

Los Angeles:

America's Artist Super City

Ann Markusen



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Markusen Economic Research Services

For the Center for Cultural Innovation

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the James Irvine foundation



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Preface

Los Angeles is widely regarded as one of the creative capitals of the world, yet few would think of it as an “artist super-city” – home to more working artists than any other major metropolis in the United States. This abundance of artists was, in fact, one of the motivations for the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) to open its doors in Los Angeles in 2002, to see if innovative programs in business training, grantmaking and community-building could strengthen the support system for artists living here.

Nearly ten years have passed, and CCI’s cumulative work with Los Angeles artists has confirmed two things: that many artists are still in great need of support, and that arts organizations, funders and policymakers in the region have not, for the most part, focused enough on individual artists and creative entrepreneurs as important drivers of our creative economy. This apparent paradox – the fact that there are so many creatives in Los Angeles, yet with no coherent plan or infrastructure to support them – led to the commissioning of this paper. Our aim was to provide a 30,000 foot view on working artists in Los Angeles, as well as food for thought about

policies and programs that could be undertaken to make Los Angeles a more artist-friendly place to live and work.

The policy brief was authored by Professor Ann Markusen, noted research economist and Director of the Project on Regional and Industrial Economics (PRIE) at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, who is currently serving as Fulbright Distinguished Chair at the MacIntosh School of Architecture’s Glasgow Urban Lab, where she is conducting a US/UK comparative study of creative cities. She brings considerable enthusiasm and expertise to this effort and we are most grateful for her collaboration.

Our hope is that this work will stimulate new ideas, discussion, strategic planning and civic actions among the many stakeholders who are invested in the future creative and economic vitality of Los Angeles – government officials, philanthropic organizations, business leaders, arts educators, nonprofit organizations and, of course, artists themselves. We are optimistic about the possibilities because Los Angeles already has the human capital in place – it is only ours to lose.

Cora Mirikitani
President and CEO
Center for Cultural Innovation

Executive Summary

Los Angeles' artists produce hidden economic dividends for the Los Angeles region. Alone and with others, musicians, writers, performing and visual artists, designers, and architects create businesses, export their work outside of the region, donate their skills to make Los Angeles a festive and tourist-attracting city, and staff cultural industries, non-profit arts organizations, schools and non-arts companies. Los Angeles hosts the largest pool of artists of any metro in the nation and is the top net attractor of young artists. Yet our conceptions of cultural Los Angeles, dominated by entertainment industry glamour, greatly underestimate the region's creative talent cornucopia. As a result, public policy and philanthropy focus too heavily on buildings, organizations, and tax breaks rather than the artistic prowess that anchors mature culture enterprises and incubates new ones.

This policy brief provides the evidence for Los Angeles' status as America's Artist Super City. It summarizes what we know about what matters to artists in choosing a place to live and work. It explores the human capital infrastructure and services needed to home-grow, attract, nurture and retain artists in Los Angeles. It probes how we can construct a region-wide incubator for artists on the dispersed foundations that already exist. It outlines the kinds of programs and partnerships that work, including references to recent successful innovations elsewhere. It speculates on how stakeholders and policymakers can fashion unique strategies tailored to Los Angeles' treasury of artists and their challenges.

Los Angeles enjoys a clear comparative advantage, even vis-à-vis New York, in its sheer numbers and disciplinary array of artists, the degree to which artists work in the for-profit sector, their relatively high earnings, and the surprising range of industries and communities in which they work. We note the healthy appetite for crossover among Los Angeles area artists – the way they build careers and livelihoods across for-profit, non-profit, public and community arenas. We show that many Los Angeles artists are marketing their skills and creations outside of the region, generating earnings not counted in cultural industry balance sheets or non-profit arts economic impact studies.

The brief also documents challenges to Los Angeles' artistic pre-eminence. The region has been a beneficiary of decades-

long in-migrations of artists from other places. But this pipeline may be narrowing because of the area's persistent high costs of living, unemployment rates and recession setbacks and restructuring in the entertainment industry. These same factors may make it more difficult to retain home-grown artists. Unless the region maintains its magnetism as the place to be for artists of all disciplines, it will begin losing cultural productions, firms and tourists to other places.

Compared with other cities, Los Angeles has no coherent strategy for celebrating and nourishing the artistic capital that comprises the region's innovative and creative genius. Many other cities and metros, large and small, have well-developed artist-centered policies that are attentive to training, career planning, marketing and space provision. Over the course of the next few years, how the County and its cities, philanthropists and cultural industry leaders respond to these challenges can make a huge difference to the survival of the region's cultural industries and the commitment of artists to Los Angeles. We suggest a number of productive fronts for Los Angeles artist initiatives, drawing examples from other cities around the country.

