Six artist residency programs, in concert with the national Alliance of Artists Communities and The James Irvine Foundation, set out six years ago to celebrate, support, and promote the work of outstanding California visual artists from diverse communities—artists whose work may as yet be unfamiliar but whose compelling visions will define California in its next decades. The consortium’s shared goal was, and remains, to introduce these artists and their communities to the opportunities for support available through competitive artist residency programs.

Launched as a pilot program in 2003, Visions from the New California has expanded into a multi-year project and has served as a model for other consortia across the country. This book represents the third installment of Visions, documenting residencies from 2008.

Selecting six artists from a diverse group of talented individuals was a difficult but rewarding task. In an effort to identify a broad range of under-recognized artists doing outstanding work, we invited over 250 artists and arts professionals to nominate qualified California visual artists. “This project will have lasting effects on the participating artists as well as the residency programs, which will be better equipped to reach out and serve previously untapped artistic communities,” we told the nominators. “We hope that you will embrace this opportunity to help us recognize and assist a number of talented artists.” All 146 nominees were invited to apply, resulting in an applicant pool comprised of 106 outstanding visual artists.

Four distinguished artists and arts professionals served on the selection panel:

- **Anjee Helstrup-Alvarez**, Associate Director/ Curator, MACLA (Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana), San Jose
- **Diem Jones**, Director of Programs, Arts Council Silicon Valley, San Jose
- **Kris Kuramitsu**, artist, Los Angeles
- **Larry Thomas**, artist, Fort Bragg

These panelists reviewed all of the applicants’ work samples and narrowed the pool down to fifteen semi-finalists who exhibited the highest quality of work and also represented a diversity of artistic methods, ethnic backgrounds, ages, and experiences. From this short list, six artists were selected by the participating residency programs to be awarded The James Irvine Foundation Visions from the New California award and fellowship in 2008: a $4,000 stipend and a one-month residency at one of the participating programs.

Visions from the New California

An initiative of the Alliance of Artists Communities

Supported by

the James Irvine Foundation
MEET THE ARTISTS

We will further introduce each of these artists, and show you some of their work, in the following pages.

Marco Rios
a sculptor from Los Angeles

The residency allowed me to finally sit down and think of what ideas to pursue for the following year. So half the time I spent researching, the other half I spent producing a piece that had been sitting inside my head for so long it needed to be exorcised. I was provided with a great studio space, and there weren’t any of the usual distractions from home.

Sara Velas
a painter from Los Angeles

When I returned from Kala, one person asked me how I felt and my response was ‘calm.’ In some ways this was a surprise. I might have expected to return with a feeling of intense or frantic energy. But the residency was more like a lasting meditation and, though productive, it inspired calm reflection on my artistic aims. I will treasure this fond memory of contentment and productivity. I hope to maintain the sense of calm and focus I developed while working at Kala.

Nathan Cordero
a mixed media artist from Sacramento

One month in this beautiful landscape with other artists was what I needed to complete what had been building up in sketchbooks and inside me. The opportunity to see what other artists were doing and to share what I had in mind is what I imagine art school to be like.

Michael Arcega
a sculptor and new genres artist from San Francisco

The content of my work is grounded in the darker regions of human behavior. I gravitate towards historic injustices that echo our present circumstances. The studio time, space, and financial support of this residency have been an important aspect of my professional art practice. But I also value the psychological space in which to think and the emotional gratification that comes from a program that validates one’s efforts.

Christine Nguyen
a photographer, illustrator, and installation artist from Los Angeles

A residency offers a chance to explore and contemplate in a different environment while meeting other creative people. It is also an opportunity for an artist to try things she might not otherwise have attempted back home. There was a real sense of community here. I will remember Headlands as being my paradise and sanctuary . . . a little fresh air for the mind.

Amitis Motevalli
a conceptual artist from Los Angeles

I don’t necessarily define myself solely as an artist. Much of what I do is information exchange. Being in the serene and natural environment at Montalvo was just what I needed to get my thoughts together and execute my piece. There was something about connecting with nature that allowed me to reflect on everything I had experienced and seen. I was able to translate my reflections into my work.

