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CITY ANNOUNCES 2025-26 PUBLIC ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

The three 2025–26 NYC Public Artists in Residence – or PAIRs – will work with the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations, the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit, and the NYC Department of Small Business Services

PAIR is a pioneering artist residency program that places artists within NYC municipal agencies to serve as “creative problem solvers” tackling urgent civic and social challenges

2025-26 NYC Public Artists in Residence



Images of the 2025-26 PAIR's past work and headshots are [available here for download](#).

New York, NY – The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs today announced three artist placements for the City's 2025 –26 Public Artists in Residence (PAIR) program. The artists, [selected through an open call](#) conducted earlier this year, will be embedded within the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations, the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit, and the NYC Department of Small Business Services. Over the next 12 months, the artists will bring their creative practices to bear on

a range of public challenges, including supporting asylum seekers, finding new ways to connect residents to government services, and better serving small businesses in immigrant communities. Each artist receives a \$40,000 stipend, dedicated workspace within their respective agencies, and ongoing technical assistance and support as they develop and implement their public facing art projects.

“For ten years, our pioneering Public Artists in Residence program has brought the power of creative practice to bear on some of our city’s most pressing civic challenges,” said **NYC Cultural Affairs Commissioner Laurie Cumbo**. “With this new cohort of PAIRs, we’re excited to see these artists get to work alongside public servants working in diverse fields like housing, small business, and public engagement. We can’t wait to work with them and their partner agencies to bring the transformative power of ‘creative problem solving’ to transform services for New Yorkers across the city.”

"SBS's neighborhood development partners have demonstrated the power of art to drive foot traffic and build connective experiences that express, and in some instances define, the identities of neighborhoods, parks and plazas," said **Department of Small Business Services Commissioner Dynishal Gross**. "Having built on those learnings to inform investments in district lighting, murals, installations and street activation citywide, SBS is thrilled pilot the integration of a professional artist's practice into our community & center-based service provision through PAIR. I'm excited to see what our artist-in-residence dreams up and that SBS gets to be part of this unique program."

“At the Public Engagement Unit, our teams meet residents where they are — at their doors, in their neighborhoods, and in moments of real need — to connect them with housing support, healthcare, financial assistance, and other essential services,” said **Adrienne Lever, Executive Director of the Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit**. “Bringing an artist into our work allows us to shine a light on stories too often overlooked: New Yorkers struggling to access the services they deserve, and the public servants working tirelessly to remove barriers to access. We hope this partnership deepens trust in our communities and inspires new, creative ways to engage residents who have historically been left behind.”

“As our city responds to the ongoing asylum seeker crisis, we’re excited to welcome an artist whose own experiences and work reflect the resilience, complexity, and humanity of this moment.” said **Rudy S. Giuliani, Executive Director of The Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery**. “Mauricio’s perspective will help shine a light on the stories behind this crisis, and we’re excited to support a project that uplifts the voices and resilience of people seeking safety and stability in NYC.”

The three 2025-26 NYC Public Artists in Residence are:

- **Mauricio Higuera**, PAIR with the Mayor’s Office of Housing Recovery Operations

Mauricio Higuera (b. Urabá, Colombia) is an artist and educator. Now a hyphenated American after personally experiencing the psychic and material brutality of borders, his practice operates at the threshold where the immaterial and material coalesce. His work explores the forms migration opens as a language to challenge undocumentedness. Through his interdisciplinary work, Mauricio opens spaces for collaboration with communities,

cultural institutions, and forests in engaging scenes —whether psychic, natural, or social— where peoples and territories undergo migration.

“The Housing Recovery Operations agency through their work meeting migrants’ needs, have rekindled the symbolism carried by the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island at the Roosevelt Hotel and the network of emergency shelters they organized from the ground up. I am honored to be chosen to participate in New York City’s Department of Cultural Affairs Public Artist in Residence program, and lend a hand in this effort through the arts, in engaging and collaborating with our newest New Yorkers to mark this moment in history,” said **Mauricio Higuera, PAIR with the Mayor’s Office of Housing Recovery Operations.**

- **Ifeoma Ebo**, PAIR with the Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit

Ifeoma Ebo is the founding Principal of Creative Urban Alchemy LLC, an award-winning design studio working at the intersection of art, architecture, urban design and planning centering cultural heritage in practice. With a twenty-year track record transforming urban spaces into platforms for community agency and healing, her work includes the "Migration" community narrative art walk at the Kingsborough Houses in central Brooklyn. Ifeoma is a 2024 United States Artists Fellow in Architecture + Design and a Creative Visionary Award winner with the Black Artists & Designers Guild.