The Great Recession provides not only an opportunity but an imperative for doing things differently. The last great Los Angeles recession, running for the first two-thirds of the 1990s, was caused by a national defense spending implosion of 40% in real terms. Los Angeles was not poised to help its aerospace companies, plants, technologies, scientists and engineers and blue collar workers move into other productive enterprises (Oden et al, 1996). Of the many large cities hit by defense cuts, Los Angeles sustained the greatest relative losses for the longest period of time, undercutting the region's economic prowess and diversity. Today, another of Los Angeles' outstanding economic engines is at stake - its stature as artist super-city.

We hope this brief reaches unusual as well as the usual suspects, jump-starting a conversation between public sector policymakers, non-profit funders, cultural industry leaders, educators, artists, and entrepreneurs about artists as place-based, community and economic revitalizers. In the face of discouraging belt-tightening, cuts in arts education, and arts organization closures, people are freer to abandon old strategies and try something new. New resources will be hard to come by, but there are promising synergies upon which to build. After all, artists are widely acknowledged to be among our most creative people. We look forward to spirited conversations around an artist-centered approach.

I. Artists as Los Angeles' Hidden Artistic Dividend

Locally and globally, the primacy of the Los Angeles entertainment complex is well-understood. Hollywood and Los Angeles are synonymous with each other in the mind of billions of people, even though much of the creative industries' work takes place elsewhere in the basin and beyond of the motion picture and television sector. The most recent Otis College of Art and Design study finds that nearly 1 million Los Angeles Basin jobs are directly or indirectly attributable to the creative industries (Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, 2009). Yet studies of creative industry employers don't track how the region's artistic talent pool is formed and maintained, whether artists are home-grown or migrate here from elsewhere, the conditions under which they stay, how they cobble together a living, and the contributions they make to built environments and communities.

Viewing the Los Angeles economy through its entrepreneurs, managers and workers—by what people do (occupation) rather than what they make (industry)—reveals that many artists work for employers outside of the cultural industries and for non-profits and community organizations. Many are self-employed and directly export their work or work on contract or in a second job not captured in employer data. Many are entrepreneurs, creating cultural opportunities that capture Los Angeles residents' discretionary income and recycle it in the region. Some launch new enterprises that attract tourists and export cultural products and services (Markusen and Schrock, 2009).

Artists contribute to the Los Angeles creative economy in multiple ways. Those who work full or part-time or on contract for the cultural industries help to make its products competitive. Many work for profitable companies in professional, scientific and technical services, management consulting, publishing, computer systems and design, and restaurants, music venues

and bars. Yet others work in food processing, machinery and equipment, and producer services where their talents make companies more productive and competitive. Some have created storefront spaces where aspiring artists can learn artistic skills, access equipment, exhibit and perform. Others work for non-profit religious, civic, social, advocacy and grant-making organizations or for public sector cultural affairs, recreation, and educational enterprises (Markusen, Gilmore et al, 2006). Furthermore, local venues and the artists that animate them are increasingly understood to be magnets for and retainers of skilled workers drawn to quality-of-life locales (Florida, 2002; Clark, 2004).

The omission of artists in economic studies distorts our understanding of Los Angeles' creativity. Companies make decisions on whether to make films, TV shows, and recordings in Los Angeles. Creative workers decide where to invest in training, live, and sell their artwork. Economists have long understood that people don't just follow jobs: jobs follow people as well. A contemporary study of Hollywood finds that despite lucrative incentives offered to LA producers to make films elsewhere, many film-making functions (script-writing, financing, casting, sound tracks, editing) remain anchored in Los Angeles because of its heavily networked talent pool (Scott, 2005). Thus nurturing, attracting and retaining artists may be more important than devoting expensive and budget-debilitating tax breaks to employers.

Los Angeles artists also stimulate community life and place-making through their gifts of leadership and skills to celebrations, festivals, dances, community murals, community organizing and the mentoring of younger people in artistic practice. These may have large economic impacts, through community and business revitalization, tourist-related spending, and incubation of future talent. But their chief impacts are incalculable: preserving cultural legacies and neighborhood histories, bridging among cultures and generations, validating the unique experiences of groups of people, solving problems through artistic expression and remedies, and giving young people a means of expressing who they are and imagining artistic careers that also encompass community service.

II. Los Angeles as America's Artist Super City

In absolute numbers of artists, Los Angeles tops a short list of American super arts metros. It hosts more working artists than any other metro, including New York. Its artists form a larger share of the workforce as well, underscoring LA's distinctive creative economy. The region's record in home-growing, attracting and retaining artists is unmatched. Diversified across artistic skill sets and types of employers, Los Angeles is the nation's premier place to pursue an artistic career.

Los Angeles County is the major employer of artists in the US (Table 1). In absolute numbers, some 80,000 Los Angeles County musicians, writers, visual artists, actors, producers and directors pursued artwork as their primary occupation in 2000 (Markusen and Schrock, 2006). With designers, architects, announcers and other entertainers, LA's total surpasses 140,000 (National Endowment for the Arts (2008: iii). Tens of thousands more create artwork as a second job or share it with

their communities on a volunteer basis.

