

Culver City Artist Laureate Application



Submitted on 6 April 2025, 3:16pm

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Related form version 13

Introduction and Eligibility

Primary Artistic Discipline Performing Arts (May include Music, Dance, Theater, Spoken Word and Performance Art)

Please confirm your eligibility by checking each of the boxes below.

Artist is at least 18 years old at time of application deadline.

Artist has publicly exhibited, performed, presented, or published artistic work within the last 3 years.

Artist is not enrolled as an undergraduate or graduate student in a degree program related to an arts discipline at time of application deadline.

Artist is authorized to work in the United States.

Artist has attended or viewed the recording of the required March 19 orientation session.

Are you currently, or have you been, employed by or served in a volunteer leadership position with The City of Culver City and/or Culver City Arts Foundation?

No

If yes, please explain.

Artist Information

Legal Name Victoria E. Marks

Preferred Name or DBA (if different from legal name) Victoria Marks

Professional Affiliation (if applicable) UCLA

Email

Phone Number

Street Address

City

State

Zip Code



Website (if applicable)

victoriamarksprojects.com

Social Media (if applicable)

Artist Statement

What is your primary artistic medium and how do you describe your creative process?

I am a choreographer/director; but I'm cautious about calling what I do "dance" because this can conjure a glitzy idea about movement. My true medium is people, and my attention is on how we are in relationship to one another. I create movement-centered performance with and for groups of people: a form of group portraiture. I define the material of choreography broadly: as any set of actions/movements that is undertaken with a conscious intention. For example, a hug can be a performance. (Especially if it lasts for, say, 10 minutes!)

Imagine a group of people coming together for a workshop, in which they tease out 3 things they have in common with another person--then finding three ways to pose with that person in ways that demonstrate inter-personal connection. A beginning.

Imagine a movement choir comprised of people who might typically feel invisibilized: like veterans, the elderly, people with disabilities, dog walkers, line cooks, accountants, domestic workers.

Moving together yields opportunities to (re)discover ourselves, and who we can be together. In my work, whether on the street, in the park, on film or on stage, performance builds civic participation and engagement in processes that encourage us to connect across difference. My work allows us to understand ourselves as part of a communal fabric, expanding our sense of connection with one another.

The form of art-making that I offer to Culver City is one where Culver City citizens and workers find a sense of belonging and purpose together in creative process. The things we make -- whether public installations that are discoverable as people move through public space, or scheduled performances -- are shared with an audience of community residents.

I am a bridge builder: I concentrate on facilitating connection. I create safe and joyful spaces to come together; places in which we can discover our sense of belonging, to and with, one another.

Please describe any experience you have with community arts activation. What is your process for engagement? If you have a specific vision for how you would like to engage the Culver City community, please describe.

I'd begin my engagement in Culver City by attending events on the City's Community Calendar, learning about the fabric of the city by joining activities at senior centers, schools, in faith communities, neighborhood parks and public spaces. I would visit City Council meetings, and interview folks at the Historic Society. The events I create for the city would be scheduled to coordinate with existing calendared annual and special events.

I have a background in community-centered performance making. Here are descriptions of a few projects I propose for this fellowship, based on my history as an artist. I am not wedded to these:

□A pop-up performance in a public space, consisting of many diverse pair of people in extended embraces. This might be staged throughout the Culver Steps, on a Metro platform and/or in Culver City parks. Here, a passerby might casually note a couple in an embrace. As they continue along, they would encounter more pairs in a nearly identical embrace, each in an unexpected location. Think of this like an outdoor gallery, where the art is real people, staged in space so to elicit delight and surprise. This performance does not have an explicit beginning or

end and might occur and reoccur over the course of an afternoon or weekend.

□A choreo-portrait performance of “Culver City” performed by a diverse group of city residents. These folks would meet with me over time to develop individual and group portraits, activities that connect them together, much like the assemblage of a quilt.

□An “Action Conversation” connecting a group of domestic workers and a separate group of employers of domestic workers. I take interest in this because many private homes employ domestic workers. These relationships often occur across language, race, class and education. There is a kind of intimacy shared by these dyads, most often women and rarely spoken about. An Action Conversation could gently build greater understanding about these complex relationships.

How do you envision your role as Culver City’s Artist Laureate furthering your own development as an artist?

My work, which moves between stage, film and public space is strongest when I am in community. An example of this was the Action Conversation project (described in my LOI) that I undertook in rural Bellows Falls, Vermont, where participants were drop-out teen mothers and an older generation of women from the same community. The Action Conversation process involved a combination of moving and talking, where I ask questions and participants respond with stories in movement and words. Moving is both literal and symbolic. Not only was the work transformative for the participants; sharing their work in community felt like a homecoming in their hometown.

