I” stands for intentional; being mindful of the food that you eat, how much water and sugar you take in before we start a hike or a bike ride. So being very intentional with food, sitting down eating, making eating a kind of ritual where your body can really digest the food is really important. “Z” is for zero waste. It emphasizes that consuming or eating things that have less effects on the environment is also better for us. We try to instill practices to our youth like carrying their own utensils and avoiding plastic bottles. We had a traveling compost bucket we took with us on our bike rides. Whenever we would sit down and have lunch, the youth knew to put the organic matter into the compost bin that then would be taken somewhere to be composted. So, this mantra fits into this holistic view that the earth supplies everything that we need.

SANDRA — Can you talk a little bit about how park amenities support such a pedagogical approach and how you activated park amenities for food education?

JOHANNA — We chose parks that had a canopy and a picnic area. The more comfortable you are the more you're tuned in to learning. We would bring chefs to the park and they'd provide a lesson on the food we would eat. They would walk us through the nutritional aspect of the food, where the food came from, the history of the dish and then share a recipe. Using the picnic tables, the youth would help set up and prepare the meal. We'd have a picnic and then clean up. The cleaning process was also part of the zero-waste component. If a park has a garden, then we're able to compost there. Parks with gardens have even more potential for projects. The youth or the participants can harvest food from the garden beds and put that into their culinary creation. We could take clippings from say a rosemary, lavender or sagebrush plant.

SANDRA — I love that potential of a food program that goes full circle from soil to seed to plant to food at the table to composting and back to the earth.

JOHANNA — Yes. In the city, it is really important to have these opportunities in which people can learn where their food comes from. I keep saying youth and participants because I really do think that programming should be intergenerational. In our programs we invite elders, parents, uncles, older brothers and cousins to participate with the young people. We're all learning together. This type of programming is not age defined, it could be accessible to a preschooler, a thirty or fifty-year old, or an elder. All can walk away with a lot of knowledge.





This Framework Implementing

Activating through Process

Cultivating fully integrated and sustained arts and cultural programs within the park system requires an active and ongoing process. We can think of this thematic framework as a foundation, a base of support, that contains seeds of ideas to give shape and form to art and cultural programs. However, in order to come alive, these ideas need to be cultivated by collaborative processes, supported by infrastructure, and implemented into tangible programs. This section outlines approaches, structures and processes that can support future art and cultural programming. Please keep in mind that this publication is a first step, written with the understanding that a multi-year department investment in manuals, curriculum and infrastructure building is needed to adapt these ideas to a full program that integrates arts and culture across all park sites.

Staffing, Partnering and Engaging Community

STAFF ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Integrating park staff into the planning and programming phases gets their buy-in, deepens their understanding, and enriches the program by utilizing their knowledge of the park site's community in the implementation of the themes. Work groups and trainings can create a space for feedback, and exchange needed to make the framework relevant to the spatial and cultural specificities of each park.

STAFFING

Park staff will play a critical role in implementing this framework. To increase staff capacity to provide art and cultural programs some recommendations include:

- Hiring staff with creative skills and experience
- Providing staff trainings
- Create arts coordinator positions to provide support

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

Involve park staff in envisioning exercises, planning processes, training sessions, resource sharing and problem solving for program development. Ongoing staff workgroups can be collaborative and create space for staff to share their needs, ideas, and learn from each other.

Community Engagement Process

COMMUNITY CULTURE AND WELLNESS ASSET MAPPING is a process that involves identifying, recording and analyzing artists, cultural practitioners, informal cultural groups, organizations and institutions whose work intersects with wellness, creativity, community building and environmental work. Identifying local cultural assets can provide opportunities to tap into unknown, less visible, or undervalued resources and practices. It can also help build meaningful cultural programs as well as strengthen local community networks. (for more: read Quetzal Flores interview (Art and Wellness) and the cultural asset mapping and **SALUDARTE** project (resource section of this publication).

ARTS AND CULTURE COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUPS can provide opportunities for community stakeholders to bring the framework to life where participants are key in envisioning and supporting local programs. By strengthening and building ongoing community relationships, a community advisory group can provide feedback and insight on local community social needs and resources.

FOCUS GROUPS can initiate conversations and build relationships with local and regional practitioners to activate and expand arts and cultural programming. With invited experts, practitioners, and knowledge holders, focused conversations around programming and implementation can provide insight, guide processes, and tap into the specialized knowledge and skills needed to build and strengthen programs.

Organizational Partnerships and Collaborations

Bringing together civic institutions, community organizations, small businesses, art organizations, and informal cultural groups and collectives can create needed partnerships and collaborations as well as provide a space for community connectedness. These relationships can inform programming and provide resources that enhance the role of parks as community hubs in the promotion of cultural, physical, and emotional well-being.

