

Revisiting the past at the Padua Hills Art Fiesta this Sunday Story on page 10



COURIER photo/Jonathan Gibby
Artist Crispin Gonzalez gently blows excess dust off a bottle while working on a new piece in his Claremont studio. Twenty area artists, including Mr. Gonzalez, will be featured in the Padua Hills Art Fiesta on Sunday, November 13 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Occupy Claremont

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COURIER photo/Steven Felschundneff
Members of the local chapter of MoveOn as well as the Claremont Democratic party protest in front of the Chase Bank on Indian Hill Boulevard on Saturday. The rally was organized in connection with the National Bank Transfer Day, an effort to get citizens to transfer their money from large banks to smaller local financial institutions.



Lights. Mayflower. Action.

Joan Forsberg and Don Chatfield share a laugh during rehearsal for The Festival Show to be performed at the 63rd annual Pilgrim Place Festival this Friday and Saturday. Story on page 8.

Revival! Mid-century Padua Hills Art Center returns

In the early 1950s, a group of Claremont artists conceived the idea of emerging from their studios and bringing art into the community. Household names such as Millard Sheets, Paul Darrow and Sam Maloof were among this group of artists who ran with the idea and made the first “Padua Hills Art Fiesta” come alive in 1953. The event took place for 7 consecutive years with artists such as Karl Benjamin, Milford Zornes, James Hueter and Harrison McIntosh participating in the 1959 event, the last Padua Hills Art Fiesta to occur. Until next week, that is.

On Sunday, November 13, the 8th annual Padua Hills Art Fiesta will pick up where it left off 52 years ago, returning to Padua Hills Theater where 20 local artists will display and sell their work and mingle with guests. The fiesta, recreated by the Claremont Museum of Art (CMA), will also feature children’s art activities, live folk music, food from Casa de Salsa and Spaggi’s and a handmade artwork boutique.

“Claremont has such a rich history of art, and the Padua Hills Art Fiesta was a major starting point of the connection between the community and the artists,” said Catherine McIntosh, who had the idea to revive the event and is coordinating its 2011 return. “It was Claremont’s first art festival, and every name you’ve ever heard of related to art around Claremont was there. The old-timers remember how much fun it was.”

Ginger Elliot, former longtime director of Claremont Heritage, reflected on the event’s history and influence.



Photo courtesy of Ford family collection
Several Mexican Players watch Betty Davenport Ford work on a sculpture at the Padua Hills Art Fiesta c.1954. After a 52-year hiatus, the Padua Hills Art Fiesta will return this Sunday, November 13 where 20 local artists will display and sell their work. The exhibit and sale is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

“No one had ever done anything quite like this in this area,” she remarked. “There were all these artists there with big reputations, as well as younger artists who were just starting to make a reputation. It was really a unique thing.”

Contrary to the event disappearing because of lack of interest, the popular 1950s fiesta stopped because the lack of parking around Padua Hills Theater at the time proved to be a logistical nightmare for the throngs of attendees. Additionally, without an indoor space in which to display the artwork (the fiesta took place during an annual 2-week period when the theater closed down), the art was exhibited among the olive trees outside the theater, without protection from the elements throughout the festival time, which spanned several days back then. An unexpected rainstorm during the 1959 fiesta compelled the artists to rethink.

“It was pouring rain,” said Ms. Elliott. “Milford Zornes

REVIVAL

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COURIER photo/Jonathan Gibby
A piece of wood is transformed into art by Mike Hill in his Upland studio. Mr. Hill has created over 300 pieces since he began working with wood 2 years ago.



COURIER photo/Jonathan Gibby
Local artist Mike Hill holds up one of the many wooden sculptures housed in his Upland studio on Thursday. This piece along with dozens of others will be featured in the Padua Hills Art Fiesta on Sunday, November 13.



Artist Crispin Gonzalez paints a bottle in his Claremont studio on Thursday. This piece will be featured with a dozen others in the Padua Hills Art Fiesta art exhibit and sale this Sunday.

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lived in Padua, so he called everyone nearby and they all ran up and started taking the art down. I don't know how much was ruined, but surely anything on paper was gone. I think this convinced the artists that there were problems with the venue, and that was that."

In conjunction with the 2011 event, an exhibition of historical photos and artworks by the original fiesta artists will be presented in the Ginger Elliot Gallery at the Garner House in Memorial Park: "Claremont Modern: The Fiesta Artists of Padua Hills 1953-1959" will be open on weekends from November 18 through December 18, with an opening reception on Friday, November 18 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Next Sunday's art fiesta will feature a preview of the historic exhibit, which will be curated by Maria Zornes Baker, the daughter of renowned watercolor artist Milford Zornes.

"In a sense, the exhibit is a family scrap book," said Ms. McIntosh who formed a network with many other now-adult children of historic Claremont artists, most of whom are now deceased. The "Claremont Art Kids," as they call themselves, get together annually and love it when they can add a member.

"Since I moved back to Claremont, I've been meeting up with so many people that are in the same boat as me, having grown up with parents in the Claremont art scene. It's so fun to discover, 'Hey, here's another Claremont art kid!' We have a shared history, a shared experience," said Ms. McIntosh, a CMA board member.

Participating artists are looking forward to the recreated Padua Hills Art Fiesta, several of whom attended the original fiesta in the 1950s, including oil painter and watercolor artist Martha Underwood.

"It was quite a deal," she said. "Now, I'm excited to see the exhibit of the people who are long-gone and to see the people I know that are still making and exhibit-

ing their art."

Local artist, lifelong Pomona Valley resident and long-time ceramics teacher Crispin Gonzalez appreciates the chance to be a part of the "continuum of the rich art tradition" in this area, he said. A well-known ceramicist, he humbly noted that, "It was nice to be invited. Me, of all people."

Native Claremonter and participating artist Richard Martinez, whose brother, Marciano Martinez, will also exhibit at the fiesta, feels connected to many of the original artists and, like Mr. Gonzalez, feels honored to be involved with the resurrected historical event.

"It's wonderful. Since I grew up here, I got to know a lot of these artists as a kid. For example, Millard Sheets helped me and my brother out and sent us to go to the Otis Art Institute," said Mr. Martinez who taught art in the Claremont Unified School District for 36 years. "I feel so excited to be a part of this."

Other participating artists displaying and selling their work next Sunday include Paul Brayton, Dee Marcellus Cole, Gina Lawson Egan, Katherine Herrman, Mike Hill, Mary Hughes, Paul Knoll, Andree Mahoney, Sioux Bally-Maloof, Luis Ramirez, Kazumi Kobayashi Svenson, Ahlene Welsh, Jan Wheatcroft and Rhys Williams.

The Padua Hills Art Fiesta will be held from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, November 13 at the Padua Hills Theater. Shuttle service from remote parking areas will be available. Admission: \$8, \$6 for CMA members, free for persons under 18. Information: 621-3200 or visit the website, www.claremontmuseum.org.

— Brenda Bolinger



Artist Mike Hill prepares a wooden sculpture in his Upland studio. COURIER photos/Jonathan Gibby



A variety of ceramic bowls and bottles wait for Mr. Gonzalez to apply paint and color to their surface. Some of these pieces will be featured this Sunday.