

Los Angeles Visual Arts Coalition News Release

“What began as casual conversations during an unprecedented moment has transformed into a sustainable, scalable, and nourishing coalition of mutual support and care. This is an opportunity for our entire chain, from arts workers to philanthropists, to redefine how we think about the Los Angeles arts and culture community.”

·*Anne Ellegood*, Executive Director, Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

“We are proud to support a group that took matters into their own hands and saw how together was better for tackling the issues—exacerbated by but definitely predating COVID—shared by practically all small visual art nonprofits. May the LAVA model spread far and wide!”

·*Larissa Harris*, Executive Director, Teiger Foundation



Los Angeles Visual Arts Coalition announces the success of its unprecedented transparent and collaborative model to fundraise, share, and amplify resources

·**Resilient, dynamic, and inclusive collective that serves a diversity of communities announces it has raised \$2,660,00 since its inception in 2020**

·**Coalition of 33 contemporary visual arts organizations dedicated to mutual support, care, and advocacy provides \$50,000 in unrestricted funds to each member**

Los Angeles, CA, March 27, 2023—The Los Angeles Visual Arts Coalition, or LAVA, a coalition of 33 small to medium sized contemporary visual arts organizations, today announced it has raised \$2,660,000 in a scalable, sustainable model to collectively fundraise, share, and amplify financial resources and infrastructure. Representing a vast spectrum of neighborhoods and communities across Los Angeles County, LAVA organizations collectively presented over 100 exhibitions, 1,240 public programs, and

welcomed over 350,000 visitors in 2022. Established by the executive directors of organizations that present, produce, and promote contemporary visual culture in Los Angeles—and that endured long closures during the pandemic—LAVA arose out of a belief that a coalition of similarly scaled organizations in a cultural capital *should* exist and that a mutually supportive ecosystem would nourish each entity and ensure the visual arts sector remains healthy and vibrant. With catalyzing grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Teiger Foundation, the coalition’s collective fundraising model is both a critical safeguard in an uncertain economic environment and a guarantee of the maximum impact of contributions from foundations and donors who support the local contemporary arts ecology. LAVA is working to restructure the ecosystem of artists, art workers, art institutions and philanthropy in Los Angeles. Since its founding in 2020, the number of public program collaborations and cross-pollination of audiences among LAVA organizations has more than tripled. The coalition actively works together to self-identify operational challenges shared by their fellow non-profits and uses integrative bargaining strategies and new model solutions that benefit their entire sector. During monthly meetings, members work on accountability measures that will help each organization forward their shared commitments to a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible art scene for all of Los Angeles County.

“At the heart of LAVA is the shared feeling that by elevating the value of mutual aid and deep collaboration, we can work together to create a transformative, radically transparent, and intergenerational economic model that benefits us all,” says Laura Hyatt, Executive Director of LAND (Los Angeles Nomadic Division). “It really shifts the thinking away from organizations as competitive entities and supports efforts to change the field.”

LAVA is thrilled to announce that it has reached a major milestone in its fundraising efforts, providing every member organization with \$50,000 in unrestricted funds to support general operations, which is rarely funded by foundations and individual donors. For many of the partner organizations, the deposit is unprecedented and transformative. Executive Directors of the individual organizations are free to determine how best to use these funds, including staffing, infrastructure, rent, administration, equipment, and programs, and the coalition will issue a report to funders on the multitude of ways members use the deposits to strengthen and grow their organizations. This remarkable first financial success is proof of concept that enables LAVA to make its first dedicated hire and to evolve its next goal of providing health insurance to all 180 full-time and part-time employees who work at member organizations by the end of 2023.

“It cannot be underestimated how impactful this coalition is not only for the immediate partner organizations but also for the larger cultural landscape of Los Angeles,” remarks Yoon Ju Ellie Lee, Executive Director of Equitable Vitrines and GYOPO, who is using the deposits to fund full-time positions, a first for both organizations. “Small groups like ours struggle with the ability to employ staff due to the scarcity of funding opportunities for core operating support and unrestricted investment to grow and scale. LAVA’s trust in coalition members is trust in the potential of our evolving cultural landscape.”