I have always wanted to apply this approach to artmaking in my LA home, but I could not imagine how to do so, until your call for proposals.

The CC Artist Laureate program is unique within the performing arts, inviting a special relationship between subject matter, place, performers and audience. What I make “speaks” to community in a register different from places of worship, different from therapeutic or healing settings, and different still, from city council meetings. The subject matter is Culver City, the performers are people in Culver City, and the audience are people in Culver City. This is of, by and for, us. What’s at stake for me is the need to build connection and shared purpose in an increasingly divided world.

How will you use your tenure as Artist Laureate, and your art, to serve as an ambassador for the arts in Culver City and the surrounding area? How will you advocate for the arts across disciplines? How will you advance cultural equity and inclusion as Artist Laureate?

I hope to provide ample evidence that the arts connect us to one another across our diverse lived experience. In this, I hope to celebrate Culver City’s pride in its civic commitment to the arts, and to the idea that a town can be a canvas for the imaginations of its residents.

I believe that performance can build civic pride and connection:

- through its process of creation.
- by providing pathways to shared understanding, and empathy across difference.
- by knitting a community together in divisive times.

During the artist fellowship period, I propose to undertake several projects, each offering a different register for encountering and engaging Culver City. I have spoken here about creating events with and for Culver City residents: Engaging stakeholders is a significant aspect of my process and will require different forms of sustained relationship building. I expect to do this work by attending events and offering free workshops for the specific communities I will engage. While I am prepared to sleuth out ways to engage residents initially, I will also hope to learn from and partner with Cultural Affairs leadership to plan wisely. Because it is important to acknowledge the labor of city residents in creative projects, I intend to use a portion of the Fellowship’s financial resources to offer an honorarium to participants who become involved in performance projects.

As a choreographer/director I do not hold one idea about art above all others. I will engage residents as contributors to creative process. This

includes inviting self-identified artists to engage in shared work with me, while also supporting residents to discover themselves as artists and performers (and audiences!), perhaps for the first time.

Attachments and Signature

Briefly describe how your chosen artistic samples are related to your application and why you selected them to represent your work as an artist.

The excerpt from “Bellows Falls: Action Conversations” is from the video documentation of an Action Conversation between a group of teen mothers and a group of older women in rural Vermont. The project was designed to support cohesion in a community where young women felt stigmatized. Screened in community, the participants were widely recognized and praised.

The excerpt from “Men” was chosen as an example of portraiture. We met at the Senior Drop-In Center in Canmore, Canada. The men chose to participate because of a first workshop in which they heard one another’s stories for the first time. We worked over two years, to create a film about aging joyously.

The excerpt from “Mothers and Daughters” is also a portrait. The moms and daughters joined us for approximately 6 weekend rehearsals before we filmed. I selected this excerpt to give you greater context for my portraiture.

Stills and Images (maximum of 10 uploads), Video files (maximum of 2 uploads; 5 minutes each), Audio files (maximum of 2 uploads; 5 minutes each), Documents - writing samples or music score (maximum of 6 uploads; 20 pages total)

[Men 480-compressed.mov](#)
[Bellows Falls Action Conversation-compressed.mov](#)
[Mothers and Daughters480.mov](#)

Identify and describe any files that you have uploaded as artistic samples. Include title of work, date of work, and names of any other featured artists.

“Bellows Falls: Action Conversation was conceived and directed by me in response to an interest in serving a community. The film documentation was created in collaboration with filmmaker Ann Kaneko. The participants were five teenagers and five older women from Bellows Falls, Vermont. Music by Doug Wieselman. The project was produced by the Vermont Performance Lab in association with Windham County Social Services.

“Men” (1997) was created in collaboration with Margaret Williams (filmmaker) and a group of Seniors in Canada. Music by Andy Tierstein. The project was funded by the British Arts Council and Canadian Broadcasting and supported through a residency at the Banff Arts Center.

“Mothers and Daughters” (1994) was created in collaboration with Margaret Williams in London. Music by Jocelyn Pook. It was funded by Channel Four.

Artist Resume or CV

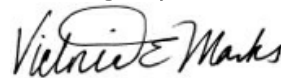
[CV Winter 2025.docx](#)

Recommendation Letters (minimum of 2; maximum of 3)

[Rec_vic_marks_culver_city.docx](#)

Acknowledgement and Signature

Name of signatory: Victoria E. Marks



Uploaded signature image: [vic signature.jpg](#)

To: Culver City's Department of Cultural Affairs
From: Victoria Marks

I offer this letter to express my interest in serving as Culver City's Artist Laureate, 2025-2027.

As a choreographer/director, the greatest contribution I can make is in support of the fabric of community.

