

Italian Artist Visits Kenosha to Collaborate in a UW-Parkside Community-Based Mural Project

Lauren Landry, Janet Jurado

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Carlo Giardina leading a group critique about mural sketch ideas in Carey Watter's senior capstone class for graphic design majors, "Digital Portfolio". Photo by Janet Jurado.

Carlo Giardina comes to Kenosha to create a mural for the Italian-American Club. The mural is planned to be unveiled in July 2025. This collaboration of the community's artists highlights the rich history of Italian immigration to Kenosha.

UW-Parkside welcomes visiting artist, Carlo Giardina, brought to our community by Professor Carey Watters. Carlo comes to us from Sicily to share his talent internationally. For Carlo, being an artist means interacting with the world with a pure heart, as he feels art purifies the soul. Carlo started doing art as a child but started pursuing art professionally in his early 20s. With his Biennial Masters in Communication Design, he now teaches illustration and mural painting within the visual arts program at the Mediterranean Arts and Design Program (MADE) in Siracusa, Sicily. Influenced by his love

of nature and the beauty of life forms, Carlo's art depicts the energy of the world around him. With a combined effort from Carlo, Professor Watters, and muralist Dean Tawwater, they have organized the creation of a mural here in Kenosha.

The mural is planned to be unveiled in July of this year and displayed at the

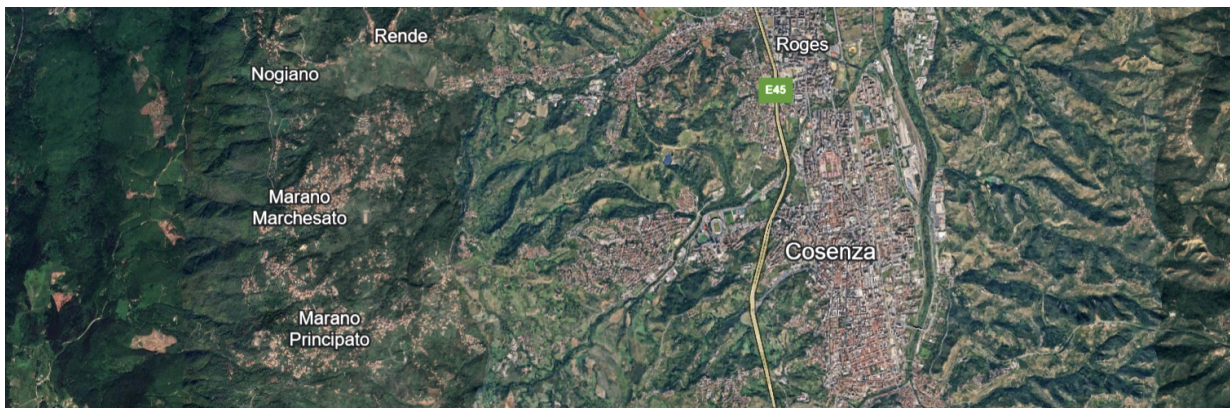


Italian-American Club. Teri Gamble, the Director of Marketing and Grants at the Boys and Girls Club of Kenosha, says “This mural project is a beautiful representation of the power of art to connect communities across the world.” Carlo feels great excitement for this piece and finds that the magic of the experience comes from “expecting the unexpected.” Not only does this mural highlight the skill and coordination of the artists, but it also draws attention to the rich history of Italian immigration to the city of Kenosha.

Carlo Giardina and Carey Watters discuss
The mural wall for the Kenosha location.
Photo by Janet Jurado.

A Brief History of the Italian Immigration to Kenosha

During the late 19th century, a mass immigration of Italians to the United States began involving pioneer immigrants in search of jobs that would make them enough money to eventually move back to Italy and live there comfortably. The largest group involved in this mass migration were the **Maranesi**, an Italian colony that consisted of Italian immigrants from nextdoor villages Marano Marchesato and Marano Principato.



Villages Marano Marchesato and Marano Principato in relation to Cosenza. Source: Google Earth.

Both of these locations are only five miles in distance from Cosenza, the provincial capital in the southern Italian region of Calabria. These Italian immigrants first migrated to Chicago, IL to work as track laborers for the Chicago and Northwestern railroad, but then eventually began to travel on foot farther north to Kenosha, WI because of growing industrialization. This massive and speedy industrialization growth was possible due to the large number of Italian immigrants of unskilled labor. Even though Kenosha started as a commercial and agricultural center in the 1830s, it eventually became one of the most industrialized and popular cities in Wisconsin by the time the 1900s came around. Now with Kenosha and Cosenza being known as “the sister cities”, Carlo and Carey are excited to create awareness surrounding the rich history of Kenosha and its connection to Calabria through collaborative art.

Reach Out to the Artists:

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Carey Watters: wattersc@uwp.edu, Instagram: @cmndesign, www.careywatters.com

References

BELMONTE, P. L. (2000). Maranesi in Kenosha, Wisconsin during World War I. *Italian Americana*, 18 (2), 206-217.