



October 12, 2019

To: Culver City Cultural Affairs Commission, Culver City Cultural Affairs Commission Artist Laureate Subcommittee and Project Coordinators

Dear Commissioners and Staff Members,

It is my honor and privilege to submit this application for the 2020-2021 Artist Laureate Program.

From an early age, I believed in the public nature of art and had measured its relevance through the evidence of social engagement. Following in my late father's footsteps, I also believe that socially relevant and publicly engaged content is the driver of the individual formal artistic search for a personal expressive medium. This is the reason for my life long experience with art as a form of community outreach and the driving force within my current Love My Neighbor Public Art Project.

The Artist Laureate Program presents a unique opportunity to vocalize, amplify and express the Love My Neighbor community building idea, and find best ways to integrate the lessons, methods and experiences we gained through our project to address the context and the needs of the Culver City community. It is also a great step toward our goal of turning our proven public art project in The City of Carson, California into a wider Love My Neighbor campaign.

I also see the position of the Artist Laureate as a great opportunity to utilize my abilities to serve and help showcase the needs and artistic capabilities of Culver City as a community rather than showcase my own abilities.

Thank you for your strong affirmation of the arts important society building role through the Artist Laureate Program,

Sincerely,

Alexey Steele  
Artist  
in ART we trust!

# ARTIST LAUREATE APPLICATION

## 2020 - 2021 Award

### Arts Discipline Category

Arts Discipline Category	Fine and Visual Arts: including 2-Dimensional, 3-Dimensional, and Digital Art
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### Artist Information

Artist Legal Name	Alexey L Steele
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Artist Preferred Name (if different than legal name)	
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Artist email	[REDACTED]
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Artist Phone Number	[REDACTED]
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Artist Home Address	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
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Artist Mailing Address (if different than home address)	
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Artist Website or Social Media Account #1	www.lovelyneighbor.us
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Artist Website of Social Media Account #2	www.highbartforever.com
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### Employer Information

Employer Name	
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Artist Work Title	
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Employer Address	
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Supervisor Name	
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<b>Supervisor email</b>	
<b>Supervisor Phone Number</b>	

## Nominator Information

<b>Nominator Name</b>	
<b>Describe relationship of nominator to artist (250 character maximum)</b>	
<b>Nominator email</b>	
<b>Nominator Phone Number</b>	
<b>Nominator Address</b>	

## Reference Information

### Reference #1

<b>Reference #1 - Name</b>	Anh Nguyen
<b>Describe relationship of reference #1 to artist (250 character maximum)</b>	Director/Consumer Banking Performance Manager Bank of America, N.A. Head of Bank of America Better Money Habits community volunteer program, partner in Love My Neighbor public art project from 2018, Culver City resident since 2003
<b>Reference #1 - email</b>	████████████████████
<b>Reference #1 - Phone Number</b>	██████████
<b>Reference #1 - Address</b>	

### Reference #2

<b>Reference #2 - Name</b>	
<b>Describe relationship of reference #2 to artist (250 character maximum)</b>	
<b>Reference #2 - email</b>	
<b>Reference #2 - Phone Number</b>	
<b>Reference #2 - Address</b>	

### Reference #3

<b>Reference #3 - Name</b>	
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<b>Describe relationship of reference #3 to artist (250 character maximum)</b>	
<b>Reference #3 - email</b>	
<b>Reference #3 - Phone Number</b>	
<b>Reference #3 - Address</b>	

## Artist Statement

### Artist Statement (7500 character limit)

My Art. I am a visual artist with a background of the Russian representational school. I believe in active engagement of art within society as driving force of formal visual development. More in resume.

Attention on the Community. If chosen, I would like to utilize this opportunity to steer Culver City community attention to its own values and its own artistic expression, not to a single artist such as myself. I will view my position as the Artist Laureate, as well as the artistic reputation I acquired over the years, as tools to amplify the goals of the Cultural Affairs Commission and of the city, to wider showcase Culver City as a vibrant center of artistic life.

Love My Neighbor Project. My prime ongoing public art project is focused on one of the most difficult neighborhoods within LA County, the storied, infamous "Scottsdale" neighborhood in the City of Carson, one of the statistically most diverse cities in the US. At the same time, the method, the experience and impact we have achieved with this project, as well as its core community-building message, has wider applications for many communities including Culver City. The goal and the intended audience of the project are economically disadvantaged and socially disenfranchised population segments, which we would plan to reach in Culver City through collaborations with corresponding agencies, non-profits and volunteer groups. More on LMN project in the resume

Collaborations. If chosen, I will be looking forward to: close cooperation with the commission; learning long term goals of Culver City; helping find public platforms to implement them in appropriate and effective collaborations. I do not have a shortage in my own artistic engagements and If chosen, I want to build a web of collaborations between all active players in the community and artistic groups of Culver City. As a Culver City resident, I view this possible position not as a short-term stint, but as a stage in my long-term involvement and participation within city formatted collaborations. I would work to more deeply engage and integrate The WendeMuseum's platform as a community artistic fore post, coordinating community art outreach with their programming, and helping to define venues and formats for the next generation of CC artistic visionaries. I would love to explore possible collaborations with the Culver City Unified School District's expanding art programs. We could offer the experience of the Love My Neighbor Curriculum Program, which is part of our LMN public art project and which compels participants through art making to focus attention on their own special neighbors and themselves becoming special neighbors in turn. This program was partially funded in the year 2019-2020 by the California Arts Council grant. This program could provide a good basis for collaboration with CCUSD. My two children are elementary school students within the CCUSD and such collaboration would be extra personal for me. If chosen I would work to utilize the position as a way to engage all Artist Laureate finalists as a group of active visual arts practitioners interested in contributing to the long term artistic development and the quality of public life in Culver City. Through collaboration with program alumni, I would hope to help form a permanently engaged group which is likely to become the pool for program participants in the following years and the formal or informal extension of the Cultural Affairs Commission. I would pursue a line of vocally advocating greater community artistic involvement in the public life of Culver City. I would also like as a form of my constructive contribution to help set up various

promising long-term programs under the Cultural Affairs Commission.

