



Memorandum

TO: ARTS COMMISSION

FROM: Kerry Adams Hapner

**SUBJECT: CREATIVE AMBASSADOR
SELECTIONS**

DATE: November 9, 2022

Approved: /s/ Nanci Klein

Date: November 14, 2022

RECOMMENDATION

Review and accept the panel's recommendation of the following four 2023 Creative Ambassadorships: Yoon Chung Han; Elba Raquel in partnership with Together We Create; Suhita Shirodkar; and Bertrand Patron Paule in partnership with SJ Storyboard.

BACKGROUND

The role of the Creative Ambassadors is to champion the power of creative expression and engage members of the public in finding their creative voice. First started in FY 18-19, this is a program of the San José Creates and Connects initiative launched by the Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) 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.

Funding for the Creative Ambassador Program was provided by The David and Lucille Packard Foundation. In June 2021, the OCA also received notification of a \$30,000 grant award from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), ensuring support for the third round of Creative Ambassadors. Support from the Packard Foundation and the NEA also enabled OCA to increase the number of potential Ambassadors from five to six. With inflation and the increased recommended living costs, we recommend increasing the award to \$9,500 per ambassador and limiting the ambassadors to four (4) for the 2023 cohort. A renewed application with the NEA is pending for matching support of the Creative Ambassadors Program.

ANALYSIS

Guidelines for the 2023 Creative Ambassadors were released on August 21, 2022, with applications due on October 10, 2022. A total of 29 eligible applications were received. A panel consisting of an Arts Commissioner, one current Creative Ambassador, two Creative Ambassador Alumni, and a community-based social practice artist reviewed the applications on October 20, 2022, via Zoom. The review panel included the following:

- **Cynthia Cao**, 2021 Creative Ambassador
- **Ricardo Cortez**, 2022 Creative Ambassador
- **Corinne Takara**, 2019 Creative Ambassador
- **Jocelyn Meggait**, Curator and Social Practice Artist
- **Jonathan Borca**, San José Arts Commissioner

Applications were reviewed according to the following published criteria:

- **Artistic Track Record**, including work samples, public presentation history, and professional achievement.
- **Community Engagement Track Record**, including a demonstrated initiative in directly launching and coordinating creative projects involving the community and responding to the cultural diversity of San José.
- **Communication Experience** with demonstrated ability to effectively communicate 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 the 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 highest-scoring scoring applicants to serve as 2023 Creative Ambassadors, two of whom applied collectively. The four selected applicants include:

Yoon C Han is an interaction designer, multimedia artist, and researcher. Her research includes data visualization, biometric data visualization and sonification, a new interface for musical expression, and mobile user experience design. She completed her Ph.D. at the Media Arts and Technology, UC Santa Barbara. Currently, she is an Associate Professor of Graphic Design in the Department of Design at San José State University (SJSU). Her Creative Expression project *Exploring and Supporting Bay Area Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Art through 3D Printing Technology* aims to create culturally relevant 3D printed artworks made from recycled materials as solutions for cultural exchange and sustainable art. The project will raise awareness about sustainability and cultural heritage by interviewing underserved, multi-ethnic community members in San José and the region. This project will include workshops with AAPI communities with

support from Chopsticks Alley. Workshops with SJSU and the San José Museum of Art are also planned. The outcome of the 3D sound objects will be exhibited at the San José ICA in September 2023.

Elba Raquel and the artist collective **Together We Create (TWC)** empower artists, youth, and the community through live painting. A San José native, Elba Raquel earned a Master of Fine Arts in Art Education from Santa Clara University and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Academy of Art. She has been a full-time art teacher at Latino College Preparatory since 2015 and a freelance artist since 2007. Raquel produced murals at the Sacred Heart Community Center, The Sweet Soul Shop, with other prominent community organizations and businesses within San José, either solo or in collaboration with TWC. The proposed Creative Expression Project is called *Paint Together*. The project consists of five live painting events at different locations throughout the year. *Paint Together* will impact the community in collaboration with three groups of people painting together at each event, including professional artists, high school students, and community attendees.

Betrand Patron Paule and the artist collective **SJ Storyboard** bridge our diverse Bay Area communities through digitally immersive storytelling events and illuminated public art installations throughout downtown San José. Paule is a digital graphic artist and SJSU Alumni. His core work involves constructing immersive digital projection mapping environments with it and creating/narrating visual illustrations for communities. Through this, they help define San José's rich cultural identity by supporting, documenting, and showcasing the diverse storytelling of its people and creating a sense of belonging through shared experiences at supported local venues. The Creative Expression *Larger than Life Project* will bring art and poetry to life through projection mapping and projection murals on buildings at designated locations in San José that will enrich this community by creating visible illuminations and bringing attention to sites. The nighttime project will enable communities to enjoy the beautiful landscape, such as landmarks, and a unique experience that redefines the aesthetics of San José. This project will engage poet laureate Tshaka Campbell as the storyteller, integrating spoken word and storytelling as a vital part of the design for the project.

Suhita Shirodkar is a reportage artist and educator. She leads sketch workshops, and sketch walks worldwide. Her recent San José-based projects involve documenting the vintage signs around San José in sketches and sketching portraits of people in recovery from addiction and homelessness. Shirodkar is currently a Resiliency Resident with WIRED Magazine and holds a Master's degree in Communication Design from Pratt Institute. The Creative Expression Project *Drawing to Discover* envisions a series of four to six sketch walks through the year led by Suhita and open to the public, showcasing different parts of the city. Each walk is "narrated" by a San Joséan familiar with the neighborhood. The narrator will share stories, history, and memories on the walk. The participants will sketch what catches their eye, creating a visual record in their sketchbooks while gaining a deeper connection to the place.

Each Creative Ambassador will receive a stipend of \$9,500 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 Ambassadors will be required to submit a final report with documentation of project activities. The success of the Creative Ambassador program will be measured by the strength of the creative projects, the level of engagement of San José residents, the quality and placement of featured articles, and the 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 on August 21, 2022, and disseminated through the Office of Cultural Affairs distribution lists, partner sites such as the YBCA Power Up platform, California Arts Council's Opportunities, multiple San José Facebook groups, and local cultural partner email lists. The application opportunity was also promoted on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Nextdoor. A public information session for potential applicants was held via Zoom on September 7, 2022.

At its November 7, 2022 regular meeting, the Executive Committee approved forwarding a recommendation to the full Arts Commission to approve the selected 2023 Creative Ambassadors.

/s/

KERRY ADAMS HAPNER
Director of Cultural Affairs