



Visual Arts Division Faculty Biographies



Christine Mallouf, Program Manager: Christine Mallouf is the Program Manager of the Los Angeles Unified School District's Gifted/Talented Programs Conservatory of Fine Arts, Visual Arts Division. She grew up in Burbank, CA where she attended and graduated from Burbank High School. She studied at Valley Community College, Glendale College, Pierce College and California State University at Northridge. Christine's education continued at East Los Angeles Occupational Center and National Computer School, both schools specializing in the arts. She continues her art education at the Academy of Fine Arts. Christine's skills are varied and eclectic. Some of her many interests include painting, pen and ink, sculpture, ceramics, printing, mosaics and design. Having worked at many of the animation studios in Los Angeles, including The Disney Studios and Warner Brothers Animation, Christine is also proficient in computer graphics and animation (traditional and computer generated). Using her many talents, Christine has also worked in the advertising, photography, fashion, product and book illustration industries. There is no question that art is Christine's passion and that is evident in her personal and professional life.

Kathy Lee, Assistant Program Manager: Kathy Lee has worked for the Conservatory for 10 years and currently serves as the Assistant Program Manager of the Visual Arts Division. Before this career, she was a fashion designer in Los Angeles for BCBG and was in charge of the Nordstrom collection. The position allowed her to travel to many cities in the US, as well as other countries in Europe. She has been involved in both domestic and international fashion shows. She holds a fashion design and merchandising degree from Los Angeles Trade Technical College and Paris Fashion Institute.

Blanca Alvarado, Instructor and Substitute: Blanca Alvarado has been working at the Conservatory of Fine Arts for 15 years as an art teacher, and it has been both an honor and a real, fun challenge for her! She currently works as an art teacher for the LAUSD Arts Education Branch, serving different elementary schools throughout the year. Before becoming an art teacher her goal was to work in Child Development. She earned both a Bachelor's Degree in Child Development and also a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential from California State University, Los Angeles. Her passion for the arts led her back to school to acquire her Single Subject Credential in Art. She considers her teaching practice and expertise as her primary form of art expression, because teaching art requires a lot of creativity, time, knowledge, dedication, planning, and passion. Lately, she's been dedicating some time learning how to draw the figure form and creating different forms of three-dimensional art. Her personal philosophy is to be happy, love life, respect yourself and others, never stop learning, and value creativity, knowledge and peace!

Cuauhtémoc Arrieta, Instructor: Cuauhtémoc Arrieta has extensive experience as a creative director and art director for different agencies in Mexico City and Los Angeles over the past years, which has provided him with a full understanding and ability to execute ad conception, creation, management, production, post-production and all tasks necessary to run multiple campaigns. It's the job of an Art Director/Creative Director to be able to decipher trends that are actionable, recognize excellent ideas and produce creative innovations that deliver results. As a respected Art Director/Creative Director, Cuauhtémoc has a solid background working for and interacting with diverse, high-profile accounts. He has learned the craft from the ground up working in roles such as copywriter, art director and creative director. He has been working at the Conservatory of Fine Arts for 10 years. His personal philosophy is "Recognize excellent ideas and produce creative work that delivers results." Cuauhtémoc's educational background includes: Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas (ENAP) and the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California.



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Audrey Cotright, Instructor: Audrey M. Cotright has been designated a professional expert as an art teacher at the Conservatory of Fine Arts for 20 years and counting. In the early days of her career, she received an Art Scholarship from Otis Art Institute. Later she received a Bachelor of Arts from U.C.L.A. Her interests led to include the study of law, she also pursued and received a Juris Doctorate. As a professional exhibiting artist, Ms. Cotright has shown her work at extensive venues in Los Angeles, Santa Ana, Culver City and more. In addition to depicting excellence in her own work, she has demonstrated a heartfelt passion in teaching art to children for which she has received several awards, such as a Certificate of Recognition for Efforts Encouraging Artistic Appreciation and Creativity in Children from the California State Assembly and a Certificate of Tribute for Community Activism in Art from the city of Los Angeles. She even led tours for children in Paris at the Louvre! Her philosophy in teaching involves love and passion for art with excitement in guiding her students to discover their unique gifts...for her, that's contagious!