I Would Propose. Firstly, I would focus on finding ways to bring the core Love My Neighbor message into Culver City and showcase local heroes who form the backbone of the community, a huge proven step in raising community self awareness and empowerment, which makes displacement much harder politically and economically. To achieve this I would work to find good Culver City collaborating partners in bringing such awareness. From that stand point The Wende Museum could be one of the best logical choices and I would work to coordinate with their plans to start a community conversation based on the presentation and panel discussion on our Carson project. I would also propose a homeless community outreach through art modeled after our outreach to at risk children in the Carson project. The actual executable plans can be developed in collaboration with the commission and the city staff upon learning specific goals and priorities, while combining them with the goals and methods we have developed through my Carson project as we work on expanding it into a wider Love My Neighbor campaign. Secondly, I would love to help develop various ways to showcase the active visual artists' community within the city in coordination with the Cultural Affairs Commission and, perhaps, PIO in order to reinforce public perception of CC as a vibrant center of artistic life. Not all known CC artists would be able to lend their works for city exhibitions. Curating such exhibitions, while important if resources exist, is also limited in scope. We can develop capabilities afforded by modern media to curate an ongoing showcase of important and noted CC artists with works outside of the CC boundaries. The city/commission can choose/curate the group of artists to showcase. Artist Laureate Program participants can serve as a base. To this end an online resource can be created for Culver City artists either as a subsection of the Cultural Affairs Commission site or a stand alone site. Internet Based City Showcase. Images from showcased CC artists as part of CC visual identity. The public information portal can be created with placements of screens in public places where showcased CC artists can be presented to the public at cultural venues such as Public Library, Theaters, The Wende Museum, the Senior Center, along with public information for the city. I could advocate development of a CC Public Info Screen Network as a way to more closely engage the public.

Personal Artistic Development. The side effect of my social action focus is lower quantity output, which is a point of constant anxiety for me as an artist. At the same time, I address and channel this anxiety as an additional driver of my formal artistic development, which I believe is at the important inflection point of my creative curve. I consciously undertook the social action and society engagement public art route in order to steer my formal expressive development. Following the legacy of my dad, I believe that content drives the search for essential formal expression. Specifically my current formal development goal is to translate the key visual aspects I learned in my works on paper from the Love My Neighbor project into coloristic interpretation for the large scale public murals such as ones I am developing currently for the City of Wilmington. If chosen I will use the Culver City funds from the program for this artistic development as well as credit Culver City Cultural Affairs Commission as one of the grant sources for this development.

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## Artistic Documentation - Images

### Image #1

Image #1 File Name

Steele\_ArtisticSample-Image1

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**Identify Image #1 (500 character maximum)**

El Rey Trabajador, 2016 Oil on canvas, 72" x 48" Produced with grants from The City of Carson and Wells Fargo Bank Campos is a beloved 75 year old gardener in the notorious "Scottsdale" neighborhood of Carson. He came from the Guadalajara region in Mexico in 1965 called "Scottsdale" home for 19 year, works here for over 30 years and would not quit. At his age he is still the hardest working on a whole crew. Cirillo is a true community hero and the neighbor everyone cannot help but love.

## Image #2

**Image #2 File Name**

Steele\_ArtisticSample-Image2

**Identify Image #2 (500 character maximum)**

Mrs. O'Neal, Love My Neighbor 2015 Sepia on Paper, 29" x 22" Produced with grant from The City of Carson's founders, Mary Anne O'Neal, is a true icon of the Carson community. A great-granddaughter of slaves who grew up on a farm in Arkansas, this 91-year-old woman leads her life by example. In a world of "it's all about me," she believed in serving others before oneself and helping a neighbor in need. Mrs. O'Neal is an inspiring, vibrant and kind human being, encapsulating the soul of the community.

## Image #3

**Image #3 File Name**

Steele\_ArtisticSample-Image3

**Identify Image #3 (500 character maximum)**

Mr. Lipsey. 2017 29" X 22" Sepia on Paper Executed with the grants from The City of Carson.

Mr. Lipsey is one of the longest continuous residents of "Scottsdale". Some old timers call him "The Seed and The Root". He is from Mississippi. He is 77. He is a living witness to segregation, sharing the stories of his childhood. Remarkable in his observations, he told me at the middle of last session as I began to develop the drawing: "It's the first time I am seeing real me".