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Innovation and the forefront of new ideas
New ways of thinking about and reflecting on the world are at the core of cultural progress. Residency programs place themselves at the forefront of this progress by serving as research and development labs for the arts, encouraging exploration by and nurturing the creativity of artists representing a wide range of aesthetics, backgrounds, and approaches to their work. By providing today’s visionaries with time, space, and community to create new work, artist residencies actively contribute to the continuing development of culture.

Gifts of time and space
One of the most important gifts an artist can receive is that of time and space to develop and create. While many artists find a way to carve out minutes or hours in their daily life, very few have the ability to dedicate consistent, significant blocks of time to their work. And often this work happens in less than ideal workspaces and in isolation from other individuals engaged in creative work. Residencies offer artists the freedom to create apart from the usual competitors for their attention, in an environment that encourages the artist to stretch his or her creative practice.

Part of a greater whole
Recognition and validation of an artist’s work are often the most crucial forms of support an artist can receive, particularly when that recognition comes from leaders in the field. Artists tell us that the affirmation from having been awarded a residency frequently comes at a critical point in their careers, and offsets in part the marginalization and trivialization of artists in our society with professional acknowledgment and encouragement. Residencies also offer a community of other artists exploring their creative practices, developing new approaches to art-making, and challenging the way we view the world. Joining the ranks of these peers, artists often work more productively and with greater confidence during a residency, steady in the knowledge that they have been recognized for their work.

Exchange across boundaries
Whether boundaries created by artistic discipline, ethnicity or nationality, career stage, religious belief, or any of the other ways we find to distinguish ourselves from others, residencies make a place for crossing boundaries and breaking barriers. Artist residency programs provide uniquely fertile environments for exchange and collaboration where thoughtful, engaged discourse can and does happen regularly. Art is not created in a vacuum, and artists of all disciplines thrive on this mix of solitary time and interaction with other creative individuals that residency programs offer.

Trust in the process
Unlike many other forms of support for artists, residency programs focus primarily, and often solely, on the process of creation rather than the product. Not surprisingly, most artists note that they produce at a much-increased rate during their residencies, without the program imposing an expectation of output. The opportunity to experiment with new techniques, art forms, and ways of thinking and seeing often leads artists in directions never before considered. Support for this type of risk-taking and innovation is rare, and is the benefit of residencies that artists highlight more than any other.

Investment in development
Artists sometimes view residencies as a luxury they can’t afford, within lives already stretched too thin. But dedicated time to work is an essential aspect in developing and creating art. Without investment in experimentation and growth, the artist and the art stagnate. Nurturing the creative life of an artist is an investment in the work itself. An investment in new work is an investment in the forward progression of our culture. And so we come full circle.
Michael Arcega
Sculptor and New Genres Artist
www.arcega.us

Michael is an interdisciplinary artist working primarily in sculpture and installation art. His art, though visual, revolves largely around language. He utilizes comedic strategies and tactics to express dark global issues. “The content of my work is grounded in the darker regions of human behavior. I gravitate towards historic injustices that echo our present circumstances. To create an interesting counterpoint, I balance it with a levity infused with corny jokes and satire, thereby defusing overtly dispiriting subjects.”

Michael spent his childhood in the Philippines, but now calls San Francisco home. Since graduating from the San Francisco Art Institute with a BFA in Interdisciplinary Studies, he has maintained a steady studio practice while exhibiting extensively, participating in curatorial projects, and often working as a visiting artist. Michael’s sculptures and installations often make use of unusual materials. He has, for example, made maps with Spam to depict the history and geography of imperialism. As El Conquistador, a Don Quixote-esque artistic persona, he successfully sailed his 5’ x 10’ x 10’ model of an 18th century Manila galleon (made, appropriately enough, of manila folders) in Tomales Bay, California. As Michael explains, “The humorous aspect of my work is delivered through language and non-traditional art materials. My materials often embody a historical value that further complicates the content of the piece.”

Michael’s decision to apply for a Visions residency was informed by his awareness that residencies “allow for a much-needed respite from the challenges of daily life.” During a residency, current ideas are expanded, new ones developed. “The time, space, and financial support are important aspects of any residency, but the validation of one’s artistic efforts is especially gratifying.” Since most of Michael’s work deals with social and political issues, exposure to other artists is extremely beneficial to him. While at 18th Street, Michael did take some time to visit the local galleries in Santa Monica, but he was mainly focused on creating a single, large-scale sculpture titled “Safe.” This ambitious work, an 8’ wooden cube made with Douglas Fir two-by-fours and containing a secret compartment within, was later included in the 2008 California Biennial at the Orange County Museum of Art. Following his Visions residency, Michael was also awarded a solo gallery show in New York City.

