



MEDIA ALERT
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Contact: Gabriel Cifarelli
Public Information Director
gabriel.cifarelli@lacity.org
213.202.5560

CITY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS ANNOUNCES ELEVEN MASTER ARTISTS SELECTED TO RECEIVE CITY OF LOS ANGELES INDEPENDENT MASTER ARTIST PROJECT (COLA IMAP) GRANTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-26

LOS ANGELES, CA – November 17, 2025 – The **City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)** announces eleven master artists selected for the 2025/26 City of Los Angeles Independent Master Artist Project (COLA-IMAP). Representing a broad array of artistic disciplines, the artists in the 2025/26 cohort collectively demonstrate the vitality of the Los Angeles creative community, with artists using their practice to explore complex themes of identity, social justice, mental health, and cultural heritage through innovative and interdisciplinary approaches. These master artists will produce new artwork with a grant of \$10,000 from the City of Los Angeles, presented either through an exhibition or live performance, and an accompanying published catalog.

Recipients include: **Michelle Bitting**: Literary Artist (poet or fiction writer); **Audrey Chan**: Visual/Design Artist; **Juliette Jones**: Performing Artist, solo musician; **Daeun Jung**: Performing Artist, choreographer-dancer; **Gelare Khoshgozaran**: Visual/Design Artist; **Sandra Low**: Visual/Design Artist; **Heather Rasmussen**: Visual/Design Artist; **Rogê**: Performing Artist, solo musician; **Sarah Rosalena**: Visual/Design Artist; **Brian Sonia-Wallace**: Literary Artist: poet/fiction writer; and **Maylee Todd**: Performing Artist, solo musician.

COLA IMAP is a collaborative effort between DCA's Grants Administration, Community Arts, and Marketing, Development, Design, and Digital Research Divisions. The DCA Grants Administration Division selected the artists through an independent panel review process with the participation of professional artists and cultural producers.

The 2025/26 COLA IMAP artists will premiere their work in spring 2026, with the COLA IMAP performing and literary artists confirmed to return to **Grand Performances** in downtown Los Angeles to present their debut performances. The exhibition and the performance are free for all to attend.

"Since 1997, COLA IMAP has nurtured creativity and helped build career paths for artists, while supporting a thriving creative environment in Los Angeles," says **Daniel**

Tarica, General Manager, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. Adding: "The resources and presentation platform provided by COLA IMAP give artists the freedom to create, take risks, and grow as artists. DCA congratulates each of the 11 recipients of this year's grant and looks forward to sharing their brilliant new works with the public."

Artist Bios

Michelle Bitting

Michelle Bitting is an award-winning Los Angeles poet, prose, and fiction writer with over four decades of experience as an artist. She holds an MFA, MA, and PhD, and currently serves as a Senior Lecturer in Poetry, Fiction, Creative Non-Fiction, and Drama at Loyola Marymount University. Her work has been described as "lush, ruminative, and deliriously beautiful excursions into the female psyche," exploring themes of memory, family, and identity.

Bitting is the author of several books, including *Dummy Ventriloquist* (2024), *Nightmares & Miracles* (2022), and *Broken Kingdom* (2018), with *Nightmares & Miracles* being named a 2022 Kirkus Reviews Best of Indie. She often works in a lyric-narrative mode whose voice-driven lines explore characters drawn from personal and historical figures. She is currently working on *Beryl*, a hybrid novel-in-progress about her great-grandmother, acclaimed 1930s character actress Beryl Mercer, which has already seen chapters published and a theatrical monologue performed. She has received numerous awards and grants, including the Wilder Book Prize and the Sacramento Poetry Center Book Award.

michellebitting.com

Audrey Chan

Audrey Chan is a Los Angeles-based artist whose research-based practice centers community allegories through projects sited across public and civic spaces and gallery installations. Born in Chicago in 1982 and now residing in Culver City, she holds an MFA from California Institute of the Arts and a BA from Swarthmore College. Chan's art takes on democratized forms such as murals, drawings, paintings, comic books, and AR monuments, often activating personal and public archives to create visual allegories reflecting on the stories and symbols of marginalized communities that have historically been erased from traditional master narratives of American identity.

