

Artists will transform St. Louis Park sidewalks during W.E. Chalk Festival

Seth Rowe, July 16, 2024



An artist creates chalk art of a cow and banana in water. (Submitted photo)



An artist creates street art. (Submitted photo)

Inaugural event set July 20-21

Stroll around the West End in St. Louis Park July 20 or 21 and you might find yourself rubbing your eyes in incredulity at what you see.

The gallery Canvas Convergence already contains eye-popping art that can make the subject of a photo appear to be in the palm of a yeti, at a Paris cafe or hanging out in the woods with friendly, giant marshmallows.

This month, Canvas Convergence founder Shawn McCann is bringing major chalk artists to Minnesota to transform city sidewalks in the St. Louis Park retail and entertainment area.

Visitors will have the chance to watch between 15 and 20 artists create works 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. July 20-21 at The Shops at West End, 1621 West End Blvd., during the inaugural W.E. Chalk Festival. The art will emerge on Gamble Drive near Punch Bowl Social while West End Boulevard will host related activities.

A zone for kids will allow them to make their own creations with chalk that will be provided. Additionally, the public will be able to color a large mandala, which will contain geometric shapes. Artist Sandy Forseth, who has helped lead the creation of mandalas at Parktacular and other events, will organize the collaborative work.

The event will feature music from a DJ and entertainment from the Twin Cities Road Crew along with the Big Red Wagon, Just Truffles, Eggroll Queen, Quashi Cuisine, Brick Oven Pizza and Asian Invasion food trucks.

Canvas Convergence, 1632 West End Blvd., will keep its doors open during the festival, welcoming viewers in to take in original and new 3D pieces.

McCann organizes 10 street art and chalk art festivals throughout the country, including Chalkfest Maple Grove. The nearby event marked its ninth year in June.

“It’s such a small community,” McCann said of the chalk artists working in two-dimensional and three-dimensional formats. “It’s been fantastic to be able to bring the talents and the amazing work that they do to the Midwest and now to the West End.”

No specific theme is planned for the W.E. Chalk Festival art, but McCann hinted that Pennsylvania artist Erik Greenawalt – who calls himself The Chalking Dad – plans to create a famous scene from a children’s movie that could allow visitors to sit in a chalk canoe.

“Other than that, a lot of the artists are pretty tight-lipped about what they’re actually going to be creating, and it’s kind of a fun surprise to have people watching and trying to figure out what’s being created and just having the enjoyment of seeing all of the wonderful pieces come

to life,” said McCann, who spoke to Sun Newspapers by phone from Wahpeton, North Dakota, ahead of that city’s Borderline Chalk Festival.

In St. Louis Park, McCann anticipates that artists will wrap up their art by Sunday afternoon. He anticipated festival-goers will then have the chance to pose by and interact with many of the pieces.

In case of rain, festival organizers plan to cover up the art with plastic and tarps and then continue working on them after the precipitation has passed by.

“No matter what Mother Nature throws at us, we’re always ready to create and finish a piece for the events and have some amazing work,” McCann said.

Most people can’t watch oil painters work, but chalk art is an art form made in the public realm, McCann said. With different artists and different art subjects, each festival is a bit different.

“It’s a celebration of creating an ephemeral art form that Mother Nature takes away but you also get to see amazing artists create masterpieces, and you really get to see how art is created for the sake of art,” he said.

For more information, visit facebook.com/profile.php?id=61560335232165 and canvasconvergence.com.

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