ACTIVATE Emerging Arts Leaders: 2022 Cohort Biographies

Anne Marie Acosta is a first-generation, Filipina-American, and proud Pomona Valley resident. She values community, altruism, growth, and creativity. In her professional career, she has uplifted the cultural and civic life of residents throughout the Inland Empire and Los Angeles County. She began her arts career as a program assistant for the Fox Riverside Theater Foundation. As part of their inaugural team, she brought 1,400+ students and senior citizens to the Fox Performing Arts Center to see free live performances. It was here where she developed a passion for equitable access to the arts. Before landing in the L.A. arts world, she worked for the City of Pomona where her interest in civic engagement grew. Anne Marie currently works with The Music Center, where she can see the trajectory of her career connect so far, between providing arts experiences for all and leaning into her civic and community values. She hopes to continue growing her knowledge and skills to cultivate equitable, healthy, and creative communities.

Christine Zheng (she/her) is an artist, storyteller, and educator passionate about connecting diverse communities with illuminating and inspiring ideas. Originally from Claremont, CA, Christine is currently completing a Fellowship in Museum Practice at the Colby College Museum of Art, an academic art museum in Waterville, ME. In her role, she supports academic engagement, exhibitions and publications, as well as communications in the museum. Prior, she worked for two years in corporate communications, telling stories for Fortune 500 companies as well as philanthropic efforts in the arts. In her work, Christine prioritizes opportunities to bolster accessibility, equity, creativity, and community.

Jamie Costa is a Los Angeles based arts and culture programmer. She is currently the Gallery Experience Associate at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery and was also recently the Curator of the Art UpFront Program at Boston Court in Pasadena, CA. Previous experience includes development and exhibition related roles at the Norton Simon Museum, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs Public Art Division, and Los Angeles Nomadic Division. Costa is a 2018-2019 Arts for LA ACTIVATE Cultural Policy Fellow and served on the organization's ACTIVATE Alumni Steering Committee. She holds a BA in Art History and Visual Art from Occidental College and a MA in Art Business from the Center for Business & Management of the Arts at Claremont Graduate University.
Jessica Coreas is a writer, arts administrator, and community organizer whose passion around storytelling, diversity and resilience in communities of color in the last decade have lead her into activism and engagement work in the San Gabriel Valley (SGV). In 2014, Jessica worked with Pasadena Playhouse’s Mi Historia, Mi Manera grant initiative to present a table reading of renowned Tanya Saracho’s play, Kita y Fernanda, in the City of La Puente. Through the community center Bridgetown DIY, Jessica organized music events featuring local artists and supported the execution of art programming for local high school students. Alongside Young Musician Foundation, Jessica now uses her extensive experience in community engagement and advocacy to increase access to music programming across Los Angeles County. A graduate of EAL/LA’s Protege program, Jessica is excited to join the 2022 ACTIVATE Program and create a fulfilling Protege mentorship program.

Jocelyn Ayala is a Queer Mexican-American, first-generation graduate of Occidental College with a B.A. in Art History and Visual Arts. After graduating in 2016, she spent three years living in South Korea as a certified ESL instructor. She returned to California, and in 2020 began working in her hometown Pomona, CA at The dA Center for the Arts. She is currently the ArtBridge Outreach Program Coordinator, managing all visual arts programs created by the dA for the Pomona Unified School District. Outside of work, she is an artist, focusing on both traditional and digital illustrations. She hopes to continue advocating for community art programs and one day illustrate children's books.

Krystal Monique Ramírez is a Los Angeles-based independent curator in the contemporary sphere. She is a recent graduate from the University of California, Riverside with a bachelors in Art History and Administrative Studies, and a concentration in Business and Society. Previously, she has served in a variety of occupations within multiple non-profit art organizations including Vincent Price Art Museum, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, UCR Arts, California Museum of Photography, Craft in America, and 18th Street Arts Center. While pursuing curatorial and administrative work, Ramírez also practices a range of different art mediums during her personal time, including photography and craft art. She frequently collaborates with local Latinx and BIPOC artists to organize art shows and vending opportunities that are accessible to the entire community.

Melba Martinez is an artist and cultural organizer from Pacoima, CA. Their passion for art, activism, and the fight for the liberation of all oppressed people guide her life and work. After attending UCSB, Melba was a community organizer in the North East San Fernando Valley working mostly with immigrant women to create strong and thriving communities. They left that role to become the director of Creative Incite, a community arts program that worked with youth from low-income communities and with people on probation. In 2019 they left Creative Incite, went back to school and worked with CultureGap.LA promoting arts and culture events across Los Angeles. Melba also works with the Feminist Center for Creative Work creating social media content. They received a BA in Chicano Studies and a minor in Feminist Studies. Melba loves to knit, dance, and play with makeup and clothes.
Miranda Ynez is a California native, Arts Management professional and community leader committed to increasing participation in the arts and culture throughout our local Los Angeles communities.

Socks Whitmore is a Los Angeles-based multidisciplinary performer, composer, and storyteller. Whether they're writing a new musical, recording voice over, or testing their four-octave range in song, every aspect of their work is rooted in voice and text. They are best known for their work on the Narwhal and Jelly audiobook series, the feature film The Magical Christmas Tree, and the original stage works We Are Here (NMI New Voices Project 2019) and Back to One: A Coming of Self Musical. They can also be found working on choral music, indie games, short fiction, or amassing large amounts of socks. For those who are curious, they hold a BFA Performer-Composer degree from the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) with minors in Digital Arts and Creative Writing. Learn more about their adventures in professional overachievement on social media @SocksWhitmore or on their website, sockswitmore.com.