

Art community supports Ianco Starrels

MAILGRAM SERVICE CENTER
MIDDLETOWN, VA. 22645
1948

Western Union Mailgram



MAYOR TOM BRADLEY
CITY HALL
LOS ANGELES CA 90012
YOUR HONOR,

JOSINE IANCO STARRELS IS LOS ANGELES ART. KEEP HER.
THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE LOS ANGELES CULTURAL COMMUNITY ARE BEST
SERVED BY JOSINE IANCO STARRELS. PLEASE GIVE THIS MATTER SERIOUS
CONSIDERATION.

Mayor Tom Bradley was swamped by Mailgrams seeking Josine Ianco Starrels' reinstatement at the Municipal Art Gallery.

By Hunter Drohojowska

As the result of a slew of Mailgrams and letters from the L.A. art community, Josine Ianco Starrels will still be presiding as director of the Municipal Art Gallery in Barnsdall Park.

Last week, Ianco Starrels was asked by Fred Croton, general manager of the Cultural Affairs Department, to take a job at City Hall that would affect all the city's art centers, rather than just the one at Barnsdall Park.

But Ianco Starrels — and the art community — were concerned that the transfer might deprive her of that part of the job she most loves: working with artists. Ianco Starrels is considered such an advocate of the art community that last week she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from Otis/Parsons of the New School for Social Research. (The other two honorees were British painter David Hockney and Harold Williams, president of the J. Paul Getty Trust.)

When people in the art community heard the rumors of Ianco Starrels being "kicked upstairs," they started the campaign by writing to Mayor Tom Bradley. In addition, members of the support group for the Municipal Art Gallery told Croton they would not work for the gallery without Ianco Starrels.

Ianco Starrels' civil service title is "arts coordinator." When she took the job 10 years ago, the Municipal Art Gallery was the primary exhibition center run by the city, so most of her activities were there. Since then, the city has added the William Grant Still Arts Center, L.A. Photo Center, Watts Towers Arts Center, the City Hall Bridge Gallery and West L.A. City Hall Gallery, and is about to open a new arts center in Van Nuys. Croton wants Ianco Starrels, as "arts coordinator," to extend her activities to all the city's art centers, operated from an office in City Hall.

A compromise was reached whereby Ianco Starrels will work two days a week at City Hall and two days at Barnsdall.

The question remains as to how she will be able to handle the responsibilities of both jobs. Croton explained, "We're giving Josine what she's always wanted, a staff." The city hired a new curator, Maria de Alcuaz, formerly a curator at USC's Fisher Gallery, to work with Gil Steel and Nancy Walsh, already curators at the Municipal Art Gallery.

Croton believes that Ianco Starrels will be able to delegate responsibility to this staff and still have time to advise other art centers. He also sees this as a team of curators who will work at all the art centers, not just Barnsdall.

"We're going to look at how this

works over the next six months and see what will work and what won't. What will work most of all is that artists who feel they aren't being taken care of at the Municipal Art Gallery, we can offer them a show at one of these other spaces."

Croton explained that the city art centers will be used as a pyramid of quality, with the most professional artists winding up at the Municipal Art Gallery and less developed artists beginning to show up at the other centers.

He said, "I see (the art centers) as a matrix, from the top level of professionalism down to a person just through art school or Sunday art classes and who needs a place to show work. I want to be responsive to everyone. We could serve the artists who might not have developed sufficient techniques or have experience to make pictures or art that would be shown at our jewel, the Municipal Art Gallery."

Ianco-Starrels is relieved that she will be able to stay at the Municipal Art Gallery, where she will still try to review portfolios once a week. She wryly explained, "(Croton) sees this as a promotion of my activities, making me a czarina of the Cultural Affairs Department. I don't need to be a czarina, I'm perfectly happy to be the gallery director at Barnsdall Park."

Hunter Drohojowska writes regularly about art for the Herald.