



Staying Rooted Through Change

ACTA's Year in Review (2020-2021)



Dear friends,

After a surreal year, we are grateful to be here. The COVID-19 pandemic has been especially devastating to the folk and traditional arts community. Artists lost essential income, traditional practitioners fell through the gaps of relief funding, and communities of color bore the brunt of the pandemic's morbidity. We've lost culture bearers to the disease, individuals who have been pillars in their community's cultural life.

During this time of extreme need among our constituents, ACTA did not close down or downsize operations. Rather, we more than doubled our output of funding for the field, administering several new grant programs and organizing multilingual sessions to share information on available resources through this period. We've linked arms with institutional partners and national coalitions to increase the depth and efficacy of our COVID responses, tapping into new skills in online convenings and remote collaboration.

Traditional practices and expressions have survived generations of change and upheaval. Traditional artists have always been on the front line of taproot care and repair in their communities through challenging times. We take continued inspiration from the adaptive, creative, and resilient character of these stewards and their art forms. We at ACTA will continue to dance with change in the months and years to come.



Amy Kitchener

Amy Kitchener

*Executive Director and Co-Founder
Alliance for California Traditional Arts*

COVER IMAGE—A San Diego-based 2021 Apprenticeship between Bernard Ellorin + Rogelle Zamora in Tagunggu' (gong ensemble) music from the Sulu Archipelago, Philippines. Photo by Rogelle Zamora.

THIS PAGE— Amy Kitchener. Photo by Craig Kohlruss.



Centering Equity in Pandemic Relief

Living Cultures Grant

\$271,000 • 55 organizations awarded statewide

Apprenticeship Program

\$60,000 • 20 artist pairs awarded statewide

Hardly Strictly Music Relief Fund

\$660,000 • 330 artists awarded in the San Francisco Bay Area

Hewlett 50 Commissions in Folk and Traditional Arts Administered on behalf of the Hewlett Foundation

\$1,540,000 • 10 commissions awarded in the San Francisco Bay Area

Sankofa Fund for Cultural Preservation

\$180,000 • 17 individuals and organizations awarded in San Francisco

In the last 18 months, ACTA has provided a historic amount of funding to traditional artists and organizations in communities of color throughout the state of California.

Through our regular grant programs and new initiatives, ACTA facilitated **\$2,718,000** in funding since March 2020.



"I was definitely strengthened in my beliefs and convictions, and gained more excitement about how to use dance to share these convictions with others."

—Jeremy Brooks, 2021 ACTA Apprentice in liturgical dance with mentor artist Erik Lee

Since our founding, ACTA has engaged in years of field research and relationship-building among the communities least recognized by mainstream arts funders. When COVID hit, we were poised to ensure that relief resources reached these communities through our own grantmaking and the dissemination of other COVID resources through our targeted channels.

ABOVE—A Los Angeles and San Bernardino-based 2021 Apprenticeship between Fode Sissoko + Makeda Kumasi in the West African kora. Photo courtesy the artists.

RIGHT—Photo by Duane Lynn.



New Programs: Cultural Resilience at Work

Traditional arts practices have the power to heal communities and ground us through turbulent times. During the pandemic, ACTA conceptualized and launched new opportunities for traditional artists to act as trusted messengers and touchstones for community wellbeing through new programs.

ACTAvando Contra COVID

*“Vacúnate,
no quiero que te vayas de mi lado
no existe nada más fuerte
que nuestra familia y nuestro
amor*

Take the vaccine, I do not want
you to leave my side
Nothing is stronger than our
family and our love

—Excerpt from “Tantos Años Juntos” by Juan **Felipe Herrera**,
Commissioned by ACTA

ACTA produced and distributed five new works of music, poetry and theater in Spanish, English, and Mixtec by four beloved Latinx artists and ensembles in the San Joaquin Valley. Through regional music, multilingual poetry, and even a radio drama, these artists are encouraging Spanish and Mixtec-speaking individuals to get vaccinated and protect their communities and families from COVID-19.



La Cultura Cura – Culture Heals

ACTA Artist Fellows in Boyle Heights led a series of bilingual online workshops connecting traditional arts practices to mental health curricula to offer relief from stress and anxiety during the pandemic. From altar-making to restorative quilting, these practices center community knowledge as a source of collective healing.

BUILDING JUSTICE FROM THE SOURCE

TRADITIONAL ARTISTS RESPOND TO THIS MOMENT



VICKY HOLT TAKAMINE



CAROLYN MAZLOOMI



TERROL DEW JOHNSON



BRETT RATLIFF



QUETZAL FLORES

REGISTER IN ADVANCE

JULY 23, 2020

1PM PST - 3PM CST - 4PM EST
LIVE VIRTUAL EVENT



Building Justice from the Source: Traditional Artists Respond to this Moment

The traditional arts have always been rooted in resilience, accountability, and creative thinking.

With our partners at the Southwest Folklife Alliance, the National Council for the Traditional Arts, and the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, we hosted two public dialogues with artists from across the nation to share how traditional arts practice can impact movements around racial justice, health equity, and more.

