

venicearts

Los Angeles Center for **Media & Imagination**

Strategic Plan

2022-2025



*Venice Arts ignites, expands,
and transforms the lives of Los Angeles'
low-income youth through photography
and film education, and uses
participatory storytelling practices to
amplify the voices of underrepresented
communities around the world.*

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March 2020–December 2021
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When Venice Arts embarks on an update to its five-year Strategic Plan, we commonly spend the better part of a year in research and conversation. We conduct key informant Interviews and hold visioning focus groups with artists, parents, kids, our staff and Board. We assess our internal program, operational, and fundraising strengths and weaknesses. We look closely at the external landscape—socio-economic trends, data on changing community needs, and emerging opportunities that may shape our future vision and goals. All are distilled into a strategic plan designed to guide our way forward.

This plan was born out of a different time and a different process. It was written during a period of global uncertainty, as we contend with the many impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the parents of youth at Venice Arts, most living at the economic margins, remain anxious about their children's well-being. As young people grapple with the terrible emotional consequences of trauma and tragedy. And, as the ongoing struggle for racial and economic justice—principles around which Venice Arts was organized—have brought renewed focus to the pain and challenges experienced by youth in our programs, and to how we, as an organization and community, live our values of equity and inclusion.

This plan projects out over two to three years—depending on how we emerge from the continued COVID-19 public health crisis—with two focused strategies:

- 1) Launch our **Center for Creative Workforce Equity**, to serve as the umbrella for our college and creative career pathways programs, which we expect to significantly expand.
- 2) Take the time needed to **reflect, reconsider, and rebuild** our core programs most impacted by COVID-19 because, if nothing else, this pandemic has underscored the deep value of rooting a creative education in supportive relationships and community.

We see the horizon and it is one of hope and possibility.



Ruth Seroussi
Board President



Lynn Warshafky
Executive Director

Since the first COVID-19 shut-down in March of 2020, nearly every morning at Venice Arts began with a report-out of leading news and a discussion of its meaning for our lives and our work. We engaged regularly in conversation with staff and board, sector peers, and public and private institutional funders about the state of the world—most focused on the pandemic’s many disruptions and its long-term implications for young people, as well as its impact on our staff and programs and how we might build-back stronger than ever. This provided the context for the formal data review that informed our planning.

We looked at a wide-range of external and internal data (*Appendix C*), the latter including outcome data from student evaluations (*2021*), youth enrollment and retention (*2018-2021*), and surveys on family need in the face of the pandemic (*2020*). Our external review was largely focused on research, reports, and key informant interviews on the emerging socio-emotional needs of young people in the age of COVID-19, trends in the creative economy, and creative workforce development opportunities targeting economically and otherwise marginalized young adults, ages 18-24; the latter is an area in which we’ve been working for many years, and which we had long considered a mission-aligned area for growth and opportunity.

“I’m like a moth, involuntarily attracted to the light creeping in from an infected world. Curious and anxious, I find myself looking out the window dreaming of the day when we can all be free again.”

— KATHERINE, AGE 15, ADVANCED STUDIES PHOTOGRAPHY
PHOTO BY KAYLEN, AGE 17



Venice Arts began 2020 in an exceptionally positive position. Our 15 Beginning-to-Advanced Studies classes in film, photography, animation, and comics were full; we'd begun our second year providing programs to a local middle school and launched a new program for a high school; we completed a six-month, national Instagram campaign with XQ America, #ByStudentsforStudents; and had scheduled exhibitions and public programs, several in partnership with Magnum Photo, for the next 18-months.

Our Creative Pathways program kicked-off with a résumé, portfolio development, and job skills workshop for teens applying for summer internships. College Day for high school juniors was planned and we were looking forward to a robust Creative Careers Day. We were also working with national partners to launch Arts2Work, a creative sector pre-apprenticeship/ apprenticeship training program.

We were in a strong financial position and were working closely with an outside consulting firm to put the finishing touches on the soft-launch of an Expansion Campaign designed to assure Venice Arts' health and sustainability for many years to come. With the announcement that 33 students

had received Gold, Silver, and Honorable Mention awards from Scholastic Arts and Writing—among other accolades—we were poised for another successful year.

