

*Dear Commissioners,*

*2022 was the last year of my extended tenure as the first Artist Laureate of Culver City. Yet again, it turned out to be unexpectedly dramatic, great, and memorable, contributing to the foundational joint effort in establishing and setting up our amazing Artist Laureate Program for generations to come.*

*Much like the beginning of my tenure in 2020, all my plans for the year were drastically altered by the tragic turn of history but yet again, we were able to pivot the program to address the new calamity.*

*The war in Ukraine, brutally, senselessly and criminally launched by Vladimir Putin on **February 24, 2022**, pitted in a self-destructive and inhumane fratricide the country of my youth against the home country of my entire family and of my birth, and threw our fragile world into the next global crisis to which we immediately mobilized through art. We did not skip a beat.*

1. **February 25 - March 1** - Within the first days of war, I developed and produced [www.peaceforukraine.org](http://www.peaceforukraine.org) website based on the imagery and the artistic output of my late father, Leonid Steele, an important Ukrainian artist of the 50s, 60s and 70s, celebrated for his powerful and compelling depictions of the Ukrainian people and of the Ukrainian nation.
2. At the same time, in collaboration with Helms Design Center, I initiated and produced the public art light installation "Projecting For Peace" with curated imagery from the collection of my father's art from his Ukrainian Period.
3. **March 7** - "Projecting For Peace" was launched at the Helms Design Center and lasted until April.
4. **March** - I advocated for the adoption of special resolution by the Culver City City Council in condemnation of the war and in support for the struggle of the Ukrainian people, including my work with City staff on appropriate language.
5. **March 14** - A Resolution Standing With Ukraine and Condemning the Russian Invasion of Ukraine was unanimously adopted by the City Council.
6. **March** - In the process of the emergency response to the Ukraine war crisis, I was advocating for a light projection installation on the Veterans Memorial Building tower which revealed the technical inadequacy of the equipment at this important city feature and its potential as a public display venue; this led to staff's consensus that there is a need to explore upgrading the projection equipment.

7. **March** - I was contacted by former Councilmember Thomas Small to join the effort for organizing a fundraising event for Ukraine, a collaboration between Culver City Forward and a group of prominent Los Angeles and Culver City based organizations.
8. **April** - The intense and all-consuming organizational work on the concert event ensued through the entire months of April.
9. **May 1** - The fundraising multi-media concert at the Robert Frost Auditorium was realized as a collaboration between the Artist Laureate Program (ALP), Culver City Forward, venerated Jacaranda series, The Wende Museum and my well known Classical Underground music and art series. Through our collaborative effort we raised over \$118,000 for Direct Relief, a nonprofit humanitarian organization delivering critical medical supplies such as insulin to the people on the front line of the Ukrainian war, a remarkable achievement for a non-celebrity driven event. The dramatically large part of this donation came as a result of the resources and outreach I was able to contribute. In addition, I curated the visual projection portion of the event.
10. **May 25** - Interdisciplinary outreach and competence were always an important part of my tenure as I believe them to be a critically important part of ALP. Having decades' of collaborative experience with musical and performance arts, I had a great collaboration with AVPA on the spring concert of CCHS orchestra. I did the onstage performance as a narrator in Prokofiev's beloved *Peter and the Wolf* and Camille Saint-Saëns's enchanting, *The Carnival of the Animals*.
11. **Throughout 2022** - Was serving on the Economic Recovery Task Force (now Economic Vitality Task Force) subcommittee for Love Local performance program. I was heavily advocating for this program throughout my work on ERTF since 2020.
12. **June** - Organized the meeting and panel discussion for our ERTF subcommittee with Blair Cohn, Executive Director of Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association and also founder of the EXPO Arts Center in Long Beach and of the hugely popular First Friday events in the Bixby Knolls neighborhood. He is the expert on large city events involving music bands on the streets and who shared important organizational insights with our subcommittee that were helpful in launching the program.
13. **Throughout the Summer** - Was advocating to bring to Culver City the famed Ukrainian International Animation Festival with partners having rights to a portfolio of Ukrainian masterpieces of cinema. Unfortunately we were not able to make it happen, but can/shall still bring it to fruition.
14. Was always putting the emphasis on the importance of active ambassadorial function of the Artist Laureate, not to be mistaken with ceremonial representation. Throughout my

tenure I kept actively engaging in art intervention within inner city outreach work via our non-profit, Artward Initiative.

15. **July - August** - As a result of my inner city ambassadorial work in the City of Carson, I was able to develop a unique opportunity to collaborate with newly established Los Angeles County program LA vs. Hate.
16. **September** - Established a joint collaboration with my flagship *Love My Neighbor* project, cross-messaging with LA vs. Hate, Love My Neighbor, and United Against Hate.
17. **September** - Established collaboration between me as Artist Laureate and LA vs. Hate during United Against Hate week.
18. **September** - Developed a way to produce a cost-effective portable art show with the support of the City's Graphic Services Division.
19. **October 8** - Took part in the Culver City Art Walk & Roll Festival, the first fully public event of my tenure because of prior restrictions from the pandemic. The dedicated ALP booth was centrally positioned at the entrance to the event. The presentation effectively showcased the role of the City and the importance of ALP in keeping the significant art component of the city's image and brand in the age of economic displacement of art galleries from the city as victims of gentrification.
20. **October - November** - After the success of the Art Walk & Roll presentation, I was able to secure the support of City's leadership for developing a municipal gallery in the city, addressing the need to keep the visual arts and social component as the creative driver of the critically important creative economy segment. Secured a confirmed ability to have a fully functional municipal gallery space within extraordinary short 2 year window.
21. **Throughout 2022** continued to Work closely with Culver Arts (Culver City Arts Foundation).
22. **October - November** - Was able to secure Culver Arts' desire and commitment to fund new city municipal gallery.
23. **November** - Was able to bring United Against Hate Week to Culver City as part of the ALP.
24. **November** - I developed, organized and conducted a series of events for the United Against Hate Week (November 13 - November 19) in Culver City as well as part of my ambassadorial work in the City of Carson and in the City of Long Beach.
25. **November** - In collaboration with CCUSD I conducted the outreach to AVPA art students, encouraging them to participate in my project and the Love My Neighbor - United Against