Michael’s one-month stay at 18th Street Arts Center left him eager for even more residency experiences. He looks forward to another project-based residency at The Contemporary Museum in Honolulu in 2009, and in the meantime is thankful for his recent Visions experience. “I truly appreciate this program. It has been a great help.”
Nathan Cordero

Djerassi Resident Artists Program
April 22–May 22, 2008

Walnut Traverse V3
2008, walnut and hardware, 17’ x 10’
Installation views at Nuuanu Gallery
Nathan a self-taught artist based in Sacramento, has long been drawn to found objects, particularly wood. "The background and appearance of the wood allows me to work with many different formats, from spray-painted stencils to carving and collage." He gathers up salvaged wood, white paint, and a razor blade and then sets out to create beautiful images and text. Nathan has recently begun to incorporate more and more text into his work, and to also work with items such as tennis rackets and crutches as well as plywood and old doors.

Nathan saw his Visions residency at Djerassi as a "priceless opportunity" to work on his art in a continuous and uninterrupted fashion, and to begin to work on projects of a larger scale. Upon arriving, he also quickly saw the benefit of working in close proximity to the other artists. "The opportunity to listen and to see what other artists were doing, and to share with them what I had in mind, is what I imagine art school to be like." Dennis O’Leary, Djerassi’s executive director, comments on this beneficial exposure to other artists-in-residence: "Nathan truly fell within the guidelines and spirit of the Visions project, having been mostly self-taught as an artist. He particularly appreciated the group of fellow artists, who were all around the same age. The other artists provided useful feedback, which Nathan was not used to." Working with materials he brought with him, as well as found wood acquired on-site at Djerassi, Nathan made numerous works of art while in residence. Since completing his Visions residency, Nathan has continued to show his signature works in the Bay Area.
Sally and Don Lucas Artists
Programs at Montalvo Arts Center
August 1–31, 2008

Amitis Motevalli

Cocaine
2008, found wooden oar, acrylic paint, 3" x 4"

Untitled
2008, mixed media, 5’ x 2.5’
Ami was born in Tehran, Iran, and moved to the United States with her family in 1977. Her artwork incorporates a combination of near-eastern aesthetic with a western arts education. “I believe my migration shows in my work a duality of culture, both natural and learned. The focus of my work has centered on signage and symbology from Iranian and Islamic art such as pattern and miniature painting. I am also influenced by symbolism used in American pop culture.” Ami has also been active in creating social change, working with students and the community to organize around issues affecting quality of life and access to education. “I don’t necessarily define myself solely as an artist,” she says. “Much of what I do is information exchange.”

Like many artists seeking a residency, Ami hoped to connect with new artists and thereby gain a wider perspective. This did indeed happen, particularly during the communal meals at Montalvo.
“Most of my interactions were at the dinners since I was very focused on creating my piece. I had wonderful, natural conversations and really enjoyed the other artists, some of whom I hope to work with in the future.”

Ami also wanted to spend some time while in residence dissecting and analyzing the way she had been creating art. A resident of Los Angeles, she realizes that the bustling city influences her work but can at the same time be distracting. “Being in the serene and natural environment at Montalvo was just what I needed to get my thoughts together. The residency helped calm me and keep me focused on what I needed to do.”

Ami spent most of her time at Montalvo researching and working on a sculpture which is a part of an installation/performance piece called “Threshold of the Innocents and Martyred.” The work is a *maghrabeh,* Farsi for the central component of a shrine or tomb. It is intended to speak to the violence perpetuated by the ultimate need for control in an occupied and militarized state. “My piece is about violence. I have been witness to much of this violence. Yet there was something about connecting with nature while I was in residence at Montalvo that allowed me to reflect on everything I had experienced and seen. I was then able to translate my reflections into my work. I am grateful.”
Christine Nguyen
Photographer, Illustrator, and Installation Artist
www.lephant.com

Christine's work draws upon the imagery of science, yet is not limited to technologies of the present. It imagines that the depths of the ocean reach into outer space, that through an organic prism, vision can fluctuate between the micro- and macro-scopic. Christine has developed a personal cosmology in which commonalities among species, forms, and environment become visible and expressive, suggesting past narratives and possible futures. There are no waste materials in these worlds. Vision is a renewable resource.