## Image #4

**Image #4 File Name**

Steele\_ArtisticSample-Image4

**Identify Image #4 (500 character maximum)**

Ricky of Carson. 2015, Oil on canvas  
Produced with the grant from The City of Carson. Ricardo Echevarria was my next door neighbor. He is a survivor of a horrendous car crash that left him in a coma for months and his face disfigured. After recovery he went on to support the local children's soccer team, built a fully-regulated indoor soccer rink and saw them become state champions. Ricky carries a truly noble and refined look of victory over unimaginable suffering and adversity. A local hero

## Image #5

**Image #5 File Name**

Steele\_ArtisticSample-Image5

**Identify Image #5 (500 character maximum)**

James Foisia. The Chief. Love My Neighbor 2019 29" X 22" Sepia on Paper. Executed with the grants from The City of Carson and Bank of America Foundation. He was the beloved local coach in his then impoverished neighborhood, sometimes paying for his program with his own money. Now the park where he coached for over 3 decades is renamed in his honor, 1st in a nation after a Samoan.

## Image #6

<b>Image #6 File Name</b>	Steele_ArtisticSample-Image6
<b>Identify Image #6 (500 character maximum)</b>	Mr. Leon - D Day Veteran. Love My Neighbor 2016, 29" X 22" Sepia on Paper, Executed with the grants from The City of Carson. At the time I did the drawing Mr. Leon was 101 years old and Carson's oldest resident. He was from from Puerto Rico. In the middle of our first session I realized he is a D Day Veteran. It was a cathartic moment. With his permanently diminishing physical strength when making each word was a deliberate task, he'd say once and again: "I was in a D Day".

## Image #7

<b>Image #7 File Name</b>	Steele_ArtisticSample-Image7
<b>Identify Image #7 (500 character maximum)</b>	Cirilo. Study for El Rey Trabajador 2016, 29" X 22" Sepia on Paper, Executed with the grants from The City of Carson. The series consists of a specific type of paintings, which are centered on the authenticity of a distinct character. In fact this is the sole key to their purpose. This kind of works relies entirely on the strong, truthful and emotional portrayal of unique individual. The strength and conviction of the character portrayal was essential to hold the future complex painting together

## Image #8

<b>Image #8 File Name</b>	Steele_ArtisticSample-Image8
<b>Identify Image #8 (500 character maximum)</b>	<p>Daughter of a Shoeshiner 2011 Oil on canvas 40" x 54"</p> <p>I met Jay and his daughter Gaby on my trip to San Miguel Allende, Mexico. Jay embodied the remarkable pride without arrogance as he turned shoeshining into a noble act of serving his people. As his life fully represented the "hemispheric" story of US/Mexico relations his character seemed straight out of Steinbeck and Marquez.</p>

## Image #9

<b>Image #9 File Name</b>	Steele_ArtisticSample-Image9
<b>Identify Image #9 (500 character maximum)</b>	<p>Working on El Rey Trabajador live on site at "Scottsdale".</p> <p>The painting took 500 hours to complete, all on site. Work live in my approach is the source of artistic truthfulness and authenticity of the image as well as the point of experiential community engagement close in its form to performance art.</p>

## Image #10

<b>Image #10 File Name</b>	Steele_ArtisticSample-Image10
<b>Identify Image #10 (500 character maximum)</b>	<p>Working on El Rey Trabajador live on site at "Scottsdale". The sometimes called "long process" of my artistic method became the basis of deeply personal interaction that led to community integration of the project, built the extraordinary level of trust that our project currently enjoys and became the foundation for all our outreach programs.</p>

## Image #11

<b>Image #11 File Name</b>	Steele_ArtisticSample-Image11
<b>Identify Image #11 (500 character maximum)</b>	Love My Neighbor public installation at the dedicated non-profit on-site Artward! Gallery Scottsdale serves as the center of our community engagement programs as well as the functional public art environment.

## Image #12

<b>Image #12 File Name</b>	Steele_ArtisticSample-Image12
<b>Identify Image #12 (500 character maximum)</b>	Love My Neighbor community outreach at Carson with the volunteers of Bank of America Better Money Habits program, the Love My Neighbor project partners since 2018. We have developed a way to make our art outreach program mobile and transport to public square as part of citywide events in Carson. We also took it to an important Taste of Soul event in 2018 and now preparing for ToS 2019 as the main presentation by Bank of America. The image from our art tent is currently on the ToS homepage

## Image #13

<b>Image #13 File Name</b>	
<b>Identify Image #13 (500 character maximum)</b>	

## Image #14

<b>Image #14 File Name</b>	
<b>Identify Image #14 (500 character maximum)</b>	

## Image #15

<b>Image #15 File Name</b>	
<b>Identify Image #15 (500 character maximum)</b>	

## Artistic Documentation - Images - continued

<b>Describe image(s) applicability to application (1000 character maximum)</b>	The images describe my artistic approach to visual communication from the stand point of content driven form, the method of my work and its wider social application.
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## Artistic Documentation - Audio/Video

### Audio/Visual Excerpt #1



<b>Audio/Video Excerpt #1 File Name</b>	
<b>Choose Format of Audio/Video Excerpt #1</b>	Video
<b>Identify Audio/Video Excerpt #1 (500 character maximum)</b>	
<b>Where to Start Audio/Video Excerpt #1</b>	
<b>Describe Audio/Video Excerpt #1 Applicability to Application (1000 character maximum)</b>	

## **Audio/Visual Excerpt #2**

<b>Audio/Video Excerpt #2 File Name</b>	
<b>Choose Format of Audio/Video Excerpt #2</b>	Video
<b>Identify Audio/Video Excerpt #2 (500 character maximum)</b>	
<b>Where to Start Audio/Video Excerpt #2</b>	
<b>Describe Audio/Video Excerpt #2 Applicability to Application (1000 character maximum)</b>	

