



CIVIC ART AT VICTORIA COMMUNITY REGIONAL PARK 419 EAST 192ND STREET, CARSON, CA 90746

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

ABOUT THE ART

Cocina Abierta Collective's artwork for the Victoria Community Regional Park is a series of cooking videos that profile five members of the Victoria Park community preparing family recipes and participating in their favorite activities at the park. The videos accompany improvements that were made to the Victoria Park kitchen, multipurpose room and courtyard.

To get to know the park, Cocina Abierta attended community programs and observed how food plays a central role in bringing people together. The artists conducted recipe swaps during evening football practices and potlucks where they exchanged recipes with park users.

From their interactions, the artists identified five community chefs to participate in the project. In collaboration with videographer Mark Escribano and art and public engagement consultant Sara Daleiden, they filmed each chef preparing his or her favorite dish reflecting on the importance of family and tradition. The team also produced a series of profiles that show the chefs participating in ballroom dancing, basketball, tennis and softball at the park. View the videos at <http://www.lacountyarts.org/victoriaparkcooks/index.html>

Local youth from the Los Angeles Conservation Corps helped to complete the aesthetic improvements at the park, which include a new kitchen island and cooking tools, mirrors for dance instruction, cork and chalkboards for notices, and picnic tables painted with colorful stencils.

The artwork is one of four projects, funded by a grant from the Los Angeles County Parks and Regional Open Space District, that use arts-based solutions to promote the value of civic spaces and deter vandalism at County properties.



*Video still of one of the Victoria Park Cooks demonstrations
Photo: Mark Escribano*

ABOUT THE ARTIST

<http://www.sanchezjuarezstudio.com/> Cocina Abierta is run by a collective of Los Angeles based artists and restaurant workers. They organize food based interventions such as communal cookouts, DIY cooking shows and recipe swaps in collaboration with diverse community groups.



*Artist Christina Sanchez Juarez of Cocina Abierta working with youth to complete the picnic tables
Photo: Cocina Abierta Collective*

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

Cocina Abierta Collective's artwork was part of a series of projects designed around the idea that better engagement in the development of artworks would lead to better outcomes, 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