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## **COUNTY ARTS COMMISSION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT ENHANCES NEW CHATSWORTH COURTHOUSE**

*Sculptures by Michael Davis of San Pedro and Michael Amescua of East L.A. receive first public viewing as part of Chatsworth Courthouse dedication.*

LOS ANGELES, CA, May 13, 2002 – A sculptural installation representing the foundation of democracy and justice and a sculpture celebrating the California landscape were unveiled today at the dedication of the new Chatsworth Courthouse of the Los Angeles Superior Court. The artworks, WE THE PEOPLE by Michael Davis and TREE OF LIFE by Michael Amescua, were made possible by a \$400,000 civic art demonstration project administered by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.

“Artists have helped shape the great civic projects of every nation and every era,” said Los Angeles County Fifth District Supervisor Michael Antonovich. “The Chatsworth Courthouse features works of civic art by two well-known Los Angeles artists. These works are a significant new cultural resource for the San Fernando Valley.”

Standing approximately twenty feet tall, TREE OF LIFE, by Michael Amescua, stands outside the courthouse and can be enjoyed not only by passersby but also by jurors in the jury assembly room. The sculpture was fabricated by the artist from stainless steel plates in his studio in East Los Angeles. Michael Amescua’s work can be found in many public spaces throughout Los Angeles including LAX, Heritage Park in Santa Fe Springs, the Los Angeles Zoo and the Montebello Transit Center.

A three-part sculpture installation, WE THE PEOPLE, by Michael Davis, uses the Courthouse’s three-story indoor atrium to give expression to the words that are the foundation of our democracy and our system of justice, the initial words of the United States Constitution. The “WE,” mounted like signage near the atrium entrance, is of bronze, patinaed to invoke the ubiquitous copper penny coin; in the words of the artist, the Courthouse “exists to literally support the WE.” “THE,” fabricated of black and white granite, is on the atrium floor and acts as benches. “PEOPLE” has been fabricated as two framed

collections of portraits of persons working in and visiting the old Chatsworth courthouse that represent a broad cross-section of the public. The frames, two-and-a-half stories high, are mounted on the walls at both ends of the atrium. The work of Michael Davis, who lives in San Pedro, can be seen across the United States; he is currently at work on a Justice Center Project for the Seattle Arts Commission and was the lead artist on the MTA's Vermont-Sunset station.

The Chatsworth Courthouse will open officially to the public on June 3. Visitors can easily view both of the sculptures during business hours.

The Chatsworth Courthouse sculptures were the first to be completed following a set of procedures developed by the County to test ways in which the work of artists might effectively be integrated into new public buildings. Michael Davis and Michael Amescua were chosen through an invitational competition. Four finalists were chosen from ten artists who submitted applications. The four submitted specific proposals and two were chosen to be developed. Jessica Cusick, formerly director of the MTA's MetroArt program, managed the process for the Arts Commission.

A second civic-art demonstration project is underway for the Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors is discussing the possibility of establishing an art program at some future date that would provide for the enhancement of all new county facilities.

The Los Angeles County Arts Commission, headed by Executive Director Laura Zucker, has fostered excellence, diversity, vitality, and accessibility of the arts in the County since 1947. Through its grants programs, the Arts Commission awarded \$2.3 million to regional nonprofit arts organizations this year. The Arts Commission also produces the Ford Amphitheatre and [INSIDE] THE FORD series, the Los Angeles Arts Open House and the Los Angeles County Holiday Celebration, and operates a year-round free music program. The Arts Commission launched new program initiatives in folk arts and arts education in 2001. The Arts Commission's budget for the fiscal year 2001-2002 is \$4.7 million.

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