## **Audio/Visual Excerpt #3**

<b>Audio/Video Excerpt #3 File Name</b>	
<b>Choose Format of Audio/Video Excerpt #3</b>	Video
<b>Identify Audio/Video Excerpt #3 (500 character maximum)</b>	
<b>Where to Start Audio/Video Excerpt #3</b>	
<b>Describe Audio/Video Excerpt #3 Applicability to Application (1000 character maximum)</b>	

## **Audio/Visual Excerpt #4**

<b>Audio/Video Excerpt #4 File Name</b>	
<b>Choose Format of Audio/Video Excerpt #4</b>	Video
<b>Identify Audio/Video Excerpt #4 (500 character maximum)</b>	
<b>Where to Start Audio/Video Excerpt #4</b>	
<b>Describe Audio/Video Excerpt #4 Applicability to Application (1000 character maximum)</b>	

## Artistic Documentation - Documents

### Document #1

<b>Document #1 File Name</b>	Steele_EngagementLetter1
<b>Identify Document #1 (500 character maximum)</b>	The letter from Joes Segal, Chief Curator and Director of Programming,The Wende Museum of The Cold War, 10808 Culver Blvd, Culver City, Ca 90230
<b>Where to Start Document #1</b>	Whole document
<b>Describe Document #1 Applicability to Application (1000 character maximum)</b>	The letter describes the interest of the institution to collaborate with me within the scope of Artist Laureate Program.

### Document #2

<b>Document #2 File Name</b>	Steele_StatementComplete
<b>Identify Document #2 (500 character maximum)</b>	The document is a complete and better laid out version of my statement within the application form.
<b>Where to Start Document #2</b>	Sections My Art and Love My Neighbor
<b>Describe Document #2 Applicability to Application (1000 character maximum)</b>	Attached for possible convenience/easier work for the commissioners and staff.

### Document #3

<b>Document #3 File Name</b>	
<b>Identify Document #3 (500 character maximum)</b>	
<b>Where to Start Document #3</b>	

**Describe Document #3**  
**Applicability to Application (1000**  
**character maximum)**

## **Document #4**

**Document #4 File Name**

**Identify Document #4 (500**  
**character maximum)**

**Where to Start Document #4**

**Describe Document #4**  
**Applicability to Application (1000**  
**character maximum)**

## **Document #5**

**Document #5 File Name**

**Identify Document #5 (500**  
**character maximum)**

**Where to Start Document #5**

**Describe Document #5**  
**Applicability to Application (1000**  
**character maximum)**

## **Document #6**

**Document #6 File Name**

**Identify Document #6 (500**  
**character maximum)**

**Where to Start Document #6**

**Describe Document #6**  
**Applicability to Application (1000**  
**character maximum)**

## **Artistic Documentation Release**

**License Acknowledgement**

Alexey Steele

**ALEXEY STEELE**, born in Kiev, Ukraine in 1967, began his art training at an early age in the studio of his father, Leonid Steele, the renowned painter of Russian Academic Tradition of the Socialist Realism School. He furthered his professional education at the prestigious Surikov Art Institute of the Soviet Academy of Arts in Moscow under important, internationally acclaimed artist Illia Glazunov. Steele moved to Los Angeles in 1990.

Steele is known for his large-scale figurative works in oil and on paper, psychological portrayals of common men of society and plein air landscapes.

Steele's approach to figure is rooted in the Renaissance and Baroque periods seen through the prism of Russian Academic Tradition. At the same time, his works possess a modern feel and intensity in their peculiar audacity of grand scale and grand themes.

Solving various problems in the development of his mammoth works, Steele employs largely forgotten Renaissance period processes. He is known for creating full size drawings, referred to as "cartoons," which attract attention in their own right. His portraiture conveys empathy and expresses humanistic ideals by giving noble presence of royal portraits to a modern day common men and women from the rock bottom of society. Steele executes his life-sized portraits in a series of live sessions. In his landscapes and seascapes Steele examines formal qualities of movement and distance while in his figure works he is preoccupied with dimensional underpinning of shapes. The Russian Academic inspired approach to unity of dimension, tonality and color plays important role in Steele's visual language.

## **PUBLIC ART**

Content and function of art within society play important part in Alexey's views on art-making, relevant for our contemporary world. Following in the tradition of his late father, Alexey is a proponent of art as an active tool of social action and community engagement in the form of public art. Upon founding his studio in Carson in 2005, Steele began working on ***My Neighbor Series*** inspired by one of statistically most diverse cities in the nation. The concept of the series is to capture uniquely inspiring local heroes who command a special universal love and admiration even within most difficult neighborhoods.

Two of his unique and major mural commissions of large-scale original multi-figure compositions include ***The Circle***, a 372-inch diameter, and the 272-inch diameter allegorical work, ***The Soul of the Hero***.

Steele's 2002 ***"Angel of Unity"***, a larger-than-life statue was installed at the Comerica Bank Towers in downtown Los Angeles as part of A Community of Angeles Art Project in Los Angeles. Representing artist's personal contemplation of the tragedy of 9/11, it was placed at the highly visible juncture of Downtown LA's two major freeways 110 and 5 and was seen by estimated 30000 motorists a day for over two years.

As part of his series Alexey Steele was commissioned by the neighboring CSU Dominguez Hills a painting entitled “**Learners of Dominguez: Howard, Jenika, Auburn, Chris, Ronald**” to officially commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the campuses, just like the whole city of Carson one of the most diverse in the nation. The work was hailed by the media as “Capturing the Soul of a Diverse Campus.”

