

2009 RUDY BRUNER AWARD: Gold Medal Winner

# Inner-City Arts

Los Angeles, California





Photo: Michael Maltzan Architecture

Aerial view of Inner-City Arts, looking toward downtown

## Inner-City Arts At-A-Glance

### WHAT IS INNER-CITY ARTS?

- ❖ The mission of Inner-City Arts (ICA) is to “use art education to positively affect the lives of inner-city children, improving their chances to lead constructive and successful lives by developing creativity, improving learning skills and building self-confidence.”
- ❖ Located in Skid Row, just east of downtown Los Angeles, ICA provides arts education to approximately 8,000 elementary and middle school students per year, drawn from over 50 public schools located mostly around downtown LA.
- ❖ ICA provides after-school and weekend arts programs to 10 high schools and social service agencies, as well as teacher-training programs.
- ❖ ICA serves children who are overwhelmingly from minority, immigrant, low-income families. Most qualify for free and reduced lunch programs. Some are homeless.
- ❖ The program has contributed significantly to improving children’s academic performance and ICA uses evaluation results to shape its curriculum, teaching methods and training programs.
- ❖ The striking complex of modern white buildings, recently expanded, includes specialized studios for music, visual arts, ceramics, dance, drama, media arts, animation, and theater.

### PROJECT GOALS

- ❖ To partner with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in offering high quality arts instruction to children who would otherwise have little exposure to the arts
- ❖ To encourage exploration and self-expression as a vehicle for cognitive development and improvement of overall educational performance and, thus, to increase the likelihood that kids will stay in school
- ❖ To engage teachers, along with their students (as well as separately from their students), and to train them so they can take skills and methods back to their classrooms
- ❖ To contribute to the revitalization of the neighborhood
- ❖ To provide a safe, enriching and inspiring environment in an otherwise dull and distressed area
- ❖ For the facility expansion: to greatly increase the opportunities to serve students (including more middle- and high school students) with expanded programs and hours



## PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

**1985:** Bob Bates, an artist, moves into the area and begins to teach classes at a local elementary school.

**1989:** ICA is incorporated, rents its own facility, and starts its program.

**1991:** ICA must move out of rented space due to possible contamination from an adjacent factory. ICA moves into two bungalows provided by LAUSD on campus of local elementary school. ICA Board raises money to buy first building.

**1994:** ICA moves into converted classroom space at Kohler Street. Designed by architect Michael Maltzan, the converted space includes visual arts, music, dance/drama, and language arts facilities. Construction of ICA's first ceramics studio and tower, and its courtyard with palm and orange trees.

**2001:** Start of professional development program for classroom teachers.

**2003:** Second phase is built, including interior renovation of an acquired warehouse, for visual arts, animation, media arts, theater design studios, kitchen, and lobby/gallery.

**2008:** Expanded facility (Phase 3) opens, adding 23,000 square feet to the campus. This includes the library/resource center, black box theater, a new ceramics studio and second tower with covered kiln yard, and administrative offices. A rooftop parking deck is created and the outdoor garden is completed.

## KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

BOB BATES, Artist and Co-founder, ICA  
CYNTHIA HARNISCH, President & CEO, ICA  
BETH TISHLER, Director of Education and Community Programs, ICA  
SUSAN EMERLING, Member of ICA Board  
DOUG HINCHLIFFE, Member of ICA Board  
BEA STOTZER, New Economics for Women, Member of ICA  
National Advisory Board  
GISELLE ACEVEDO, President & CEO of Para Los Niños,  
Member of ICA National Advisory Board  
MICHAEL MALTZAN, FAIA, architect & lead designer of ICA  
NANCY GOSLEE POWER, landscape architect for ICA  
RICHARD BURROWS, Director, Arts Education Branch,  
Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)  
RICHARD ALONZO, Superintendent, LAUSD, Local District 4  
EUGENE HERNANDEZ, Principal, Frank Del Olmo  
Elementary School, LAUSD

RAYMOND REISLER, Executive Director, S. Mark Taper Foundation  
JANIS MINTON, foundation management consultant (by phone)  
ROBIN KRAMER, Chief of Staff, Mayor Anthony R. Villaraigosa,  
City of Los Angeles,  
ESTELA LOPEZ, Executive Director, Central City East Association  
JOSEPHINE RAMIREZ, Vice President, Programming and Planning,  
The Music Center  
CHRISTOPHER HAWTHORNE, Architecture Critic, *Los Angeles Times*

## Inner-City Arts



Street scenes, Skid row neighborhood

## URBAN CONTEXT

Inner-City Arts is located just east of downtown Los Angeles on the edge of the area known as Skid Row. It is a highly mixed zone, predominantly light industry, with produce wholesalers and garment industry shops, among many other uses. Some housing, both apartments and shelters, is dispersed among the warehouses. The region's major concentration of homeless people, who live on the street or in shelters, is a few blocks away. There are many services such as privately run missions and public social service agencies that serve the homeless. Directly across the street from ICA is a depot where homeless people can store and access their possessions. As a result, many homeless individuals are drawn to the immediate vicinity.