Los Angeles home-grows many of its artists and is a powerful magnet for professional and aspiring artists from elsewhere. From 1990 to 2000, the ranks of its artists grew at twice the national rate (Table 1). Between 1995 and 2000, more than 19,000 artists moved to Los Angeles County while less than 9,000 left, and these numbers do not include the aspirants who are waiting tables or working other jobs. Los Angeles' net in-migration rate of 2.2 — more than two artists arrived for every one that left — tops the list of the nation's arts-rich metros (Table 2).

Artists are more prominent in the Los Angeles workforce than elsewhere and more diversified across art forms. Home to three times as many artists as a share of its workforce (See Table 3, page 12), Los Angeles hosts thick concentrations of artists in all core disciplines. It supports more than five times as many performing artists (actors, directors, producers) as the nation, outpacing New York substantially. Among large arts-rich metros, it enjoys denser pools of visual artists and musicians, and higher proportions of writers than all metros but New York.

Table 1. Artists totals and growth rates by metro, 1980-2000

	2000	% Change 1990-2000	% Change 1980-1990
Los Angeles- Long Beach, CA	79,781	20	52
New York- Northeastern NJ	77,216	4	33
Chicago, IL	26,901	1	50
San Francisco- Oakland, CA	25,262	20	39
Washington, DC/MD/VA	22,925	-6	70
Boston, MA	16,884	2	73
Atlanta, GA	14,808	53	64
Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	12,155	13	63
Seattle, WA	11,030	9	52
Orange County, CA	10,656	-5	87
San Diego, CA	10,330	4	73
Miami, FL	7,033	3	42
Portland, OR	6,630	10	66
Cleveland, OH	5,667	7	28
United States	881,841	10	53

Source: Markusen and Schrock, 2006: Table 3. Artists defined as musicians, writers, performing and visual artists.

Table 2. Artists' net migration to arts-rich metros, 1995-2000

	In/out migration ratio	New artists as % of total
Los Angeles	2.16	22
Portland-Vancouver, OR	1.48	24
Orange County, CA	1.47	26
New York/Bergen, NY-NJ	1.44	21
San Francisco-Oakland, CA	1.37	28
San Diego, CA	1.25	24
Atlanta, GA	1.22	26
Washington, DC-MD-VA	1.14	24
Seattle, WA	1.11	22
Newark, NJ	1.05	26
Boston, MA	0.98	24
Minneapolis-St Paul, MN-WI	0.97	16
Baltimore, MD	0.95	21
Chicago, IL	0.83	16

Source: Markusen and Schrock, 2006: Table 4. Arts-rich metros are those where artists were over-represented in the workforce compared to the nation in 2000.

II. Los Angeles as America's Artist Super City

LA's artists live throughout the region. Although Hollywood, the heart of the region's cultural industries, houses the thickest concentrations, many cities and neighborhoods from Long Beach to Pasadena to the San Fernando Valley harbor above average shares of artists (See Figure 1 inside back cover). Visual artists and musician comprise larger shares of artistic workforce in the southern and eastern Los Angeles, with performing artists and writers living nearer to cultural enterprises.

LA's high cost of living, high unemployment rates, and setbacks in the entertainment industry place its artist super-city status at risk. To retain its cultural producers, its arts-related industries, and its tourist cache, the region must nurture its artists, keep the in-migration pipeline flowing, and train and recruit the next generation. It must develop an incubator strategy tailored to the particularities of artistic careers.

Table 3. Artistic Concentrations by Discipline, Selected Metros, 2000

	Total	Performing Artists	Visual Artists	Writers	Musicians
Los Angeles	2.99	5.44	2.34	2.71	1.95
New York, NY-NJ	2.52	3.71	2.01	2.99	1.85
San Francisco-Oakland, CA	1.82	1.85	1.83	2.51	1.12
Washington, DC-MD-VA-WV	1.36	1.51	1.01	2.27	1.08
Seattle, WA	1.33	1.15	1.48	1.48	1.06
Boston, MA-NH	1.27	1.24	1.02	2.00	1.15
Orange County, CA	1.18	1.21	1.36	0.92	0.98
Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN-WI	1.16	1.12	1.10	1.33	1.16
San Diego, CA	1.15	0.90	1.27	1.10	1.25
Miami, FL	1.15	1.48	1.05	.082	1.28
US AVERAGE	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Denver, CO	0.90	1.08	0.82	0.98	0.79
San Jose, CA	0.84	0.75	0.95	0.95	0.61
Cleveland, OH	0.79	0.61	0.79	0.74	1.05
Riverside-San Bernardino, CA	1.77	0.79	0.84	0.61	0.76
Houston, TX	0.74	0.65	0.75	0.66	0.91
Detroit, MI	0.74	0.61	0.82	0.73	0.74

Source: Markusen and Schrock, 2006: Table 1.