In 2015-2019 Alexey Steele was awarded grants by **The City of Carson Cultural Arts Commission** to continue his work on the Love My Neighbor Series. With the series at the center Steele built his public art project “**Love My Neighbor**” with the goal to introduce into our contemporary society a credible **unifying message** through compelling images and stories of the beloved and inspiring diverse neighbors who serve as unique binders of local community.

In 2016 Wells Fargo Bank participated in the project as the exhibiting partner. At two public venues in the period of one month over 40,000 Carson residents visited the installations.

Starting in 2016 Alexey made the focus of his public art project the notorious “**Scottsdale**” neighborhood of Carson, one of the glaring examples of multi-generational urban failures in the contemporary America.

The process of creating his portrayals on-site in the series of live sessions open to public became a unique way of community engagement that never happened there before. It opened the door into the community and built the trust with the residents of this difficult and long-neglected neighborhood, created the opportunity for continuous engagement in this notoriously hard to set foot in community.

In collaboration with 501 (c) 3 non-profit **Artward Initiative** in 2017 Alexey Steele founded the non-profit **Artward! Gallery “Scottsdale”** to directly engage this most underserved community of Carson with *Love My Neighbor* public art project. The Artward Initiative non-profit was awarded 2016 – 2018 grants by **Wells Fargo Bank**, 2019 – 2020 grant by the **California Arts Council** and 2019 grant by **Bank of America Foundation** to facilitate work on the Alexey Steele led “Love My Neighbor” public art project.

The project has delivered a measurable impact:

- Alexey Steele and his *Love My Neighbor* public art project are credited by local activists and public officials for playing significant part in the community turnaround effort.
- With his public art project Alexey Steele facilitated closer tactical cooperation on gang intervention between **Carson Sheriff’s Department** and “Scottsdale’s” security team.
- Alexey Steele’s *Love My Neighbor* public art project is instrumental in bringing attention and affecting the city policy toward “Scottsdale” neighborhood of Carson.

In 2018 the Artward Initiative non-profit was awarded the prestigious **California Arts Council** federally funded state grant to support its outreach work and maximizing the opportunities for community engagements opened up by Alexey Steele’s public art project in “Scottsdale”, Carson.

In 2018 in partnership with **Bank of America** volunteer team Alexey Steele conceptualized and launched in the city of Carson **Love My Neighbor Day** centered around outreach programs of *Love My Neighbor* public art project.

In 2019 Alexey Steele had had launched **Love My Neighbor Gang Out** program in collaboration with **Carson Sherriff's Department Gang Diversion Team (GDT)** and **Bank of America Better Money Habits** community outreach team. The program addresses the single most difficult and critical group among the entire children at risk segment. It provides the creative outlet and the exposure to the alternative life goals to a group of youth with high probability of entering US penal system.

## **My Art.**

I am a visual artist with a background of the Russian representational school.

My late father, Leonid Steele, who had a profound influence on the formation of my artistic thought, was an important artist of the Socialist Realism School of the Soviet Union with influential work in the late 50s-early 70s in Ukraine. My father was an ardent believer and active proponent of the venerated "Into The People" movement within greater Russian culture, stretching back to the cultural wave of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

I grew up following my dad on his long excursions to Ukraine's remote villages with a rock bottom life style, and later in his civic engagements founding a city gallery with state museum status in Russia, which became a community beacon in a bleak industrial Moscow suburb. The museum recently celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, still venerated by the community and, remarkably, was protected by the community throughout the gangster-land turf wars of 1990s. My dad believed that the people from the rock bottom of our societies are the source of true art, and its most important audience.

This is what I grew up knowing, this is what I believe today in contemporary America, and this is what drives my current artistic search and social engagement.

## Love My Neighbor Project

My prime ongoing public art project is focused on one of the most difficult neighborhoods within LA County, the storied, infamous "Scottsdale" neighborhood in the City of Carson, one of the statistically most diverse cities in the US. At the same time, the method, the experience and impact we have achieved with this project, as well as its core community-building message, has wider applications for many communities including Culver City.

Putting the emphasis on special neighbors -- the unsung, true heroes that serve as binders of local communities -- by showcasing their presence and their stories helps define local community values at a critical evolution juncture for many California communities including Culver City. With an influx of higher than local historic average net worth residents, the project aims to preserve communities' social and cultural identities, to prevent from being seen as just acreage for developers in waiting.

The Love My Neighbor project aims to help local neighborhoods to be seen as valuable historic communities to be joined, defining local values and character and helping to find balancing and regulating instruments to stand up to gentrification pressures and their many unintended social consequences. We have to learn the lessons of the Bay area, not just be seduced by the short term number-glitter, but wisely manage forward the consequences. Culver City under the current leadership has an opportunity to serve as a case study for sustainable non-gentrifying development. With our Love My Neighbor project we see gentrification as an economic displacement and aim for empowerment of the community in the face of market pressures.

Through my project I view the public nature of art as an important unifying humanistic platform.

Love My Neighbor public art project is conducted in close collaboration with the Artward Initiative 501 (c) 3 non-profit and has received support from grants by Wells Fargo Bank, California Arts Council and Bank of America Foundation. The project is developed in close partnership with the City of Carson and its Human Services Department through the grants by the Cultural Arts Commission, and currently has an active operational partnership with Bank of America's community outreach Better Money Habits Program and the Carson Sheriff's Department's nationally recognized Gang Diversion Team (GDT).

Artward Initiative's experience and capabilities can be brought in as needed to implement goals of possible Culver City engagement.