While in residence, Christine worked on a series of drawings on layered Mylar. She also took full advantage of Headlands' extraordinary location in the coastal hills of the Marin Headlands, hiking, collecting vegetation, photographing the landscape, and creating several small landscape paintings. Christine salt-crystallized over one hundred collected items, including shells, dried ferns, and lichen, which she will be using in future sculptures and prints. She was surprised to find herself using a very different palette than she typically would. "The
landscape paintings were very multi-colored, almost psychedelic looking. After a few walks and paying close attention to the surrounding landscape, it made total sense to me. There are various colors everywhere in the rocks, mountains, and cliffs." Like so many other Visions artists before her, Christine was grateful for the uninterrupted time and space to create new work. "I haven’t had a studio in a long time, and the space given to me allowed me to spread out and work freely. It was a great relief to not have to worry about my typical daily obligations at home." Christine also found the interaction with other artists-in-residence to be most helpful. "There’s a real sense of community here and everyone is quite friendly and supportive. I’ve met quite a few people whom I will keep in touch with once I leave.” Christine aptly summed up her Headlands residency experience as “a little fresh air for the mind.”
“Disruptions” is the novel term Marco uses to refer to his entire body of artwork. Originally, that was the word used to describe melancholia and anxiety. A person suffering from low spirits was said to be experiencing disruptions. Marco’s interest in psychological and emotional states serves as a starting point for his sculptural work. Just prior to applying for a Visions residency, he had shifted his focus from discrete, stand-alone sculptures to more orchestrated and site-based work, in some instances incorporating elements of performance art. In all of the work, humor and slapstick tactics are employed to address solemn issues of failure and death, desire and despair. Marco’s art can be convoluted and enigmatic, often involving hidden meanings and obscure references to film, music, and literature.

Marco’s hope was that his Visions residency would offer him a genuine communal working experience, would be a period of “renewed focus and discovery” in his practice, and would lead to meaningful
artistic development. Exploratorium exceeded all of his expectations. “Just before my residency, I had a solo exhibition consisting of work from the past two years, so the residency was perfectly timed. It allowed me to sit down and think about new ideas to pursue. I spent half my time researching, the other half producing a piece that needed to be exorcised.” He found the Exploratorium to be “incredibly unique,” with access to people working in a whole cross-section of disciplines, including mechanical engineers, physicists, biologists, designers, and of course visual artists. “It opened up new ideas and possibilities to incorporate into my work. Whenever I had a question regarding a specific subject, someone always put me in touch with somebody who was an authority on that subject. And, despite people’s busy schedules, they always made time to meet with me.” Marco’s time at the Exploratorium left him wanting more. He hopes to return one day and be rewarded with a new set of “fresh ideas.”
Sara Velas
Painter
www.panoramaonview.org

Sara is a Los Angeles-based painter and a devotee of panoramic works of art. With influences ranging from German Expressionist film to early autochrome photography, Sara creates sublime and cinematically constructed landscapes, often in 360-degree format. “In essence, my goal is to create an immersive ‘landscopic’ experience, which gives participants the opportunity for an unexpected inspirational moment, a mysterious encounter, an ephemeral glance of beauty.” Sara planned to use her time at Kala to create small works examining her obsession with cinematic romantic landscape. She found herself working on quick ink drawings, sketches, and studies for paintings using romanticist landscape compositions from a book of wood engravings and a variety of plant guides as source material. “I used water-based inks and faster methods to paint. I think this was a very good direction for me to go in. It allowed for some immediate intuitive processes and making many things quickly, processing ideas rather than focusing on singular finished works. More than anything, this helped free something of a mental block I had prior to the residency.”