Interviewees (and an article by Spivack – see References) describe the evolution of this area, which appears to have a long history of attracting socially marginal groups. In part, its mix of people and uses is the result of its being the terminus of the trans-continental railroad. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, mostly single males arrived, looking for opportunity; many were social misfits who had not succeeded elsewhere. Successive waves of immigration from the East were spawned by the discovery of oil, the growth of the film industry, and automobile manufacturing. At that time, the Skid Row area was home to single room occupancy (SRO) hotels, shops, restaurants, bars, brothels, and dance clubs. These establishments

served men who worked low paying jobs at the nearby rail yards, industries and warehouses, or who were on their way to other parts of town or state. Many were transients, and social issues consisted mainly of alcohol abuse and prostitution. As Spivack points out, “the area had the missions and the other social services for the population that began to cluster here during the Depression. To a large degree this population consisted of hobos, rail riders and others who migrated from place to place, some in search of work, some simply moving around because of restlessness. Many of these individuals were alcohol addicted, often they were unemployable, and several of the social service organizations focused on ‘saving’ such people.”

In the 1970s and 1980s, with the closure of the state mental hospitals, the failure to provide a substitute system of community mental health services, and the advent of crack cocaine, the nature of the Skid Row population – and its problems – changed. The area became a place where drugs could easily be obtained, drawing people with dual-diagnoses (mental illness and drug abuse). Crime and violence increased substantially. Many of those living on the streets either could not be accommodated in the shelters or chose not to stay in them.

In the late 1970s, the city established a redevelopment plan aimed at stabilizing the area, maintaining its stock of SRO housing, and encouraging social service agencies to locate or to stay there. As of

the late 1990s, there were about 6,500 dwelling units in the area, about half of which had been rehabilitated.

More recently, under pressure from civil rights advocates, the city and police have instituted changes in the area. Fewer people live on the street and more humane and professional treatment is offered to those who remain. A large homeless encampment was closed, but more social services were made available (including the storage depot mentioned above). In addition, the edges of Skid Row (toward downtown on one side and the Arts District on another) are beginning to gentrify, with many loft conversions and some newly constructed loft-like apartments. Still, estimates show that 1,500 to 1,800 homeless people live in the area. A high concentration of recently-released felons also lives in the area, including sex offenders (who, in California, must register their location under Megan’s Law).

Driving through the area during the day, one sees many people living on the streets out of their backpacks or shopping carts. Some of the homeless have created small encampments or shelters of cardboard or other provisional materials. Some are in wheelchairs or on crutches. Small pocket parks were filled with street people, some of whom appeared to be intoxicated. These local parks are not suitable for the use of neighborhood children. During part of the site visit, some homeless people were observed to be staying across the street from ICA. We were told that the ICA is, by and

large, spared from being vandalized, though the lower portion of the white exterior walls has an anti-graffiti coating and the security personnel from the local business improvement district (BID) move people off the street before the school buses arrive. Still, ICA has to sanitize the sidewalks every morning. It is clear that the area is not safe for the children who live there— thus, their parents tend to keep them indoors.

### DEMOGRAPHICS: SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The schools served by ICA are drawn from a relatively large catchment area, but predominantly from LAUSD Local Districts 4 and 5, which surround ICA. Of the 53 elementary and middle schools that participated in ICA's programs between 1992 and 2008, 37 schools were drawn from these two districts. These two districts range from 78% to 94% Hispanic and 3% to 11% Asian. More than half of their students are "English learners," that is, English is their second language and they are still developing competency.

Consistent with the school data, the children who come to ICA are predominantly from lower income, minority families. 90% of their families live at or below the poverty line, and nearly all qualify for the free and reduced lunch program (that is, their families earn \$14,378 or less each year). A majority 81% is ethnically Hispanic and most are English learners, coming from immigrant families, mostly from

Mexico and Central America. Others are African-American (15%), Asian (4%) and a few are Caucasian.

Many families live in overcrowded apartments or houses shared by multiple families. Up to half of the children (or approximately 400) who attend the elementary school closest to ICA (9th Street School) are believed to be from homeless families. Of these, perhaps half actually live on the street or out of a car, and the other half relocates every 30 days under a voucher system that puts them up in shelters or hotels. ICA staff report that many of these children are at risk for physical or sexual abuse either from family members (in part as a result of the overcrowding conditions) or from sexual predators living in transient housing nearby.

Interestingly, observing class after class, the children were all dressed in neat and clean clothes, though some were clearly worn. It was explained to us that, culturally, Latino families put a high priority on their children and the way they appear in public and that the parents will sacrifice with respect to their own needs in order to allow the children to look presentable.

### HISTORY OF INNER-CITY ARTS

Inner-City Arts has evolved over more than twenty years. Its origins revolve around artist Bob Bates, who moved to the area because he was drawn by the availability of cheap studio space. In addition to

his own studio work, he began teaching kids as a volunteer with an area non-profit, Para Los Niños, and in a summer program at the local elementary school (9th Street). Bob reports that he literally “heard a voice,” which he felt was God’s, telling him to “get an art space for kids.” The vision was so compelling that Bob felt he had to pursue it.

