

# Raising hope

**Butte County native returns to make art, raise funds for Paradise**

**I**t wasn't art classes that made Shane Grammer want to be an artist—it was a computer class at Butte College in the early 1990s.

by  
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**Preview:**  
*Camp Fire Mural Series: Beauty From Ashes*, Friday, June 7, 6:30–10 p.m. (VIP reception at 5 p.m.). Cost: \$25/general; \$100/VIP; free for Ridge residents

**Museum of Northern California Art**  
900 Esplanade  
487-7272  
monca.org

Grammer has traveled all over the world—Mexico, Brazil, Asia—to paint murals that might “elicit hope from devastation.” And it was that work that prepared the Chico native to return to Butte County this past January to paint murals in the Camp Fire burn zone.

“God has always used my art to bring hope and joy to the downcast and brokenhearted,” he said.

The evocative murals made a huge impression on the residents of Paradise, got gobs of media attention (CNN, NPR, The Washington Post, etc.), and now Grammer is returning to Chico to capitalize on

the exposure. He has partnered with the Museum of Northern California Art (MONCA) to put on a one-day exhibit/reception to both raise money for those affected by the fire and re-create the hopeful feelings his Paradise murals engendered.

*Camp Fire Mural Series: Beauty From Ashes* will take place Friday, June 7, and proceeds from ticket sales (\$25 each, \$100 to attend early VIP reception) will be split between MONCA's summer-school program for young people experiencing post-fire trauma and the programming of the Paradise Art Center, which survived the fire.

**Earlier this year, if you drove into Paradise via Clark Road from Butte College, you couldn't miss the huge face rising from the wreckage.** Grammer's striking black-and-white aerosol mural of a solemn woman seemed to have been burned into a gray hearth and chimney (all that remained of the home of his friends Shane and Jennifer Edwards). “You come around this bend and, boom. She's looking right at you,” Grammer said.

The piece, titled “Beauty From Ashes,” spread quickly via photos on social media and struck an emotional chord for those dealing with the fire's ugly aftermath. As he was overcome by a flood of online comments, Grammer came to realize that the mural was “the first glimmer of beauty [they'd] seen since the fire.”

That mural is gone now, demolished and hauled away as part of

“Holding on to Hope” mural.  
PHOTO BY SHANE GRAMMER

the ongoing cleanup. But there were more to follow. Grammer painted friends on their destroyed homes; faces on burned-out cars; a memorial to Camp Fire victim Helen Page; Jesus on the side of the baptismal at Hope Christian Church—17 murals in all, of which a dozen remain.

The MONCA show ties in with Grammer's work in Paradise and will feature three components: In one room will be a series of photos by Grammer and Sacramento photographer Terence Duffy of the Paradise murals. The other parts of the exhibit include a room of other work by Grammer, and another room containing an installation titled “Hope Rises.”

Painting is a side gig for Grammer. His day job is as a sculptor for the theme-park industry, and he's designed and fabricated everything from dragons to pirate ships for fantasy lands all over the world (including Shanghai Disney). For “Hope Rises,” Grammer has put those skills to work on a 15-by-14-by-8-foot sculpture created with materials donated by Storyland Studios in Lake Elsinore. The installation also will feature professionally designed lighting and original music written for the night for what promises to be an immersive and evocative experience.

“I want people to be moved emotionally when they walk in,” Grammer said.

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