Sara enjoyed exploring Oakland and Berkeley. “It was wonderful to be away from my day-to-day environment. Travel is important to me and it is rare that one is able to spend an extended period of time in an unknown city or area. This in itself was refreshing.” Sara also took full advantage of Kala’s

*Effulgence of the North* (views 1-4) 2006-07; 360-degree oil painting on canvas. 3D terrain elements in front of painted canvas created with plaster, wire, styrofoam. Includes a MIDI-controlled light and sound cycle. Created with the collaborative assistance of Sound Designer Moritz Fehr and Sculptor Anami Morita, 90’ circumference (28’ diameter), height average 10’, entered through a circular staircase.
The Alliance of Artists Communities is the service organization for the field of artists’ communities and residencies. We strive for a society that is focused on people and process, not merely products; that values experimentation and the exploration of new ideas; and that recognizes the role artists and the creative process can have in achieving this vision. Believing that the cultivation of new art and ideas is essential to human progress, the Alliance’s mission is to advocate for and support artists’ communities, to advance the endeavors of artists.

The Alliance gives a collective voice on behalf of its members, small and large, that leverages support for the field as a whole; promotes successful practices in the field; and advocates for creative environments that support the work of today’s artists. The Alliance is one of the few national organizations representing programs that support artists in all disciplines, believing that collaboration and exchange that cross traditional boundaries furthers our culture’s progress.

To learn more, visit our website at www.artistcommunities.org

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To learn more, visit our website at www.artistcommunities.org
18th Street Arts Center supports artists and arts organizations dedicated to issues of community and diversity in contemporary society. 18th Street aspires to be an artist-friendly gathering place—providing a physical center in a city characterized by its decentralization—seeking emerging to mid-career artists who demonstrate social consciousness and spiritual awareness in a well-developed art-making practice, manifest the spectrum of approaches to contemporary ideas, and reflect the diverse population of Los Angeles.

18th Street’s Residency Program serves as an arts incubator, providing subsidized live and work space for arts organizations and artists. Residents are offered free administrative and fundraising consultation services, an office equipment co-op and community resources exchange, volunteers, and meeting facilities. 18th Street works to bring residents greater public recognition and paid presenting opportunities through its programs and events, all of which helps residents put more of their financial resources and time towards their art practice while working in a stimulating and supportive environment.

18th Street’s International Artists in Residence Exchange program facilitates creative inter-cultural collaboration and experimentation among artists. The organization strives to build a critical forum and context for the examination of such work by forging relationships with arts agencies and centers around the world. Now in its thirteenth year, the program has hosted over eighty residencies with arts organizations in Australia, Cameroon, Croatia, Cuba, Finland, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Sudan, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, and the United Kingdom.

Lastly, 18th Street’s Presenting Program arranges exhibitions, installations, publications, and other opportunities for artists to share their work with the community. The goal of this program is to further public understanding of art and to inspire more interaction between artists and the public. Over the last five years, the work of more than 400 artists has been presented through this program.

Now in its 29th year, the Djerassi Resident Artists Program annually offers up to eighty residencies to artists working in the visual arts, new genre/media arts, choreography, music composition, and literature. Located on a secluded 560-acre ranch in the Santa Cruz Mountains, forty miles south of San Francisco, the Program is open to local, national, and international artists at all career levels who meet a high standard of excellence.

The majestic beauty and remote solitude of the Program’s stunning natural landscape serve as an inspirational backdrop for the intense creative experience that defines a Djerassi residency. Designed to invigorate the creative process by affording artists the gift of time, free from everyday distractions, the Program offers seven individual sessions of month-long, retreat-like residencies for diverse groups of eight to ten artists. All direct residency expenses, including a private studio, housing, all meals, administrative and technical support, local transportation, and other personal amenities, are provided free of charge. Residency artists pay only for their travel to California and their materials.

Freedom and trust are two distinct hallmarks of a Djerassi residency. The Program encourages artists to find their own work style and rhythm and has no work requirements. The opportunity for concentrated solitary work in a place of great natural beauty is complemented with intimate collegial fellowship and lively discourse among peers, which has proven to stimulate genuine personal and professional relationships that bridge aesthetic discipline, age, geography, and ethnicity. For three decades, Djerassi has adhered to its mission to conserve the culture, the land, and the creative spirit that ensures that the artistic process is perpetuated and valued.
The Exploratorium is a museum of science, art, and human perception, with a mission to create a culture of learning through innovative environments, programs, and tools that help people nurture their curiosity about the world around them. The museum invites visitors, artists, scientists, educators, and exhibit developers to explore the natural world in new ways. From its beginning, the Exploratorium has used the observations made by scientists and artists as a means of expanding the public’s understanding of nature, culture, and natural phenomena.