A Creative Response to Crisis

On March 17, 2020 Venice Arts shut down our physical campus and began to work remotely in response to Safer-at-Home Orders issued because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff immediately pivoted to design and deliver online classes and to transform our Creative Career Day into a six-week *Remote Visiting Artist Series*. Our College Counselor provided 1:1 support virtually to all high-school Juniors and Seniors, the latter of whom were now deciding whether to attend college remotely or defer. Our creative education programs increasingly employed strategies to help young people process, through their art and creative expression, growing isolation and fear related to COVID-19, racism, immigration status, and income inequality. Our staff also responded to young people's academic, social, and emotional needs: we distributed art materials, cameras, and laptops for home use; worked with 30% of our families to secure stable Internet services; and provided emergency sanitation supplies and grocery cash cards to our most impoverished families.

In April 2020, we lost our first staff member, tragically, to death. Over the course of the next 12 months, we would see two young people succumb to drug overdoses, would lose two long-time staffers to relocation and retirement, and several stalwart teaching artists to the call of new opportunity.

By June 2020, we were back in the office and running hybrid (*in-person and remote*) programs, having determined that nurturing adults, creative self-expression, and the deep sense of community that young people feel at Venice Arts were essential to decreasing isolation and supporting their well-being. By January 2021, nearly all of our programs were exclusively in-person. We found that our model—active and

experiential classes with no more than 12 youth, an artist-to-youth ratio of 1:3, and a focus on storytelling and creative development—lent itself well to these times.

Early in 2020, we had accurately predicted a 30% revenue shortfall from the loss of event and individual donor support, as well as from two long-time foundation donors changing their giving priorities. By year's end, this was largely offset by a PPP loan, emergency funding, and a generous rent reduction. Individual donors were starting to give again and our Board's online wine tasting event series *Creativity Uncorked*, was showing success.

“Zoom Portrait of Ivanna”

— EUGEAN, AGE 18
ADVANCED STUDIES PHOTOGRAPHY



In December 2020, we had signed a consulting contract with LA County's workforce division to build a *Film + Digital Media Career Pathways pilot*, targeting talented, low-income young people, ages 16-24, with priority for foster, homeless, and justice involved youth; only two months later we had enrolled 425 participants. Later that year we soft-launched our Center for Creative Workplace Equity; established a three-year funding and partnership commitment from United Talent Agency; and received several unsolicited gifts from private foundations. We are again financially stable and well-positioned for growth.

Challenge = Opportunity

The past 18-months have been a time of both tremendous challenge and opportunity. We've played to our strengths. We've been nimble and willing to experiment. And we've been focused on our mission. The pandemic has given us the gift of time to be thoughtful and forward thinking as we build for the future.

“Outside”

— KATHERINE, AGE 15
ADVANCED STUDIES PHOTOGRAPHY
HOLDING HER PHOTOGRAPH WHICH
WON A 2021 SCHOLASTIC ART & WRITING
GOLD KEY AWARD



Develop the Center for Creative Workforce Equity

Goals:

- A. Restructure all creative career development programs and projects for teens and young adults under the new *Center for Creative Workforce Equity* (Creative Pathways, Arts2Work, the Film + Digital Media Career Pathways Pilot)
- B. Sustain the Creative Workforce Equity (CCWE) Advisory Board
- C. Identify additional public resources and private partners to grow the Center’s programs—from exposure through internship and apprenticeship placement
- D. Institutionalize the programming format to assure continued broad reach across LA County through virtual learning, mobile classrooms brought to partner sites, and in-person learning
- E. Expand strategic engagement with creative sector businesses, including through the CCWE Advisory Board, funding partners, and increase opportunities for sector involvement at Venice Arts

**“The house feels really empty at night,
everything is dark and quiet, but safe.”**

— CITLALLI, AGE 19

ADVANCED STUDIES PHOTOGRAPHY



Reflect, Reconsider, Rebuild

Goals:

ART MENTORING + EDUCATION PROGRAM

- A. Rebuild core programs for youth—media arts education, college success, creative career pathways—to pre-COVID-19 levels (just under 500 youth per year)
- B. Dedicate necessary time to train and support new staff so that they understand and successfully deliver programs grounded in Venice Arts’ highly successful project-based, experiential, and child-centered pedagogy
- C. Rebuild staff structure to assure that key leadership and management positions are divested of providing direct services, and artist-mentors and college and career counselors have the time and knowledge needed to provide the mentoring that has been the hallmark of Venice Arts’ success
- D. Build-out the animation track so that its sequencing—Beginning to Advanced Studies—aligns with our other educational programs