III. Los Angeles Artist Career-building Fundamentals

Artists differ markedly from all other professionals. Their work lives generally begin with strenuous years of specialized education, followed by a daunting search for jobs or contract work or an entrepreneurial effort to set up a business. At very high self-employment rates — six times the workforce average, artists’ incomes fall short of workers with comparable educational backgrounds. In Los Angeles more than other cultural cities, artists build careers by moving across commercial, non-profit, and community spheres, and by cobbling together diverse streams of earnings.

Artists’ extraordinarily high rates of unemployment distinguish them from members of other occupational groups. In 2000, 40% of Los Angeles County’s artists were self-employed while

the rest worked for commercial, non-profit, and public sector employers (Table 4). Musicians, writers and performing artists were more apt to be self-employed than in the Bay Area metros. Nationally, these detailed Census numbers underestimate the self-employed share by 20% to 35%. In Los Angeles, the true ranks of self-employed artists are likely well over 50%.

Thanks to the region’s rich cultural milieu, Los Angeles artists often work across artistic disciplines. In a 2006 survey, 60% reported a second art form, most notably writing (including screenwriting, playwriting, storytelling) and film and visual art-making (Markusen, Gilmore et al, 2006: Table 1). A majority of artists also reported working simultaneously across for-profit, non-profit, public and community sectors, more common in Los Angeles than the Bay Area. As a group, artists found commercial sector more lucrative and network-rich than not-for profit and community work. But they preferred the latter sectors for aesthetic satisfaction, innovation, working

Table 4. Los Angeles, Bay Area Artists, Employment type, 2000

	Los Angeles	San Francisco Oakland	San Jose
All Artists			
%Self-employed	40	44	36
%Private employer	54	43	52
%Nonprofit, public	6	13	12
Visual artists			
%Self-employed	41	48	45
Performing artists			
%Self-employed	28	21	6
Musicians, Composers			
%Self-employed	51	45	43
Writers			
%Self-employed	57	55	40

Source: Markusen, Gilmore et al, 2006: Table A1.

Table 5. Shares of Arts Income by Source, Primary Discipline, 2006, %

Percent	Wages or salary	Direct selling	Contract work	Grants awards, fellowships, residencies	Advances, royalties, copyrights
Not applicable	26	19	48	53	62
35% or less	24	39	34	36	30
35-65%	18	13	10	7	5
65% or more	32	29	8	4	3

Source: Markusen, Gilmore et al, 2006: Table 4.

III. Los Angeles Artist Career-building Fundamentals

across art forms, and achieving emotional, community, social and political goals. If money were not an issue, many fewer artists would specialize in any one sector (Markusen, Gilmore et al, 2006: 52-8).

Artists' arts earnings are varied, reflecting their movement across sectors and between self-employment and work for others (Table 5). In 2006, less than one third earned more than 65% of their arts income from wage and salary employment or by directly selling their work. The rest cobbled together earnings from work on contract, grants, and creative property rights.

Yet despite Los Angeles' robust cultural ecology and opportunities for crossover, artists earn relatively low returns.

In the 2000 Census, Los Angeles artists' median personal incomes of \$40,000 matched those of artists in San Jose, were 42% higher than artists nationally, and 60% higher than LA County workers as a whole. But much of that income derived from non-arts work. In the 2006 survey, LA median annual earnings from artwork were well below \$20,000 while earnings from all work were close to \$40,000 (Table 6). Because of other household members earnings, reporting artists lived in households where median income surpassed \$60,000. These low returns are troubling given the high levels of educational attainment of Los Angeles artists, the high cost of living in the region, and the region's internationally renowned cultural prowess.

Table 6. Annual Average Incomes Ranges, LA and Bay Areas, 2006

	Individual Artwork	% Responses Individual All work	% Change Household Income
\$5,000 or less	31.1	5.3	1.3
\$5,001 – 10,000	16.7	5.5	1.9
\$10,001 - 20,000	15.5	13.7	6.4
\$20,001 – 40,000	19.3	30.2	19.6
\$40,001 – 60,000	8.8	22.2	19.4
\$60,001 – 75,000	4.6	11.6	14.7
\$75,001 – 100,000	2.0	6.2	15.0
\$100,001 – 150,000	1.1	3.3	12.2
\$150,001 – 200,000	0.5	1.0	5.4
Above \$200,000	0.4	1.0	4.1

Source: Markusen, Gilmore et al, 2006: Table 3.

IV. Los Angeles as an Artist Incubator: Special Challenges

Successful artistic livelihoods, studies show, require lifelong learning, validation, access to financial and physical resources (including space to work and equipment), health insurance, business skills, and networks that help expand markets or land jobs (Jackson, 2003). In Los Angeles, these are especially pivotal and yet underinvested in.

On the business front, a study of CalArts graduates found that artists require business and marketing skills not generally taught or acquired through formal schooling (Backer et al, 2005). Nor are public-funded or University entrepreneurship programs tailored to help artists set up a business working across art forms and sectors. High rates of self-employment render conventional workforce development programs ill-fitted to artistic occupations.