He met a local real estate developer and property owner, Irwin Jaeger, credited as the ICA co-founder, who took an interest in his teaching and provided resources to help him expand it. They rented a large studio space and began to teach classes of students there.

Subsequently, they discovered that fumes from an adjacent factory that used harsh chemicals to acid wash jeans were penetrating the studio classroom. The building had to be abandoned. For a time, the program relocated to trailers on the 9th Street School campus. Fund raising then began in earnest and a lead gift was received from The Mark Taper Foundation, allowing purchase and renovation of the warehouse building that became the first structure of the ICA campus (see the next section describing ICA’s phases of expansion).



## FACILITIES

Facilities were developed in three phases. The original warehouse building, (now the Mark Taper Center), completed in 1994, was an old auto body shop building with a bowstring truss roof and long, clear spans that made the building easily adaptable to classroom space. Studios for dance/drama, music, and language arts were wrapped around a central visual arts and multi-use meeting space where classes, presentations, performances and group discussions take place. The original trusses were exposed and the ceiling was tall enough to allow the insertion of a mezzanine. The entire building is oriented toward a courtyard at the north, with large glass roll-up doors all along that edge. The space’s design promotes a strong physical and visual connection between the studio and the outdoor courtyard. Also added at that time were the original ceramics studio and its tower, as well as a fountain and orange and palm trees. The

INNER-CITY ARTS  
INNER-CITY ARTS

Left: *Founder Bob Bates*  
Right: *ICA Classroom*



Photos: Michael Maltzan Architecture

*Views of Inner-City Arts*



total area of the original converted shop and studio is about 16,000 square feet. Palm trees planted at that time are now fully grown and provide welcome shade during the summer months.

The second phase was completed in 2003 and consisted of the interior renovation of a warehouse adjacent and to the north of the original facilities. The space accommodates visual arts, animation, media arts and theater design studios, a kitchen, and an exhibition gallery adjacent to the lobby, totaling approximately 9,600 square feet. The media arts and theater design studios were constructed, but were not completely fitted out until later. When the second warehouse property was purchased, the additional adjacent site area for Phase Three was also acquired.

The most recent – and ambitious – expansion, completed in 2008, added 23,000 square feet to the original. It includes a black box theater, administrative offices, the library/resource center, a new ceramics studio with a second tower (which is a kind of beacon, lit from within and painted orange on the interior) and covered kiln yard, as well as a rooftop parking deck and expansion of the courtyard.

*Looking from classrooms into courtyard*



The expanded facilities are being utilized, but not yet fully. Timing of their completion coincided with the recent economic downturn and operational funding has contracted and is projected to shrink further. Full utilization of the space is planned for later this year (see Future Plans).



## DESIGN

The architect was Michael Maltzan (with Marmol Radziner and Associates during Phase One), and the landscape designer was Nancy Goslee Power. Both are well-known in the Los Angeles design world. Graphics were by PhD Studios. Professional principals worked *pro bono* and staff members were compensated at cost.

ICA's design makes a powerful statement – both in the neighborhood, where it stands out as an island of white in a sea of drab warehouses, with downtown skyscrapers in the middle distance – and to the children and teachers who come there. ICA is a shiny, modern place for art, clearly intended especially for them.

The formal design vocabulary consists of strong, angular, relatively stark forms created out of white stucco walls on the exterior. Interior spaces tend to have exposed structural, mechanical and electrical systems. Windows are strategically placed to provide abundant natural light and views of the landscaped courtyard gardens.

The architect has employed a number of formal gestures to add sculptural interest to the buildings. In addition to the sometimes

Landscape architect Nancy Goslee Power, and architect Michael Maltzan

acute angles, these gestures include cantilevered overhangs, a tower with bulging walls, and low windows about 30" high placed along the ground in the ceramics studio. These ground level windows are intended allow children who are seated at the ceramic wheels to be able to look out into the garden while they work – however, they appear to provide only limited views out.

While largely contained and inward-focused, the design does open to the street with a number of gates that are perforated and allow visual access into the courtyards. The architecture is enlivened by the landscaping in the courtyards, especially where trees planted in Phase One have matured, and by the ubiquitous displays of children's artwork. In the courtyard, mosaics done by the children decorate the walls and encrust a mosaic fountain where students can clean brushes and wash up. A number of ceramic projects are displayed in the public galleries, as well in the library. Ceramic tiles and murals adorn the Kohler Street entrance outside the facility, signaling ICA's presence to the street. (It is worth noting that ceramics has played an important role in the ICA curriculum, and the ceramics facility forms what Bob has called the "heart" of the complex.) The monochrome color scheme is broken by the ceramics tower, which is partially glazed and painted brilliant orange on the interior. Graphics and signage are strong and also add color.