Brianne Fatemi, Instructor: Brianne Fatemi is an artist from Los Angeles who creates acrylic paintings using an uncommon method of industrial power tools. She received her B.A. and M.A. in Studio Arts at California State University, Los Angeles. Her work is about releasing energy, tying her work to the electromagnetic spectrum, connecting art with science. Music, color, and movement are elements in her work, while she uses a full body method to paint her expressive works. The work she creates varies from her origami series, to sculptural paintings, using bright vivid colors as her inspiration.

Cheryl Goettemoeller, Instructor and Substitute: As an artist/designer Cheryl Goettemoeller likes creating all sorts of things. Painting, sculpting, finding cool things to assemble into new pieces- that all fits her definition of artistic creations. Her inspirational bouts vary from realistic to abstract and from very small works to rather large. She has pieces in private collections, public art spaces and local galleries. Her art education includes a Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) and a Bachelor of Science in Medical Illustration.

Kim Guedin, Substitute: Kim Guedin has a background in fine arts, design, and computer animation. She worked for fifteen years in Los Angeles as a 3D computer animation generalist on commercials, television series, and films. For the last five years she has been running her own website design company. However, her lifelong passion is painting. Kim graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design with a BFA and the Florence Leif Award in painting, and from the School of Visual Arts, NYC, with an MFA in computer art.

Nicole Marquez-Johnston, Instructor: This year marks the start of Nicole Marquez-Johnston's tenth year working for the Conservatory of Fine Arts. She has been teaching for LAUSD since 2008 as a substitute teacher and a fine arts teacher. She received her expertise in art by taking courses from Pasadena City College where she received her Associate of Arts degree before transferring over to Cal State LA earning not only her Bachelor of Arts degree in Art Education, but also her Master's Degree and teaching credential in art. She has the privilege of collaborating with other educators to enhance her teaching practice in addition to making art a fun and enjoyable experience for teachers and students alike. Some of her personal interests and hobbies include reading, drawing, watching movies, listening to different varieties of music, and she is a big fan of Star Wars, Harry Potter, and Disney.

Tomás Parra, Instructor: Tomás Parra has worked for the Conservatory of Fine Arts for a total of eight years (1998-2003, 2016-present). His teaching experience spans twenty-six years. He holds a bachelor's degree in Architecture from Woodbury University, Burbank. He also has a master's degree in Education from The University of Phoenix. As an artist, he appreciates stimulating shapes, vibrant colors and functional design. He likes to sketch, draw, paint, and build. His artwork reflects all that moves him. He sees beauty in a human form, an inspirational space or location, a colorful sunset, an interesting animal or plant. He also enjoys the aesthetics in a building interior; the feel and look of classic architectural forms. Over the years, Tomás has painted portraits, landscapes and created cultural displays. He has built small-scale models and sculptures. His favorite artworks are large-scale paintings and street murals.



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Atilio Pernisco, Instructor: Atilio Pernisco is a Los Angeles painter, who makes contemporary impressions of suburbia Los Angeles. Existential at its core, his work interrogates the human condition in the quotidian moments that are marked by absence and anxiety. This absence turns Atilio into the observer and chronicler of the repetitiousness of life, observing this process in itself as some sort of spectacle. As a result, the actual process of painting is done with a liquid fluidity – with his marks striving for a glimpse of something more authentic in the now. Atilio's works have appeared in many group exhibitions in Los Angeles.

Jessica Perry-Martin, Substitute: Jess Perry-Martin is a proud Banana Slug, with a degree in Fine Arts and Education from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a teaching credential in the Visual Arts from California State University, Northridge (CSUN). She has devoted her career to arts education and advocacy, with 18+ years of experience teaching middle and high school students as well as professional student teachers. Recently awarded LAUSD Teacher of the Year and LA County Teacher of the Year in 2019, she supports excellence in arts education across disciplines, abilities, and interests. As a teacher at LAUSD's ArTES Magnet, Mrs. Perry-Martin works passionately to bring a love of the visual arts to all her students. She believes that with practice and a willingness to work hard, anyone can be an artist.