Funding resources are especially meager. Fellowship and grant resources are much smaller per capita in LA than in many other metros, stretched thin across so many worthy artists. Private foundation funding has been stagnant, while state funding has imploded. Although city and country support has increased markedly over the last decade, the share of public dollars flowing into the local arts community remains well below that of other cultural capitals such as New York, Chicago and San Francisco (Howard et al, 2009: 3). Furthermore, compared with New York and other arts-rich cities, the profits generated in commercial cultural enterprises have not been widely shared with artist-nurturing organizations, even less so today than in the past.

Lifelong learning opportunities are chiefly confined to on-

the-job training. Many artists lack ready intelligence on fast-changing LA cultural industries and the technologies and human skills they require. The digitization of media alone imposes huge retraining and upskilling costs on artists at the same time that it opens up whole new worlds of learning, networking and marketing opportunities.

The sprawling spatial layout of Los Angeles County, its balkanized cities, and the high cost of living form additional barriers to artist incubation. High real estate premiums, for instance, make it harder for LA artists than their counterparts in most other cities to find adequate space to live, work, perform and exhibit. Affordable space is often a very long distance, commute-wise, from employers and marketing and performance venues. The competition between Los Angeles County and its constituent cities from giant Los Angeles to Long Beach, Pasadena, and Santa Monica and many more, complicates the formation of a coherent strategy for artist support, as does the fragmentation of responsibility for policies that shape arts and culture inside each unit of government.

LA private, non-profit and public sectors offer fewer supports for artists than elsewhere. Many other cities, from close competitors New York, San Francisco and Chicago to second tier cities like Seattle, Portland, Minneapolis/St. Paul and Boston, are mounting programs to wrest film-making, music, and other art forms away from Los Angeles, often by directly nurturing film-makers, writers, musicians, and visual artists with multiple offerings. Unless Los Angeles fights hard for its artist super city status, it may lose whole segments of its extraordinary artist pool to other locales, a development that would undermine cultural industry commitment to producing in the region.

V. Artist-nurturing Frontiers

From surveys and case studies of artists' career development, researchers have identified the ingredients necessary for success: initial and ongoing artistic development, financial and career planning, training in the business of art, access to art-making equipment and workspace, strategies for understanding and reaching audiences, networking and mentoring structures, and information about artistic work and learning opportunities in the region and beyond. And a good place to live: affordable, easy to get around, with urban and environmental amenities (Jackson et al, 2003; Jeffri, 2004; Markusen et al, 2006, Markusen et al, 2008). In what follows, we review possibilities on these various fronts, with reference to pioneering examples in Los Angeles and elsewhere.

Youth arts and job training

One way to ensure a future pipeline of committed artists in Los Angeles is to focus attention on youth by nurturing their creativity, helping them learn job skills and encouraging them to imagine arts careers. Home-bred artists are more likely to be attached to the Los Angeles workforce than those who move from elsewhere in the country. Several cities have developed effective programs that combine artistic experience and mentorship with job training. Chicago's Gallery37, originally a small, downtown effort begun with local government and federal workforce development funds, has expanded throughout the City through a partnership with the Public School system. Other public/nonprofit/private initiatives that link arts training with job preparedness include Boston's Artists for Humanity, Philadelphia's Mural Arts program, Pittsburgh's Manchester Arts Guild, and Cleveland's ArtWorks. In these programs, arts leaders with artist partners have succeeded in helping young people bridge the high school/artistic career divide.

Business of art training

Huge numbers of artists are self-employed for most of their careers. In the 2000 Census, 40% of Los Angeles County artists reported being self-employed, a number that underestimates actual levels because artwork as a second job is not included. Because artists are not apt to learn business skills (planning, strategy, accounting, marketing, finance, and so on) in formal arts schools, they must learn them somewhere else. Most don't. In the past decade, new initiatives address this

deficit, among them Business of Art curricula developed and offered at Los Angeles' Center for Cultural Innovation, now being replicated statewide. St. Paul's Springboard for the Arts, a public/non-profit-funded venture, counsels individual artists and helps tailor training to them. Cleveland runs' an Artist as Entrepreneur Institute with similar missions. Although Los Angeles' CCI is a national pioneer and has served thousands of artists over its short lifetime, the hunger for business training in this region has not been slaked. With over 100,000 working artists and designers, many more could be reached.

