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Lauren Halsey

Los Angeles' artist laureate

By Naomi Rea



Christina House—Los Angeles Times/Contour/Getty Images

One of the most successful artists of her generation, Lauren Halsey has committed to funneling the art world's largesse back into the South Central Los Angeles community that raised her. In March, her nonprofit Summaeverythang opened "sister dreamer," an 18-month-long sculpture project celebrating the neighborhood. The initiative will stay in the area, moving into a permanent home—featuring classrooms, an art gallery, and an outdoor sculpture garden and sports court—in 2028.

Halsey's sculptures take inspiration from all forms of Black cultural expression, melding styles including ancient Egypt and Afrofuturism. Her 10-ft.-long reclining sphinx and wall relief depicting local community members as ancient deities presides over the Egyptian galleries at the newly expanded Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Having shown in some of art's most august spaces, including the Venice Biennale and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Halsey is one of a growing cohort of millennial artists using the establishment's validation to build cultural institutions outside the art-world system.