Her notable public art commissions include *Will Power Allegory*, a 168-foot porcelain enamel mural at the Little Tokyo/Arts District Metro Regional Connector Station (2022), and "The Care We Create," a large-scale mural for the ACLU of Southern California (2020). Chan has received numerous awards, residencies, and fellowships, including a DCA Cultural Trailblazer award and the 18th St. California Creative Corps Fellowship.

audreychan.net

Juliette Jones

Juliette Jones is a Los Angeles-based violinist, composer, and creative director with over 15 years of experience. Her artistic practice blends orchestral instrumentation with contemporary, interdisciplinary narratives, using music to tell stories, drive social change, and foster communal healing. She specializes in multi-genre compositions, merging classical and cinematic precision with the emotional power of hip-hop, R&B, and other modern styles, particularly focusing on Black musical

expression.

Jones is the Founder and Creative Director of Wondersmith Entertainment, a company dedicated to creating bespoke string and orchestra-centered experiences and promoting diversity in music by employing BIPOC musicians. Her notable works include the Lincoln Center commission "Passing the Crown: Celebrating the Queens of Hip-Hop" and the "Each Kindness Suite," inspired by Jacqueline Woodson's book. She has collaborated with major artists such as Beyoncé, John Legend, and OneRepublic, and has been concertmaster for productions like the Emmy-nominated *Jesus Christ Superstar: Live!*. Jones is committed to elevating underrepresented voices and challenging exclusionary traditions in classical music.

wondersmithent.com

Daeun Jung

Daeun Jung is an LA-based Korean immigrant dance-maker who connects traditional Korean dance forms with contemporary performance practices through self-constructed systems. Holding an MFA in Dance from UCLA and a Bachelor of Dance from Ewha Womans University, Jung's works interlace classical Korean dance vocabulary, irregular folk rhythms, live Pansori singing, electronic beats, and somatic methods. She challenges binary approaches of "traditional" versus "contemporary."

Her practice is described as "math art in motion," "playful singularity," "powerful and precise," and "controlled frenzy." Notable works, including *BYOUL* and *NORRI* are described as "mind-twisting and totally engrossing," balancing scholarly exploration with humor. Jung has received significant support from residencies and grants, including the National Dance Project Production Grant. She is currently developing a twenty-minute solo dance piece, aiming to guide the dancing body into a kinesthetic trance state, pushing physical limits, and decolonizing her body from pre-established forms.

daeunjung.com

Gelare Khoshgozaran

Gelare Khoshgozaran is a Los Angeles-based artist and queer immigrant educated both in Iran and the US, whose "undisciplinary" practice explores the enduring legacies of imperial violence, war, militarization, archives, and borders. Through film and video, she constructs "peripheral narratives" that seek to redefine existing constructions of 'home' as a means of approaching new conceptualizations of belonging.

Khoshgozaran has an MFA from the University of Southern California and a BFA from the University of Arts, Tehran. She has exhibited extensively at institutions including MoMA, Delfina Foundation, and the Hammer Museum. Her film *The Retreat* (2023) earned the New Cinema Award at the Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, praised for its boundary-pushing approach. She is currently developing *Ghosts of Salt*, a video installation inspired by personal history and the mechanics of censorship. Her work is in numerous collections, including LUX Moving Image and the Hammer Museum Contemporary Collection.

gelarekhoshgozaran.com

Sandra Low

Sandra Low is a Los Angeles-based visual artist specializing in painting and

drawing. Her work, characterized by absurd juxtapositions, surrealism, and idiosyncratic narratives, satirizes consumerism and stereotypes with a cross-cultural, ironic, and critical perspective. Low's artistic practice centers on humor, social commentary, and storytelling, often exploring the complexities of the American immigrant experience and her Chinese heritage.