"I'm honored to work with the Public Engagement Unit to explore how art and creative storytelling can transform the spaces between government systems and community needs into sites of collective imagination and healing. Through participatory design processes that center community voices, I hope to create artistic interventions that make city services more accessible while building lasting partnerships between vulnerable New Yorkers and the institutions meant to serve them," said **Ifeoma Ebo, PAIR with the NYC Public Engagement Unit.**

- **Stephen Kwok**, PAIR with NYC Department of Small Business Services

Stephen Kwok is an interdisciplinary artist and curator who creates situations in which contradictions between a site and the activity within it may emerge. His work has been exhibited at Seoul Museum of Art; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; bologna.cc, Amsterdam; Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans; and other venues internationally, with programs at Delfina Foundation in London, the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, and NEW INC in New York. His ongoing project “Recreational Meetings” uses conferencing platforms to create surreal, embodied workshops that reimagine corporate meeting culture. He lives in Brooklyn, teaches design at Brooklyn College, and is the Curator of Public Engagement at Dia Art Foundation.

"My work focuses on site not just as physical space, but as a system that shapes social, cultural, and political possibility, especially in everyday environments like storefronts and public service centers, where routine can be reconfigured to produce unexpected exchange and imagination. Through my residency with the Department of Small Business Services, I

hope to explore how SBS facilities and the businesses they support can reflect the cultural richness of New York's communities while fostering sensory activation and cultural expression – helping resist encroaching monoculture and contributing to a more textured, dynamic urban environment. It's a proposal rooted in the understanding that the most potent artistic concepts are often actualized and embedded within everyday structures," said Stephen Kwok, **PAIR with the NYC Department of Small Business Services**.

PAIR residencies begin with a four-month research phase, during which time the artist and agency establish mutual trust through shared exposure to each other's work and process—the artist shadows agency staff and attends meetings, trainings and site visits, and in turn the agency hosts an artist talk and visits the artist at their studio. The research phase ends with the artist proposing a project, designed in collaboration with the partner agency, to produce during the remaining months of the residency.

The implementation phase of the residency is marked by approval of the project proposal and initiation of the work. The proposed project must be collaborative in nature and include at least one public-facing event or component. Artists selected for PAIR receive \$40,000, which covers their fee for the full length of the program along with project expenses related to their projects. PAIRs also receive a desk at the partner agency, with office access based on regular building hours, and access to free materials and supplies at [Materials for the Arts](#).

Launched in 2015, the PAIR program takes its name and inspiration from the pioneering work of artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles, the City's first official artist in residence (1977), with the NYC Department of Sanitation. Since establishing the program, DCLA has embedded 24 artists in 15 agencies, including [Kameron Neal at the Department of Records and Information Services](#), [Tania Bruguera at the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs](#), [Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya at the Commission on Human Rights](#), and [Yazmany Arboleda at the Civic Engagement Commission](#). Recent PAIRs included theater artist [Modesto Flako Jimenez, who worked with the NYC Health + Hospitals' "Guns Down, Life Up" program](#); [Carlos Irijalba, who worked with the Department of Design and Construction](#) to realize an ambitious, site-specific sculptural work as part of the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project; and Alex Strada, whose ongoing residency with the Department of Homeless Services produced "[Public Address](#)," currently on view in Manhattan's Petrosino Square. The 2024-25 PAIRs, [announced last year](#), are still currently working in their respective agencies. A full list of PAIRs to date is available [on DCLA's website](#).

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About NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) is dedicated to supporting and strengthening New York City's vibrant cultural life. DCLA works to promote and advocate for quality arts programming and to articulate the contribution made by the cultural community to the City's vitality. The Department represents and serves nonprofit cultural organizations involved in the visual, literary, and performing arts; public-oriented science and humanities institutions including zoos, botanical gardens, and historic and preservation societies; and creative artists at all skill levels who live and work within the City's five boroughs. DCLA also provides donated materials for arts programs offered by the public schools and cultural and social service groups, and

commissions permanent works of public art at City-funded construction projects throughout the five boroughs. For more information visit www.nyc.gov/culture.