



Memorandum

TO: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

FROM: Kerry Adams Hapner

**SUBJECT: CREATIVE AMBASSADOR
SELECTION**

DATE: October 26, 2021

RECOMMENDATION

Review and accept the panel's recommendation of the following 2022 Creative Ambassadors: Stephanie Barajas, Ricardo Cortez, Dana Harris Seegar, Eric Hayslett, Amy Hibbs, and Brandon Luu.

BACKGROUND

The role of the Creative Ambassadors is to champion the power of creative expression and engage members of the public in finding their own creative voice. This program is an outgrowth of the San José Creates and Connects initiative launched in 2016 by the Office of Cultural Affairs to connect residents across communities and within neighborhoods through creative, participatory experiences.

Creative Ambassadors serve a one-year term and are selected on a competitive basis to complete a scope of work that includes a creative expression project, which engages the public as active, creative participants. Ambassadors are also expected to promote the importance of creative expression in everyday life by utilizing social media, participating in interviews, the WeCreate408 challenge, and promoting public expression at public events as relevant.

OCA first launched the Creative Ambassador program in FY18/19 as a pilot round with four community-based arts leaders serving as Ambassadors. These first Ambassadors were Rodrigo Garcia, Barbara Day-Turner, Franco Imperial, and Corinne Okada Takara. Based on the successful pilot round, OCA began planning for a second round of Creative Ambassadors with a formalized application process. The Arts Commission reviewed the guidelines for the Creative License Ambassador program on November 18, 2019. Due to COVID-19, the project start date for the second round of Ambassadors was pushed back to January 1, 2021. These 2021 Creative Ambassadors included Cynthia Cao, Demone Carter, Ray Furuta, Elizabeth Jiménez Montelongo, and Chike Nwoffiah. Funding for the 2021 Creative Ambassadors was provided by The David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

In June 2021, OCA received notification of a \$30,000 grant award from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), ensuring support for a third round of Creative Ambassadors in 2022. Support from the NEA also enabled OCA to increase the number of potential Ambassadors from five to six. A renewed application with the David and Lucille Packard Foundation is currently pending for NEA matching support in 2022 and funding 2023 Creative Ambassadors.

ANALYSIS

Guidelines for the 2022 Creative Ambassadors were released on August 23, 2021, with applications due on October 7, 2021. A total of 20 eligible applications were received. A panel consisting of an Arts Commissioner and current Creative Ambassadors reviewed the applications on October 26, 2021 via Zoom. The initial review panel included:

- **Cynthia Cao**, 2021 Creative Ambassador
- **Demone Carter**, 2021 Creative Ambassador
- **Elizabeth Jiménez Montelongo**, 2021 Creative Ambassador
- **Chike Nwoffiah**, 2021 Creative Ambassador
- **Audrey Rumsby**, San José Arts Commissioner

Applications were reviewed according to the following published criteria:

- **Artistic Track Record** including work sample, public presentation history, and professional achievement.
- **Community Engagement Track Record** including demonstrated initiative in directly launching and coordinating creative projects involving community and responding to the cultural diversity of San José.
- **Communication Experience** with demonstrated ability to effectively communicate both orally and in writing, including in public.
- **Professionalism** reflecting the values of the City of San José, including a commitment to honor diverse views and backgrounds.
- **Creative Expression Project Plan** including philosophical approach to community engagement, innovation of proposed creative strategies, and understanding of the project's target cultural communities.

After careful deliberation, the panel recommended the six highest scoring applicants to serve as 2022 Creative Ambassadors. These six applicants include:

- **Stephanie Barajas** is a performer, photographer, and events manager, who was raised in Guadalajara, Mexico. Stephanie is a Steering Committee Member of genARts Silicon Valley, a Multicultural Arts Leadership Institute (MALI) Alumni, and 2021 Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana (MACLA) Cultural Power Fellow. She is also the Events Manager for Giant Creative Services, the event production partner of the School of Arts and Culture at the Mexican Heritage Plaza. Stephanie's creative Expression project *I Am My*

Body will center around portraits and interviews with folks from diverse communities, examining the relationship we have with our bodies and the issues that we face due to our physical appearance.