Landscape design incorporates a number of themes or concepts. One is to provide an oasis of shade in what can be a very warm and



intensely bright setting (especially as sunlight reflects off the white walls). Another is to introduce the children to growing food plants, similar to Alice Waters' "edible schoolyard." (Nancy Powers is committed to this idea, and has collaborated with Waters on other projects. However, the quantity of edible plants is very limited. A third is the introduction of a small-scale riparian habitat with a notional stream (that can flow only when it rains or when fed from a hose), boulders and trees. Generally, the plants are drought-tolerant natives or others well-adapted to the local environment.

Christopher Hawthorne, architectural critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, praised the design, focusing especially on its white color as a "blank slate" for creativity, which could invite taggers, but instead appears to be treated with respect. The exterior is further protected by an anti-graffiti coating up to about 8 feet. Hawthorne also praises ICA's urban qualities, particularly the way the design balances enclosure

*ICA students arriving in central courtyard*



for safety with substantial openings to the neighborhood and calling its towers “beacons.” He goes on to describe it as an “essay on the power of architecture to create community, and even a sense of wonder...” (*Los Angeles Times* article, December 15, 2008).

**PROGRAMS** *(This section was edited or paraphrased from ICA's program descriptions.)*

Classes during the instructional day serve 8,000 K-8th grade children annually from over 50 local elementary and middle schools with students attending one and one-quarter hour sessions twice per week for seven weeks. Classes are offered in visual arts, drama, dance, music, ceramics, digital photography and animation. During a typical school day, there are from seven to nine classes being conducted simultaneously.

*Courtyard mosaic by ICA students*

- ❖ ICA is a member of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Arts Community Partnership Network, serving at-risk English learners from 30 schools per year.
- ❖ Early Arts Learning Initiative (EARLI Arts) serves K-5th grades, directed to public school students with limited English proficiency (also a seven-week, twice-weekly program).
- ❖ Arts In The Middle (AIM) serves 6th through 8th grade students who are failing to meet minimum standards of literacy in their grade level by providing a specialized curriculum that addresses literacy in the context of the arts curriculum.
- ❖ A guest artist series brings performances and workshops from UCLA's Center for the Performing Arts, CalArts, The Music Center, The LA Philharmonic, the EAR Unit and others. Artists have included Itzhak Perlman, YoYo Ma, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, STOMP, Lila Downs, Aboriginal Dancers of Australia, and Jeffrey Kahane.



*Student classroom and performance*

- ❖ After-school programs serve over 600 students with workshops in visual art, drama, ceramics, dance, puppetry, music and animation. Students from Central City Community Outreach, Para Los Niños, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Greater Los Angeles, A Place Called Home, and local social service agencies come to Inner-City Arts five days per week.
- ❖ Community Arts Partnership (CAP) is an animation program with workshops and classes twice per week for 12 weeks for elementary students, and once per week on Saturdays for 24 weeks for high school students. Workshops are led by faculty and graduate students of the Cal Arts School of Animation.
- ❖ Family events feature full day art experiences as well as attendance at class-culminating performances and exhibitions.
- ❖ Exhibitions and murals have been displayed at many museums and galleries, and throughout the community.
- ❖ The Annenberg Professional Development program supports teachers learning to teach more effectively by teaching in and through the arts. It is seen as a critical component that leverages the impact of the relatively brief exposure students have at ICA by developing continuity into their classroom experience. The program also extends the reach of ICA programs beyond the numbers who attend with

their teachers. Teachers who participate come to see their students differently and bring new strategies and methods of instruction back to their classrooms. The professional development program has a number of components:



Top: Mosaic at Kohler Street entrance  
Bottom: ICA class

- Arts in the Classroom/Possibilities and Pay-offs: Full-school in-service trainings at Inner-City Arts or at school-sites, engaging elementary teachers and administrators in arts experiences that introduce the creative process as a method for teaching all core subjects.
- Creativity in the Classroom (a two-salary-point LAUSD approved course): A five-day course of experiential learning where teachers learn strategies for addressing different student learning styles and classroom integration of the arts into all core subject areas.
- Bridges To Classroom Integration (a one-salary-point LAUSD approved course): A five-session series for teachers attending ICA with their students, providing them with tools to integrate what they are experiencing in the art studio into their classroom, across the curriculum.
- Visiting Scholars and Artists Series (a one-salary-point LAUSD approved course): A lecture series that presents research and best practices in arts education.
- AIM (Arts in the Middle) Training: Full-day workshops introducing middle school teachers in all subject areas to the merits of arts-based learning when working with low-achieving students.
- The Teachers Institute (with the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies): Two accredited UCLA courses that, each year, serve 150 new teachers who are enrolled in a two-year credential and M.Ed. program.

## APPROACH TO TEACHING ART

ICA's approach to teaching art is informed by its basic goal: to offer students a gratifying and developmentally appropriate experience in expression. ICA places importance on the joy in doing the work, the satisfaction in creation, and the heightened awareness of features like color, line and form (as well as the ability to find words to discuss them), rather than focusing on the "artistic merit" of the students' products. This intent permeates the techniques used by teachers, which include helping the children learn to observe carefully and find words to describe what they see in a non-judgmental manner.