Shelter Together

In this livestream series, 55 traditional artists from across the state shared performances, demonstrations, and words of wisdom from their homes during the height of the pandemic quarantine. From making masks using traditional Korean bojagi techniques to building altars in remembrance of loved ones lost to COVID, the series reminds us that the home is central to traditional arts practice and transmission.

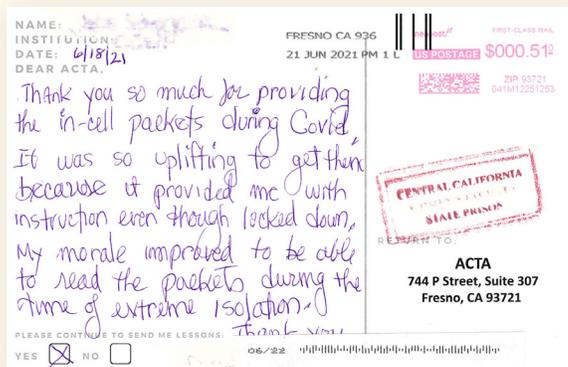
"We brought to the workshop the importance of listening to stories, and bringing our ancestors to the present in order to take that step to move forward. One's soul is healed...one learns to let go of the chains."

—Juana Mena, ACTA Artist Fellow

TOP LEFT—Promotional flyer for Building Justice from the Source. CENTER—Photo by M. Perez/ACTA TOP RIGHT—Still image from Shelter Together episode with Karen Collins of the African American Miniature Museum. RIGHT— Photo: T. Saarelma/ACTA



Same Programs, New Approaches



Responding to the pandemic meant revisiting all of our existing programs with radical flexibility and creative problem solving. ACTA staff trained up in digital fieldwork methods and online event production, and maintained close connections with our grantees, partners, and artist collaborators throughout a period of physical distancing.

- We produced **45 online events** across multiple programs, sustaining opportunities for networking and collaborative learning in the traditional arts field.

- ACTA's Arts in Corrections teaching artists shared new written curricula with their students in prisons across the state in addition to producing nearly **30 original educational videos** as part of our new Engaging Tradition video series.

"Thank you so much for providing in-cell packets during COVID. It was uplifting to get them because it provided me with instruction even through lockdown. My morale improved to be able to read the packets during the time of extreme isolation. Thank you!"

—**AIC student** at the Central California Women's Facility



- We took our Sounds of California program online and on the radio, commissioning and premiering new bilingual musical works, organizing collective songwriting workshops around community issues like gentrification and street vending, and launching a public archive featuring community-gathered sounds and stories from Boyle Heights, CA.

"Being a part of this project changed the perception that I have of myself. It was something extraordinary for me."

—**Eva Garcia**, Sounds of California community documentarian

ACTA's Creative Workforce

Culture bearers are critical to navigating crises and change within communities. They are essential workers in their own right, acting as anchors, advocates, and agents of community-led change. ACTA recognizes artists as central to California's workforce by:



dozens of artists every year to take part in various ACTA programs, we are launching the California Traditional Artist Plaza, a user-generated roster of traditional artists that includes information about how to hire artists for performances, lectures, classes, and more.



Offering ongoing employment to traditional artists

We are proud to offer benefits and employee protections to our cohort of 35+ teaching artists, providing a critical safety net particularly during the employment crisis caused by COVID-19.



Hiring Artist Fellows to work across sectors

For ten years, ACTA's Building Healthy Communities Artist Fellows have intervened in educational policy, community displacement, and other social issues through micro-level work with individuals and communities. Our Fellows engage participatory traditional arts practices as sources of strength, resilience, and creativity to counter systemic harm in communities of color.



Contracting mentor artists to continue the transmission of cultural legacies

ACTA's Apprenticeship Program is in its 21st year, marking more than two decades of ACTA's support for mentor artists training apprentices in cultural forms across the state. We have employed 385 mentor artists for a total of \$1,155,000 since 2000.

Positioning traditional artists in the online marketplace

In addition to contracting



ACTA has been a coalition partner with the Invest in Youth campaign in Los Angeles, integrating cultural activities that create spaces for youth to tell their stories for four years. In response, the LA Mayor's Office officially funded a \$1.1 million city youth department in April 2021.

TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT—Students in an ACTA storytelling workshop led by teaching artist Michael D. McCarty at California City Correctional Facility. Photo: Peter Merts, April 2018; East Los Angeles altarista Ofelia Esparza prepares paper flowers for an ofrenda. Photo: Oscar Vargas/ACTA, 2020; 2021 Apprentice Nicole Maria Hoffschneider is studied Arabic frame drumming with percussionist Faisal Zedan in El Cerrito. Photo: Courtesy the artists; Corrido Writing workshop led by ACTA Artist Fellow Vaneza Calderon at Mendez High School in Boyle Heights. Photo: B. Marin/ACTA.



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ABOVE—ACTA presented a bilingual radio drama at the Madera Flea Market in June of 2021 as part of the vando Contra Covid project. Photo: Jenn Emerling/ACTA.



Make a gift today to support California's thriving cultural communities.

Every gift is a commitment to a culture bearer — and the people of California.

actaonline.org/support