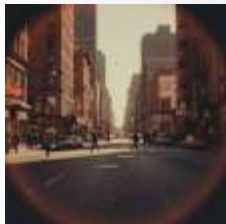


SUSTAINING THE ARTIST'S LIFE

Reimagining the Creative Ecosystem: "What does our community need, and how might artists help?"

Today isn't a lecture; it's a working conversation. You are helping generate the research.



with Christine Harris



Thanks City of SCV!





EDUCATOR
DESIGNER
BUSINESS
CIVIC ART

CHRISTINE

Design Enthusiast | Repairer of the Breach | Social Innovator

Loves: (other than my fam)

Studying Hebrew

Innovative Interiors

Depth of Relationships

Black Tea and Almond Roca

Dance and Pilates

Underground Hip Hop and Vampire Weekend



Part 1: SEE

What is happening?

Personal story

Artist pressures

Community needs

Honest concerns

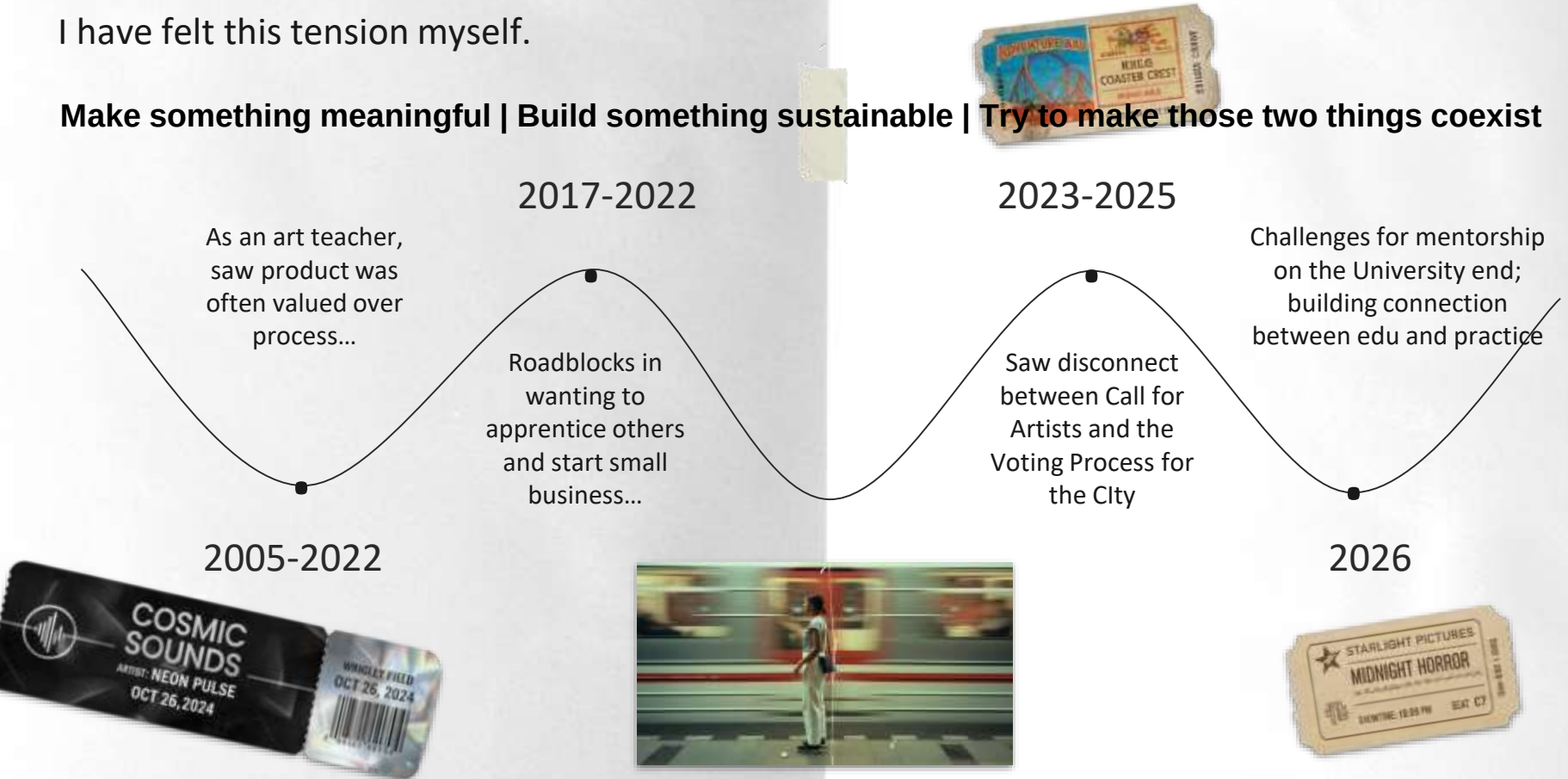
Question:

