

# Italian Mural Project Artists' Bios

**Our artist Team includes:** Jeremy Caniglia, Frank Costanzo, John Pecoraro, Mary Ensz, Dave Manriquez, Marianne Smejkal, Lita Caniglia, and leadership from Richard Harrison. High school art students Sophia DiLorenzo and Sicily Manganaro, and college student, Lily Svaboda worked on the mural as apprentices. Here is more about some of them:

**Jeremy Caniglia** studied under Brenda Jones at ISU, Grace Hartigan at the Hoffberger School of Painting, Dionisio Cimarelli at The Art Students League and Odd Nerdrum at the Nerdrum School. He currently teaches at Creighton Prep. He has published articles on what it takes to be an art activist as well as old master techniques on Caravaggio and Rembrandt. He is also a successful painter, with his work being showcased in private collections around the world.

**Frank Costanzo** can be seen in the Nebraska Arts Council Offices and at the Durham Western Heritage Museum. Past showings include shows at Omaha's Old Market Artist Gallery and Gallery Eppley at the Omaha Airport, and his political posters are carried by the Chisholm-Larsson Gallery in New York.

**Lita De La Guardia** is a local artist/muralist identifying mediums with rich cultural background in the abstract arts. She teaches art therapy, advocating for mental health healing through creative expressions. She has actively created mural masterpieces on the downtown Sioux City buildings and locally with the South Omaha Mural Project in which her work depicts her artistic talents. Lita owns and operates Bella Vita Canvas, demonstrating her work as an artist/muralist.

**John Pecoraro** is a life-long arts educator with a BFA from UNL where he was greatly influenced as a student of Keith Jacobshagen. John taught middle school and high school art classes in the area for decades teaching drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, and filmmaking. He also was a mentor for Jeremy as he was growing up! John formerly lived in the neighborhood and is retired and will be able to help as much as is needed. His extensive knowledge of the area and his skills in teaching art will be invaluable.

**Marianne Smejkal** has given decades of service to Omaha Public Schools in the area of Graphic Arts. Smejkal's art influence was her grandfather Anthony Cianciolo. He was her mentor and a great painter. She would watch him draw and paint. The gene pool of creative energy, vision and talent guided Smejkal's education from St. Patrick's Grade School to graduation at Paul IV High School in 1977. At an early age she realized art made a difference in people's lives.

**Mary Ensz** is a Nebraska-based artist and muralist. Mary received her BFA in Studio Art from Creighton University in 2011 and is co-organizer with Nasty Artist Collective, a group of local artists seeking to use the arts to bring about social change. In the community, Mary creates vibrant murals and in her attic studio, she experiments with painting, drawing, and collaging. She layers human forms and Russian nesting doll shapes to connect with identities and truths.

**Richard Harrison** has an MFA from North Carolina School for the Arts, and he has managed 12 murals in South Omaha receiving awards from mayors, governors, and the state legislature. Incorporating 58 paid artists and 650 volunteers over 7 years. He recently completed a 1% for art mural project for the Central Nebraska Veterans Home in Kearny. Richard's newest grandson, Calvin, has Carlentini roots. Calvin's father Chris Robiola grew up in Little Italy and Richard is excited to explore the background of his grandson and son in law. You can see the work of our collective energies at the collective artists site: [southomahamuralproject.com](http://southomahamuralproject.com). And you can see Richard's individual work at [amidsummersmural.com](http://amidsummersmural.com).