ICA also has a sensitivity to, and understanding of, the issues confronted by its students, who are living among an often dangerous and dysfunctional population. The cultural background of ICA's students, their living situations, and the challenges they face are all addressed directly or indirectly in the design of their teaching program.

As ICA states their philosophy in their program brochure, they offer "arts programs where students can develop and explore their own creativity. The arts are vital for personal and cultural development and connect the individual to the larger world. Through creative exploration, the arts offer opportunities for these children to believe in who they are. This belief becomes the seed from which personal and academic growth explodes, allowing students to excel both creatively and academically in challenging environments." During our visit, we saw examples of teacher training materials posted on

the walls. They focused on a very simple approach to eliciting the children's comments on their experience using four steps, starting with the very concrete and moving to the more abstract and internalized.

- What tools or materials did you use?  
*("We used pages from a telephone book.")*
- What did you do with the tools or materials?  
*("I used a push-pin to make a hole.")*
- What did you learn?  
*("I learned to make several kinds of books.")*
- How did you feel?  
*("I felt proud of [or exhilarated or exhausted by] the experience.")*

Despite – or perhaps because of – the emphasis on process, we saw striking examples of the children learning to express themselves in a wide variety of media. In the classrooms we visited, students were fully engaged in their work, cooperative, and attentive. They were clearly enjoying what they were doing and were proud of the results.

ICA holds the strong belief, supported by research, that the children's experiences in the arts carry over to core curriculum when the students and their teachers are back at their home schools (see the section on Impacts). According to a description of the teacher-training program, "Student learning is enhanced in all core subjects

because students are actively engaged in their own learning. In each art form, the training curriculum promotes self-discovery, self-discipline, self-expression and connection to all areas of learning. Instruction provides participants with an opportunity to believe in their abilities and to believe in their potential as learners – that they can learn things that are not familiar and for which they may have no frame of reference."

## ICA STAFF AND EMPLOYMENT

ICA employs 22 full-time staff. The teachers are all practicing artists who are passionate about working with children and who receive on-the-job instruction and training in the ICA approach. There is a wide range in employment longevity, from a few months to 20 years; the average is over 7 years, indicating substantial stability. ICA pays its teachers on a scale similar to other non-profits and is able to offer employment benefits including sick leave of 6 days a year, vacation ranging from 10 to 20 days a year depending on longevity, 12 paid holidays a year, 100% employer-paid medical insurance, \$20,000 life insurance, a cafeteria plan, a retirement plan and dental insurance (the latter two are employee-paid).

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

ICA is actively engaged in two types of partnerships: with the schools and with community organizations – both through the school's net-

work and on its own. For the LAUSD, ICA has a roster of over 50 elementary and middle schools served during the instructional day, and 10 high schools (plus social service agencies) with after-school or weekend programs.

ICA is also a member of the LAUSD Arts Community Partnership Network (ACPN) of the Arts Education Branch, serving at-risk English learners from 30 schools per year. To extend the limits of its resources, the District established a network of providers to coordinate arts services of authorized community-based arts organizations. Inner-City Arts is a primary provider within the network and, for many district schools, is a sole resource for specialized arts instruction and in-service training. ICA also works with the Cal Arts Community Arts Partnership Program (CAP), offering an animation program for high school students.

Bruner Foundation staff met with LAUSD representatives, including an elementary school principal, the local district superintendent for one of the two districts that contribute the most students to ICA, and the director of the LAUSD Arts Education Branch that serves the entire system. Each of them spoke very highly of ICA's work and explained how critical its contributions are to enriching the limited resources of the school district. In addition to the general provision of resources, ICA's responsiveness and child-centered philosophy were also praised.



ICA maintains a close liaison with the police, who regularly patrol the adjacent streets. Surveillance cameras are mounted at critical locations on the perimeter of ICA, and are monitored at the local police station. These measures are a prudent response to the situation in the surrounding area (as described in the Urban Context section), which is inhabited by homeless drug abusers, recently released felons, and registered sex offenders.

ICA also partners with local community organizations that focus on neighborhood improvement. The Foundation met with Estela Lopez, Executive Director of the Central City East Association (CCEA), which is an umbrella organization for three BIDs (business improvement districts) in the area. The BIDs provide services such as street improvements, cleaning and security. In the case of ICA, they take special care that homeless people who may have camped

Left: ICA classroom  
Right: Kohler Street entrance to ICA



on bordering streets overnight are not in evidence when the children are dropped off by their school busses. CCEA also operates the homeless storage depot across the street from ICA. The security measures – together with the positive local perception of ICA – appear to be succeeding in greatly limiting problems that might otherwise result from ICA's location.

*Mosaic on Kohler Street elevation*



## LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

ICA's leadership has evolved over time in ways that have allowed it to remain an effective organization. In the early years it was led by Bob Bates. Bob provided the vision (as described in the History section). His early connection with Irwin Jaeger offered a source of funding and fundraising for the program.