Affordable housing and workspace

In survey after survey, especially in large, high rent cities, artists report a dearth of affordable live and work space. Artists are relatively low-income for their levels of educational attainment, and when self-employed, they need more space—to create and rehearse, and to store artwork, equipment, and materials. Los Angeles in particular is known for its space crunch, with very few affordable artist-dedicated live/work or studio options. Minnesota-based Artspace Projects, a nonprofit dedicated to creating artist live/work and studio space and to owning and managing them affordably, has now completed over twenty projects nationwide, tailored to the unique needs of each city, sponsoring partners and artists. It combines low income housing and historic preservation tax credits with local public, donor, and bank financing to rehab or build new space. Boston's Artist Space Initiative offers incentives to private developers to create artist live/work space, often contributing redevelopment resources. Palm View, an Actor's Fund partnership with the West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation, offers forty low-income housing units, thirty-five dedicated to performing artists. Brooklyn-based ArtHome, an asset and equity-building initiative for artists, works with the New York Mortgage Coalition and New York Low Income Coalition to help artists qualify for mortgages and learn personal finance skills.

Presentation and convening space

Artists seek space to present their work and to gather with other artists for mutual support and feedback. In surveys, artists of all disciplines lament limited opportunities to show visual art, play their music, present their theatre and dance productions, and read their writing or speak their words. Some are attracted to cities and smaller towns where space is cheap and often vacant. One creative solution used in high-cost, high occupancy cities like Los Angeles is the temporary use

V. Artist-nurturing Frontiers

of vacant buildings as galleries and performance space. In New York City, Chashama, No Longer Empty, and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Swing Space offer varying models for doing so. In San Jose, the City has opened up under-utilized storefront space in publicly-owned buildings to a visual arts cooperative gallery and other uses.

Some cities and small towns have nurtured artists' centers that invite artists to join, hang out, teach and take classes, present their work, access information, compete for funding, and share space and equipment. Minnesota's centers—including the Loft Literary Center, Playwrights' Center, Highpoint Center for Printmaking, Intermedia Arts, Juxtaposition Arts, IFP Minnesota, the Textile Center and Northern Clay Center among others—are national models, each tailored to its community or an artistic discipline.

Promotion of Artists through an Art Form/Industry Initiative

Artists benefit when a city or region brands itself as a place for arts and culture, because that attracts new residents, tourists and businesses to the region. Seattle's City of Music Initiative celebrates every aspect of the music industry, placing musicians at its center. It makes clear that commercial, nonprofit and informal community music-making, production, presentation and sales are all essential ingredients. The City commissioned two sequential studies of the complex ecology of music in the region (Beyers et al, 2004; 2008), showing how musicians are supported by composers, instructors, instrument makers/repairs/sellers, promoters, musicians' unions, operators of live performance venues, radio, recording companies, products that embed music (e.g. video games), and equipment that enables consumers to enjoy the music. The economic development initiative, coming directly from the Mayor's office, supports musicians (affordable housing and health care), live music venues, and music businesses.

For most people in the world, Los Angeles is "Hollywood," and yet this west coast cultural capital has so much more to offer. Los Angeles could enhance its visibility as the crossover cultural capital of the US, helping residents, managers, workers and visitors alike to see it as the talented, diversified creative city that it is, with rich talents pools in all art forms, including marvelous ethnic dance, music and visual art. Los Angeles could claim to be the City of All Arts.

Funding for Individual Artists

Even small and intermittent grants or loans can ensure an artist's

career commitment or enable a new line of work to emerge. An evaluation of Los Angeles Durfee Foundation's Artists' Resources for Completion program concluded that "small grants are like stepping stones...allow(ing) artists to navigate across all kinds of terrain and to move from one project to the next," preventing them from becoming isolated or immobilized (Peeps, 2010: 3). Even highly accomplished, internationally recognized artists may be living financially precarious lives. Funding for artists, the study found, has surprising multiplier effects: artists used 46% of grants awarded (maximum size \$3500) to hire other artists as collaborators. The grants helped them build a sense of community and keep them in LA (Peeps, 2010; Brown, 2009).

Los Angeles has long been a leader in local public funding for individual artists. Following UCLA's huge study, *Arts in the Economic Life of a City* (Perloff et al, 1979), the Los Angeles City Council in the 1980s authorized the creation of the Los Angeles Endowment for the Arts that to this day uses proceeds from the transient occupancy tax to fund individual artists as well as arts programs. Regrettably, the legislation does not specify the arts' tax share, which has dwindled over time. Los Angeles area public funders are more likely than private grantmakers to support individual artists, a gap that has widened since the late 1990s. However, some local, California and national private funders—the Center for Cultural Innovation, California Community Foundation, the Alliance for California Traditional Arts, the Herb Alpert Foundation, United States Artists, and Creative Capital, for instance—do channel support to Los Angeles artists. A recent survey for Southern California Grantmakers found that the average size of an individual artist grant from a private funder (\$19,548) is nearly three times that of a grant from a public funder (\$6928). These amounts may be high, however, because small funders were under-represented among the respondents (Howard et al, 2009:3, 7).