- **Ricardo Cortez** is a trained graphic designer and media artist, whose work explores the intersections of art, technology and the Chicano culture. He has a BFA in graphic design from Santa Clara University and an MFA of Digital Media from San José State University. His creative expression project includes a series of workshops for youth incorporating digital and traditional media to produce one-of-a-kind sound-reactive artworks around San José's rich Lowrider culture. The workshops will culminate in community art exhibit.
- **Dana Harris Seegar** is a printmaker and teaching artists, whose work is influenced by her experience growing up as a second generation Baltic American. Dana is the Co-Founder of the School of Visual Philosophy art studio and school. She is also a 2020 Santa Clara County Artist Laureate, and a core member of San José Arts Advocates. *Dialects of Art*. Dana's creative expression project *Dialects of Art* includes a series of public lectures and workshops designed to help artist communicate their own stories through their artwork and understand the translation of visuals across cultures. She will collaborate with artists working in different mediums and from different cultural backgrounds on the project.
- **Eric Hayslett** is an accomplished Jazz musician, who has toured the world. He is also an educator and currently leads educational programs e2music Productions, Media & Education. He led workshops for the San José Multicultural Artists Guild Arts Education Program and mentored youth to perform on the Next Gen Stage for the 2019 San José Jazz Festival. Eric hosts the weekly radio broadcast *The Drive Thru* on KKUP.org 91.5 FM. Eric's creative expression project will center around a series of percussion workshops for families in the Stevens Creek and San Tomas neighborhoods of San José, which repurpose and recycle disposable containers as instruments.
- **Amy Hibbs** is a visual artist with a background as a garden instructor. She received her MFA from Mills College and received the graduate affiliate award at the Headlands Center for the Arts. She is a recent recipient of a printmaking residency at the Palo Alto Art Center. Amy's creative project, *Transformation Station*, is a participatory art piece that uses the creative output of visitors to feed hungry composting worms. Participants are invited to contribute a bad thought, deadly secret, or expression of grief in the form of a drawing or just words on newsprint paper. The paper is then shredded and fed to the worms. The resulting worm castings are potent fertilizer for nourishing plant life. Participants are invited to take the castings home to grow for their own gardens. The community farm, Veggelution, will host *Transformation Station* at their Prusch Farm site and at a new SOFA site.
- **Brandon Luu** is an emerging poet and member of the Board of Directors of Poetry Center San José. Brandon's creative expression project will focus on the creation of a collaborative art piece titled *We Are San José*, which will feature art by local Asian artists and poetry written and submitted by the community. Brandon will host a social media campaign to

collect art, photos, and videos showcasing different parts of San José. The images will then become the inspiration for poems and compiled into mural.

Each of the Creative Ambassadors will receive a stipend of \$7,500 to produce a creative expression project and promote creative expression through their networks. A final proposal for the Ambassador's creative project must be presented to OCA for approval before implementation and all projects must comply with Santa Clara County Public Health orders.

At the end of their residency, Creative Ambassador's will be required to submit a final report with documentation of project activities. Success of the Creative Ambassador program will be measured by the strength of the creative projects, level of engagement of San José residents, the quality and placement of featured articles, and traction of the creative expression messaging on social media related to the Ambassadors' projects.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The Creative License Ambassador guidelines were posted on the City's website and disseminated through the Office of Cultural Affairs distribution lists. The application opportunity was also promoted on Facebook and Instagram. A public information session for potential applicants was held via Zoom on September 8, 2021.