What do you see?

Ch.2/ The Personal Story.

I have felt this tension myself.

Make something meaningful | Build something sustainable | Try to make those two things coexist



The pressures are REAL.



- 01 **COST:**
Studio • housing • materials • labor
- 02 **VISIBILITY:**
Algorithms • branding • constant content
- 03 **ACCESS:**
Funding • space • patrons
- 04 **SURVIVAL:**
Income • time • family • risk
- 05 ?
- 06 ?
- 07 ?

/Artists are navigating more than the
work itself..



THE SHIFT

What if the problem isn't simply that we as artists need to work harder?

What if we shift the question to ask what do we want to “fertilize” and grow in the nursery of our lives...

What if we need healthier ecosystems?

Artist → Ecosystem → Flourishing

NOT Artist → Hustle → Product → Sale



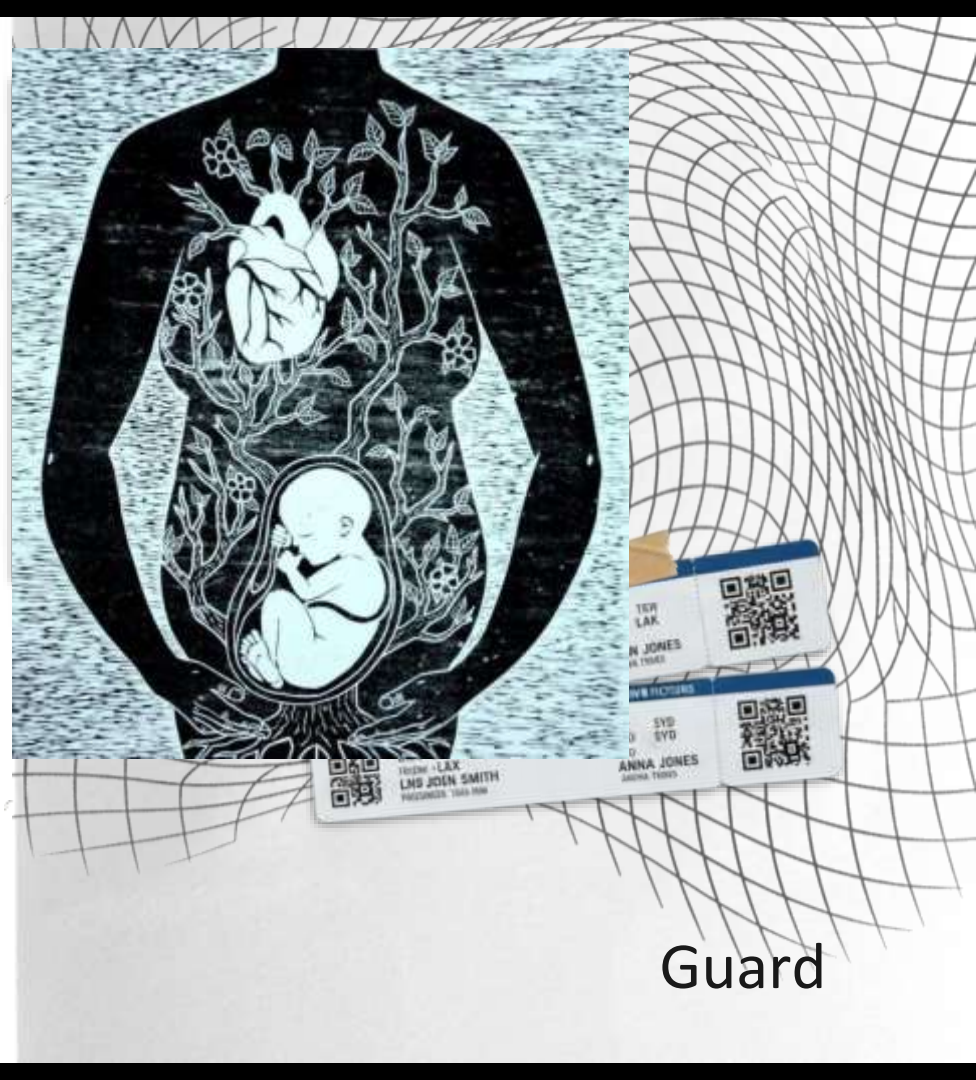
Belief: I have a belief that when people are in alignment with the core of who they are, the whole world benefits- more joy in our communities, more effectiveness, more connection...