The organization and the board grew gradually and organically, responding to needs, opportunities and challenges (such as having to move out of their first, rented facility and find a more permanent home). ICA takes a strategic approach to appointing board members with competencies or "spheres of influence" that can contribute to the organization in a variety of ways. As a result of the 2003 strategic plan, a Board of Governors was added to assist with meeting strategic goals, but with no management or operational oversight responsibilities. ICA is still working to add more ethnic diversity to its board.

An interesting aspect of ICA's growth and evolution is its transition in leadership. What started as an artist's vision has become an effective organization, but getting there required substantial shifts in

*ICA class*

responsibilities and personnel. Initially, Bob Bates and Irwin Jaeger provided the leadership, along with a board of directors. Bob was responsible for teaching and for operations. As the organization grew, Beth Tishler, whose expertise was in program development, became the Executive Director. At a certain point, around 1999, the board realized that a more businesslike management structure was needed. Beth not only helped to recruit her replacement, but also created a job for herself that built upon her expertise, staying on as director of education and community programs after Cynthia Harnisch was hired as Executive Director (she is now President & CEO). Cynthia came from a background in museum management, and so had both knowledge of the arts and skills in non-profit business management. One can imagine that these transitions might have been difficult and resulted in uncomfortable relationships, but Bob, Beth and Cynthia appear to complement each other and to work in a cooperative, synergistic manner. To perhaps oversimplify, Bob continues to teach and to ensure that ICA remains true to its core values and evolving vision, Beth directs the educational program, and Cynthia runs the business.

One thing that impresses the foundations we spoke with, and that keeps them funding ICA, is that ICA has proven itself able to evolve and adapt successfully over a substantial period of time and that it has an effective organizational structure that will carry it forward through future transitions.

## FUTURE PLANS / STRATEGIC PLANNING

ICA has engaged in strategic planning for at least four cycles of its development. One was completed in 1991 (for 1991 to 1994), another in 1998 (for 1999 to 2003), a third one in 2003 (for 2004 to 2008), and the most recent one was essentially complete at the time of the visit (and covers 2009 to 2013).

In 2003, key issues included: whether to grow (it was determined that they could double their capacity once the planned expansion was complete); whether to continue to serve children from the downtown area or to expand (it was decided to continue the focus on local children); and whether to specifically include more programs for teenagers (this was not determined at the time). The plan called for the facility to be completed in 2006 and the number of students served to have doubled by 2008; these targets have been delayed.

By 2009, the context for strategic planning had changed. The facility expansion was complete, but the broad financial crisis threatened to curtail resources, possibly drastically. The response was to diversify “customers, markets served, and services provided” rather than relying on LAUSD for 95% of its “business,” and, in fact, ICA has recently started to serve two private, religious-based, schools. This would be accomplished by maximizing use of the campus, diversifying and increasing fee-based services, enhancing strategic alliances, diversifying funding streams, and increasing marketing (note the use of business-school jargon and thinking).

The “business vision” for ICA is: “to successfully evolve from an entrepreneurial enterprise to a broad-based institution that is well known locally and nationally and that is sustainable in its own capacity and not dependent on any one person or entity in order to thrive.” And the “big goal” for ICA is “to be THE indisputable source of programs, information and advocacy (based upon our work and research) regarding how the Arts make a healthy and sustainable difference in the lives of children and youth.” For each strategic goal, specific and measurable targets are identified. The targeted areas for program expansion include school-day programs in dance, media arts and animation; after-school programs in performing arts, visual arts, adult classes and summer classes; and professional development training.

## FINANCES

### ***Operating Costs***

The current (2009) budget for ICA runs to about \$2,250,000. Revenue sources include contributions, grants and fundraising from special events. Projected grants and contributions are reduced substantially from 2008, likely reflecting a realistic appraisal of the deteriorating economic climate. Janis Minton, a foundation management consultant who is a strong supporter of ICA and who manages foundations that provide ICA support, suggested that the real impact of reduced endowments will not be felt until next year. On the other hand, projected revenues from fundraising events

are substantially higher, perhaps reflecting added emphasis (and reliance) on these events.

By far the largest category of expenses is personnel costs, which run to about 60% of the budget. Other substantial expenditures are for independent artists and for professional services. Another major item is the in-kind contribution of bus services by the school district. At the present time, the district remains committed to continuing to provide these services, but if that changes due to budget restrictions it would have a major impact on ICA’s operations or funding needs.

### ***Construction Costs and Capital Program***

ICA has succeeded in attracting substantial capital funding support over its 20-year history. Its first facility was funded by a grant from The S. Mark Taper Foundation while the second phase was funded with Community Redevelopment Agency funds and proceeds from a Los Angeles school bond.