/s/

KERRY ADAMS HAPNER
Director of Cultural Affairs

Attachments:

Creative License Ambassador Guidelines

List of 2022 Creative Ambassador Applicants



City of San Jose
OFFICE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

**CREATIVE AMBASSADOR
2022 APPLICATION GUIDELINES**

DEADLINE: 5:00 PM, OCTOBER 7, 2021
VIRTUAL INFORMATION SESSION: 5:30 – 6:30 PM, SEPTEMBER 8, 2021
RSVP by noon on September 8 to receive info session link

PURPOSE:

The role of the Creative Ambassador is to champion the power of creative expression and engage members of the public in finding their own creative voice. The Creative Ambassador's efforts will seek to recognize, celebrate, and promote diverse creative experiences citywide.

BACKGROUND:

The Creative Ambassador Program was launched in 2018 as a pilot project under the Office of Cultural Affairs' (OCA) San Jose Creates and Connects initiative to connect San Jose residents across communities and within neighborhoods through creative participatory experiences. Through San Jose Creates and Connects, OCA seeks to make the arts integral to residents' everyday lives by focusing on place-based opportunities for creative expression and connection throughout San Jose, showcasing the rich texture of its cultural landscape. The development of this initiative was informed by the national *Creating Connections* research on the role of creative expression in fostering meaningful connections with people, our community, and ourselves. OCA's objectives with San Jose Creates and Connects are for residents to see the arts as a way to celebrate their neighborhoods, connect with their neighbors, and have their voices heard. This initiative also celebrates the role of arts and cultural organizations, artists, and artist-run businesses in communities as cultural producers, teachers, neighborhood anchors, and community organizers.

SCOPE OF WORK:

Creative Ambassadors will serve a one-year term, between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022, during which time they will complete the following scope of work:

- 1) Promote the importance of creative expression in everyday life. The Ambassador is expected to:
 - a) Have an active social media presence using the #408Creates hashtag and @sjculture to promote creative expression.
 - b) Partner with OCA in promoting participation in the month-long WeCreate408 challenge.
 - c) Contribute an article on the topic of creative expression to OCA's newsletter.
 - d) Participate in media interviews as requested.
 - e) Act as a representative of cultural expression at local events and meetings to engage with residents as requested (up to 5 events, maybe virtual or in-person).
- 2) Produce a creative hands-on project in San Jose that engages the public in creative expression. Project must be open to the public and be participatory in nature. A proposal for the Creative Expression Project must be presented to OCA for approval before implementation. All projects must comply with Santa Clara County Public Health orders.
- 3) Attend quarterly Creative Ambassador meetings.

ELIGIBILITY:

- Applicant must have a current business or residential address within the city of San Jose and had a professional presence in the city of San Jose for at least three (3) years.
- Applicant must be a practicing artist in the performing, visual, literary, and/or media arts with at least a five (5) year track record of exhibiting, performing, publishing, or otherwise sharing their artwork with the public.
- Must be available and willing to fulfill the Creative Ambassador duties between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.
- Applicant must be in good standing with respect to prior grants from the City of San Jose.

NOT ELIGIBLE:

- Applications from students. While students may be involved in creative projects, the applicant may not be a student.
- Artists that have previously served as Creative Ambassadors.
- Current San Jose Arts Commissioners and City of San Jose staff.
- Incomplete applications, including failure to respond to application questions and/or to submit requested attachments.

COMPENSATION:

Up to six Creative Ambassadors will be selected for the 2022 term. Each Ambassador will receive a stipend of \$7,500 to develop and implement an approved creative expression project within the Ambassador's term. Expenses for the proposed creative project will be drawn from the stipend. Funds will be released upon meeting deliverables as set forth in the contract between the Ambassador and OCA. The stipend may be received on behalf of the Ambassador by an organization with which they are closely affiliated or a nonprofit fiscal sponsor.

Please note: If recommended as an Ambassador, applicant or applicant's fiscal sponsor must have a valid business license on file with the City of San Jose and provide proof of current liability insurance in order for payment to be issued. Lack of required documentation can significantly delay payment and project start dates. Artists that are not already directly affiliated with a nonprofit organization are highly recommended to secure a nonprofit fiscal sponsor.