A healthy community is one where unique gifts are recognized, cultivated, shared, and woven into the life of the community.

Action: Metaphor of Mommah Bear: Guarding that which has been entrusted to you...and seeing it through until it is "birthed."

What I'm Seeing: See culture riddled with operating from fear, frustration, performance mentality: would love to see people free to birth ideas from love and pure motives...

Ch.1/
your heart.



Guard

A QUESTION MUCH BIGGER THAN “HOW DO I MAKE A LIVING?”

What kind of culture produces healthy creators?

Economics • Education • Community •
Infrastructure • Culture • Policy



The artist is a citizen whose creative life is worth cultivating.

What issues do you see?
Unrecognized needs?

POST IT!!

We could approach this like IDEO-

Some artists create because they have something to say on
behalf of the community they engage with...

What problems do we see in our culture that our art could help
to heal??



A Healthier Ecosystem

underneath this conversation is the difference between 2 competing philosophies-

Today's model often looks like this:

Artist → Product → Consumer

But a healthier ecosystem looks more like this:

Unified Diversity



Relationship



Shared Story



Creative Expression



Community Flourishing

Notice that art is no longer the end goal—it's the visible fruit of deeper relationships.



Today's Agenda

- I. Lay our questions and concerns on the table...
 - II. Share our stories, Respond
 - III. Look at what other cities have done...
 - IV. Discuss questions in small groups
 - V. Action Plans
-
- I. Creative Ecosystem Toolkit



WHY?

- To inspire your body of work
- See where you want to build up community and connect
- Have a body of ideas to lay at the feet of various stakeholders

Parameters for Today

- I. Honor
- II. Vulnerability
- III. Openness to Experience
- IV. Cognizant of Time Constraints
- V. Questions showcase wisdom just as much as having the answers
- VI. Cross-Disciplinary Concerns

As artists, this is typically our strong suit...

**Artists are extraordinarily good at imagining what doesn't yet exist.
So let's use that capacity here.**



Part 2: IMAGINE

What could be possible?