GALLERY + PUBLIC PROGRAMS

- A. Reconsider the structure and goals of our exhibitions and public programs, assessing how best to adequately fund and staff these efforts
- B. Relaunch gallery programs, including revisiting partnerships with Magnum, among others, and with an initial goal of four annual exhibitions and related film screenings and/or public programs

Reflect, Reconsider, Rebuild

Goals:

STAFFING

- A. Restructure existing staff to minimize single positions being responsible for multiple, mission-critical roles; funding permitting, add new staff to manage offloaded responsibilities
- B. Complete succession planning for key leadership positions

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

- A. Rebuild Board engagement with the Board again raising 100% of goal
- B. Recruit and place at least three new Board members, passionate about the organization's mission, able to meet the give/get requirements, and representing, in particular, the Latinx and Black young people that the organization serves

“Self Portrait, 2020”

— KAYLA, AGE 17

ADVANCED STUDIES PHOTOGRAPHY



Reflect, Reconsider, Rebuild

Goals:

DEVELOPMENT + FUNDRAISING

- A. Rehire a second leadership position in Development
- B. Rebuild development programs and processes to pre-COVID-19 levels, including re-instituting multi-year planning, as well as fundraising data input, analysis, and reporting
- C. Sustain institutional fundraising, while growing new sources of foundation, corporate, and public support
- D. Sustain event-related fundraising at least at prior levels, growing revenues over time as in-person events are reintroduced
- E. Revisit the need and viability of relaunching our Expansion Campaign effort
- F. Rebuild multi-platform communications strategies to raise the visibility of core programs and new initiatives

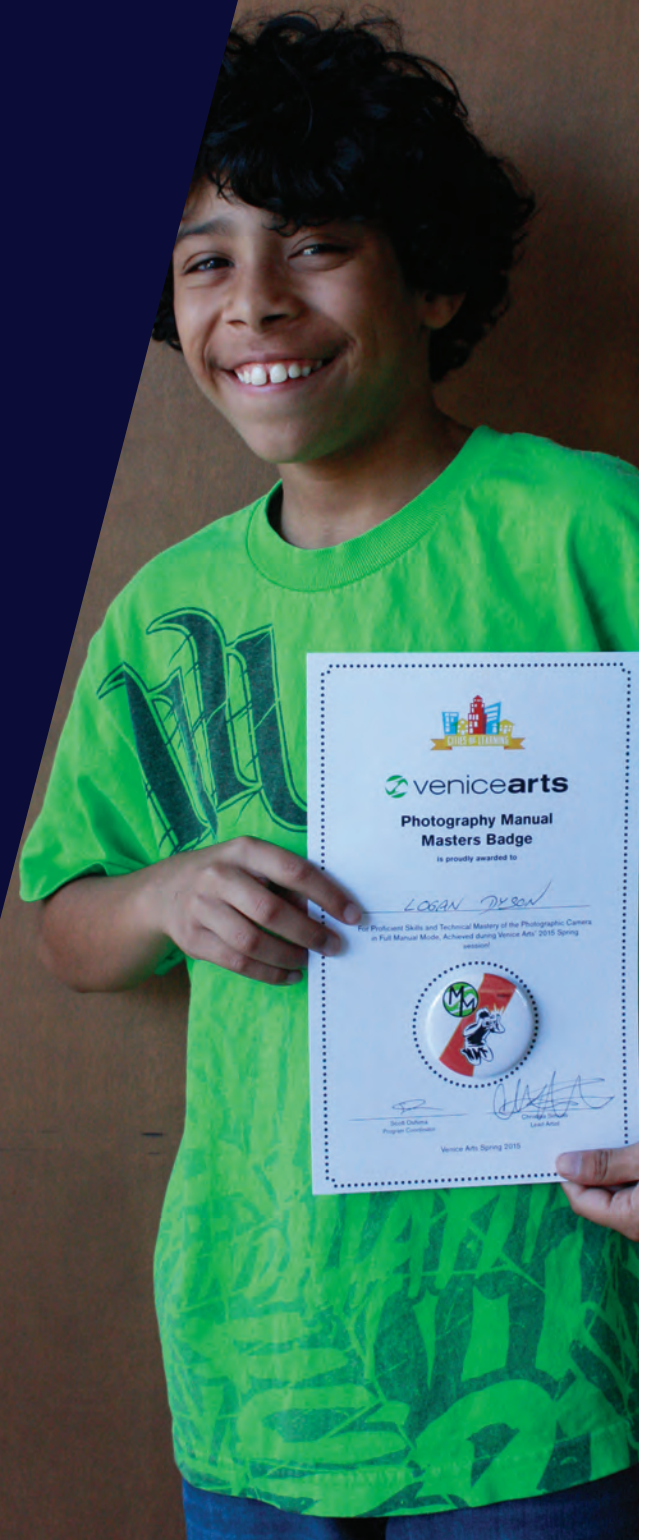
“Photo 'Zines”