Other cities and states have recently mounted successful campaigns for new arts-dedicated revenues. In 2006, voters approved a ten-year excise tax on cigarettes that generates about \$19 million annually for the public Cuyahoga Arts and Culture (CAC), serving Cleveland and its suburbs. Over \$1 million is used to fund fellowships for artists through the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, which awards about twenty \$20,000 grants per year. A statewide effort, Minnesota voters in 2008 passed a Clean Water, Land and Legacy constitutional amendment devoting a 0.5% sales tax increase to these ends, including the arts. In the first year, \$21 million was allocated to arts, artists and arts access via the Minnesota State Arts Board (70%) and the eleven Regional Arts Councils (30%).

Commissions for individual artists

Infusing public space and infrastructure with artwork and performance serves the public as well as providing income and visibility for artists. King County (WA) Waterworks Garden commissioned an artist to create a recreational space around the settling ponds of a wastewater treatment plant that has become well-used and loved. An even more ambitious integration of artwork is built into the County's new Bridgewater Treatment Plant, to open in 2011. Phoenix's Animating Infrastructure projects, the current Los Angeles airport overhaul, and community-tailored artwork embedded in Los Angeles' new transit stations have generated important commissions for artists. St. Paul, Minnesota, supports a city-wide artist-in-residence program.

The interiors of public and other buildings offer opportunities for commissioned artwork. During the Great Depression, the US Post Office Murals program supported hundreds of artists while creating enduring visual legacies for patrons. The Fond du Lac Indian reservation's Min No Aya Win social services complex in northern Minnesota has commissioned and purchased artwork from contemporary Ojibwe artists that hangs on walls, corridors and clinic rooms. Two decades ago, the Director convinced his Board that art is part of healing, so that 1 to 2% of each new building addition is dedicated to artwork. The Director explained to his board that utilitarian walls and doors alone cost ten times as much as the artwork he buys. Many untapped opportunities for commissioned artwork in public, non-profit and private sector buildings and landscapes could be tapped through partnerships.

Networking, information, and marketing

Most artists believe that their access to artistic training, funding, presentation, marketing, networking and space is hampered by poor information. In some regions, a centralized website has

been created that invites any artist to mount a webpage that includes a short characterization and visuals of his/her work, contact information, and links to other websites. These websites also gather, organize and mount information on many matters of importance to artists: funding opportunities, jobs, auditions, arts events, artist space rentals, artist career development programs and workshops, and informal artist gatherings. Two examples are the City of Chicago's CAR (www.chicagoartistsresource.org) and Minnesota's [mnartists.org](http://www.mnartists.org) (www.mnartists.org).

City-wide initiatives

Occasionally, a region comes together to launch a major strategic initiatives centered on artists. Such was the case with San Jose in 2008. The brainchild of the City's chief strategist, an economic development executive, the San Jose Creative Entrepreneur Project was launched by the Office of Cultural Affairs with a steering committee that brought in educators, Silicon Valley high tech executives, property developers, gallery and club entrepreneurs, and nonprofit arts leaders as well as representative from other city departments such as housing and planning. Its mission was to build synergy between the Valley's already powerful science and engineering talent and an under-represented cadre of artists. It also aspired to animate the City's new downtown arts infrastructure with live performance, visual art and people on the streets, activity that artists could lead. After a full year of activity, including a San Jose area artist survey, an Artists' Town Hall attended by hundreds, and a set of prioritized recommendations, a number of important new initiatives and partnerships have helped make the City a more artist-friendly place (Mirikitani, et al, 2009). These include City-sponsored Business of Art training, the explosion of the Zero-1 festival as an artist showcase, and new private-led development initiatives to create artist space.

VI. Artist-Promoting Partnerships for Los Angeles

To articulate and broadcast Los Angeles as an artist super-city and build structures of support that anchor and nurture artists here, partnerships and thinking outside the box are key. Most of the examples in the prior section emerged when leaders stretching across organizational lines (public, nonprofit, community, cultural industry); found new partners such as environmentalists, community developers, local business people, and educators; and refused to stay in functional trenches with labels like housing, transportation, sanitation, health, human services, employment, business development, and environment. In each instance, advocates fashioned a strategy that fit their local circumstances, resources and skills.

Los Angeles has the good fortune to host the nation's premier cultural industries and its largest pool of artists and related cultural workers. It also supports well-established and successful County and city arts offices, highly creative non-profits, educational institutions and community groups actively engaged in arts and culture and engaging artists in the process. Yet the significance of this artistic core remains relatively unappreciated by leaders and people both inside and outside of the region.