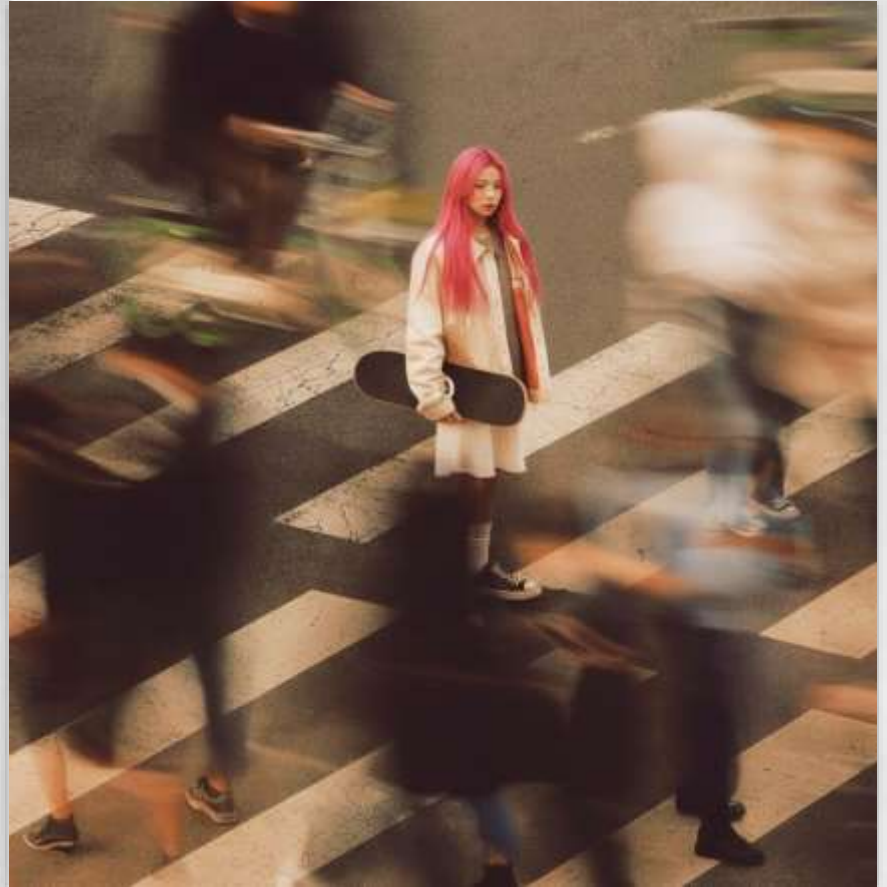
Other city models

Partnership examples

Creative ecosystem framework

Question:

What could be different?



What unique gifts do artists bring
that others often overlook?

Let's get warmed up...



Where could artists, businesses, schools, nonprofits, faith communities, and civic leaders work together?



STARTING OUT SAFE:

LAYING IT ALL “ON THE TABLE”

Examples:

“I am thankful we have an Arts Master Plan, but sometimes I think we miss the boat on pulling together the “non-artistic community” with the artists.