LAVA also announced that since its inception it has engaged in a series of constructive dialogues with agencies and organizations in order to learn, introduce member organizations, and advocate for the sector of small to midsize visual arts organizations, including with the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs; Arts for LA; and Contemporary Art League, a trade cooperative building unity, solidarity, and equity within and across the field of contemporary art in Los Angeles County.

Background

The Los Angeles Visual Arts Coalition, or LAVA, began in March 2020 with informal conversations among a few directors of small to mid-sized visual arts organizations in order to support one another as the pandemic forced organizations to shutter their doors. The number of participants grew organically, and the value of establishing a more formal coalition—with a nominating process to bring in new members—that would establish a strong professional network in order to nurture each other’s welfare through fundraising, resource sharing, and advocacy became clear. LAVA was founded as a collective dedicated to a culture of mutual support and is today a vibrant ecosystem of contemporary visual arts organizations that together directly serves 34 neighborhoods in Los Angeles with new, experimental, and community-

based art—a reach unprecedented among museums in the city. The coalition includes long standing institutions that have defined the visual arts in Los Angeles—with many serving as launching pads for artists who have gone on to significant careers and to receive critical recognition—from Craft Contemporary to ICA LA to LAND, as well as newer organizations such as Crenshaw Dairy Mart, GYOPO, and JOAN, who center the communities that shape the city’s increasingly diversifying population.

LAVA member organizations include: Active Cultures, Armory Centre for the Arts, Avenue 50 Studios, Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI), Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Clockshop, Coaxial, Craft Contemporary, Crenshaw Dairy Mart, Equitable Vittrines, Feminist Center for Creative Work, LA Freewaves, Fulcrum Arts, GYOPO, Human Resources, Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (ICA LA), JOAN, LA Artcore, LA Commons, Los Angeles Contemporary Archive (LACA), Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), Los Angeles Nomadic Division (LAND), Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD), LAXART, MAK Center, Museum of Jurassic Technology, NAVEL, Self-Help Graphics, Side Street Projects, SoLA Contemporary, Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), The Mistake Room, and Vincent Price Art Museum.

A proven model that supports the entire field

Guided by an ethos that there are many things that can be achieved if done together and inspired by the power of the collective, LAVA shares and amplifies financial resources and infrastructure across all member organizations. As an example, costly but critical “missing infrastructure,” such as human resources, communications, and finance staff positions that are often out of reach for small scale organizations are now advanced through hired consultants paid for with funds raised by the coalition. And as LAVA embarks on its next chapter, a robust fundraising campaign continues, and foundations and individuals are invited to support and sustain the sector to ensure economic recovery and sustainability, healthcare for all employees, and capacity building for all LAVA members. Funders interested in diversifying their donations can now contribute to a proven, sustainable model that supports the entire field of vital, vibrant small to medium sized visual organizations in Los Angeles.

Added Ellegood: “The existing models of fundraising often put us in competition with one another and can unwittingly create an atmosphere of scarcity. We are arguing for the value of all our organizations with the belief that there is ample capacity among a range of advocates and patrons to enable all of us to thrive. With LAVA, we are offering funders an unprecedented opportunity to work with us to create a new model and make their impact felt across Los Angeles, impacting diverse communities that truly represent the demographics of the County.”

LAVA would like to acknowledge generous early contributions by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Teiger Foundation, as well as the Jerry and Terri Kohl Family Foundation, Krupp Family Foundation, Ruth Foundation for the Arts, Metabolic Studios, and Betsy Greenberg.

About LAVA

The Los Angeles Visual Arts Coalition, or LAVA, is a collective of small to medium sized visual arts organizations that present, produce, and promote contemporary visual culture in Los Angeles. A new model that acts as an organic, cross pollinating ecosystem, LAVA is dedicated to a culture of mutual support and nurturing each other’s welfare through fundraising, information and resource sharing, and advocacy for our sector. The organizations directly serve an unprecedented 34 diverse neighborhoods in Los Angeles with new, experimental, and community-based art and represent a vital sector of the Los Angeles arts scene. In 2022, LAVA collectively presented over 100 exhibitions, 1,240 public programs, and welcomed over 350,000 visitors in 2022.

For more information, please contact Emma Jacobson-Sive (emma@ejs-media.com) or visit lavacoalition.art.

Photo: Ruthie Brownfield