If chosen, I would hope to maximize the opportunities of Artist Laureate position to vocalize, amplify and express the "Love My Neighbor" community building idea, and find best ways to integrate the lessons, methods and experiences we gained through our project to address the context and the needs of Culver City community.

The goal and the intended audience of the project are economically disadvantaged and socially disenfranchised population segments, which we would plan to reach in Culver City through collaborations with corresponding agencies, non-profits and volunteer groups.

## **PRESS AND EXHIBITIONS**

Alexey Steele and his work is subject of numerous Art and Mass Media publications including **"Fine Art Connoisseur"**, **"American Artist"** featuring on its two covers, **"American Arts Quarterly"**, **"Southwest Art"**, **"Gramophone"** in London and of an in-depth profile on the front page of **Arts and Books Section** by **The Los Angeles Times**.

He has participated in numerous exhibitions including at the Fleicher Museum of Art in Scottsdale, Arizona, in exhibitions at the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art; Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art at Pepperdine University in Malibu; Natural History Museum of LA County, Pasadena Museum of California Art, The Autry National Center Museum, Phippen Museum in Prescott, Arizona; University of Arkansas Fine Arts Center in Fayetteville; at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angeles in Los Angeles, Cape Cod Museum of Art; he had his one man show "Outside Constraints" in Carnegie Art Museum in Oxnard, California.

At the tri-annual **"On Location In Malibu"** exhibition at Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art at Pepperdine University Alexey Steele's work had a distinction of being featured on the main banner of the museum twice.

In 2017 Alexey Steele's painting "Ricky of Carson" from "My Neighbor Series" was placed on the title wall of the 106<sup>th</sup> Annual Gold Medal Exhibition of the California Art Club at Autry Museum of the American West.

In 2018 Alexey Steele's major painting "El Rey Trabajador" along with "Mr. Lipsey" and Mrs. O'Neal" drawings, all from "My Neighbor Series" were prominently displayed at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History at the 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Gold Medal Exhibition of the California Art Club. The City of Carson was credited on wall descriptions.

Alexey Steele was commissioned by the City of Oxnard a master drawing **"Quiet Steps of Approaching Thunder"** for the permanent collection of the Carnegie Art Museum in Oxnard, California



## AWARDS AND THEORY

Alexey Steele is a 2009 winner of the prestigious **Artemis Award in Athens, Greece** “for celebrating the power and beauty of women through his art on a heroic scale in the modern world particularly in his multi-figure compositions “The Circle” and “The Soul of The Hero.”

In 2009, Alexey Steele received **Gusi Peace Prize** in the Philippines for his work on turning art into a tool of International Conflict Resolution and for his **"Fire of Peace"** composition.

Investigating the variety of ways art interacts within modern society, in 2008 Steele founded the critically acclaimed **Classical Underground**, a classical music and visual art project examining the experience of artistic integrity in the modern world.

Alexey believes theory plays important role within art making process and helps the practitioner discover new thematic and expressive goals outside of commercially driven formats. Alexey participated in the memorable organizational meeting of **American Forum for Realism** called on and moderated by Fine Art Connoisseur Magazine in December 2011 and from the inception with influential **The Representational Art Conference (TRAC)** sponsored by California Lutheran University, giving extensive presentations at **TRAC 2012, TRAC 2014** and **TRAC 2015**.

Steele has coined the new art term **Novorealism** in March 2011 and is a **Signature Member of the California Art Club**.

Steele contributed to a book **"Soviet Impressionism"** by Dr. Vern Grosvenor Swanson.

Alexey Steele is featured in **"California Light. A Century of Landscapes"** published by Rizzoli and in **"Painting California. Seascapes and Beach Towns, Paintings by California Art Club"** published by Rizzoli.

## QUOTES

*"Steele paints tender, even erotically charged, depictions of male and female lovers, and hugely scaled canvases of fantastical scenes that evoke a new mythology. His cartoons, rendered in colored Conte crayon, evoke the refinement and expertise of a Raphael or Leonardo or Pontormo, but on a Herculean Scale."* **David Masello** in *American Arts Quarterly* summer 2012, critic, contributes regularly to *The New York Times* and *Fine Art Connoisseur*, among other publications

