

Put this into Your Weekend Plan: Montmartre Coming to Darien

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An announcement from organizers of the “La Place des Artistes” event:

Twenty local artists will celebrate the open-air spirit of Montmartre in an all-day outdoor exhibit at Grove Street Plaza on Saturday Sept. 26.

The event, “Artists at Grove Street Plaza,” will feature framed canvases, prints, photographs and ceramics. Some of the painters will work at their easels from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Darien Arts Center (DAC), and the rain date is October 3rd.

“For one autumn day, we hope to bring Paris to Darien,” explained Nobu Miki, the Darien modern folk artist who conceived and organized the day. Montmartre is the 400-foot hill in the northern section of Paris where

bohemian painters like Renoir, Picasso and Modigliani lived and worked from 1872 to 1914 in the shadow of the white-domed Basilica of Sacre Coeur.

“An outdoor setting like Grove Street Plaza is perfect for a pop-up art event where the whole day will be alive with shoppers and working artists, food and music -- all surrounded by beautiful paintings, photography, prints and ceramics,” Nobu said.

Unlike modern day Montmartre, the Artists at Grove Street Plaza will be demonstrating their brushwork but will not knock out ten-minute pastel portraits of passers-by. “The participating artists are either for-real professionals or Sunday painters with solid local reputations,” Nobu explained.

She recruited the artists with a suggestion to keep the price on most sale items to less than \$500 “to make the artwork reasonable and accessible” to a strolling-by clientele who might buy on impulse. “I think that is part of the outdoor, pop-up spontaneity of the event,” she added.

Nobu hopes this first outdoor group exhibit will grow to achieve standing alongside Darien’s many important outlets for local talent, such as the Darien Arts Center’s June exhibit, the on-going monthly exhibits in the Darien Library’s gallery level, the periodic open studio exhibitions of the Wilson Avenue Loft Artists (WALA) in Norwalk, monthly featured artists at Atria, and the big annual June fund-raiser in Rowayton for the Community Cooperative Nursery School (CCNS).

“I miss the annual fall EMS Post 53 exhibit,” she said. That mega-fund-raiser for the youth Explorer Post’s emergency medical services which held its last exhibit featuring 400 paintings by 100 artists in November 2008. “With the crash in the art market in 2008, Darien has needed a replacement for that showcase event, and I dream this open air exhibit could become that successful in years to come.”

Use of the Grove Street Plaza for the day was made possible by developers Penny Glassmeyer and David Genovese of Baywater Properties. HAN Network, publisher of Darien Times, donated advertising and editorial content to publicize the event. Darien Rowayton Bank contributed money to defray set-up expenses. Other local people volunteered their time to help Nobu.

Alphabetically, participating artists include:

- Sandra Aldrich
- Billi Kid (Guido Rodriguez)
- Britt Bair
- Gigi Barrett
- Lauren Chisholm
- John Coots
- Steve Fritsch

- Pierre Gagnon
- Gillian Grozier
- Bill Jensen
- Lisa Koorbusch
- Joseph Lamorte
- Nobu Miki
- Nanci Natale
- Stan Pastore
- Jon Puzzuoli
- Jan Raymond
- Peter Saverine
- Dennis Stevens
- Laura Trask
- Lisa Webb
- Kathleen Weinstock