CROSS SECTOR — Collaborative projects developed in partnership with nonprofit arts, cultural and community-based organizations that

contribute to community wellness and empowerment can provide platforms for artistic creation and community impact across disciplines.

INTER-AGENCY — Pooling resources across LA County agencies can grow institutional networks that move toward problem solving around the common goals of improving community livability, intergenerational and cross-ethnic relationships, as well as improve the economic, social and cultural quality of life.

COMMUNITY — Building relationships with local small businesses and partnering with formal and informal community networks can provide bases of support and resources for short, and long-term programming. This programming should weave in and center art and cultural activities in the variety of programs offered at parks.

Programming

EVENTS — Themed events can provide a shared space in which attendees collectively enjoy a creative program. Specialized events can be enhanced by a creative visual ambience, and a variety of related activities can build an all-encompassing experience.

FESTIVALS — Provide a setting in which multiple activities and resources are simultaneously offered. Attendees are free to wander and engage in an activity (enjoy a performance, a creative workshop, food, have a conversation with a community group), and gain access to services and resources. Creative activities can enhance a festival or be the central theme of a festival.

ACTIVATING PARK SPACE — Performances, films, exhibits, art installations can temporarily activate a room, serve as a pop-up space, or enliven unused or underutilized sites. Walls, kitchens, picnic tables, grasslands, trees and landscaped areas can be sites for inspiration and activation.

OPEN STUDIOS — Can provide an open-ended space for creative activities on a drop-in basis. An open studio program can happen in a designated room, on outdoor tables or via a pop-up studio. A designated time and date would allow the local community to drop-in and enjoy a creative experience that is accessible to all regardless of age and ability. Open studios should have a variety of art-making materials to help build a creative and welcoming space.

ARTIST RESIDENCIES — Provide opportunities for artists to deepen their relationships to parks through longer term and ongoing projects that engage community in creative processes. Artist residencies can vary in length of time, form, approach and desired outcomes. Individual parks can creatively work with artists to set the goals, terms and agreements of exchange, support, and compensation.

ONGOING CLASSES/SEASONAL PROGRAMS — Offer a range of classes each season that cater to different age-groups (children and families, youth, teens, adults, seniors and/or multi-generational). The classes can vary by art form, number of meetings and skill level. Classes offered can activate a theme and/or a creative form (i.e. ceramics, drawing and painting, photography and digital arts, dance, theater, poetry and spoken word).

CUMULATIVE PROJECTS — An ongoing project can provide a space in which stand-alone activities can fold into an ongoing project. A mural is an example of a project that can consist of a series of activities. An artist can lead workshops that guide the community through the visioning, researching, designing, and the execution of a project.

ARTIST-RUN WORKSHOPS — Artists can be brought in for numerous activations and engagements in park programs. In addition to providing workshops, artists can also enhance programs and other park related events through activities such as: installations, guided conversations, an interactive sculpture at a park event, or a pop-up environment.

Infrastructure

A variety of strategies can help address spatial needs to support and enhance arts and culture programming.

LOW IMPACT STUDIOS — Can dedicate and repurpose rooms for arts and culture to provide the necessary infrastructure to store equipment and supplies. These spaces can also provide areas for more elaborate art activities. Ceramic studios, photography, digital art, drawing and painting require specialty equipment.

MOBILE ART CARTS — Mobile units can provide flexible infrastructure for pop-up studios that can activate various park locations on a need to use basis. As an alternative to a designated room, a mobile art cart loaded with supplies can offer a variety of creative activities, host singular events or ongoing open studio hours. Reoccurring workshops can also be done in an open outdoor setting.

GREENHOUSES/GARDENS — Community gardens not only function as a space to grow plants, but can also act as a creative laboratory, a gathering space, and an outdoor classroom that can host a range of activities.

OTHER SITES WITHIN PARKS — How can art and culture activate and enliven various spaces in parks that are underutilized? Art projects can improve the design and aesthetics of existing buildings and can creatively activate walls, gardens, BBQ's, picnic tables, and walking paths.

Conclusion

INSPIRED BY THE EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES that bring people to parks, this framework takes a thematic approach to support and enhance one's park experience. Organized around the themes of **WELLNESS, COMMUNITY, NATURE** and **FOOD**, it is designed to support parks in functioning as vibrant, enlivened and active spaces that provide opportunities for social and environmental connectivity and regeneration.

