



**MEDIA ALERT**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and LACMA  
announce  
Partnership to Preserve Historic Watts Towers**

**Department of Cultural Affairs joins forces with LACMA  
to protect the Towers, raise their profile, and encourage further support.**

(Los Angeles, October 22, 2010)—The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) today announced a collaboration with The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), toward the day-to-day preservation of the Watts Towers in a one-year agreement. LACMA will provide staff-time and expertise to identify repairs to the Towers, preserving the unique outdoor public landmark, and the City will provide \$150,000 in funds towards this effort.

LACMA will reach out to other local institutions including the Getty, the California African American Museum, the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of Southern California, and others, for their expertise and recommendations in support of LACMA's efforts. LACMA will also partner with community members to address local concerns about the way the Towers are cared for and managed, and to recommend a long-term plan. Tours, community festivals, and other art center and park-related programs will continue to be operated by the Department of Cultural Affairs in collaboration with the Watts Towers Arts Center and the Charles Mingus Youth Arts Center.

LACMA's specific scope of work will be to undertake a review and assessment of the City's existing conservation and preservation plans for the Watts Towers, and to develop a comprehensive management plan, including an organizational structure and long-term budget for conservation efforts, suggesting potential collaborations, and identifying possible funding sources. LACMA will provide day-to-day oversight and monitoring of conservation and preservation of the Towers and of the implementation of minor restoration and repairs, under the direction of the museum's Conservation Center. LACMA will also engage with potential funders that could provide resources to raise awareness of the Watts Towers and present the conservation and other program needs.

LACMA Director Michael Govan said, "By expanding LACMA's mission to include the care, preservation, and interpretation of architectural and sculptural works of art within the community that are at risk of neglect and deterioration, we are changing the way LACMA functions as a museum, from what we collect to how we work within the community more directly. The historical Watts Towers are an indelible landmark within the Los Angeles community, and we are proud to help sustain efforts in preserving them."



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LACMA hopes that its involvement in this project will launch a larger effort to engage not only the community in supporting the site's preservation, but also local, regional, national, and international awareness of the unique nature of the Towers and their significance. Future goals include securing sustainable philanthropic support, as well as increased outreach to create broader awareness for the Watts Towers.

As Mark Ridley-Thomas of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Second District, noted, "The Watts Towers are of great importance to the entire region—as a source of inspiration to Angelenos and as a cultural treasure. I am proud to partner with LACMA on this necessary and important project to stabilize and preserve one of Los Angeles's great artistic monuments."

Olga Garay, Executive Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs, added, "The City of Los Angeles acknowledges the importance of public/private partnerships to preserve arts and cultural programs for Angelenos and the millions of annual visitors to our City. We recognize the iconic nature of the Watts Towers, and the responsibility we have to preserve this National Historic Landmark for current and future generations. Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa has championed our partnership with LACMA, as well as our collaboration with other stakeholders such as the California African American Museum and the J. Paul Getty Trust. This is evidence that the City of Los Angeles as well as the State of California—owners of the Watts Towers—are committed to creating innovative strategies needed to maintain Los Angeles's most precious cultural assets."

#### **About Watts Towers**

The Watts Towers are the work of Italian immigrant Simon Rodia, who lived most of his adult years in the Watts district of Los Angeles. Constructed between 1921 and 1954, this collection of 17 interconnected structures form an iconic monument in the city of Los Angeles. Over the years, they have become a magnet for artists and have created a sense of pride within the community.

#### **About DCA**

The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) generates and supports high-quality arts and cultural experiences for Los Angeles' 4 million residents and 25 million annual visitors. DCA advances the social and economic impact of the arts and assures access to arts and cultural experiences through grant making, marketing, public art, community arts programming, arts education, and partnerships with artists and arts and cultural organizations in neighborhoods throughout the City of Los Angeles.

DCA's operating budget and managed portfolio totaled \$36.7 million in fiscal year 2009/10. It consisted of: \$9.6 million in Transient Occupancy Tax funds; \$12.2 million in funds from the Public Works Improvements Arts Program; \$8.6 million from the Private Arts Development Fee Program; \$4.9 million in City related and indirect cost allocations; and \$1.4 million in private and public funds raised during the year. DCA grants approximately \$3 million annually to over 280 artists and nonprofit arts organizations through its long-established Grants Administration Division. DCA provides arts and cultural programming in its numerous neighborhood arts and cultural centers, theaters, and historic sites, and manages several arts and education programs.

The Department also administers the City's Private Arts Development Fee and Public Works Improvements Arts Programs, a portfolio of approximately \$20.8 million in fiscal year 2009/10. In addition, DCA raises outside public and private funds, over \$10.5 million



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since fiscal year 2007/08, used to re-grant to LA-based arts and cultural organizations for special grant initiatives and to support DCA's special programming and facilities. DCA markets the City's cultural events through development and collaboration with strategic partners, design and production of creative promotional materials, and management of the [culturela.org](http://culturela.org) website visited by over 2.7 million people annually.

#### **About LACMA**

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography-and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a contemporary museum on its campus. With this expanded space for contemporary art, innovative collaborations with artists, and an ongoing *Transformation* project, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

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