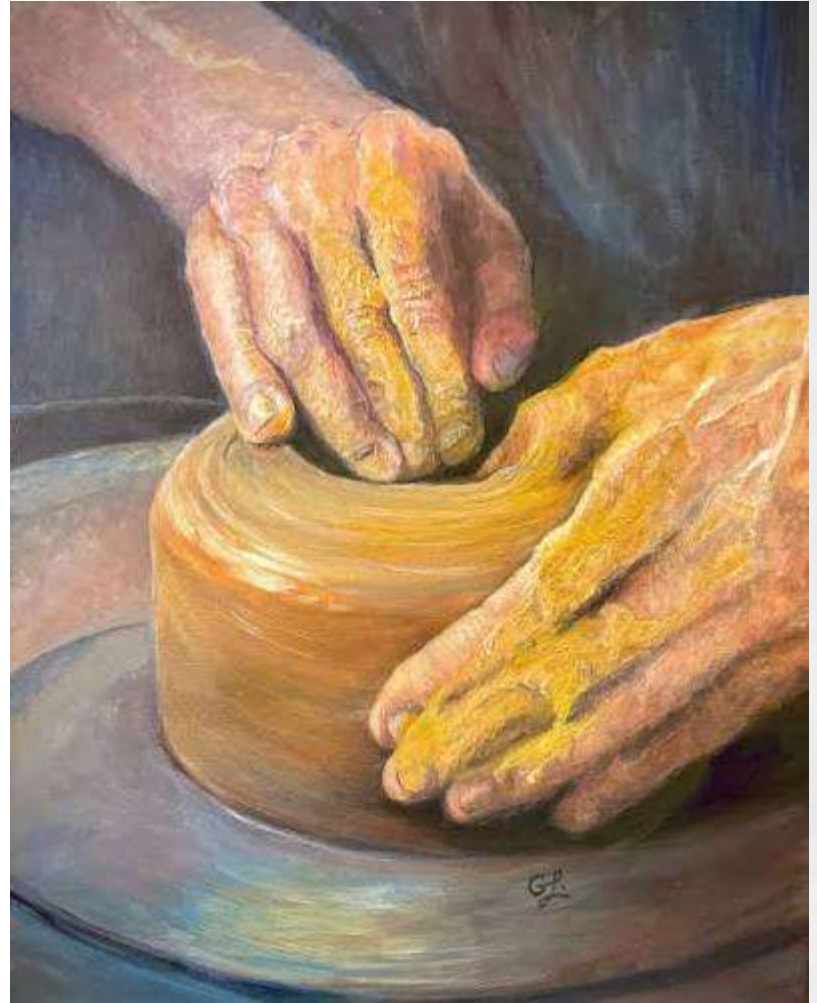
Sometimes I think that art in the SCV is used for entertainment at a function, or even as a product. Exhibits are posted and promoted, but it seems they don’t get a lot of attention, not because the artwork isn’t good, and not because it wasn’t promoted throughout city pipelines, but because perhaps, it’s not “discussing real emotional and spiritual concerns.”

We have “Seascapes exhibits, Nature exhibits....and I’m not saying we need to be controversial, but what if...

What if instead we partnered our exhibits to answer questions families are already wrestling with? What could artists create that would resonate with the hearts of the people and offer them hope? To feel seen? To know we wrestle together?”

Courage to Share...

Take 5 minutes to write



If one thing changed in Santa Clarita, what would most help creativity flourish?

Funding?
Studio space?
Permitting?

What partnerships between artists, businesses, and community institutions are missing?

What would help artists take creative risks without financial fear?



Brainstorm:

Let's ask of every new idea:

- Does it increase belonging?
- Does it reveal someone's unique gifts?
- Does it strengthen relationships rather than transactions?
- Does it invite participation instead of passive consumption?
- Does it leave the community more beautiful, generous, and hopeful?



Other City Models to Inspire Us...

Artist Adopt-a-Neighborhood

Instead of artists waiting for commissions...

Neighborhoods invite artists into their community.

An artist spends several months walking one neighborhood:

- interviewing residents
- sketching local stories
- photographing memories
- creating murals
- composing music
- writing poetry
- designing installations

The artwork becomes the story of that community.
Residents don't simply attend an unveiling.
They become co-authors.



Community Commissions

Residents nominate problems rather than projects

"We want a place where teenagers linger."

"Our neighborhood lacks gathering spaces."

"This park feels lonely."

Artists respond creatively.

The city funds imagination, not merely decoration.



Community Studio Nights

Every year dozens of artists simultaneously open their studios.

Not for sales.

For conversations.

Children watch pottery.

Retirees ask questions.

Woodworkers demonstrate joinery.

Painters explain process.

The emphasis shifts from

"What did you make?"

to

"How do you think?"



Borrow an Artist

Libraries lend books.

What if our Santa clarita libraries also "loaned" artists?

Grants could pay for artists to do "consulting work"....

Schools

churches

businesses

retirement homes

coffee shops

could invite an artist for two hours.

Not to perform.

Either to discuss creative solutions or create in public and answer questions.



Slow Art Saturdays

Instead of festivals with hundreds of booths...
Feature only five artists.

Give each one half an hour.

People hear
their failures
their influences
their process
their doubts
their hopes.

People fall in love with humans—not products.