This publication is a beginning step as the Department of Parks and Recreation moves toward integrating arts and cultural programs into its vast network of facilities which include parks, nature centers, trails, and wildlife centers. However, to make such a program available and accessible to all LA County residents requires large-scale shifts. We as a society need to invest in life-affirming civic infrastructure such as parks so that robust year-round arts and culture programs can be offered across the county. This framework and toolkit looks at civic institutions not as inert structures where employees simply deliver programs to users, but rather as dynamic spaces that can be enlivened through participatory processes of exchange, co-learning and experimentation. This publication answers the call for relevant and relatable programming. The research and building of this framework and toolkit aim to support democratizing processes that bring to the table local communities, other public agencies, formal and informal arts organizations, nonprofits and grassroots community organizations to build the foundation for this organic and living infrastructure of arts and culture.

The approaches mentioned in the implementation section combined with the interviews, lesson plans and listed resources provide some insight on what these processes could look like and how they can be approached. The selection of interviewees, admittedly small in scope, for the number of voices needed for the endeavor at hand, helped to frame these approaches. The voices of the cultural workers noted here showcase examples around the thematic spokes in terms of their connections with land, community, history, and their generous and respectful relationships with constituents. Most importantly, they offer us ideas on how to move justly toward social, institutional and cultural transformation.

I offer this publication to the LA County Department of Parks and Recreation as someone who is a product of this land, its institutions and its communities. My roots as a working-class Chicana go back more than three generations. While growing up in Los Angeles, I was impacted by hostile institutional practices including segregation, police brutality, and educational experiences centered on the erasure of my culture, language and self-knowledge. Coming of age during the 1990s, art and culture opened up space to assert creative agency when there historically were not many options for young people to grow or find dignified and meaningful work.

Support on an institutional level for this organic and artistic grassroots blossoming was mixed and irregular. In spite of scant public resources, some creative projects, spaces and artistic expressions evolved, many unevenly and few with longevity. Unfortunately, investments in policing and the criminalization of youth cultural forms was more of a priority than arts and cultural programming. The use of public funds for mass incarceration and other forms of policing continues to negatively impact young people, families and communities. With mass protests against police brutality erupting all over the country, my hope is that we do not again make the same mistake in not investing in youth and emerging artistic voices.



People Consulted

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EARVIN MAGIC JOHNSON INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMMING PLANNING GROUP: Malisa Martin National Park Services, Ruth Bell, Parks RX and the Department of Public Health, Mika Yamamoto, Kim Bosell, Ansley Davies Department of Parks and Recreation

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Resources

A CULTURAL MAPPING TOOLKIT
https://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/cultural_mapping_toolkit.pdf

SALUDARTE BUILDING HEALTH EQUITY ON THE BEDROCK OF TRADITIONAL ARTS AND CULTURE
<https://actaonline.org/saludarte/>

HEALING THROUGH STORY: A TOOLKIT ON GRASSROOTS APPROACHES
<https://www.healingthroughstory.org/>

MAKE ART AT HOME: LACMA'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJy-HLfC3xxBdAa2vP1Js-RXrx1X0S27T>

HEART OF LA: ART LESSONS
<https://vimeo.com/holavisualarts>

About



SANDRA DE LA LOZA is a community-engaged visual artist, art educator and organizer who resides in Northeast Los Angeles where she grew up. Within her artistic practice she supports communities in finding and documenting hidden social and ecological histories to strengthen community bonds, relationships to place and support collective action toward community-led placemaking. She earned an M.F.A. in Photography from Cal State Long Beach and a B.A. in Chicana/o Studies from UC Berkeley.

From 2019–2020 she was an Artist-in-Residence with the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation in partnership with the Los Angeles Department of Arts and Culture.

hijadelos@gmail.com, www.hijadela.net

THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE (LADAC) advances arts, culture and creativity throughout LA County. They provide leadership, services and support in areas including grants and technical assistance for nonprofit organizations, countywide arts education initiatives, commissioning and care of civic art collections, research and evaluation, access to creative pathways, professional development, free community programs, and cross sector creative strategies that address civic issues. All of this work is framed by their commitment to fostering access to the arts and the County's Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative.

THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION (DPR) manages 183 parks and operates a network of 9 regional parks, 38 neighborhood parks, 20 community parks, 15 wildlife sanctuaries, 8 nature centers, 41 public swimming pools, more than 200 miles of multi-use trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding, and the largest municipal golf system in the nation, consisting of 20 golf courses. The department also maintains four botanical centers: The Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden, the South Coast Botanic Garden, Descanso Gardens, and Virginia Robinson Gardens. The department also owns and operates the iconic Hollywood Bowl and John Anson Ford Amphitheatre which are jointly managed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, providing County residents with valuable entertainment and cultural resources.