The cost of building the latest expansion was \$9.2 million. Special efforts were directed toward raising funds for it and support was received from many sources, including The W.M. Keck Foundation, The S. Mark Taper Foundation (which provided an unusual – for it – follow-on grant for the library/resource center), and the Rosenthal Charitable Fund, which contributed two million dollars for the theater. During the period when the expansion was built, costs

continued to escalate and more funding had to be found. One board member, Doug Hinchliffe, and his family, contributed a property that was sold to raise around a million dollars for the project. The board also agreed to obtain a line of credit, part of which was used for construction.

Other major sources of funding for ICA over its history have included The Ahmanson Foundation, The Annenberg Foundation, Bank of America Foundation, California Community Foundation, Dream-Works Animation SKG, The Eisner Foundation, J. Paul Getty Trust, The Hearst Foundations, The Streisand Foundation, and many others.



Signage at Kohler Street entrance

## IMPACTS ON THE CHILDREN: A RESEARCH-DRIVEN PROGRAM

ICA is one of the relatively few Rudy Bruner Award projects for which there is documented research on the impacts and outcomes of its programs. Much of this research has been conducted and published by Dr. James Catterall, a professor of education at UCLA (see References). Catterall has tracked children's performance following participation in classes at Inner-City Arts. In fact, ICA describes itself as "a research driven organization," with programs and pedagogical techniques developing and changing based on the results of evaluation studies. Research projects conducted at or with ICA include the following:

- ❖ A current evaluation study of Arts in The Middle (AIM) funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Current results show that when students are engaged in an extended and integrated arts program at ICA, their English language skills improve, compared with a control group that does not attend the arts program. This work informs current plans to expand service to middle school students, where risk of failure is apparent.
- ❖ In 2004, a Ford Foundation-funded evaluation of ICA students (conducted by James Catterall) demonstrated that participation in visual arts programs was associated with significant increases in children's sense of "self-efficacy" and improvement in their worldview, as well as what might

be an expected increase in the visual arts competence of participants. Teacher exit-interviews also indicated a shift in teachers' perceptions of their students' potential as learners after observing them as learners in their visual art classes.

- ❖ A five-year evaluation (from 1997 to 2002) involving 3,000 students, funded by the U.S. Department of Education and carried out by researchers at UCLA, provided evidence that classes whose children and teachers actively participated in ICA arts programs scored significantly higher on standardized tests in math, reading and language arts than control groups whose students did not participate. Results also showed that when teachers participated in 10 hours or more of professional development, students' Stanford 9 scores increased by 17.8% in reading, 8.3% in language arts and 25% in math.

It is clear that ICA has not only pursued evaluation studies, but has also evolved its programs in response to their findings. In particular, the study showing the benefit of increased teacher involvement led to creation and expansion of ICA's teacher training programs, funded by the Annenberg Foundation.

Supplementing and reinforcing the research findings are the powerful stories shared by teachers and administrators. They speak of children who use art to express deep and sometimes distressing



feelings that otherwise might not come out – and speak of finding them professional help in dealing with the problems. They also talk of the pride that children feel at achieving a degree of competence in using a medium or in creating a work that is appreciated. For both students and teachers, the experience at ICA is reportedly transformative, bringing enthusiasm for life and countering a potential loss of hope.

Two past participants have come back to teach at ICA and two others have become public school teachers.

*Students leaving ICA*

## IMPACTS ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD

ICA's white walls and towers and its landscaped courtyards stand out in contrast to the neighboring drab industrial buildings. While one could not expect this small project to transform Skid Row, it is a positive, clean, and attractive addition to a depressed and depressing area. (And it clearly has an important impact on its children, as documented in the prior section.)

## Assessing Project Success

### SUCCESS IN MEETING PROJECT GOALS

*1. To partner with the LAUSD to offer high quality arts instruction to children who otherwise would have little exposure to it.*

The partnership is strong and thriving. ICA is greatly appreciated and respected by the schools for substantially supplementing the arts education that would otherwise be offered and for the quality of its instruction. ICA has decided for strategic reasons to broaden its partnerships so that it relies less on the school district, recognizing that funding is vulnerable in difficult economic times.

*2. To encourage exploration and self-expression – more than technical competence – in part as a means of cognitive*

*development and improvement of overall educational performance and, thus, to increase the likelihood that kids will stay in school.*

This philosophy permeates all art classes and appears to be having the intended impacts, based on results of several evaluation studies.

*3. To engage teachers, along with their students as well as separately from their students, and to train them so they can take skills and methods back to their classrooms.*

Teachers come to ICA with their classes and receive special instruction in curriculum development and other methods they can take back to their own classrooms. There are also formal professional development courses, both for student teachers and as continuing education.

*4. To contribute to revitalization of the neighborhood.*

This contribution is seen as much in terms of the human capital of its children as in its physical fabric. ICA's message is: "we are here, we are staying here, and you (kids and parents) don't have to go somewhere else for beauty and other good things." While the campus does appear like a beacon or oasis in a bleak area, its impact is likely greatest on the children who come to it for art classes.

*5. For the facility: to be a safe, enriching and inspiring environment in an otherwise dull and distressed area.*

ICA's environment appears to meet these goals.

