Mario Mesquita

Public Art Project Manager | Educator | Artist

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Bilingual arts professional with more than 15 years of experience in public art, museum education, higher education, and community engagement. Manage artist commissions, programs, budgets, and partnerships; supervise and train educators and project staff. An MFA in Public Practice and an ongoing social practice art project inform how I work with artists, students, families, and public agencies.

Skills

Project planning and delivery • Artist selection and panel facilitation • Staff supervision and training • Program design and evaluation • Budgets and grant documentation • Community engagement • Government partnerships • Research and reporting • English/Spanish

Professional Experience

Regional Arts & Culture Council — Portland, OR

Public Art Project Manager | September 15, 2026–present

Director of Advocacy & Engagement | January 2024–mid-September 2026

Manager of Advocacy & Engagement | January 2021–December 2023

- Manage public art projects from artist opportunities and selection through design review, site coordination, installation, and documentation. Track budgets and schedules and coordinate artists, panels, public-agency partners, and collection specialists.
- Managed the Multnomah County Elections Building mural by Daren Todd, completed August 2026: $14,000 artist commission, plus $1,000 design-proposal fees for each of three finalists. Current work includes Rockwood Community Health Center’s $25,000 mural and $20,000 artwork purchase process.
- Led Portland and Multnomah County implementation of the 18-month Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 study. Supervised two temporary staff, coordinated organizations and audience surveys, and communicated findings for arts funding and government relations.
- Reactivated Arts for All after COVID-era disruption, reconnecting more than 90 cultural organizations and forming a representative steering committee to support community leadership of the program.
- Led/co-led a six-site community engagement series during Portland’s cultural-funding transition; coordinated host partners, facilitated conversations, and synthesized feedback for RACC leadership, the Board, and City officials.

- Co-led RACC's Equity Advisory Group, coordinated organizational assessments and training, and contributed recommendations on policies, programming, and workplace practices. Led Uprooted, a three-month exhibition with the City of Portland, coordinating artists, approvals, expenses, installation, and public programming.

Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego — San Diego, CA

Manager of Education | February 2017–June 2021

Education Associate | February 2016–February 2017

- Supervised approximately 10 Gallery Educators over the course of my management tenure, along with interns and teaching artists. Responsibilities included hiring, performance reviews, coaching, scheduling, and addressing performance concerns.
- Developed educator training through lesson planning, demonstrations, practice, observation, and feedback. Supported Spanish/English tours for adult and youth audiences with a team in which approximately half the staff were bilingual.
- Led Extended School Partnerships engaging more than 800 students annually, coordinating teachers, artists, museum visits, classroom activities, and student showcases. Mentored the Teen Advisory Group as students developed creative projects and public programs.
- Managed budgets, grant commitments, expenditure tracking, evaluation, and documentation with colleagues across museum departments. Helped adapt programming during COVID-19, including the March 2020 digital student showcase and catalog.

Earlier Higher Education Experience

Otis College of Art and Design — Seasonal Admissions Counselor | 2015–2016

Provided admissions outreach and guidance to prospective art and design students and families.

Portland State University — Bilingual Admissions Counselor | 2010–2013

Managed multi-state recruitment and bilingual student/family outreach, including school visits, presentations, and campus programs.

Portland Community College, College Assistance Migrant Program — Academic Advisor, 2009–2010; Program Assistant, 2008–2009

Advised approximately 10–20 first-generation students from migrant and seasonal farmworker families. Coordinated peer mentoring, tutoring, College Parent Day, stipends, participation records, and retention reporting.

Selected Art Practice

Paletas Communal Social Club — Founder, Artist & Project Lead | 2017–present

Develop participatory projects using a paleta cart, food, and conversation to invite stories about identity, memory, and place. Coordinate partners, public events, project resources, and documentation in Santa Monica, San Diego, and Portland.

Michelada Think Tank — Co-founder, Collaborating Artist & Facilitator | 2014–present

Co-develop public conversations, workshops, and collective projects with artists and cultural workers of color.

Education

MFA, Public Practice — Otis College of Art and Design | 2015

Bachelor’s degrees, Spanish and Multimedia Design — University of Oregon | 2005

Selected Service

Blue Sky / Oregon Center for the Photographic Arts — Board Member | 2025–2026.

Americans for the Arts — State & District Lead; 2025 Conference Committee.

Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon — Former Board Member & Secretary; service concluded October 2026.