



18TH STREET ARTS CENTER
1639 18TH STREET,
SANTA MONICA, CA 90404

T 310.453.3711
ADMIN18@18THSTREET.ORG
18THSTREET.ORG

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Press Contact:
Kim Flum
kflum@18thstreet.org

Two New Murals by Karla Diaz Uplift Voices of Santa Monica

Inspired by community storytelling workshops, two new murals honor racial justice, cultural equity, and the vibrant spirit of Santa Monica.

Santa Monica, CA – Artist Karla Diaz has created two new murals that honor and uplift the diverse communities of Santa Monica. The murals, *We Are Santa Monica* at the [Santa Monica Public Library](#) (SMPL), and *Youth Powerful Voices* at the [Virginia Avenue Park Teen Center](#) are on display through Sunday, December 15, 2024.

Diaz will speak about *We Are Santa Monica* in the library courtyard at SMPL on Saturday, October 26 at 2 PM. *Youth Powerful Voices* will be celebrated at the Virginia Avenue Park Teen Center on Friday, November 8, 4-6pm.

"Murals and public art serve as a powerful medium for community expression, storytelling, and reflection," said Jan Williamson, 18th Street Arts Center's Executive Director. "They bring people together and celebrate the diversity and unique narratives that make up our shared experience. In a public space, art becomes a collective voice that fosters understanding, honors history, and inspires future generations."

These two vibrant artworks, *We Are Santa Monica* and *Youth Powerful Voices*, are rooted in community workshops led by Diaz earlier this year. The workshops were held this summer at the Juneteenth Festival and the Teen Center at Virginia Avenue Park. Both sessions focused on storytelling and sharing, and fostered dialogue about racial justice, cultural equity, and community well-being.

"Art, especially in public spaces, has a profound impact on our well-being," continued Williamson. "By transforming ordinary spaces into vibrant, meaningful reflections of our



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community, murals not only beautify our surroundings but also promote mental and emotional health, offering a reminder of our shared stories and resilience."

Karla Diaz is a writer, teacher, and multidisciplinary artist whose work spans painting, installation, video, and performance. Her practice centers around using narrative to question identity, explore memory, and challenge institutional power. Through her work, Diaz engages in socially conscious collaborations, sparking critical conversations within diverse communities. Her vibrant paintings draw inspiration from her dreams and everyday experiences, often depicting portraits and landscapes reflective of her upbringing in Los Angeles and México.

The workshops and murals were produced by 18th Street Arts Center. The project builds on 18th Street's long-standing collaboration with Diaz and the Quinn Research Center (QRC), an archive of Black life in Santa Monica that has been digitally preserved by the Santa Monica Public Library. 18th Street, one of the leading artist residency programs in the United States and the largest in Southern California, supports artists worldwide in developing impactful new artworks. The Quinn Research Center serves as an archive and educational resource, promoting the study and research of Black family history and culture in the Santa Monica Bay Area.

ABOUT 18TH STREET ARTS CENTER

Celebrating its 35th anniversary, 18th Street Arts Center is the largest residency program in Southern California. Conceived as a radical think tank in the shape of an artist community, 18th Street supports artists from around the globe to imagine, research, and develop significant, meaningful new artworks and share them with the public. We strive to provide artists the space and time to take risks, to foster the ideal environment for artists and the public to directly engage, and to create experiences and partnerships that foster positive social change. For additional information, please visit 18thstreet.org.

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