



School news

from the Santa Barbara County Education Office

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***I Madonnari* Italian Street Painting Festival planned for May 27-29**

The *I Madonnari* Italian Street Painting Festival will celebrate its 31st anniversary from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on May 27, 28, and 29 at the Santa Barbara Mission. A ceremony at noon on Monday, May 29, on the Mission steps will introduce and thank the major festival sponsors and featured artist Meredith Morin as her street painting is concluded.

I Madonnari, the first festival of its kind in North America to present the performance art of street painting, is presented by and raises vital funding for the Children's Creative Project (CCP), a nonprofit arts education program of the Santa Barbara County Education Office.

The festival features 140 street-painting squares drawn with chalk pastels on the pavement in front of the Mission. As the public watches, 200 local artists transform these pavement canvases into elaborate compositions in unexpectedly vibrant colors. The spaces range in size from 4-by-6 feet to 12-by-12 feet and in price from \$150 to \$700, each one bearing the name of its sponsor — a business, organization, family, or individual. The festival is sponsored in part by The Berry Man, Loreto Plaza Shopping Center, Yardi, Daniel and Mandy Hochman, and Bella Vista Designs. The festival is grateful and thanks the Santa Barbara Mission for hosting *I Madonnari*. Members of the public can sign up at the festival's information booth to receive a brochure to be a street painting sponsor or an application to be an artist next year.

This year's featured artist, Meredith Morin graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1989 with a BFA in Graphic Design. She has worked as the Graphic Designer and Art Director at AGIA, Computer Motion, Nexxus Haircare, and Forms+Surfaces. She has received multiple awards for printed materials including annual reports, media kits, brochures, and advertisements. Meredith currently works at her own design studio, MMGD Meredith Morin Graphic Design, opened in October of 2016, and works as an assemblage artist. She has participated as a Santa Barbara *I Madonnari* artist since 1993, and has participated in festivals in Puerto Vallarta, San Luis Obispo, and Valencia.

An expanded area for children to create street paintings will be located at the west side of the Mission inside a private parking area. Some 600 Kids' Squares are available. When completed, they will

form a 40-by-60-foot patchwork of colorful paintings. Throughout the three-day event, the 2-by-2-foot Kids' Squares can be purchased for \$12, which includes a box of chalk.

Live music and an Italian market will be featured on the Mission lawn throughout the three-day event. The festival's *fabuloso* Italian Market offers authentic Italian cuisine produced by the Children's Creative Project Board of Directors. According to Board President Phil Morreale and Market Coordinator Bryan Kerner, this year's market will include lemon-rosemary roasted chicken, pasta, pizza, calamari, Italian sausage sandwiches, *gelati*, coffees, and specialty items designed from prior years' festivals including T-shirts, posters, note cards, and more. All proceeds from sales benefit the Children's Creative Project.

History

I Madonnari is produced by the Children's Creative Project (CCP), a nonprofit arts education program of the Santa Barbara County Education Office. The organization is the first to create a festival in North America featuring the public art of street painting. After traveling to a street painting competition in Italy, CCP Executive Director Kathy Koury created the festival and the concept of sponsored street-painting squares as a fundraiser and produced the first local festival in 1987. The late Father Virgil Cordano and the Santa Barbara Mission's bicentennial committee members also worked with Koury to include the *I Madonnari* festival in the yearlong series of official events that celebrated the Santa Barbara Mission's bicentennial.

The festival has continued to grow and now is being replicated in more than 100 cities throughout the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. In November 2016, four *I Madonnari* street painters — Ann Hefferman, Joy Davis, Cecelia Linayao, and Lisa Jones — traveled to Santa Barbara's sister city of Puerto Vallarta to create street paintings with local artists and children. Koury has continued to work with Santa Barbara and Puerto Vallarta Sister City representatives to further develop the festival that has taken place in the city's main plaza since 2006. The project is co-sponsored by the Santa Barbara-Puerto Vallarta Sister City Committee.

Street painting, using chalk as the medium, is an Italian tradition that is believed to have begun during the 16th century. Called "*Madonnari*" because of their practice of reproducing the image of the Madonna (Our Lady), the early Italian street painters were vagabonds who would arrive in small towns and villages for Catholic religious festivals and transform the streets and public squares into temporary galleries for their ephemeral works of art. With the first rains of the season, their paintings would be gone. Today, the tradition lives on in the village of Grazie di Curtatone, Italy, where the annual International Street Painting Competition is held in mid-August.

Festival proceeds enable the CCP to sponsor fine-arts programs conducted by professional artists during school hours for 50,000 children in county public schools. Resident artists provide workshops in the visual and performing arts for more than 38,000 children. Fundraising from the *I Madonnari* festival helps to continue the CCP's work to support annual performance events and other activities.

Last October at the Granada Theater, the CCP presented a free performance for 1,400 elementary schoolchildren who experienced the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis and their Jazz

for Young People program “Who is Duke Ellington?” The performance was presented in collaboration with UCSB Arts & Lectures. The performance was fully funded by the *I Madonnari* festival with grant support from The Towbes Foundation.

This school year 50,000 children at 90 school sites will view some 450 performances presented by multicultural touring companies featured in the CCP’s Arts Catalog. To support this program, festival proceeds also provide every county public school with a \$200 arts credit to help pay the companies’ performance fees.

For festival photos or more information about the Children’s Creative Project or *I Madonnari*, or to arrange artist interviews, contact Koury at 964-4710, ext. 4411, or go to imadonnarifestival.com. To interview featured artist Meredith Morin, contact her at 637-9561, or mkgdesigner@me.com.

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