

Contact: Colleen O'Mara @ Hype
colleen@hypeworld.com
www.hypeworld.com

Venice Arts' Center for Creative Workforce Equity (CCWE) Expands Its Film + Digital Media Pilot Program In Partnership with Los Angeles County

Venice, CA – (May 23, 2022) – Venice Arts' Center for Creative Workforce Equity (CCWE) celebrates the expansion of its Film + Digital Media Career Pathways Pilot, designed in partnership with Los Angeles County Economic and Workforce Development (EWD) and representing the County's first-ever investment of this scale in creative career development for low-income County youth.

About the partnership, L.A. County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl says, "L.A. will retain our competitive edge in the creative industries by embracing all of our regional diversity. That is what positions us so well to produce great creative work that appeals to the entire world. The Film + Digital Media Career Pathways Pilot will strengthen our talent pipeline by bringing low-income young people into creative careers."

This innovative and groundbreaking creative career equity pilot compensates young people while they learn. "This year we are able to pay low-income young creatives for their education and training at Venice Arts. This is a radical rethinking of how to build equity and opportunity," shares Lynn Warshafsky, Executive Director of Venice Arts. "It flips the education cost-benefit equation on its head: instead of debt, income. It allows young people who may be at the economic margins to really commit to learning. A small investment for what, we believe, will have a significant impact."

Head of Digital Strategy at Illumination Entertainment, one of the industry's leading producers of animated films, J-T Ladts says, "Many paths in the entertainment industry do not require higher education, in fact, that traditional route can actually become a barrier of entry for talented but marginalized youth. The CCWE has tackled that issue head-on by providing these aspiring storytellers a unique track of training with some of the best mentors in the business, while actually being paid — providing a path for their success and for much-needed diversification within the industry itself."

The Pilot's programs are designed to support the creative aspirations of youth, while building a more diverse and inclusive pipeline of talent for the creative sector. They range from Creative Conversations, which exposes young people to myriad creative sector professionals and careers, to intensive education and training, as well as paid internship and apprenticeship placements.

Natasha Sattler, Head of Production at post-production studio Ethos, notes her admiration for the work Venice Arts does. "Venice Arts has cultivated some of the best young talent in Los Angeles by providing them opportunities that cross many different aspects of the Los Angeles art world," says Sattler. "Their eye for up-and-coming talent is impeccable."

For students, the access and opportunities provided are invaluable. “My parents immigrated from India and our family has no connections to the entertainment industry,” expresses recent graduate Amaan Merchant, placed in partner United Talent Agency’s externship program. “I always felt silly and irresponsible for wanting to engage in creative endeavors. My time here at Venice Arts has expanded my worldview immensely.”

For Amber Bolden, whose internship converted into a full-time position, the culture at Venice Arts inspired her to begin looking into building a media arts center/nonprofit in South LA “so these resources are more accessible to those who do not have the same advantages as I have,” explains Bolden. “I recently returned to Venice Arts as a Teacher’s Assistant where I am able to watch teens experience the joy of discovery. I know their lives will be changed like mine.”

Industry involvement and leadership is central to Venice Arts’ model. Strategic partner United Talent Agency (UTA) says: “Since the UTA Foundation launched the ‘Creative Conversations with UTA’ series last year in partnership with the CCWE, students from Venice Arts have been able to hear from UTA’s agents and executives from across the company about their professional journeys and firsthand experiences in the entertainment industry,” says Desiree Flores, Director of Employee Social Impact for the UTA Foundation. “We are proud to join Venice Arts in their commitment to helping students from greater Los Angeles County gain exposure and access to exciting opportunities in the creative space.”

Elyssa Seidman, Senior Manager of Brand Strategy at creative agency Liquid Sunshine, recognizes the opportunities the program puts in motion to provide long-term guidance and support for their students. “Venice Arts gives young people exposure to the creative industry and builds opportunities for them to turn their passion into a viable career.”

On Saturday June 4th, from 12-2 p.m. Venice Arts will host a student graduation event to celebrate the culmination of 160-hours of paid education and training in visual storytelling, production, and editing, as well as youths’ placement in creative sector internships. Various Advisory Board members and other industry luminaries will be in attendance. Venice Arts 13445 Beach Avenue, Venice, CA 90292.

About Venice Arts:

Venice Arts, a leading media arts education organization provides free creative education, college pathways, and creative career programs to Los Angeles’ low-income young people; offers young and emerging artists, as well as professional photographers and filmmakers, with opportunities to share their work and engage with a broader community; and brings the power of storytelling and participatory practices to communities around the world.

www.venice-arts.org

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Additional Resources:

<https://www.venicearts.org/ccwe>

<https://www.venicearts.org/fdm>