Ambassadors will be selected on a competitive basis.

Creative Expression Projects supported through the Creative Ambassador Program are not eligible to receive support under another grant administered by the San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs.

REVIEW CRITERIA:

- **Artistic Track Record** including work sample, public presentation history, and professional achievement.
- **Community Engagement Track Record** including demonstrated initiative in directly launching and coordinating creative projects involving community and responding to the cultural diversity of San Jose.
- **Communication Experience** with demonstrated ability to effectively communicate with the public both in person and in writing.
- **Professionalism** reflecting the values of the City of San Jose, including a commitment to honor diverse views and backgrounds.
- **Creative Expression Project Plan** including understanding of the project's target cultural communities, innovation of proposed creative strategies, depth of community engagement, and opportunity for creative participation.

When selecting the final cadre of Ambassadors, diversity of the overall cohort will be considered so that diverse disciplines and communities in San Jose are engaged.

HOW TO APPLY:

Applications are due by 5:00 PM PST on Thursday, October 7, 2021.

To apply, submit a completed application form and required attachments including resume via email to arts.program@sanjoseca.gov. In the subject heading write: "Creative Ambassador Submission." Applicants must use the application form.

REVIEW PROCESS:

After an eligibility review by staff, applications will be reviewed by a panel consisting of representatives from the Arts Commission and individuals with arts, community engagement, and marketing expertise. The panel will recommend up to six applicants to serve as Creative Ambassadors in 2022. Recommendations will then be forwarded to the Arts Commission in November 2021.

A virtual information session will be held on Wednesday, September 8 from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm via Zoom. Please RSVP to emily.sevier@sanjoseca.gov by noon on September 8 to receive the meeting link.

TIMELINE:

Wednesday, September 8, 2021: Info Session

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2021: APPLICATIONS DUE BY 5:00 PM PST

November 2021: Creative Ambassadors Announced for 2022

January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022: Creative Ambassador Term

CONTACT INFORMATION:

For information on the Creative Ambassador Program, please contact:
Emily Sevier, Senior Arts Program Coordinator
San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs
Phone: 408.793.4347 or Email: emily.sevier@sanjoseca.gov
www.sanjoseculture.org

2022 Creative Ambassador Applicant List

#	First	Last	Website 1
1	Stephanie	Barajas	https://stephaniebarajas.squarespace.com/
2	Ricardo	Cortez	http://www.tijuanarick.com/
3	Michelle	Dinh	n/a
4	Chinedum	Emeahara	n/a
5	Sarah Joy	Espinoza	www.joyinthethorns.com
6	Julia	Halprin Jackson	https://playonwordsanjose.com/
7	Dana	Harris Seegar	www.danaharrisseegeer.com
8	Eric	Hayslett	www.e2musicpro.com
9	Amy	Hibbs	https://www.amyhibbs.com
10	Jeff	Kramer	https://cszsanjose.com/
11	Lita	Kurth	https://litakurth.com/
12	Adrien	LeBiavant	https://www.instagram.com/iamadrien
13	Jessica	Liao	https://www.instagram.com/ourtwotales/
14	Brandon	Luu	https://sjpl.bibliocommons.com/events/5fa4a65d5e8c0f2400fa3e70?fbclid=IwAR0NUPzU_UKRYLP2VJ7KUpEIrB0POJyNp7KUKLnvEVrZ5_jL2t3P56gDoeo
15	Jena	Renay Gonzales	https://jena-gonzales.squarespace.com
16	Shareen	Rivera	www.shareenrivera.com
17	Stephanie	Vlahov	n/a
18	Fan	Wu	www.FanWuWrites.com
19	Ellina	Yin	www.onalilrampage.com
20	Freeda	Yllana Lugo	https://www.lugoleadershipacademy.com/