— EVELYN, AGE 11
SNAP THE FRAME CLASS



Appendices

- 12 Staff + Board List
- 14 Creative Workforce Equity Advisory Board
- 15 External + Internal Sources



Staff | @venicearts.org

EXECUTIVE, ADMINISTRATION, DEVELOPMENT

Lynn Warshafsky, *Executive Director*

Karen Kiss, *Director of Grants + Administration*

Lydia Golitz, *Development +
Communications Associate*

Judith Stephan, *Accountant*

Jennifer Tyler, *Bookkeeper*

PROGRAM

Julia Berghammer Villarreal, *Director of Education*

Alicia Bad Heart Bull, *Creative Pathways Manager*

Cecilia Arana, *Program Operations Coordinator*

Jacinto Astiazarán, *Lead Artist, Film + Animation*

Alex Lee, *Lead Filmmaker, Creative Pathways*

Camila De Luna, *Administrative Assistant*

LEAD TEACHING ARTISTS

Sean Blocklin, *Photography*

Jennifer Browne, *Photography*

David Dodds, *Animation*

Kelly Fogel, *Photography*

Tiffany Ike, *Film*

Mike Jasorka, *Sequential Art (Comics)*

Fred Thornton, *Film + Digital Media Pathways*

TEACHING ASSISTANTS + VOLUNTEER MENTORS 2020-2021

Bazille, *Photography Mentor*

Charley Capp, *Teaching Assistant, Film*

Mike Cersosimo, *Artist-Mentor, Film*

Isa Coty, *Teaching Assistant, Film + Animation*

Kashi McDaniels, *Teaching Assistant,
Film + Digital Media Pathways*

Esmeralda Martinez, *Teaching Assistant,
Film + Digital Media Pathways*

Lucy Roze, *Teaching Assistant, Film*

Meka Tome, *Teaching Assistant, Photography*

Michael Verdin, *Teaching Assistant, Film*

Board of Directors

OFFICERS

Ruth Seroussi, *Attorney-at-Law, President*

Steven Oritt, *Filmmaker, Vice President*

Michael Cannone, *Senior Partner, Westmount
Asset Management, Secretary/Treasurer*

DIRECTORS

Claudia Bartlett, *Owner, photo l.a.*

Moze Cowper, *Managing Partner, Cowper Law, LLP*

J-T Ladt, *Head of Digital Strategy, Illumination*

Michael Newhouse, *Attorney-at-Law,
Newhouse Law Group, PC*

John Nguyen, *Executive Producer of Film,
Media Monks*

Meredith Oritt, *Catering Services*

Iris Paulino, *Regional Manager, Mechanics Bank*

Matt Ogens, *Filmmaker, Commercial Director*

Tristan Robinson, *Attorney-at-Law, Ashurst LLP*

Sarah Sung, *Marketing Consultant*

Lynn Warshafsky, *Executive Director*

“Cyanotope Portrait of Ceci, 2021”