Ewa Pietraszak, Instructor: We all love fairytales. They scare us, they teach us life lessons and they make us happy. Ewa Pietraszak's goal is to tell adult stories through lyrical, expressionist and surrealist visual imagery and some found object or reclaimed art to keep a memory; because memories are quintessential to art. We are all connected and art connects us the most. Ewa currently has six series: 1) Abstract Expressionism and Found Object Art: Acrylic on Canvas with Resin, 2) Feminist Series: Gender Roles and what it's like to be a Woman, 3) Christianity: Religion vs. Faith, Iconography vs. Hypocrisy, 4) Endangered Species Series, 5) Trees: Spiritual Beings- A Metaphor, 6) Children's Book: Narney the Narwhal (in progress.) Ewa holds a B.A. from U.C. Irvine and teaches art, history, and English at Ramona High Schools. She had been with the Conservatory for 12 years.

Sergio Raygoza, Instructor: Sergio Raygoza is an LAUSD high school visual arts teacher currently working at Marquez High School LIBRA Academy. He has worked as an instructor for the Conservatory of Fine Arts, Visual Arts division, for over ten years. Sergio has a Bachelor of Arts in Art Education and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. The reason why he has committed himself to this great profession is that he really enjoys working with students who have the potential to become great young artists and productive citizens. What Sergio has learned along the way is that every single student has a voice, and in many instances, art is the best way for them to express their thoughts and concerns.

Rachelle Scarpin, Instructor: Ms. Rachelle Scarpin has been with the Conservatory of Fine Arts for eight years as a visual arts instructor. She also works as a specialist for Apple, freelance cosmetologist and designer of jewelry and hair accessories. She also works on her own art and enjoys costuming design. She studied Fine Art with a minor in Art History. She is a licensed cosmetologist and certified floral designer. She has had her artwork in the "Picture This" gallery for a Frida Kahlo art exhibit. Her jewelry has been sold in "A Pin-Ups Closet" and "Moss & Rock." She has done hair for Blizzard for "BlizzCon" and worked with airbrush artist Mark Frazier. She is a lover of all things creative and enjoys everything from photography to mixed media.

Lisa Seid, Instructor: Lisa Seid is an artist from Orange County. This will be her tenth year teaching as a visual arts instructor for the Conservatory of Fine Arts. In 2015, she graduated from California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Fine Arts/Metalsmithing. In her studio she creates art work out of a number of materials such as wood, metal, leather, and resin/3D printing.

Kira Shewfelt, Substitute: Kira Shewfelt is a painter based in Los Angeles. Her interest lies in the depiction of idealism and its practice. Intimacy and movement are recurrent subjects in her work, as well as renderings of imagined idyllic spaces. Her figuration draws upon personal relationships as well as popular depictions of optimal gestures: instructional manuals, travel and editorial photography, illustrations of dance and sport, yoga girls, ancient glyphs, and social movements. The politics of pleasure: how it manifests, who it manifests for, and how it is remembered, are



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foundational questions in her practice. The action of painting also becomes a hopeful gesture, creating images that highlight transitional rather than fixed states, potentiality and curiosity.

Carlos Vargas, Instructor: The central preoccupation unifying Carlos Vargas' work is an engagement with the practice of the old masters, particularly those of the Dutch and German expressionist periods. Their perfection of craft, their exploration of narrative modes, and their explicit connection to history and politics are a source of continuing fascination and inspiration to his work. He incorporates contemporary iconography and themes in a classical Memento Mori fashion that serves as a reminder of human error: a reminder of the fact that humans fail and make mistakes. His work draws inspiration from artists such as Jan Weenix, Chaim Soutine, Edouard Manet and Peter Shire's use of color. Ceramics as a material has permanence; it is how we are able to learn about ancient cultures. There is beauty in these traditions and Carlos' aim is to create work that will stand the test of time that will give future generations insight into the way we live today as well as things we worship. Carlos spotlights traditional gods and goddesses in both clay and paper and highlights funeral arrangements as an art form. His current body of work examines issues related to the environment and deals with the Hindu concept of spiritual awakening and the impermanence of life and death. Carlos' goal is to create a body of work that uses mixed media and suggests an association with traditional nineteenth-century Memento Mori painting and sculpture. He refers to himself as a Mexican artist. Carlos identifies his work and himself with the fusion and dynamics of his newfound interest in the Hindu philosophy.

Alejandro Zendejas, Substitute: Alejandro Zendejas has worked for the Conservatory for the past nine years as a substitute teacher and visual arts professional expert. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Studio Art from the University of Southern California in 2008. He has professional experience in the field of painting. Alejandro wrote the article "*Collection Illuminates Spirituality: Rico Lebrun*," published in the Daily Trojan on April 24, 2001.