

California Strawberry Festival

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NATIONALLY ACCLAIMED ARTIST NOMI WAGNER WINS

34th ANNUAL CALIFORNIA STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

OFFICIAL POSTER CONTEST AND RECEIVES \$2,000 GRAND PRIZE

Oxnard, CA (Tuesday, March 7, 2017) –Using a unique medium that combines traditional watercolor painting with fine art digital technology, artist Nomi Wagner of Oxnard won the California Strawberry Festival 34th Annual Poster Contest. Nomi’s winning entry was revealed today to dignitaries and Festival sponsors gathered at Yolanda’s Mexican Café in Oxnard. The luncheon kicked off activities for the 2017 celebration getting underway May 20 and 21.

In addition to taking home the \$2,000 prize, Wagner’s painting will adorn Festival posters, T-shirts and collectible merchandise. “This year we opened up the contest to include all forms of digital design and we received a record 70 entries, including among them an inquiry from Italy to participate,” said California Strawberry Festival Chairperson Kim Gibas. “It was Nomi’s innovative technique and the textures of color that really set her creation apart from all the others.” As a 24-year resident of Mandalay Beach in Oxnard, Nomi says, “I am honored to have my art recognized by my hometown’s fabulous Strawberry Festival.”

Wagner’s niece told her of the Festival’s new rules and the opportunity to participate. Her breathtaking painting depicts a picnic on the beach in Oxnard with a basket of grapes and strawberry wine, next to a plate brimming with luscious strawberries. The region’s Anacapa and Santa Cruz Islands adorn the background as a sailboat breezes by. She started the creative process by arranging all the elements for a romantic picnic on the dunes near her home, photographing the display, and then digitally painting each stroke from scratch, using the photograph as reference. To her, the painting represents “the joy of living here in our beautiful and bountiful Ventura County.”

(more)

As far back as she can remember, Wagner has been an artist at heart. After graduating from USC as a dental hygienist, she ultimately found her calling in the arts as a professional portrait photographer with studios in West Los Angeles. Having studied portrait drawing for years, Wagner began her study of digital graphics at UCLA in the early 1990s, when fine art technology was in its infancy. She developed her digital watercolor technique while studying traditional portrait painting at the California Institute of Art. Her goal was to mix colors and paint traditionally, using a stylus, graphics tablet and computer software, instead of her regular brushes and paints.

[Wagner's portrait paintings](#) are hanging in homes all over the country. Her clients email their favorite photographs, which she uses for reference as she paints each stroke of their portraits on her "virtual canvas." Wagner's husband prints her art on either fine art watercolor paper or canvas.

Of Wagner's numerous professional achievements, she is proudest of the funds her art has raised for online silent auctions, helping worthy causes of all kinds. With her win of the 2017 Poster Contest, she continues that promise by supporting the Festival's efforts of giving back to enhance the lives of those in need throughout the Southland.

The 34th Annual [California Strawberry Festival](#) May 20, 21, 2017 features more than 50 food booths with all things berry, live concerts, gooey contests, Strawberryland for Kids with rides and attractions, hundreds of Fine Arts & Crafts, celebrity cooking demonstrations, and more, on the newly expanded Strawberry Meadows of College Park; 3250 S. Rose Avenue, Oxnard. General admission is \$12, seniors 62+ are \$8 and children ages 5-12 are \$5. Kids 4 and under are free. Active military and dependents with ID are \$8. Hours are 10:00a.m. to 6:30p.m. The free Park & Ride "Strawberry Express" shuttles from convenient locations off the 101 Fwy have direct access to save patrons time and money. Parking on site is \$10. Tickets are available for purchase in advance online via the website. Toll free information is available at 888 288-9242.

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**Editors note: Interviews and art design image available. Contact: 818.889.1085*