The grant was used to create a labor-intensive installation of the site-specific work *Cardboard Revival* at the LA Municipal Art Gallery (LAMAG) for the *SKIN* exhibition. Curated by the new LAMAG director, Isabelle Lutterodt, the show features 36 artists, including art world notables Kara Walker and Ben Caldwell. As the exhibition statement indicates:

“The election of President Obama in 2008 and re-election in 2012 marked the emergence of a new period in race relations and identity politics in the United States. One in which significant advancements underscore deeper, more persistent ruptures in the skin that binds us as Americans. President Obama, from a multiracial family, represented the most potent and singular figure for the progress made by the civil rights movement, multiculturalism, and identity politics from the previous decades. Some even argued that his election marked the moment of post-racism in the country’s history. And yet, since election, numerous racialized incidents have occurred that tell a different story. The exhibition *SKIN* brings thirty-six artists whose work is timely and engaged in many ways with these broader debates. The gallery acts as a discursive space where these disparate conversations can have a platform, and where further productive work and reflection on these topics can proceed.”

*Cardboard Revival* is a reworking of a previous a site-specific artwork exhibited at 2A Gallery in Downtown LA in 2013-14. In the original work, decorative motifs from the Italian Renaissance Revival building that housed the gallery were presented as a visual mash-up that acknowledged the proximity of the space to Skid Row, and the conflicting realities of homelessness and gentrification.
The new version functions in a similar way; but, in the spirit of site-specificity, engages with and responds to the refurbished Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Hollyhock House’s Mayan Revival style motifs and the east Hollywood homeless community that lives in the vicinity of Barnsdall. The house was built in the early 20th century for oil heiress Aline Barnsdall, who donated the structure to the City of Los Angeles in 1927 after becoming unhappy with the costs of construction and maintenance. In the present-day environment, there is a clash of perceptions related to the myth of Hollywood, wealth and celebrity and the desperate situation of people who live on the streets, a large number of which are LGBT youth.

As an artist, I am interested in creating hybridized spaces that engage social issues via the language of painting and abstraction. Borrowing decorative motifs from Hollyhock House’s Mayan Revival-style and tropes from the urban environs, such as graffiti and cardboard scraps, I create a space that is a reflection on approaches to housing that share a neighborhood in spite of their ideological incompatibility. With house paint, markers and spray paint, I work directly
on the walls. I combine the gilding of Hollywood’s Golden Age and naturally derived hues of the pre-Columbian world with a humbler palette dictated by life on the streets. *Cardboard Revival* attempts to reconcile a difficult situation within the realm of aesthetics.

![Image](image-url) In LA, LGBT youth make up 40% of the homeless population. Image courtesy of [http://www.tasithoughts.com](http://www.tasithoughts.com).

To create this piece, I visited the site many times to do research and plan the installation. In viewing this amazing structure, I was struck by how industrial and phallic the building and decorative motifs are—something that seems counterintuitive to the patronage of Aline Barnsdall, a *grande dame* of the Art Nouveau era, or the curving characteristics of her favorite flower, the hollyhock. The design seems more connected to visual cues inspired by the culture.

Images left to right: Aline Barnsdall and her daughter, a hollyhock flower, and exterior detail of Hollyhock House.
of Maya in terms of the use of clay tile, tilted exterior walls, and linear design elements. I decided to focus on 1) colors inspired by Mayan culture (yellow ochre, terra cotta, sky blue, and gold) 2) the articulated clusters of the hollyhock flower, 3) graphics based on Mayan glyphs that represent the growing tree and four corners of the Mayan world, and 4) cardboard (a material that becomes a sign for homelessness). With assistance from LAMAG staff and several Otis students and alumni that I hired for the project, (junior Emmanuelle Castelan, seniors Darel Carey and Olivia Obrecht, and alumni Carlos Ochoa (’13) and Rhiannon Aarons (“04)), the piece was created.

The space with the ochre base coat. Terra cotta stripes are added.

Fine Arts senior Olivia Obrecht at work on the doorway. A detail of the marker drawing and gilded doorway.
FA senior Darel Carey starts the back wall. He is joined by Olivia and Emmanuelle.

After days of painstaking work, the back wall is ready.
A soffit in the room is gilded with the bottom plane getting a coat of blue.

One of the cardboard pieces in my studio.

And framed as it appears in the installation.
Here I am standing in the completed piece during the press preview reception on Feb. 4, 2016. Image courtesy of Marlene Picard/Picard Pick Art.

An alternate view of the installation shows me standing in the doorway. Image courtesy of Marlene Picard/Picard Pick Art.
After 10 days of installation, including weekends, the work was completed. The public, including the Otis Community, were invited to the opening reception on February 7, 2016.

At the public reception with FA Chair Meg Cranston and alumna Dawn Ertl. Photo by Darel Carey.

This exhibition has brought me a lot of exposure in the form of press coverage and new professional contacts.

SKIN press to date:
1. Huffington Post
2. RedTricycle.com
3. KPCC Take Two Programs
4. Picard Pick Art
5. WestHollywoodLifestyle.com
6. Twitter/The Culture Trip
7. The Leimert Phone Co.
8. The Culture Trip
9. Examiner.com
10. LA Times Datebook

Additionally, I will be participating in two public events related to the exhibition. The first, Los Angeles as a Sustainable City, will take place on March 29. I will take part in a panel conversation exploring the role that arts and cultural workers can take or serve in developing Los Angeles as a sustainable city. This event will be moderated by Anuradha Vikam, Director of Residency Programs at the 18th Street Arts Center.
The second event, *SKIN: Un-Panel 2*, will be a series of simultaneous group discussions about issues of race and identity. Several artists in the show who teach, including myself, will work with students from their respective institutions to lead the public in this very timely and important conversation.