



MEDIA ALERT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CITY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
LAUNCHES NEW VIRTUAL ACCESSIBILITY EXPERIENCE THIS FALL
FOR FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT’S HOLLYHOCK HOUSE**

DCA Set to Increase Access to Historic Site through Immersive Technology

Los Angeles, CA— The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) in collaboration with the Department on Disability (DOD) and the Barnsdall Art Park Foundation announce tours of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Hollyhock House in Los Angeles will soon be expanded to include a virtual accessibility experience this Fall.

Utilizing the most appropriate, emerging technologies to create elegant, user-centered, and inclusive experiences for visitors of all abilities, the virtual tour provides a creative solution available both onsite and remotely through a web browser. After a rigorous selection process, LA-based firm, AVA Inclusivity, was selected because of their unique approach to the creation of a commensurate experience for those with disabilities while also increasing remote access for users around the globe.

“Everyone should be able to experience L.A.’s cultural landmarks,” said **Mayor Eric Garcetti**. “Hollyhock House is a remarkable piece of architecture, and virtual reality will allow people with disabilities and the elderly to explore a location with deep history in our city.”

The DCA-led initiative is funded with a \$133,000 award from the City's 2016-17 Innovation Fund and has now been fully approved by: the Los Angeles City Council’s Innovation, Grants, Technology, Commerce, and Trade Committee; the City Council, and the Office of the Mayor.

“My office organized a working group that collaborated on long and short term goals for equitable access for all Hollyhock House visitors, and a virtual reality experience was one of the ideas for the historic landmark,” said **Councilmember Mitch O’Farrell**, who represents the area where Barnsdall Park is located. “This equitable access initiative will allow everyone, everywhere, the opportunity to visit the House as well as eliminate any challenges due to its unusual design and obstacles inside the structure.”



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“This new project utilizes innovative technology to enhance the Hollyhock experience to people with mobility or physical issues,” said **Danielle Brazell, Department of Cultural Affairs General Manager**. “The Department of Cultural Affairs serves the 4 million residents of our city and over 50 million visitors annually and this project will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience this architectural gem.”

AVA Inclusivity was founded by Gregg Leonard and Astrid Reed. This team has expertise in cutting-edge media content and virtual reality production. Their approach is to utilize emerging technology to service human experience. This ethos, combined with extensive research into the ways people with disabilities utilize technology, has led to an artistically appropriate and focused solution. For visitors with physical disabilities and limited mobility, the new platform will offer a spatial, visual, and audio experience with an access to opening rooms that were previously off-view to the general public. According to DCA, this initiative will increase accessibility to Hollyhock House by 210 percent.

Completed in 1921 as the home of noted philanthropist and art collector Aline Barnsdall, the UNESCO-nominated Hollyhock House is noted as the first Los Angeles building designed by the famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Reopened in February 2015 after an extensive four-year \$4.4 million renovation, it now stands as the centerpiece of Barnsdall Park, a vibrant twelve-acre cultural campus in the heart of Hollywood. While Hollyhock House is fully ADA compliant with wheelchair accessibility to the first floor of the house, the addition of the new platform will allow the second floor of the Mayan Revival building, previously inaccessible to wheelchairs due to their historical architectural value, to now be enjoyed to all.

“Creating an immersive and inclusive experience for Hollyhock House visitors, particularly for people with disabilities, has always been our mission. We are thrilled that this new technology will allow people all over the world to fully access this public treasure,” said **Jeffrey Herr, DCA’s Hollyhock House Curator**.

This virtual accessibility experience will be browser-based and available to anyone with a computer or mobile device and Internet access. Visitors who use AVA Inclusivity’s virtual tour will have several other choices to best fit their needs, in addition to the option to use their own device. The tour will feature the option of a narration to complement the visual experience. This narration feature is especially useful for those who choose to experience the House from an outside location, away from the live narration offered by the trained docents. Via the virtual accessibility platform, visitors near and far will have the option of determining the order of the tour to suit their needs and interests. In addition, extremely high-resolution 360 degree photography will allow users see exquisite design details from the grain of the wood to the patterns details in the stained-glass windows.



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“Being within the environment of Hollyhock House is a multi-sensory experience, not merely a visual one. The virtual accessibility experience that AVA is developing for Hollyhock House is designed to be used by visitors inside Hollyhock House with the involvement of a docent. The visitor and the docent are having a shared, visual encounter. Docent interaction combined with the virtual tour provides the disabled visitor with an experience that is comparable to physically being in an area of the house, which is currently inaccessible to disabled visitors,” said **Astrid Reed, President of AVA Inclusivity**. Choices of captioning will be available for the hearing impaired.

Hollyhock House currently offers self-guided “Walk Wright In” tours, which are open to the public from Thursday through Sunday with tickets available online or onsite for a cost of \$7 for Adults; Seniors/Students with ID \$3 and Children 12 and under (free). <http://barnsdall.org/hollyhock-house/about/>

About the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)

As a leading, progressive arts and cultural agency, DCA empowers Los Angeles’ vibrant communities by supporting and providing access to quality visual, literary, musical, performing, and educational arts programming; managing vital cultural centers; preserving historic sites; creating public art; and funding services provided by arts organizations and individual artists.

Formed in 1925, DCA promotes arts and culture as a way to ignite a powerful dialogue, engage LA’s residents and visitors, and ensure LA’s varied cultures are recognized, acknowledged, and experienced. DCA’s mission is to strengthen the quality of life in Los Angeles by stimulating and supporting arts and cultural activities, ensuring public access to the arts for residents and visitors alike.

DCA advances the social and economic impact of arts and culture through grant-making, public art, community arts, and strategic marketing and development. DCA creates and supports arts programming, maximizing relationships with other city agencies, artists, and arts and cultural nonprofit organizations to provide excellent service in neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles.

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