Hate pop up exhibition at Village Well by producing their own original artwork reflecting on confronting hate and embracing unity.

As a form of my ambassadorial capacity:

26. I conducted the dedicated outreach events about Love My Neighbor - United Against Hate project and United Against Hate Week to Carson Sheriff's Station Gang Diversion Team and their youth as well as to the youth of International Institute of Tolerance and the Carson Muslim community.
27. I developed and conducted the Love My Neighbor - United Against Hate Carson Kids Art Contest celebrating Carson neighbors and in commemoration of United Against Hate Week in LA County in collaboration with Artward Initiative, "Scottsdale" Townhouses, Carson Sheriff's Gang Diversion Team and International Institute of Tolerance.
28. I developed and conducted the Love My Neighbor - United Against Hate Special Kids Art Contest Long Beach, celebrating Long Beach neighbors and in commemoration of United Against Hate Week in collaboration with Artward Initiative Non-Profit, "Carmelitos" Housing (the biggest in LA County) and the office of Long Beach Councilmember for the 8th District, Al Austin II.
29. **November** - In collaboration with The Wende Museum, I produced new live portrait for the newly cross-messaged Love My Neighbor - United Against Hate series showcasing Fox Hills community icon Candance Pilgram-Simmons.
30. **November 13** - The last live session for the portrait of Candance Pilgram-Simmons was public and part of The Wende Museum's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. The event became a great form of the outreach which brought in a new audience and important segment of our city's Fox Hills neighborhood. With Love My Neighbor - United Against Hate event at The Wende on November 13, Culver City officially opened the United Against Hate Week in the entire Los Angeles County.
31. **November 14** - Represented Culver City at the official press conference at the Los Angeles County Administration Building organized by LA County leaders dedicated to United Against Hate Week.
32. **November 14** - The Culver City City Council at my request presented a proclamation in support of United Against Hate Week.
33. During the City Council ceremony in collaboration with Culver City Chamber of Commerce and Members of the City Council, I organized a pop-up exhibition of Love My Neighbor - United Against Hate.

34. **November 15** - Opened the Love My Neighbor - United Against Hate pop-up art show in commemoration of United Against Hate Week in Culver City and in collaboration with Village Well, Culver Arts and CCUSD.
35. Throughout all of my work on ERTF in 2020-2022 I was consistently and continuously advocating for the art in windows (empty storefronts/businesses) program. In 2022 the City Council made the decision to establish and fund the program. Due to limited staff and logistics, the program was not implemented yet with plans to launch it in 2023. My Village Well window pop-up show was also designed to be a practical pilot and showcase for the city's future art in windows program.
36. **November 16** - Culver Arts hosted a reception for the Love My Neighbor - United Against Hate window pop-up show at Village Well which was very well attended by the great group of Culver City leaders.
37. The show visibly demonstrated yet again the potential and the need for the municipal gallery space that will be able to bring together the creative leaders of the future with the community members and community leaders of today.
38. The important part of the Love My Neighbor - United Against Hate window pop-up show was the fabulous participation of three CCUSD young artists -- Haifa Maung, Benjamin Scully and Lauryn Kinsella - who specially created a heartfelt, uniquely individual and impactful works, answering my call. I want to emphasize, that these three young artists created the works on their own very limited free time, outside and in addition to their existing school assignments and on remarkably short notice.
39. I am advocating for recognizing this three outstanding CCUSD artists by the Culver City City Council.
40. **November 18** - As a form of my ambassadorial capacity and as part of United Against Hate Week in LA County, I conducted the Award Ceremony for the participants and winners of the Love My Neighbor - United Against Hate Carson Kids Art Contest celebrating Carson neighbors and in commemoration of United Against Hate Week, in collaboration with Artward Initiative, "Scottsdale" townhouses and Carson Sheriff's Gang Diversion Team. The event was held at one of the remaining most difficult neighborhoods of LA County, the infamous "Scottsdale" neighborhood in the City of Carson, the location of our non-profit Artward Gallery and the place of origination of my Love My Neighbor program. The event had great and rare attendance by the members of diverse Carson communities and Carson City Council.
41. **November - December** - Developed, designed and created the original artwork for the annual Spotlight Award by the Culver Arts and produced a limited edition of ten archival artist prints as an award.

42. **December 15** - Along with Culver Arts Board Members, I presented the Spotlight Award (designed and produced by me) to Lynne Davidson, owner of Tito's Tacos, at the annual Culver Arts event at The Wende Museum.
43. I am currently taking part in preparation of commemorating the sad one year anniversary of the tragic, ongoing Ukrainian war.
44. I am currently developing an exciting new large-scale public art concept in the new visual medium of large-size majolica panels to be presented at the Earth Day, April 22, 2023 at the Helms Design Center.

Happy New, Creative and Inspiring 2023!