

Paper Mache for 9-5-25 by David Read

Please indulge me with a moment of nostalgia. Yesterday, September 4, 2025, marked the fifth anniversary of the Paper Mache column. Hard to believe it has been that long. I was invited to write a weekly column by then Editor, Steve Miller, about, well, art and culture, something I purportedly know something about. And what about the goofy name, Paper Mache or, more properly, papier-mâché. We came up with it based on the idea that the columns would be a mish mash of this and that like the “humble composite material” itself which has been around for 2,000 or so years.

The column survived during the reign of Editor, Robert Summa, and continues to this day thanks to the current Editor-in-Chief, Chuck Smith. The column has grown from its originally allotted 300-word count to today’s 600-word version. I have received many positive comments from regular readers over the years when I see them at events in the community. Thank you all for still believing in the importance and value of local journalism by subscribing to the Appeal Democrat. I only recently received my first written note ever which criticized my tone in the article about the current administration’s takeover of the Kennedy Centers Honors program. I do not, generally, wear my politics on my sleeve, but sometimes, well you know, I suppose it seeps through especially when it comes to the arts.

Looking back at that first Paper Mache, much of what I wrote still resonates. Here are some highlights.

“We will aim to cover topics across multiple artistic genres and events large and small and maybe even reveal some hidden gems in our midst that will be new to many of us. Most importantly, we want to explore the intersection of art and culture and how they are intertwined. Like paper mache, it can be a bit of a mash up.”

“Some of the questions we will consider include: Are artists important beyond the artwork they produce? How does art, whether literary, visual, or performance- based define the culture or era it belongs to? How does art cross language and cultural barriers? Does art contribute to the economy?” This one really stands out today and we have worked hard to convince local leadership of the value of art and culture to local economic development.

“Is it true that the arts including music, literature, painting, sculpture, theater, and dance represent a society’s collective memory? Certainly, they help create a historic record of what it was like to live in a place at a particular time beyond just simple facts. Art is a proven vehicle for social commentary and change and can give voice to the voiceless and inspire activism. It is a powerful form of communication that transcends language and cultural barriers through images and sounds. Who knew the phrase “art and culture” could inspire so many questions and ideas? Clearly there is much food for thought for further consideration.”

In the weeks, months and years ahead, I hope to continue to contribute to the local arts and culture landscape and call attention to the many wonderful local events that our community has to offer. And I will continue to write about issues related to the field of national significance and the occasional foray into international activities that I think may be of interest or somehow relevant to our local arts scene. And your part is to keep reading, keep attending live theater and music events, art gallery openings, student performances and art shows, cultural events like Pow Wows and everything else Yuba-Sutter has to offer.