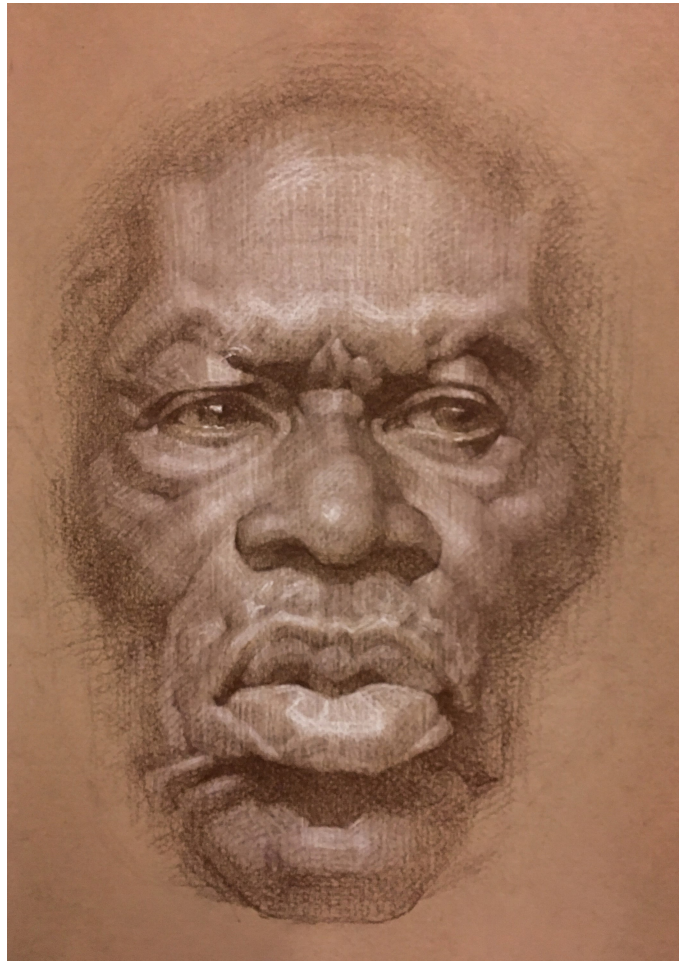
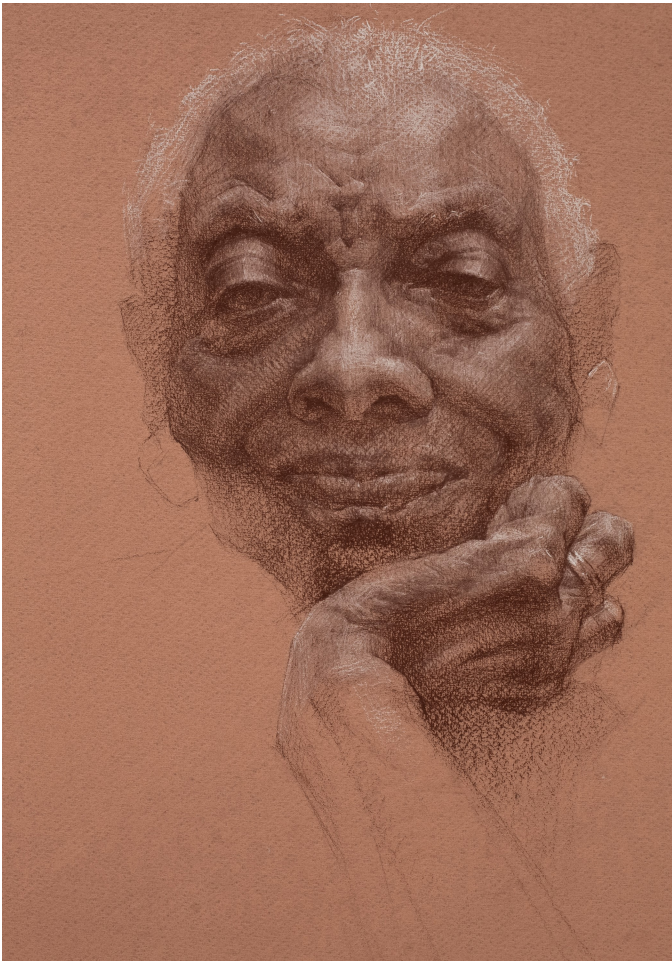
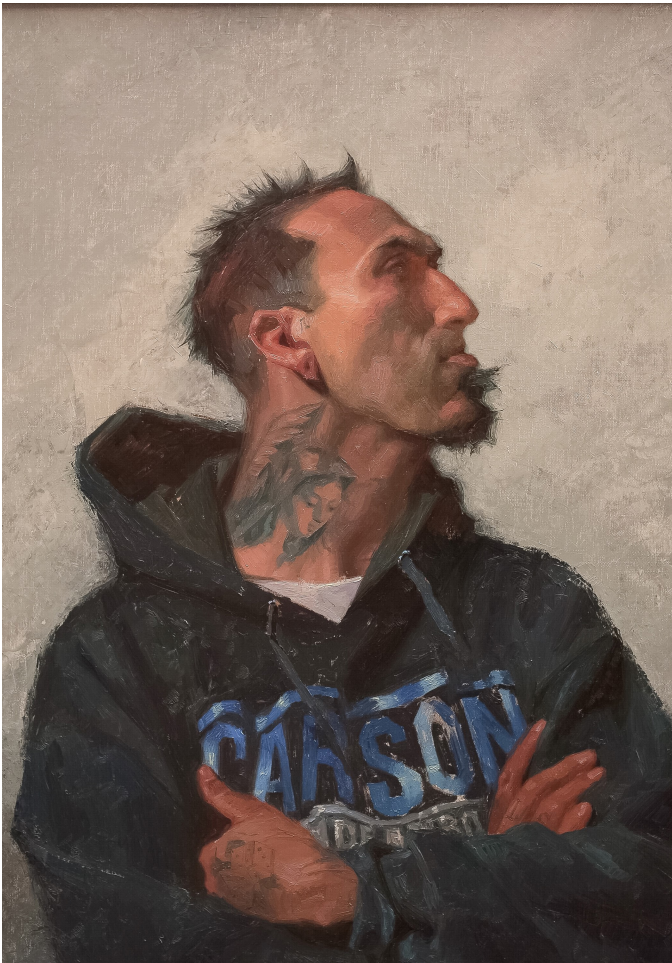
*"Rarely in the world of art does one encounter such a superb and completely unique artist..."*  
**Jean Stern**, *The Irvine Museum*, Executive Director

