

# Maria Maneos – Bio

## COMMUNITY WORX

Maria Maneos has spent over a decade using art to advocate for social change and criminal justice reform within mental and behavioral health. She is a visual artist from the Philadelphia area and the resident artist for HopeWorx/Community Worx. She holds a BFA from Arcadia University and an MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Her work in this field started at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Rehabilitation in Philadelphia. She developed and implemented a class and worked with the facility's patients using artmaking for therapeutic purposes. Around this time, a family member started showing signs of mental health and substance use. She decided that the best way for her to understand the issues within the legal system and mental health and substance abuse was to engage with people living with these circumstances. She started weekly art classes with incarcerated people inside the Montgomery County Correctional Facility to understand better the systems in place regarding addiction, mental health, and incarceration. She founded the nonprofit Brush With the Law, which uses art as a tool for social change.

Community Worx has enabled her to work directly and closely with people experiencing rough times who could use kindness, empathy, and genuine connections. Community Worx, and its diversity and inclusivity, allows Maria to connect and advocate for people in whatever stage of recovery they may be. Community Worx is her salvation and safe place where she finds community built every day and friendships and resources freely shared.

Maneos has shown her work extensively throughout Philadelphia and exhibits in galleries, art centers, universities, and museums nationwide. In 2020 she was awarded the (CFEVA) Center for Emerging Visual Artists' Career Development Fellowship (2020-2022), a highly sought artist fellowship in Philadelphia. She is a Leeway Foundation for Art and Change (2014) grant recipient and received the Outstanding Mentor in Alternative Settings Award from Kutztown University. Her sculpture, 5535-2017, won first place and received the Purchase Prize Award in 2018 at the Art of the State exhibit in Harrisburg, where it is now part of the permanent collection of the State Museum of Pennsylvania.

Most recently, she was selected to serve as a Montgomery County Public Defenders Advisory Board member, where she will help provide input on policy, priorities, and legislation that impact the justice system.