



Maria Arena Bell Named Chair of the LA28 Cultural Olympiad

The multi-disciplinary arts & culture program will run in parallel to the 2028 Olympic & Paralympic Games to showcase the diversity and depth of the Los Angeles arts community

LOS ANGELES (June 13, 2024) – Today, the LA28 Olympic and Paralympic Games announce Emmy-winning writer/producer and Los Angeles arts leader Maria Arena Bell as Chair of the LA28 Cultural Olympiad, the celebrated arts and culture platform that has accompanied the Games in every host city for more than one hundred years. Bell is an experienced executive and Founder of Vitameatavegamin Productions as well as an arts advocate with more than three decades of experience. A native Angeleno, she served as Board Chair at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles at a pivotal time; chaired P.S. Arts, providing arts education programs in LA County and the Central Valley; and was appointed to the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Commission; amongst other notable positions.

LA28's Cultural Olympiad, alongside the LA28 Games, will highlight and expand access to the region's rich cultural landscape, celebrating diverse voices and the bold artistic history of Los Angeles. The LA28 Cultural Olympiad will feature originated artistic content and programs and will amplify LA's varied cultural institutions' performances, events, and exhibitions in a wide range of mediums, including film, fashion, visual art, dance, theater, music, and culinary experiences. The program will be staged in the year preceding and during the Summer Games and will feature an education component for students across the region.

Bell and LA28 will work closely with the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, and the LA County Department of Arts & Culture, along with partner institutions, community organizations and creators to bring this cohesive and inclusive program to Southern California. She will assemble a team of arts professionals, curators, educators, and advocates in the coming months to realize the LA28 Cultural Olympiad. Working as an unpaid volunteer with the LA28 organizing committee, she will report to LA28 Chairman and President Casey Wasserman.

“Los Angeles is a city built by artists,” commented Maria Bell. “As the world’s attention turns to Los Angeles for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, we have an incomparable opportunity to showcase our vibrant and diverse arts scene for our own community, and for a global audience, highlighting one of the world’s most creative places. This program will put a spotlight on our incredible culture, expressed across many mediums throughout greater Los

Angeles. My priorities will be to listen to and collaborate with LA's arts creators, champions, organizations, and institutions large and small to shape the LA28 Cultural Olympiad and to grow its impact before, during, and after the Games."

"We are thrilled that Maria Bell will direct the LA28 Cultural Olympiad, one of the largest worldwide events that will simultaneously promote arts, culture, and sport and energize the Games," said LA28 Chairperson and President Casey Wasserman. "Maria is uniquely qualified to lead and organize the LA28 Cultural Olympiad through her thirty years of experience as an executive, founder, and champion of the arts. A native Angeleno, Maria knows our community and will develop an inclusive Cultural Olympiad that will have a lasting impact on Southern California. We thank Maria for taking on this leadership role as a volunteer and joining the LA28 team."

"I saw Maria's work firsthand when we served together on MOCA's board," Los Angeles-based artist Mark Bradford said. "She is a committed leader who listens, shows up, and does the work with precision and intelligence. I know she will cook up something that we haven't seen before for LA28's Cultural Olympiad."

"No one intersects with the local and the global in art as much as Maria" said Michael Govan, CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). "Informed by her travels around the world and support of many arts-related nonprofits across the country, she continuously invests in and celebrates Los Angeles as a center of art and creativity."

"Maria Bell is that rare civic leader whose love for Los Angeles, its communities, and its children leads to meaningful, impactful changes in our city," said John Lawler, Chief Executive Officer of P. S. ARTS. "Under her passionate leadership at P. S. ARTS, the organization doubled in size, ensuring access to quality arts classes for tens of thousands of children. With Maria as Chair of LA28's Cultural Olympiad, the world will know that LA's arts and culture scene is second to none."

For more than thirty years, Maria Arena Bell has worked in Hollywood, spearheading writing teams of all sizes through her decades of experience on shows including *The Young and the Restless*, which earned her an Emmy and led her team to two WGA awards. In 2013 she founded Vitameatavegamin Productions, and her most recent project, a documentary film *The Warhol Effect*, premiered on Sky Arts Britain. Bell has lectured on art, philanthropy, and performance at Harvard College and Northwestern University, and for six years, taught an extension course at Harvard University, *Writing The Pilot and Serialized Storytelling*.

Bell has been committed to the arts in Los Angeles for decades. She served as Board Chair of The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA) from 2009–2014, where she championed groundbreaking exhibitions such as *Art in the Streets*, MOCA's highest-attended exhibition in the Museum's history, which welcomed many first-time museum-goers. She led efforts to raise a \$100 million endowment for MOCA to remain independent and worked closely

with artists Marina Abramovic, Doug Aitken, Takashi Murakami, Rob Pruitt, and Francesco Vezzoli in realizing large-scale interventions that transformed museum galas into immersive artist experiences, raising record proceeds.

Additionally, from 2003–2007 Bell chaired and from 2007–2013 served as President of P.S. Arts, an organization that serves thousands of children by bringing art into Title 1 public elementary schools in Los Angeles County and the Central Valley, and led their signature fundraisers for over a decade. As a Board member at MoMA PS1 and longtime Board member of Americans for the Arts, Bell also chaired the Americans for the Arts *National Arts Awards* for over a decade, was Vice Chair of the board, and received the *Legacy Award* in 2015 for her extensive work in arts education. She's also a recipient of a WIN Award in 2012 for Women in Entertainment for Philanthropy and in 2016 the worldwide Mont Blanc de la Culture Arts Patronage Award. In 2013, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa appointed Bell to the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Commission, where she served for 4 years.

ABOUT THE CULTURAL OLYMPIAD

The history of the Cultural Olympiad is woven into the history of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). During Games held from 1912 to 1948, the Cultural Olympiad awarded medals for art, architecture, music, painting, and more, all inspired by sports. From 1952 onward, instead of a competition, it became a celebration of the arts by each Olympic host city, with extensive events. Each host city creates its own Cultural Olympiad. The vision for LA28 is to showcase Los Angeles' diverse artistic voices in a wide range of mediums and from venues large and small for our community and to the world.

ABOUT THE LA28 OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC GAMES

The LA28 Games will mark Los Angeles' third time to host the Olympic Games, previously hosted in 1984 and 1932, and first time to host the Paralympic Games. Los Angeles will host the world's most elite athletes in 2028 as it welcomes Paralympians and Olympians from around the world to compete on the biggest stage in sports. The LA28 Games are independently operated by a privately funded, non-profit organization with revenue from corporate partners, licensing agreements, hospitality and ticketing programs and a significant contribution from the International Olympic Committee.

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