My primary medium is dance and performance. I define dance broadly: as conscious and chosen movement that occurs outside of everyday actions. For me, dancing is about who we are and who we can be together. Through dance, we make visible life's vitality. Whether in the kitchen, on the street, in the park, on film or on stage, dance can offer resources for imagining future possibilities together.

As an artist living adjacent to Culver City (across Venice Blvd in Mar Vista), for 25 years I see myself animating the city by making public space more vital as I also dip into micro-communities to support growth and interconnection. I view the city as a canvas for projects that connect residents and build civic pride.

A while ago, I began to create "choreo-portraits" of real people. I have created Choreo-portraits for elderly men in Alberta Canada, for fathers and daughters in Washington, DC and LA, for mothers and daughters in London, for religious leaders in Houston, Texas, among others.

Portraits led to "Action Conversations" bringing two groups of people together who would not otherwise have a shared social anchor. I have brought together rehabbing military veterans and artists; teen mothers and older women in a working-class rural community; and fraternity and sorority students enmeshed in hook-up culture. "Action Conversations" are processes where spoken conversation yields playful moving and moving yields deeper and richer conversation. These active conversations, yield live performance, or film. In this work, a performance portrait is created as participants build understanding across difference.

My projects mean to unsettle existing power dynamics, generating new possibilities of relationality between individual participants, and between their affiliated groups. I practice justice-focused leadership: holding safe yet playful space. In a polarized society, where groups are isolated and under-resourced, forms of portraiture including Action Conversations nurture understanding between communities, moving us out of Isolation.

Action Conversations: Bellows Falls

<https://vimeo.com/99760165>

Action Conversations: Veterans

<https://vimeo.com/99743786>

Outside In (choreo-portrait)
<https://vimeo.com/106007951>

Mothers and Daughters (choreo-portrait)
<https://vimeo.com/83466458>

Working in Bellows Falls, Vermont, partnering with Windham County Social Services and the Vermont Performance Lab, (2014), I asked: *could I contribute to that community through engaged art making?* There was concern about teen mothers who were dropping out of high school. With the assistance of civic partners, I brought a group of older women and teen moms together for a period of 5 weeks in Action Conversations. My hope was that later, when the local librarian bumped into a teen wheeling her infant/toddler crossing main street, they would pause at the side of the road to share photos and ask after one another's health and well-being.

At the heart of a call for an artist laureate is an invitation to enter community with curiosity. The beginning is about deep listening, followed by questions, followed by deep listening. I ask, "how can art help?"

I offer two projects here for discussion. These might be beginnings that will grow and change as conversations with Culver City stake holders deepen. They are informed by our post pandemic experience, and increased uncertainty about our social, economic and political futures. I believe we need to come together.

Project 1: Public Performance Installations:

Stopped at a light on my drive home from work, I noticed two people on the shoulder of the road, paused in an extended embrace. A hug. So beautiful, I thought. Such a private moment right here in public space! I wondered what it would be like if 50 feet further down the road there would be another two people, paused in an embrace. Then 50 more feet and another pair, hugging. And then another and another. What would have seemed at first a private moment of connection, would grow to become an event—an encounter with staging the possible.

I can imagine staging this filial embrace, enacted by Culver City citizens, in public spaces: Between parking garages and cinema. Around the Farmer's Market. In parks. While I imagine a sustained hug, there could be many different iterations of this idea: many pairs of people, distributed widely through public spaces quite still, but holding hands.

Project 2:

Choreo-Portraiture/Action Conversations:

I would like to collaborate with domestic workers who toil, mostly invisibly, navigating power and self-determination in the homes of others. Domestic employer/employee relationships frequently take place at the crossroads of class, language, citizenship, education, and age. Can performance acquaint us with the complex dynamics of labor between domestic workers and household employers?

Culver City's Artist Laureate program is an invitation for an artist to step into the complex weave of civic life. What a progressive, pro-active and hopeful vision for a city's future! I view this opportunity not only as one that will enliven the literal town square, but one that will light up the metaphorical spaces of exchange and meaning-making within community.

If I am selected for this post, I will begin by attending City Council meetings and listening to stake holders. I will learn about city history. I will tour neighborhoods and observe the different patterns of life that occur at different times, and on different days of the week. I will notice when and how and by whom public spaces are used.

I view the people of Culver City as participants in creative process and as audience. Anything I undertake will be particular to Culver City: a series of civic portraits.

Art can address problems in registers that cannot be addressed other ways. In this, I seek to make art that brings wonder, that causes people to feel connected, that places hardship in greater context, that builds empathy, that makes work meaningful and that makes ordinary life more beautiful.

I inspire and engage by joining people where they meet and by creating warm, playful and relevant opportunities for engagement.