Exploratorium’s arts program aims to develop new insights and understandings by incorporating the artistic process with other investigative processes; to enhance the role of the museum as a center of cultural investigation; to initiate discourse about the relationships among art, science, human activities, and topics related to multidisciplinary and multicultural activities; and to elucidate, by example, the role that artists can play in modern society.

In the words of Exploratorium founder Dr. Frank Oppenheimer: “Art is included, not just to make things pretty, although it often does so, but primarily because artists make different kinds of discoveries about nature than do physicists or geologists. They also rely on a different basis for decision-making while creating their exhibits. But both artists and scientists help us notice and appreciate things in nature that we had learned to ignore or had never been taught to see. Both art and science are needed to fully understand nature and its effects on people.”

Headlands Center for the Arts provides an exceptional environment for the creative process and the development of new work and ideas. Through artists’ residencies and public programs, the organization offers opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and exchange that build understanding and appreciation for the role of art in society.

In creating Headlands Center for the Arts, the founders sought to reconfigure the role of the artist from a marginalized position to that of a central participant in our society. Since 1987, Headlands has developed this idea into an array of dynamic programs for artists and the public, including residencies, lectures and performances, open houses, community-based projects, publications, and commissions.

Over 1,000 artists from different disciplines and cultural backgrounds have participated in Headlands’ programs. A variety of public programs bring artists together with scholars, activists, and other professionals, facilitating interaction across traditional boundaries and introducing artists and audiences to new creative processes in order to expand the range of possibilities for art’s function in our society.

Headlands’ reputation for creative exploration is world renowned, influencing communities from Bangkok to Berlin, Stockholm to New York. The cross-pollination of ideas that is at the core of what Headlands does attracts emerging talents and highly accomplished artists alike. These artists, along with other professionals who come to Headlands, influence one another and the worlds they touch.
After a five-year hiatus to construct a new complex, Montalvo’s artist residency program re-opened in October 2004 as the Sally and Don Lucas Artists Programs at Montalvo Arts Center. The Lucas Programs has quickly earned international recognition as a model of curatorial practice supporting new and challenging contemporary work. Of particular note are the Lucas Programs’ facilities, a complex of ten state-of-the-art, discipline-specific live/work studios and a commons building designed by six teams of renowned architects and artists. Since reopening its residency program, 156 artists of all disciplines from 27 nations have been in residence at Montalvo. Lucas Programs fellows are identified through a recommendation/invitational process that helps ensure support for highly qualified artists with the potential to become major voices in the next generation of artists and thinkers, but who might not normally find their way to residency programs. While at Montalvo, residents are granted time for solitary creation and exploration, as well as the opportunity for stimulating interaction with colleagues. The program’s international focus fosters a cultural and ethnic diversity that offers a variety of perspectives and a global framework of ideas. Shared dinners are especially significant, thanks to Montalvo’s unique culinary fellowship program, and encourage residents to linger in a vibrant exchange of ideas that often continues long after the residencies come to an end.

Kala Art Institute helps artists sustain their creative efforts over time through its Artists in Residence and Fellowship programs, and increases appreciation of their work through exhibitions, public programming, and educational efforts. Located in the former Heinz ketchup factory in West Berkeley since 1979, Kala’s 8,500-square-foot facility houses an extensive array of printmaking and digital media equipment, as well as a public exhibition gallery, an art library, and an extensive print archive. Kala is a rare resource, providing high-quality facilities to serious artists working in all forms of printmaking, photography, book arts, and digital media including digital video, sound, and computer art.

Artists at Kala are encouraged to produce innovative artwork of the highest quality and are given total freedom to realize their artistic vision. Artists are also provided with a number of professional development opportunities, and a spirit of exchange and education is nurtured through artist involvement in exhibitions, special events, lectures, teaching, and classroom experience. Additionally, Kala is committed to offering quality art education to the general public and public school children through its on-site program of classes and workshops and its Artists in Schools program, established in 1991, providing multiple-week artist-led instruction to students in East Bay public schools and summer programs.
I would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their roles in making *Visions from the New California* a success:

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Caitlin Strokosch
Executive Director