She holds an MFA from the University of Southern California and a BA from UC Berkeley. Low has exhibited extensively in the Los Angeles area, including at the USC Pacific Asia Museum, Walter Maciel Gallery, and Art Salon Chinatown. Her work has been acquired by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and she received the California Community Foundation's Fellowship for Visual Artists in 2022. Low is also a professor of painting and drawing at Rio Hondo College. Her art, particularly the "Cheesy Paintings" series, uses American cheese as a metaphor for consumer glut and cultural contamination, reflecting on environmental and societal issues.

sandra-low.com

Heather Rasmussen

Heather Rasmussen is a photographer working in Los Angeles. Her artistic practice, influenced by her background in classical ballet, explores themes of sexuality, the grotesque, and subconscious longing through carefully composed photographs, installations, and videos. Rasmussen often uses her own body in conjunction with everyday objects like vegetables, fruit, and mirrors to subvert traditional representations of the female form, motherhood, and desire with humor and surrealism.

Her work challenges art historical narratives, particularly those by male photographers, by offering an intimate, female perspective on pleasure, play, and pathos. Rasmussen's artistic process, which avoids digital manipulation, frequently incorporates "photo-multigraphs" and mirrors to create complex illusions and multiple reflections. Her work is part of the permanent collections at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and she has exhibited extensively, with upcoming shows including "Synchronicities: Intersecting Abstraction with Figuration" at The Bemis Center in 2025. Rasmussen's proposed COLA-IMAP project involves creating a suite of outdoor photographs using a mobile mirror room in her garden, marking a new direction in her exploration of aging bodies and natural cycles.

heather-rasmussen.com

Sarah Rosalena

Sarah Rosalena (Wixárika) is a Los Angeles-based interdisciplinary artist who works between handicraft traditions, particularly, weaving and beadwork, ceramics, and emerging technologies. Her practice is rooted in Indigenous cosmologies, reinterpreted through digital tools and her own hand. She combines cutting-edge technologies to blur binaries between high and low tech, human and nonhuman, ancient and future, tradition and progress beyond power structures rooted in colonialism.

Rosalena's art, described as transforming power structures held by conquest, employs experimental techniques, from digital Jacquard looms to 3D ceramic printers programmed to mimic basket weaving. Her works, like *Exit Point* and *Above Below*, critically examine colonial ideologies by integrating machine learning with traditional crafts to deconstruct images of systemic power and surveillance, often

using materials like Mars regolith simulant and cochineal-dyed wool to reveal hidden histories. An Associate Professor at UC Santa Barbara, Rosalena's work is held in permanent collections at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Columbus Museum of Art, and has been featured in major exhibitions including *In All Directions* at the Columbus Museum of Art.

<https://sarahrosalena.com/>

Rogê

Rogê is a celebrated Brazilian artist, singer, songwriter, and musician. A Latin Grammy nominee and Brazilian Music Award recipient, he is a prominent figure in MPB (Brazilian Popular Music). He has released seven solo albums, including his 2023 U.S. debut *CURYMAN*, and two collaborative projects: *Na Veia* with Arlindo Cruz and *Seu Jorge & Rogê* with Seu Jorge.

Rogê's music, a fusion of traditional Brazilian sounds like samba and bossa nova with global influences, aims for timeless appeal. Having lived in Los Angeles for five years, his recent work bridges cultures, blending Brazilian heritage with American genres such as jazz, blues, and folk, exploring both their harmonies and tensions. This artistic evolution reflects an homage to his roots while expanding the scope of Brazilian music globally.

Career highlights include supporting acts for Altin Gün and Gipsy Kings (including two sold-out nights at the Hollywood Bowl). Discovered by Seymour Stein, he signed with Warner Music in 2014. Rogê was an ambassador for ESPN's 2014 World Cup broadcast and composed official themes for the City of Rio de Janeiro (2016 Olympics) and FIFA's 2014 World Cup mascot. His work has been praised by the LA Times, The Guardian, MOJO, and Grammy.com.