— ADAM
TEACHING ARTIST



Advisory Board

MEMBERS

Rabia Abedin, Manager, Early Career Programs
& Diversity Outreach, *Dreamworks*

Wil Bazille, *Bazille Photography*

Robert Chavez, Associate Director, *South Bay
Workforce Investment Board*

Fanshen Cox, Producer and Development
Director, *Pearl Street Films*

Silvia Curiel, Emerging Artist, *Venice Arts' Alumna*

Desiree Flores, Director, Employee Social Impact,
UTA Foundation

J-T Ladt, Head Of Digital Strategy, *Illumination*

Wendy Levy, CEO, *The Alliance For Media
Arts + Culture*

Tiffany S. Miller, Dean, Apprenticeships,
West Los Angeles College

Kashi McDaniels, Emerging Filmmaker,
Venice Arts' Alumnus

John Nguyen, Executive Producer, Film,
Media Monks

Berenice Robinson, VP Post-Production,
Walt Disney Animation Studios

Catherine Rotunno, Manager, Global
Corporate Social Responsibility,
Sony Pictures Entertainment

Elyssa Seidman, Strategy Director, *MOTIVE*

Mitchell Snary, Animator, *Walt Disney
Animation Studios*

Ferren Warner, VP People And Culture, *Macro*

“Untitled”

— KELLY, AGE 17

ADVANCED STUDIES PHOTOGRAPHY



Articles + Research Reports

The Alliance for Media Arts + Culture. "Arts2Work Report." 2017.

Beacon Economics, LLC. "Film and Digital Media Industry, Los Angeles County Perspective." 2017.

Beacon Economics, LLC. "Otis Report on the Creative Economy." 2021.

Benevity Impact Labs. "The State of Corporate Purpose: A Benevity Impact Labs Report." 2021.

Blume, H. "What do L.A. students want most? Mental health help, an adult to listen, reliable tech."

The Los Angeles Times, 14 November 2021, pp. B1, B6.

California Workforce Development Board. "High Road Training Partnership." 2018.

Center for a Competitive Workforce. "Entertainment and the Rise of Digital Media in the Los Angeles Basin, An Industry Disrupted." 2018.

Communities for Los Angeles Student Success (CLASS) & United Way of Greater Los Angeles.

"Where do we go from here: Students speak about learning needs in Covid-19-era L.A." 2021.

County of Los Angeles Public Health. "Housing and Health in Los Angeles County."

Social Determinants of Health. 2015.

Gonzalez-Vasquez, A.L., Lopez, M.N. "The High Road to Economic Prosperity: An Assessment of the California Workforce Development Board's High Road Training Partnership Initiative." UCLA Labor Center. 2021.

Koller, V. "Closing The Gap; The Future of Apprenticeships in California." Social Policy Research Associates, Jobs For The Future. 2018.

Krieger, C. and Maudlin, B. "Make or Break: Race and Ethnicity in Entry-level Compensation for Arts Administrators in Los Angeles County." Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture with the Business and Management of the Arts at Claremont Graduate Institute. 2021.

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Los Angeles County Arts Commission, Los Angeles County Arts Ed Collective. "Building Creative Career Pathways for Youth: A Field Scan for Los Angeles County." 2019.

National Endowment for the Arts, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. "Creative Economy State Profiles." 2019.

Articles + Research Reports

National Skills Coalition. "Broadening the Apprenticeship Pipeline." 2018.

NORC at the University of Chicago. "The Role of the Arts and Creative Expression in Employability and Economic Opportunity." 2018.

Senators Allen, Newman, Rubio. "California Creative Workforce Act of 2021." California Legislative Information. 3 September 2021. [leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB628](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB628).

Whittaker, A., Torres-Guillen, S., Morton, M., Jordan, H., Coyle, S., Mann, A., & Sun, W. "Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff is Harming Students." American Civil Liberties Union. 2019.

The William Penn Foundation. "The Social-emotional Benefits of the Arts: A New Mandate for Arts Education." 2017.

Sample Conversations with Peer Networks

Arts + College Network, Herb Alpert Foundation

Executive Director Network of Los Angeles Arts Education Organizations

Media Arts Executive Directors' Roundtable, A national network organized by the Alliance for Media Arts + Culture

Teen Programmers Network of Los Angeles Arts Education Organizations

Internal Data

2016-2020 Strategic Plan and its achievements

Aggregate outcome data from annual student evaluations (2021)

Giving Analysis: Historical comparison of annual dollars raised, sources, number of donors, etc.

Summary of anecdotal data from staff, faculty, and mentors (2020-21)

Changes in student enrollment (2018-2021)

Student retention (2018-2021)

Two Venice Arts' surveys of family need (2020)

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