

August 29, 2018

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## Art Fiesta to Exhibit Local Artists at the Historic Padua Hills Theatre

The Claremont Museum of Art will host the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Padua Hills Art Fiesta on Sunday, November 4 with an outdoor art show, exhibition and film, craft demonstrations, music and festive foods. Visitors can shop for unique original artwork as they stroll through the beautiful olive groves of the Padua Hills Theatre. The exhibition will examine the history of the Padua Hills Artist Colony.

**Sunday, November 4**, 11am to 4pm at the **Padua Hills Theatre**, 4467 Padua Ave., Claremont.

Admission is \$8 for adults, \$6 for Claremont Museum of Art members. Children under 18 are free. A free shuttle is available from Padua Park.

- **Thirty area artists** will display and sell their paintings, prints, ceramics, glass, sculpture, textiles and jewelry. Area art organizations will provide **art and craft demonstrations** and art books will be for sale.
- This year's **exhibition** *Padua Hills Artist Colony* will feature artists who lived and worked in Padua Hills during the heyday of the Claremont Art Scene including Jean and Arthur Ames, Betty Davenport Ford, Sam Maloof, Harrison McIntosh, Millard Sheets and Milford Zornes. The film *Design for Modern Living: Millard Sheets and the Claremont Art Community* will be shown.
- ARTstART students will lead families in creative **Art Activities**. A **Music Stage** will feature local performers. **Festive foods** will be served with traditional Jamaica punch and fresh lemonade.

The Padua Hills Art Fiesta originated in 1953 for local artists to bring art into the community. The studio art movement that flourished here in the 1950s centered on the use of natural materials and traditional sensibilities. Visitors came from miles around to meet the artists and watch "art in action" at the popular festival. In 2011, the Claremont Museum of Art revived this tradition with a new generation of artists sharing their talents.

Go to [www.claremontmuseum.org](http://www.claremontmuseum.org) for information about the museum and current programs.



## THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition *Padua Hills Artist Colony: 1945-75* produced by Claremont Heritage will feature the small planned community nestled in hills above Claremont and the artists who lived and worked there during the heyday of the Claremont Art Scene.

In the mid-1920s, a group of twenty Claremont Citizens banded together to purchase over 2,000 acres in the foothills above Claremont to keep the area safe from undesirable real estate developments that threatened to encroach on the community. A local businessman, Herman Garner, was charged with heading up the development of the land. A corporation was created and the vision for a community that embraced art, culture and education was formed. The plans included residential homes, a cultural arts center, artist's studios and shops.

The Padua Hills Theatre itself opened in 1930 and was the dream project of Bess and Herman Garner. Longtime home to the famous "Mexican Players" performance group, the Padua Hills Theatre became an immensely popular dinner theater destination for tourists across all of Southern California. In addition to the theater and dining room, Padua Hills also included several art studios, kilns, and the Arts and Crafts Shop that carried artwork by local artists. Ceramicist, William Maker famously operated out of a studio at Padua in the 1940s where he created his renowned "Mankerware" ceramics. Later Betty Davenport Ford taught ceramics classes here for several decades.

Padua Hills attracted a number of artists (some were given land and/or labor to build their homes and studios) and faculty from the Claremont Colleges over the years. They built their homes and the community began to grow. A number of significant architects, including Richard Neutra, Theodore Criley Jr. and Fred McDowell, were hired to design the homes. An "art jury" consisting of Millard Sheets and Foster Rhodes Jackson had to sign off on the plans. The intersection of art, design and culture created a unique and desirable community.

The lynchpin of the Claremont arts movement was Pomona native and world-renowned artist Millard Sheets. After graduating from the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, Sheets came to Scripps College in 1930 to help develop the fledgling art department. Through his influence, Sheets was able to invigorate the art faculty by bringing in notable artists like Albert Stewart, Henry Lee McFee, Jean Ames, and William Manker to serve as art professors. He encouraged all of these artists to build their homes in Padua Hills and others followed.

Artists Betty Davenport Ford, Harrison McIntosh, Hildred Reents and Milford Zornes built their homes in Padua Hills in the 1950s. Sam Maloof lived and worked in the Sheets guest house for several years

and Rupert Deese shared the McIntosh studio for six decades. Lindley Mixon built a home and studio on Mt. Baldy Road designed by Foster Rhodes Jackson which passed on to artists Diane Divelbess and Norma Tanega in 1972.

Sheets no doubt helped influence a generation of Claremont artists at mid-century, spurring on the city to become an “art mecca” for local artists and craftsmen.

## **HISTORY OF THE PADUA HILLS ART FIESTA**

As Claremont’s art community grew and many artists either worked at the Padua Hills Theater or resided in the Padua Hills artist colony just south of the theater on Via Padova, the theatre became the obvious location to host an annual Art Fiesta.

The First Annual Padua Hills Art Fiesta took place from July 25 to August 2, 1953 and as Padua Hills Theatre founder, Herman Garner proclaimed, “is destined to become one of the outstanding annual events of the art world.” The stature of artists taking part in this initial event immediately propelled the fiesta to a high standard, with participating artists reading like a who’s who of the Claremont art community in the 1950s.

The theater’s arcaded walkways and shady olive groves provided a natural and beautiful backdrop for the art event and was a great success. The art fiestas showcased a variety of artwork including painting, sculpture, prints, pottery, enamels, jewelry, glass, weaving, ironwork, and furniture. Not only were these pieces for sale, but demonstrations were also carried out allowing for an interactive experience for the public and a look into the artist’s creative process. The initial Art Fiesta featured a panel of 32 Claremont artists including Jean and Arthur Ames, Millard Sheets, Albert and Marion Stewart, Phil and Betty Dike, Richard Petterson, Betty Davenport Ford, Hildred Reents, Harrison McIntosh, and William Manker. Other artists featured at the Fiesta throughout the years include Karl Benjamin, Paul Coates, Paul Darrow, Diane Divelbess, Robert Fleck, Carl and Sue Hertel, James Heuter, Anthony Ivins, Sheldon Kaganoff, Roger Kuntz, Sam Maloof, Douglas McClellan, Walter Mix, Lindley Mixon, David Scott, Paul Soldner, James Strombotne, John Svenson, Sylvia Pauloo-Taylor, Ed Traynor, Melvin Wood, Robert E. Wood, Jack Zajac, and Milford Zornes. While these artists all worked in different mediums, the goal of the Padua Hills Art Fiesta was to bring art into the community and showcase art that centered on the use of natural materials and traditional sensibilities.

“Art in Action” was the motto of the first Padua Hills Art Fiesta and the event was a groundbreaking gathering that sought to showcase Claremont’s talented artists and their methods and crafts. The Art Fiesta broke down barriers between the Claremont artists and the public, allowing for interaction, education, and championing of Claremont’s burgeoning art community. 65 years later, the Padua Hills Art Fiesta continues to live up to its original theme, allowing local artists to showcase their craft and share their creations with the Claremont community.

While the original Padua Hills Art Fiesta only lasted 7 years, from 1953 to 1959, the current incarnation of the Fiesta seeks to replicate the educational and entertaining feel of the original events, all the while continuing to practice and showcase the “Art in Action” theme of the original fiestas. The arts movement in Claremont continues to flourish in and the Padua Hills Art Fiesta seeks to showcase a new generation of Claremont artists. By following the principles of the original fiestas, the Padua Hills Art Fiesta will continue to advocate its local artists and keep Claremont truly an art mecca.