*6. For the facility expansion: to greatly increase the opportunities to serve students (including more middle- and high school students) with expanded programs able to be scheduled over more hours and days of the week.*

Given the scope of the expansion, ICA will be able to more than double its offerings when corresponding increases in operating budgets are achieved. Until then, the new facilities have allowed improvement or expansion for performing arts and ceramics, and also support expansion of middle school services in cooperation with Para Los Niños.

## OTHER MEASURES OF SUCCESS

There is also, always, the question of how applicable or replicable a project may be, and what others can learn from it. The intent is not to clone or transplant a project, but to look at how it was built in context and how it developed effective programs that address the issues of its setting. The Inner-City Arts project has many unique features involving its history, people, location and mission. As one interviewee said, “you can’t clone Bob Bates.” You also cannot simply build another ICA in a second location in LA or perhaps elsewhere (for reasons of limited human and capital resources, among many others). In fact, ICA formally decided, prior to its latest expansion, to stay in the Skid Row area rather than relocate to a “better” neighborhood, since this is in the center of the area of highest need. Likely, this commitment also helps ICA to raise

money, since funders are clearly impressed by the magnitude and depth of need in the area.

On the other hand, there is much to learn from ICA. Principal areas include curriculum and teaching methods, teacher training programs, commitment to conducting and applying research and evaluation, evolution of the organization, strength of leadership and strategic planning, and quality of the facilities.

## SELECTION COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The Committee chose Inner-City Arts as the 2009 Gold Medal winner because it excelled in all aspects of its endeavor, and because of its potential to provide a national model in design, art education, and organizational effectiveness. Moreover, the Committee felt strongly that ICA successfully addresses some of the most critical issues facing our cities today, including the need for quality design in all sectors of the urban built environment; the devastating impact of homelessness on children; the need to provide safe and beautiful open space for children; and the importance of effective art education in public school curricula.

The Committee commended Inner-City Arts and Michael Maltzan Architecture for the excellence of its architectural design. They noted the importance of the planted and safe courtyard as a sanctuary in this industrial area, and the free-flowing relationship

between interior and outdoor spaces throughout the project. The Committee felt the design was extremely effective in creating an oasis for children who live in dangerous, bleak urban environments and who have no access to safe outdoor space. The Committee observed that the landscape design and plantings lent beauty and dignity to the courtyard spaces and contributed to both educational and architectural efforts toward sustainability.

ICA was also selected as the Gold Medal winner because of its transformative impact on the lives of children who may be homeless or transient. The Committee applauded ICA for the number of children they reach. The Committee felt that ICA's approach, which brings classroom teachers along with their students to a safe and nurturing environment, and uses art training to teach a variety of life skills, is a valuable and important model that can be used in cities and educational systems nationally. They also placed tremendous value on the quality and breadth of the teacher-training program. This experience for teachers ensures that the ICA curriculum and "lessons learned" can be shared with other schools throughout the region. The Committee noted that, again, this is a model that potentially has very broad applicability to schools across the country.

The Committee also placed importance on Inner-City Arts' success at achieving significant longevity, and in adapting their organizational structure to meet changing program needs while staying true to their original mission. The Committee noted the value of having



the original founder still involved in teaching and directing the organization, as well as the longevity of many staff members, some of whom have played multiple roles in the organizational structure over the years. They also commended ICA for its ongoing evaluation of its programs, demonstrating outcomes, and building results into adjustments to its program to ensure ongoing excellence. The Committee felt that ICA provides an organizational model for non-profit organizations of all kinds throughout the country. 🐾

*Student ceramic work*

## REFERENCES

CHRISTOPHER HAWTHORNE, "Coming Clean in the Inner City," architectural review of ICA from the *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 2008.

CHRISTOPHER HAWTHORNE, "Inner-City Arts: Standing Out in a Gritty Locale," *Architectural Record*, 02/09; page 68.

EDWARD B. FISKE, ed., "Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning," published by the Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 1999.

CLIFFORD PEARSON, "Michael Maltzan Designs a Place of Hope and Creativity for Inner-City Arts in Los Angeles," *Architectural Record*, 02/09; pages 61-67.

DONALD R. SPIVACK, "History of Skid Row Series, Paper 1," Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency, September 15, 1998.

## ICA Reports

"Destination 2013: Strategic Plan Summary" (PowerPoint presentation), February 25, 2009.

"Interim Evaluation Report: Arts in the Middle (AIM), Assessing English Language Development and Arts Learning, A Project of Inner-City Arts," JAMES S. CATTERALL, Professor, KYLIE PEPLER, Research Assistant, UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, December 2007.

"Executive Summary: Arts Education and the Worldviews of Inner-City Children," Principal Investigators: JAMES S. CATTERALL, Professor, KYLIE PEPLER, Research Assistant, UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, 2004.

"Executive Summary: Title VII: Project ALL, Arts for Language and Learning, Biennial Evaluation," ICA, 2001.