Artists and related cultural workers deserve greater visibility and credit for the contributions that they make to the image

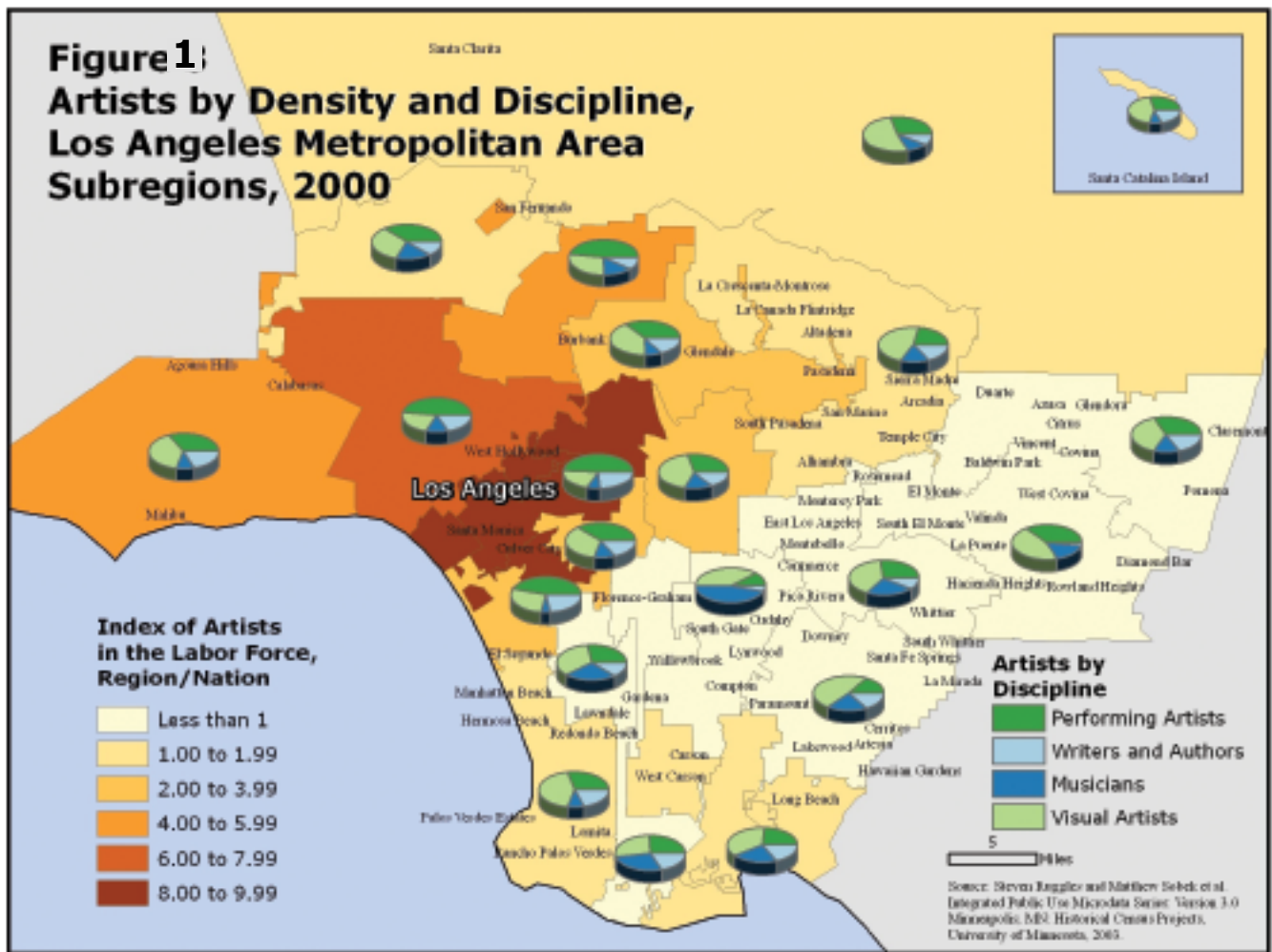
of the city and its economy, quality of life, and cultural vitality (Jackson et al, 2006). Just think how an "Artist of the Day" feature on television and radio would broaden understanding. Consider the fact that such a series could run for 150 years and not cover every contemporary Los Angeles Basin artist. A campaign to portray this diversity of artists—by discipline, style, product, age, race and ethnicity, neighborhood—would animate the entertainment face of Los Angeles, currently summed up as just "entertainment."

A robust partnership among any number of players could achieve this transformation. Potential partners include cultural industry and non-profit arts leaders, philanthropists, economic development managers, city and county cultural affairs officers, arts advocates, community organizers and real estate developers, and leaders of organizations that represent or serve artists and cultural workers.

If Los Angeles can boost its cultural aura at home by celebrating and encouraging its artists, it will enhance its draw for tourists and new residents. The region will also become a more welcoming destination for artists from elsewhere who come to practice and hone their skills. By diversifying and amplifying the creative workforce, the region will expand a key source of entrepreneurialism and attract and retain employers, not only in cultural industries. Finally, partnerships can engender clear pathways for young people from minority and immigrant groups to pursue their artistic talents, develop creative expression and techniques from their own cultures, build careers, and make lasting contributions to the livability and economic viability of their communities.

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Source: Ann Markusen, Sam Gilmore, Amanda Johnson, Titus Levi, and Andrea Martinez. 2006. *Crossover: How Artists Build Careers across Commercial, Nonprofit and Community Work*. Minneapolis, MN: Project on Regional and Industrial Economics, University of Minnesota: Figure 3.

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