Civic Artist Residencies

What if every city department hosted an artist?

- Parks
- Fire
- Libraries
- Planning
- Transportation
- Animal Services

Imagine an artist observing firefighters for six months.

Or redesigning trail experiences.

Or helping Planning visualize future neighborhoods.
Artists become civic collaborators.



The Living Portfolio

Instead of displaying finished work...

Display
sketchbooks
failed prototypes
discarded ideas
journal pages
Mistakes

People begin to value becoming instead of performing.



Part 3: BUILD

What happens next?

One idea

One partner

One conversation

One experiment

Question:

What will we do?

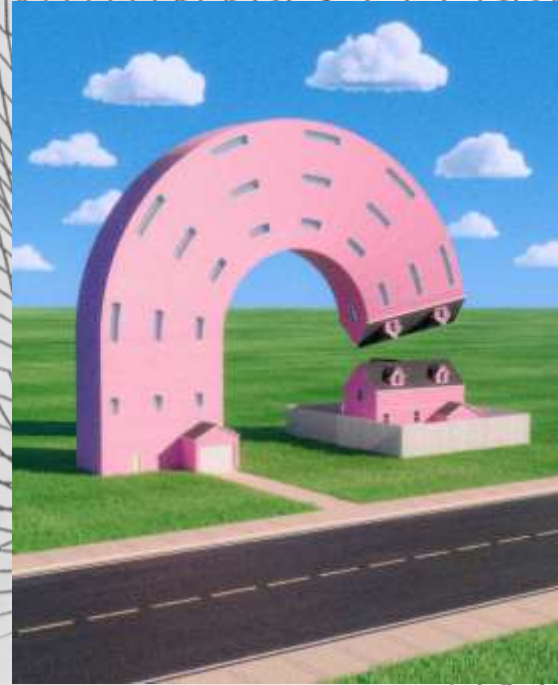
If our community genuinely believed creativity was essential to human flourishing & connection...

What would be different?

What could we build?

Who could partner?

What could we change?



TURN IDEAS INTO NEXT STEPS

What is one experiment we could try within the next year?

COMING IN 2026

CIVIC EXPERIMENT MINI-GRANTS

Not a master plan.

Not a dream.

An experiment.

Examples:

- Artist-in-residence program
- Community story project
- Teen filmmaking initiative
- Shared creative workspace
- Civic arts partnership



Hope Wall

"One thing Santa Clarita could become..."

Post all responses.

Read several aloud.

Let's ends with vision instead of problems.

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ENVISION ARTS MAGAZINE

WHERE ART & VISION MEET



WHAT DO WE DO WITH WHAT WE HEARD?

ONE problem worth pursuing

ONE possible solution

ONE person/institution who might help

ONE next conversation

What will you carry forward?

Write down:

ONE internal change

I can make in my own practice.

ONE external experiment

I can try with someone else.

ONE conversation

I want to continue after today.

Problem → Possibility → Partner → Next Conversation

"The arts in our community would flourish if we had the courage to _____."



Creative Toolkit

Conference Response



/Thank you

Thank you for trusting this room enough to be honest.

Thank you for listening generously.

And thank you for helping begin a conversation that I hope is considerably larger than this one hour.



Do you have any questions?

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CREDITS: This presentation template was created by **Slidesgo**, and includes icons, infographics & images by **Freepik**

Creative Toolkit

1) Local Resources:

Social media managers | Commercial real estate contacts | Funding advisors | Workspace rental opportunities | Local vendors | Material suppliers

2) Research Sources: “Learn, grow, and stay inspired”

Favorite artist podcasts | YouTube channels and tutorials | Recommended blogs, books, or journals
Online classes or platforms | Industry newsletters

3) Open to Collaborate Wall: “Find your creative partner”

Post business card + post-it describing: Who they want to collaborate with
Specific project idea or vision | Spark cross-disciplinary projects

4) Funding & Grants: “Money to make your art thrive”