His work has received critical acclaim from publications such as the LA Times, The Guardian, MOJO, Grammy.com, and Wax Poetics. Notably, *The Guardian* described his work as an "exuberant, heartwarming creation," and Gilles Peterson called it "A Modern Brazilian Masterpiece." In September 2024, Remezcla provided a short review summarizing his upcoming album, *Curyman II*. Thomas Brenneck, producer and owner of Diamond West Records, praises Rogê's ability to blend traditional Brazilian sounds with contemporary influences, highlighting his creativity, vision, and collaborative spirit.

rogebrasil.com.br

Brian Sonia-Wallace

Brian Sonia-Wallace is a poet and cultural worker whose writing is rooted in community engagement and social practice, often blurring the lines between author and subject. A queer, third-generation Angeleno, he served as West Hollywood's City Poet Laureate from 2020-2023, receiving an Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellowship in 2021-22.

He is the author of "Maze Mouth" (2023), "The Poetry of Strangers" (2020), and "I Sold These Poems, Now I Want Them Back" (2016). His work has been featured in *The Guardian* and *Rolling Stone*. Sonia-Wallace is the founder of Pride Poets, an LGBTQ+ poetry society, and an organizer for the APLA Health Writers Group for HIV+ writers, demonstrating a dedication to uplifting marginalized voices.

Currently, he is undertaking a year-long residency with the LA LGBT Center, developing a 10-year retrospective show and writing project that explores dreams.

Sonia-Wallace teaches creative writing at UCLA Writers' Extension and Red Hen Press Writers-in-the-Schools. He holds an MA in Sustainable Development from the University of St Andrews, Scotland.

rentpoet.com

Maylee Todd

Maylee Todd, based in Los Angeles, is a multimedia/inter artist, incorporating a wide range of artistic disciplines; performance art, music production, dance, AR/VR performance, and curation. Todd's artistic influence comes from psychology, digital identities. A composer and musician, she uses the harp as her main instrument with synthesizers and lyrics focused on mental health.

Her artistic practice creates immersive, transformative experiences that explore digital identity, technology, and mental well-being. Notable works include "Virtual Womb," an acclaimed installation-performance series, and the science fiction album "MALOO" (Stones Throw Records, 2022), which garnered her a 'Best Creative Campaign' AIM Award and featured the first avatar performance on NPR's Tiny Desk Home Concert Series.

Currently, Todd is pioneering the use of an EEG headband to convert brainwaves into real-time synth music for her live performances, a groundbreaking endeavor that earned her the Woman In Music Honors 2024 International Achievement Award. Her proposed COLA-IMAP project aims to develop a 20-30-minute solo harp performance, integrating live brain data to offer a meditative auditory journey exploring mental health and digital disconnection.

<https://linktr.ee/mayleetodd>

About the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)

As a leading, progressive arts and cultural agency, DCA empowers Los Angeles' vibrant communities by supporting and providing access to quality visual, literary, musical, performing, and educational arts programming; managing vital cultural centers; preserving historic sites; creating public art; and funding services provided by arts organizations and individual artists.

Formed in 1925, DCA promotes arts and culture as a way to ignite a powerful dialogue, engage LA's residents and visitors, and ensure LA's varied cultures are recognized, acknowledged, and experienced. DCA's mission is to strengthen the quality of life in Los Angeles by stimulating and supporting arts and cultural activities, ensuring public access to the arts for residents and visitors alike.

DCA advances the social and economic impact of arts and culture through grantmaking; public art; community arts; performing arts; and strategic marketing, development, design, and digital research. DCA creates and supports arts programming, maximizing relationships with other city agencies, artists, and arts 5 and cultural nonprofit organizations to provide excellent service in neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles.

For more information, please visit culture.lacity.gov or follow us on Facebook at: facebook.com/culturela, Instagram @culture_la, YouTube.com/@CultureLA and Twitter @culture_la.

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