



Every Picture Tells A Story

Holli Harmon's Portraits of the Central Coast

By Michel Miller • Art by Holli Harmon

*"Don't look at the big overwhelming issues of the world.
Look in your own back yard. Look in your heart."*

~ Mike deGruy ~

For those who live elsewhere, Santa Barbara and Montecito are synonymous with celebrity. While many recognize the area for its architecture and landscape, more probably know it by the rich and famous who dwell under its Spanish tile roofs. Oprah Winfrey, Jeff Bridges, Kathy Ireland, Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Kenny Loggins have all contributed to the area's lore (and lure) to varying degree, but far from the glare of the spotlight, countless others—whether by trade, deed or ancestry—have influenced the culture of the region. Holli Harmon wants to paint them.

Harmon, a member of the Santa Barbara Studio Artists group and former board member of SCAPE (Southern California Artists Painting for the Environment) has spent much of the last six years rendering portraits of people who will likely never be on the cover of *People* magazine, but have nonetheless left an indelible mark on the Central Coast. Her *Portraits of the Central Coast*, which recently celebrated its inaugural exhibition (*Revelations: Culture and the Human Landscape of the Central Coast* at Elverhøj Museum of History & Art in Solvang), is more than a series of paintings; it's a historical record of people who, without fanfare or even much recognition, have shaped the region.

Left – **Dr. Lyndal Laughrin**, the first subject of *Portraits of the Central Coast*, inspired Holli Harmon to launch the project. His portrait evokes the famous photograph of John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt standing on a promontory overlooking the Yosemite Valley.

Above – **Holli Harmon**, the artist who developed the *Portraits of the Central Coast* project, presents her subjects through paintings, stories and oral history videos to reflect their dreams, history and accomplishments.