Share grant opportunities | artist residencies | local funding programs
Crowdfunding campaigns that worked | Investor or patron connections

5) Studio & Workspace Ideas: “Where the magic happens”

Shared studio or makerspace leads | Co-working ideas for visual, performing, or digital artists
Recommendations for ergonomic or specialized tools

6) Marketing & Audience Growth: “Get seen, get known”

Social media tips | platforms, and strategies | Portfolio, website, and e-commerce ideas
Networking tips for galleries, shows, or online marketplaces

7) Skill Sharing & Workshops: “Teach it, learn it, pass it on”

Workshop recommendations (online or local) | Opportunities to learn cross-disciplinary skills

8) Community & Support: “Artists helping artists”

Local artist groups or clubs | Peer critique circles | Collaboration for socially-engaged projects

Shaping a Future SCV Arts Master Plan

ROUND 1 — REALITY CHECK

What is the hardest part about sustaining an artistic life today?

Where do artists most often get stuck — training, exposure, income, or confidence?

What kind of support do artists in Santa Clarita currently lack?

ROUND 2 — SYSTEMS + CULTURE

What assumptions about success in the arts might be outdated?

What forces most shape what kind of art gets attention or funding?

How do economic pressures influence creative decisions?

ROUND 3 — POSSIBILITY THINKING

If this region truly supported artists, what would look different?

What partnerships between artists, businesses, and community institutions are missing?

What would help artists take creative risks without financial fear?

ROUND 4 — EDUCATION + FUTURE

What should young artists learn that they usually don't?

What non-art skills are actually essential to sustaining a creative life?

What kind of community would help artists keep growing long-term?

What **obstacles** keep great creative ideas from becoming reality?

- Cross Departmental Communication
- Patronage disappearing
- Affordable studio space
- Fear of failure
- Consumer expectations
- No apprenticeship pathways
- Lack of business education
- Permitting
- Isolation
- Lack of mentorship
- Funding
- Zoning
- Family obligations

Solutions?

- Interdisciplinary Conversations
- Artist cooperatives
- Maker spaces
- Shared retail
- Artist residency exchange
- School partnerships
- Business mentorship
- City grants
- Apprenticeships
- Community patron circles
- Local purchasing campaigns
- Temporary zoning flexibility



A FEW MODELS TO SPARK OUR IMAGINATION / Possibility.

SHARED INFRASTRUCTURE

Co-ops • makerspaces • shared studios

APPRENTICESHIP

Generational knowledge • mentorship

CIVIC COLLABORATION

Artists working with city departments

COMMUNITY PATRONAGE

Neighbors/businesses supporting artists

ARTIST + NEIGHBORHOOD

Artists becoming part of community storytelling

SKILL EXCHANGE

"I'll teach bookkeeping if you teach woodworking."



People are already experimenting with different models.

Four. Assumptions/

Worth Questioning.

01 — INDUSTRIAL THINKING

*Artists are living organisms, not
factories.*

03 — THE LONE GENIUS

*Creative work has historically
flourished through
communities*



02 — MARKET VALUE = PERSONAL VALUE

Sales ≠ significance.

04 — SPEED ≠ PROGRESS

*Some things become valuable precisely
because they take time.*

Across the Nation...

Revenue Sources for Nonprofit Arts Organizations

NASAA Public & Private Arts Investment

NEA Funding the Arts

THE “EXPERTS” A FEW VOICES HAVE ASKED SIMILAR QUESTIONS

Lewis Hyde

What happens when we understand creative work through gift and relationship, not only transaction?

Richard Sennett

What does craftsmanship teach us about human formation and community?

Jane Jacobs

What happens when healthy neighborhoods are designed around human relationships rather than only economic efficiency?

Eric Klinenberg

What kinds of shared civic spaces allow relationships to form?

Andy Crouch

How do communities cultivate culture rather than simply consume it?

Makoto Fujimura

What if creativity is connected to cultivation, generosity and flourishing?