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[Festival of Arts](#)

A wannabe artist I once knew would periodically pack up his photographic "artworks" and portable display booth and drive to weekend summer art festivals. He wanted to get himself known as an artist and make a living off his "art." But soon realizing that most people were not interested in his photos and that he was lucky if he broke even from weekend sales, he abandoned his "artistic" goals and moved on to some other line of work.

I've attended more art festivals than I'd like to admit, looking at watercolor cats, acrylic landscapes, macramé plant holders, ceramic bowls, calendar type photos and more. Perhaps the most atrocious collection of art I've seen was at a festival in upscale Cherry Creek in Denver. One booth displayed several larger than life sculptures of heads, each sprouting real human hair.

In contrast, the paintings, sculpture, pastels, drawings, serigraphs, photographs, ceramics, jewelry, etched and stained glass, fiber arts and furniture at Laguna Beach's [Festival of Arts](#) are a world away from what you'll see at most other summer art festivals. This year's works are so thoughtfully designed and crafted that a stroll through the festival grounds can provide a seemingly endless visual feast.

And the newly designed layout this year is easier to navigate with booths arranged in a double triangle pattern around a central open plaza with tables and a stage for musical performances. (Please check out my [Festival of Arts](#) page for a comprehensive explanation and growing list of descriptions of artists' works.)

The largest category of art is paintings in oil, acrylic, pastels, watercolors and mixed media. Works by Scott Albert, Ebrahim Amin, [Mary Aslin](#), Sandra Jones

Campbell, Kathy Jones, Michael Jacques and [Tom Swimm](#) and several other artists are luminous, colorful and scenic.

When I view these works, their harmony and balance of form, structure and color, I think about German philosopher Immanuel Kant's description of beauty as "purposive without a purpose." Kant explained that while the beautiful object is made by a person and is essentially unnatural, it appears natural to the viewer. He said that the object's array of colors and textures causes our mental faculties to feel that the artwork is right.

Sculptures by 13 artists, including Marlo Bartels, Marie-Pierre Philippe and Terry Thornsley, are more diverse in style and are crafted from a wide variety of materials including ceramic, bronze and steel. The styles range from classic to abstract to aquatic inspired to whimsical.

There is a range of photography, as well as assemblage works, glass sculpture and furniture. And there is jewelry, high-end finely wrought pieces made from gold, silver, precious and semi-precious stones.

In this cynical age, beauty, as Immanuel Kant describes it, is often derided, especially when compared to [Postmodern Art](#). Or as artist Brice Marden said in an interview, "Maybe beauty is too easy. It doesn't deal with issues, political issues or social issues. But an issue that it does deal with is harmony."

Yes, the Festival of Arts doesn't deal much with the pressing social issues of the day, with the exception of a few artists such as [Pat Sparkuhl](#) whose themes include war, man's inhumanity and concentration camps. Yet even Pat's works are aesthetically rendered, proving that social significance does not rule out beauty.

If you are in Southern California this summer and can attend this [Laguna Beach Art Festival](#), you might be surprised at how refreshing and enjoyable it is to spend the day looking at numerous "attractive, refined and elegant" works of art.