



LACMA brings 'love and inspiration' to modernized Charles White Elementary art gallery

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Above, Veronica Alvarez, LACMA's director of school and community programs, leads fifth-graders on a tour of the new gallery at Charles White Elementary School.

Surrounded by colorful works created by contemporary Latino artists, Interim Superintendent Vivian Ekchian and School Board President Mónica García celebrated the official opening Wednesday of a revitalized gallery at [Charles White Elementary School](#), operated by the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art \(LACMA\)](#).



Board President Mónica García joins Ian White on a tour of the newly renovated gallery at the school named for his father, Charles White.

In place for a decade, the gallery has been updated and modernized to make room for larger displays. There also is a new public entrance on Wilshire Boulevard, providing the community with easier access to year-round programming and weekend workshops at the MacArthur Park campus.

"Today is a commitment to the future and what our kids deserve," Ekchian said. "Here in Southern California, art is not just art. It is a representation of our value systems and reflects the rich diversity in our city. It represents what is in our hearts. And, if we value access and equity, then we must expand our work to bring art into our schools."

Board President García spoke of the connections between education and cultural centers of communities.

"In L.A. Unified, we know our teachers benefit from and are inspired by what our museum partners make possible," she said. "I am grateful to all in MacArthur Park for your boldness and courage to bring the love and inspiration our kids need to feel in our schools. As we celebrate this space, we celebrate learning and life and the absolute best that art brings out in every one of us."

Charles White Elementary opened in 2004 on the former campus of Otis College of Art and Design. It is named for the late artist Charles White, a long-time teacher at Otis. White's son, Ian White, also attended the grand-opening event, along with Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis and LACMA Director Michael Govan.

It provided participants their first look at *A Universal History of Infamy: Those of This America*, which will be on display at the gallery through Oct. 6. Curated by artist/educator Vincent Ramos, it showcases art as a method of resistance.

"L.A. County is about the arts," Solis said. "We invest in ways that allow art to transform our communities. Once children learn about the arts, they are motivated, disciplined and they love to show up to school every day and be a part of it. It is releasing an energy that we all have. I am so delighted to be at the center of it all."

The project served as a milestone in the partnership between the District and LACMA, as they work together to expand arts education and community outreach. Since 2007, LACMA has provided exhibits for the school's gallery, offering students unprecedented access to art, and the ability to learn about and understand contemporary artists. Specialists also provide hands-on art workshops for students.

LACMA paid for the modernization, which ties in with the school's plans to open a new arts-focused magnet program in the fall 2018.

"The partnership is helping us to shape the vision and specifics for the curricular program for our new program," said White Elementary principal Alfredo Juarez. "We will continue to offer arts education to all students — traditional and magnet alike. Now we are better equipped to go deeper into art education, art history, art techniques in various media and linking to core content areas such as literacy development."

Students present for the ceremony exhibited excitement about having more exposure to the arts.

"Arts is my favorite part of school," said fifth-grader Oswaldo Martinez. "I wish we got to spend more time painting and working with colors...I definitely want to be an artist when I get older."



LACMA education coordinator Albert Valdez leads White Elementary fifth-graders through a painting workshop following the gallery tour.

nations as a result of the art that we produce together."



The new street access to the LACMA-Charles White Elementary School gallery was celebrated by; from left; Board President Mónica García; Shawn Landres, Chair of the Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Commission; L.A. County Supervisor Hilda Solis; Interim Superintendent Vivian Ekchian; White Elementary Principal Alfredo Juarez; and LACMA director Michael Govan.

His classmate, Sebastian Perez, described ways in which school activities use the logical and creative sides of his mind.

"First we learned about shapes and how they fit together," he said. "It helped us design new things like robots out of recycled materials. I used bottles and a shoebox to build a robot turtle."

Perez says he loves art and plans to study it to be a teacher when he's older.

Throughout the morning, leaders expressed a desire to expand on the successful efforts at White.

"We have already talked, and we all agree that today is only the beginning," Ekchian said. "I invite all of our wonderful partners to think big. Let's think beyond the boundaries that exist now and let's make sure that every child benefits from art education. Let's help every child to become a better person and build bridges across