

2025 Project & Impact Report



collaboration education celebration

**Frogtown
Arts**

A Message From Our Executive Director

2025 was a year that asked us to listen closely; to our neighbors, to the river and to each other. It was a year of both uncertainty and illumination, and through it all, Frogtown Arts remained grounded in what we know best: bringing people together through art, culture and shared experiences.

We successfully rebranded our organization including a refreshed mission and vision, along with a new name, logo and brand identity.

Illuminate the Night, once again, transformed familiar spaces into something wondrous. Light installations, art, music and poetry reminded us that beauty can be both gentle and powerful...and that even in darker moments, community has a way of shining through.

With *Frogtown First Fridays*, we continued our commitment to supporting local artists and small businesses, creating welcoming monthly gatherings that turned ordinary nights into neighborhood rituals. From May through October...you showed up for us over and over again!

Our Día de los Muertos celebration honored remembrance, ancestry, and storytelling with reverence and joy. The community altar, art-making, and collective reflection created space for grief, love and cultural continuity; reminding us that honoring the past is an act of care for the future.

Arts Education remained at the heart of our work. Through workshops, senior art programs and intergenerational learning experiences, we nurtured creativity as a lifelong practice, building confidence, curiosity and connection.

2025 was not without its challenges. Like many arts organizations, we navigated funding constraints and shifting landscapes. What carried us through was the unwavering belief of our community, our artists, volunteers, partners, board members, collaborators and supporters—who continue to show up with generosity and grit.

As Executive Director, I am deeply grateful and endlessly inspired. Frogtown Arts exists because people believe art matters here—by the LA River, on our streets and in our shared stories. Thank you for walking alongside us. The work continues and the future, though unwritten, feels bright.

With appreciation,

Michelene Cherie – Executive Director, Frogtown Arts



20,000+
VIA IN-PERSON EVENTS
& PROGRAMS

30,000+
ONLINE EVENTS-YOUTUBE
WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA

300
ARTISTS & COLLABORATORS
ENGAGED IN PROGRAMS

EVENT HIGHLIGHT:

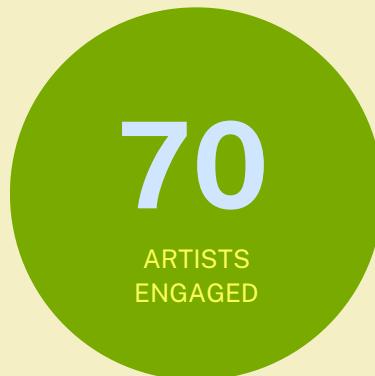
Illuminate the Night

SEPTEMBER 13, 2025

Our third biennial *Illuminate the Night* festival shimmered back to life along the LA River, turning the shared pedestrian and bike path along with local businesses and pop up spaces into an evening of artful surprise and collective joy for both residents and visitors alike.

The event brought together light installations, visual artists, live music, dance and spoken word performances that invited neighbors to slow down, look closer and experience the river and the neighborhood in a new way. In a year that asked much of our community, this night offered a gentle but powerful reminder: when we gather with intention, even in the darkest hours, we can “bring the light.”

IMPACT SNAPSHOT





PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT:

SENIOR ART CLASS SERIES

APRIL - JUNE 2025

This vibrant bi-weekly program served local adults over fifty years old; offering them hands-on instruction in drawing, watercolor, Ecuadorian bread dough art and mosaic. Three local teaching artists assisted twenty-five students over the course of eight classes at our headquarters at The Blake Lofts and the Elysian Valley Community Garden.

Students enjoyed learning the basics of several art forms including drawing to de-stress exercises and took home 1-2 pieces of finished art per class. During the class series bonds were created with our teaching artists and friendships were made between our students who shared stories and similar interests with each other.

This class series was supported by a generous grant from the Elysian Valley Riverside Neighborhood Council.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT





PROJECT HIGHLIGHT:

DOCUMENTARY SHORT FILM ENTITLED “Water, Words and the City Converge”

February - June 2025

Water, Words and the City Converge, a short film produced by Frogtown Arts and directed by Cindy “Mimi” Phan explores poetry created by two Los Angles poets; Mike Sonksen and Rocio Carlos. Both students of the late poet and FoLAR founder Lewis MacAdams, much of their work is inspired by or about the LA River, nature and the city of Los Angeles.

The film uses Sonksen’s poem “Ode to the LA River” as the basis and running theme throughout the film. Carlos recites her poems and talks about nature as teacher and muse while describing how she and Sonksen spent their youth in the poetry and punk rock scenes in L.A in the 90's.

The film has been screened at The River LA during our First Fridays series and at the Stoneview Nature Center in fall 2025. The project was funded by a grant from the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs.