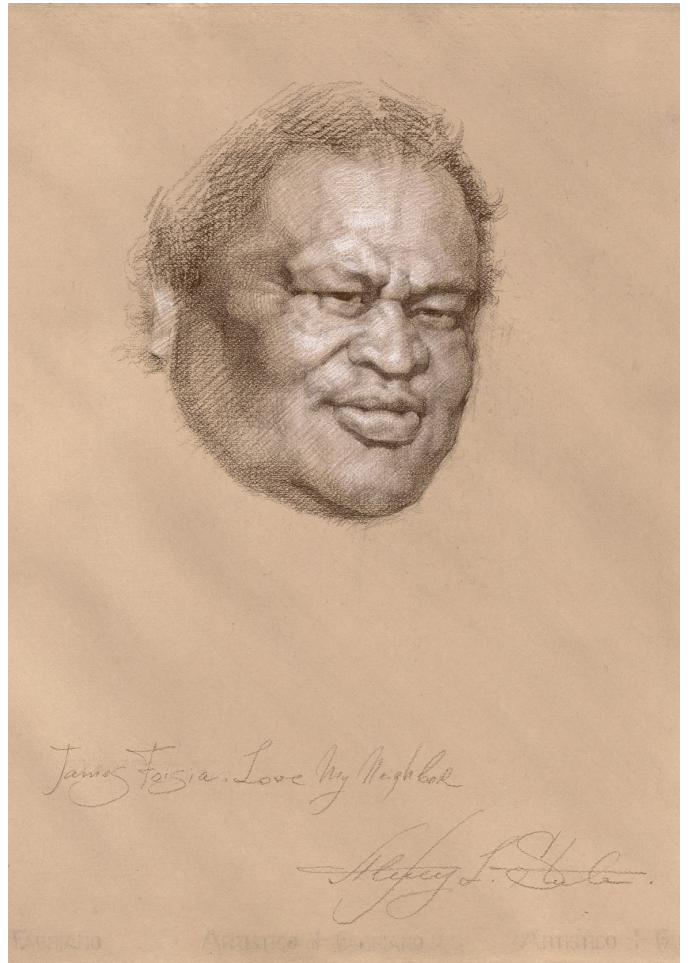
*"Alexey Steele's own artistic vision is heroic. Ignoring the lure of contemporary conformity, he pursues complex, figurative compositions... Steele has created a new and magnificent classical vernacular for our times".* **Suzanne Bellah**, Director, Carnegie Art Museum.

*“He is a “Bolshoi” talent, soul and personality, and an artist with a cause and the passion to back it up. He pours the old wine of classical art into new bottles of the 21st century. His “Grand Manner” style dwarfs the efforts of many of his contemporaries.”* **Dr. Vern G. Swanson**, Director, Springville Museum of Art.

*“Both in the process by which it was created and the diverse students it portrays, ‘Learners’ captures the essence of Cal State Dominguez Hills and its goal to wield the power of diversity, lifelong learning, and collaboration for a more promising future,”* said **Dr. Mildred García**, the institution’s former president and current chief executive of Cal State Fullerton. *“I was honored to play a small part in Alexey’s process, and proud the students depicted in ‘Learners’ reflect an even brighter future for Cal State Dominguez Hills and its surrounding communities.”*

*“The City of Carson is currently preparing to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our founding with substantial forward-looking urban development,”* said **Carson Mayor Albert Robles**. *“Alexey Steele’s Love My Neighbor public art program highlights the city’s civic pride and showcases Carson’s diversity as we pursue our City motto of ‘Future Unlimited.’”*









Culver City, October 10, 2019

Letter of support for Alexey Steele, Artist Laureate Program

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Wende Museum of the Cold War, I would like to express our great interest in Alexey Steele's proposal. I have known Alexey for years as an inspired artist and organizer. I have been an enthusiastic visitor of his art studio in Carson, where he and his wife Olga organized magnificent and very well attended concerts under the name "Classical Underground." Alexey has kept me informed about his "Love My Neighbor" project and its remarkable accomplishments in terms of public engagement with art and urban planning. A central role for the arts in community building seems to be a very promising path for Culver City as well, especially in times of gentrification and the influx of big companies.

The Wende Museum would be thrilled to work with Alexey on coproducing a panel discussion about art and community, drawing parallels between the Cold War (socialist) past and the local present. The fact that Alexey's father Leonid Steele was a famous public artist in the Soviet Union adds an extra layer of interest to this discussion. The museum is strongly dedicated to community service, and such a collaboration would fit perfectly with our broader programming. We look forward to working with Alexey on such a project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joes Segal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joes Segal  
Chief Curator and Director of Programming

October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

It has been my great privilege to participate in the Love My Neighbor Initiative sponsored by the City of Carson. I have been involved with Alexey Steele and his work since the beginning of 2018.

Along with other volunteers from my workplace, I was able to deliver financial seminars to the Scottsdale community of Carson, while Alexey Steele of Artward Initiative provided free painting and drawing lessons to the children. The Scottsdale Townhouse Complex has been troubled by gang violence and socio-economic challenges. People who have been living there for quite a long time did not know each other. Alexey has been able to continuously pull the multiple members of this fragmented community together through his Love My Neighbor Program. Residence of this community are now beginning to know, interact and assist each other.

I am currently a resident of Culver City since 2003. I have witnessed the tremendous change in this city and I am a very proud citizen of this community. I think Culver City would benefit tremendously from the Love My Neighbor Initiative. This would pull the various neighbors from this vast city together so we can make this city an even stronger and better place. I would strongly recommend Alexey Steele and his Love My Neighbor Program to the Culver City initiative.

Thank you



Anh Nguyen

