Mario Mesquita

Artist | Educator | Public Art Project Manager

Portland, Oregon | (971) 319-1882 | mariomesquitastudios@gmail.com | www.mario-mesquita.com

Education

2015 | MFA, Public Practice — Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, CA.

2005 | Bachelor's degrees, Spanish and Multimedia Design — University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.

Selected Social Practice Projects

November 7, 2026 | The Lost Table — El Zócalo, Milagro, Portland, OR.

Creative activity facilitator for a community gathering organized by Milagro and Portland Grief House. Opening activity exploring memory, food, and relationships with loved ones who have died, within a shared evening of intercultural remembrance, offerings, and food.

2017–present | Paletas Communal Social Club — Santa Monica, CA; San Diego, CA; Portland, OR.

Founder, artist, and project lead. A mobile participatory art project using paletas, shared food, and conversation to invite stories about cultural identity, memory, and public space. Develop each iteration, coordinate collaborators and host partners, facilitate exchanges, and document participation.

> 2025 | A Shared Table — Paletas Communal Social Club, Portland, OR. Artist and organizer; a shared-meal iteration connecting food, cultural memory, and stories gathered through Paletas.
>
> 2024 | Community Building & Identity, PDX Edition — Portland, OR. Artist and organizer; neighborhood visits, community conversations, and documentation.
>
> 2022 | Park Social — City of San Diego, CA. Artist and project lead; Paletas iteration completed in summer 2022.
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> 2017 | Paletas Santa Monica — City of Santa Monica, CA. Artist and project lead; public conversations about the future of public art.

2014–present | Michelada Think Tank — Multiple locations, United States.

Co-founder, collaborating artist, facilitator, and organizer. Collective projects with artists and cultural workers of color addressing race, representation, institutional accountability, and sustaining an artistic practice.

Selected venues and convenings: Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), Los Angeles, CA; San Diego Art Institute, San Diego, CA; Open Engagement, Queens, NY, Chicago, IL, and Pittsburgh, PA.

2017 | Common Field Convening — Michelada Think Tank, Los Angeles, CA.

Selected Curatorial Work, Exhibitions & Residencies

2022 | Uprooted: An Art Exhibition Inspired by Refugee Identity and Resilience — Curator/organizer, Portland, OR. Exhibition developed with the City of Portland for Welcoming Week; coordinated invited artists, approvals, artwork logistics, installation, and public programming.

2019 | Efímera — Curator, Los Angeles, CA.

2016–2017 | Thriving or Surviving as an Artist of Color — Michelada Think Tank residency and exhibition, San Diego Art Institute, San Diego, CA. Residency began in late 2016; exhibition presented in summer 2017.

2015 | Race, Art, Survival: Michelada Think Tank & Chats About Change — Artist residency with Michelada Think Tank, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), Los Angeles, CA.

2015 | Día de los Muertos Altar Exhibition — Participating artist, Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA.

2013 | Portland Institute for Contemporary Art — Resident collaborator, Portland, OR.

Selected Presentations & Talks

2022 | Leadership Portland: Arts and Culture — Portland Business Alliance, Portland, OR.

2022 | New Monuments Taskforce — Digital interview on reimagining monuments and public decision-making.

2019 | Creating Space as an Art Practice and Socially Engaged Practices — Artist talk, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA.

2019 | Fundamentals of Art Practice — Artist talk, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, CA.

2018 | Radically Disrupting the Community/Cultural Planning Engine: Paletas Santa Monica — Americans for the Arts Conference, Denver, CO.

2017 | Teen Advisory Group Youth Partnership, MCASD — Open Engagement: Justice, Chicago, IL.

2017 | American Alliance of Museums — Presenter, St. Louis, MO.

2015 | Michelada Think Tank — Open Engagement: Place and Revolution, Pittsburgh, PA.

2009–2010 | College Parent Day — TRiO-CAMP National Conference, Washington, DC.

Selected Public Art Project Management

These entries identify my project-management role. Artwork authorship remains with the commissioned artists.

2025–2026 | Multnomah County Elections Building Mural — Project manager through RACC, Portland, OR. Artwork by Daren Todd; completed August 2026. Artist opportunity, selection, panel coordination, design review, permitting, scheduling, and installation. Artist commission: $14,000; design proposals: $1,000 each for three finalists.

2025–2027 | Rockwood Community Health Center Public Art — Project manager through RACC, Multnomah County, OR; in progress. Mural by Christian Téllez García, plus an invitational artwork purchase process. Mural commission: $25,000; artwork purchases: $20,000.

Selected Arts Administration & Education

Regional Arts & Culture Council — Portland, OR

September 15, 2026–present | *Public Art Project Manager.*

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

January 2021–December 2023 | *Manager of Advocacy & Engagement.*

Public art commissions, arts advocacy, community engagement, and government partnerships. Led Portland and Multnomah County implementation of Arts & Economic Prosperity 6; reactivated Arts for All with more than 90 participating organizations.

Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego — San Diego, CA

February 2017–June 2021 | *Manager of Education.*

February 2016–February 2017 | *Education Associate.*

Led Extended School Partnerships and Teen Advisory Group programming; supervised and trained Gallery Educators. Coordinated student showcases, teaching artists, bilingual tours, and the March 2020 digital showcase and catalog.

Earlier Education Roles

2015–2016 | Seasonal Admissions Counselor — Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, CA.

2010–2013 | Bilingual Admissions Counselor — Portland State University, Portland, OR.

2008–2010 | Program Assistant and Academic Advisor — College Assistance Migrant Program, Portland Community College, Portland, OR.

Grants & Professional Development

2024 | Precipice Fund support — Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, OR.

2018 | National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC) Leadership Institute — Participant, San Antonio, TX.

Selected Panels & Professional Service

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

2025 | Conference Committee — Americans for the Arts.

2022–2024 | Board Member — Parallax Art Center, Portland, OR.

2022 | Around Oregon exhibition panelist — Corvallis Art Center, Corvallis, OR.

2018–2019 | Grant panelist — California Arts Council.

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

Languages

English and Spanish.