2025 EVENTS & PROGRAMMING

- Frogtown Heart Walk - Frogtown Loves L.A. - February - a Valentine's themed art and culture event in response to the Palisades and Eaton fires. The event raised \$5,000 for fire L.A. victims.
- Production of short film: Water, Words & the City Converge; documentary film about poetry inspired by the Los Angeles River featuring poets Mike Sonksen and Rocio Carlos.
- Free art class series for local seniors April - June at The Blake Lofts and Elysian Valley Community Garden.
- Spring Open House at the Elysian Valley Community garden in collaboration with LA Compost - rock painting with the local community members.
- Free dance parties on the Taylor Yard Bridge. June - August, in partnership with Tadaa Coffee and LA Skate Hunnies.
- River Fest - Creation Station Mobile Art Studio & Gallery. Community art-making with Friends of the LA River at Los Angeles State Historic Park.
- Stories, Poems & Songs: a Literary Lounge by the LA River - Multi-generational, multi-genre, diverse poets and writers, spoken word performances curated by Mike Sonksen - Various Locations.
- LA River Charrette at The Blake Lofts, in partnership with Festival Trail, LA Más, Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative and LA Walks.
- LA Design Weekend Group Art Show at The Blake Lofts featuring seven local artists.
- 2nd Annual Frogtown First Fridays - Monthly themed art and culture experiences in collaboration with small businesses, artists and performers in 12-15 venues in Frogtown, May - October.
- Illuminate the Night, a biennial festival of light featuring 70 artists, performing arts and spoken word in 20 venues along the LA River in Frogtown.
- Elysian Valley Community Garden Fall Open House in collaboration with Friends of the LA River and Theodore Payne Society.
- Secret Craft Crawls - 3 secret locations, 3 secret crafts in partnership with Forager Crafts, KIF Natural Soda and Justine's Wine Bar.
- Dia de Los Muertos Community Altar and cultural celebration. Collaboration with Forager Crafts, artist MAJA and Ritual Azteca Dance Troupe.
- Frogtown Holiday Hop - Neighborhood holiday shopping experience featuring art exhibits, craft vendors, food, music in a dozen venues in Frogtown
- 5th Annual Holiday Food Drive benefiting the NELA Mercadito in collaboration with Frogtown Brewery, Quantum Clinic, Tracy A. Stone Architecture, The Left Bank, 1st Impression Dance Studio and Just What I Kneaded Bakery.



OUR FUNDERS

Thank you to our grant funders for 2025; California Arts Council, Elysian Valley Riverside Neighborhood Council, Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture, Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs.

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tracy A. Stone - President

Nina Briggs - Vice President / Treasurer

Chazandra Kern - Secretary

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Rajan Shandil

Executive Director - Michelene Cherie



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PEOPLE ARE TALKING...

Take a look at what folks are saying about us!

“MRCA recognizes the profound connection between the arts, nature and community well-being. The Frogtown First Friday’s series contributes significantly to this connection by providing emerging and established artists with a platform to showcase their work, creates community participation and dialogue in shared spaces for a cultural and artistic experience. By highlighting the unique artistic character of Elysian Valley/Frogtown, the series helps build a strong and cohesive neighborhood identity. The collaboration between the arts collective, local residents and businesses exemplifies a model of community-driven cultural development that we strongly support”

--Brian Baldauf, Deputy Executive Officer, Mountains, Recreation & Conservation Authority

“Frogtown First Fridays has been a wonderful, impactful and vibrant community event. The series has helped foster authentic connection between local businesses and neighborhood residents, while providing an approachable, family friendly environment for enjoying the arts! We are proud to be a part of this amazing event series.” --Jacqueline Goodman, Owner The Left Bank

“I continue to work with Frogtown Arts, as they are one of my favorite organizations to partner with. Our on-going project, *Literary Lounge by the LA River* poetry salons have been wildly successful with generations of diverse poets and writers from all over Los Angeles sharing their work in spaces along the LA River.” --Mike Sonksen, Poet, Journalist and Frogtown Arts Literary Curator

“Since becoming a member of this art collective about six years ago, I have participated in multiple events that connected me to other local artists, art collectors and my own community. From the Friends of the LA River’s event *River Fest* to The *Frogtown Artwalk and Illuminate the Night*, I have displayed my work to thousands of people. I have made new connections and professional advancements during my time as an arts collective member. Frogtown Arts has consistently offered new artistic opportunities as well as the support and community that I had been missing.” --Mary Kudlak, Frogtown Arts Artist Member

“Working with Frogtown Arts on Frogtown First Fridays has been an extremely rewarding experience for our team at Forager. As a venue, we’ve had the privilege of hosting a diverse array of local artists and artisans, creating a welcoming space where creativity and community intersect. Frogtown Arts’ role as a curator has allowed us to showcase not only the incredible talent within our neighborhood, but also to foster connections between artists and the broader public – including long-time residents, children of all ages, and the broader East Los Angeles community. The synergy between Frogtown Arts’ vision and our commitment to the arts has been truly inspiring, and we are eager to continue this partnership in the future.” --Victoria Steger, Owner, Forager Crafts

“Frogtown Arts welcomed me warmly when I asked to join, immediately including my artist profile on the website, and inviting me to participate in events. I really like how the community – residents from the area, kids, and stakeholders – are included in each event, showcasing the multiple personalities and talents of Frogtown. The events this past year, which I exhibited as a featured artist, ran smoothly, delighted the visitors, created sales, and enhanced Frogtown’s reputation. For many attendees of Frogtown Arts’ events, this is their first introduction to Frogtown and the lovely experience of walking or biking along the LA River, encountering art, music, food, poetry and foremost, a friendly, social community.” --Erica Goebel , Frogtown Arts Artist Member

“Exhibiting at ‘Illuminate The Night’ proved to be a valuable experience for me as an artist. Throughout the night, visitors streamed into my site and I was able to watch people discover and engage with my light sculpture. The scale of the event – spanning the length of Frogtown along the L.A. River, an incorporating many destinations in an art-walk setting – meant that I was able to show my artwork to a large number of people that night, an audience that I otherwise might not be able to reach. It was a pleasure meeting and chatting with guests who experienced my art piece and I was gratified to see how happy they were to discover it.” --Justin Lui, Artist

“I have collaborated with Frogtown Arts on Frogtown First Fridays, The Frogtown Artwalk and California Arts Council funded free ceramics program “Start to Finish; a Creative Journey for Young Artists.” My experiences have only been positive with the organization. They provide a supportive, encouraging and positive partnership to provide culturally relevant and impactful community programming. --Natalia Sookias, Owner Sooki Studio