



EVERYDAY HERO

CRISTINA MELOTTI

Artist Brightens Lives of Children

Last year, accomplished artist Cristina Melotti donated eight months of her time and talent to paint murals on the walls of the Queens Child Advocacy Center (QCAC). An inter-agency partnership led by Safe Horizon, the nation's largest nonprofit victim assistance agency, QCAC provides support to victims of child abuse. At its center, teams of caseworkers, detectives, prosecutors and victim advocates work together to collect evidence and minimize the number of times a child is interviewed.

"It is her love of children, as well as her compassionate and generous spirit, that attracted Cristina to the mission of QCAC," says Senior Director Myra Shapiro. "She labored over the murals as an act of love."

Melotti explains that the hallway she painted lead to the center's interviewing and examination rooms, no doubt frightening to traumatized children. "It was my challenge to convey a message of security and serenity, a place that would speak of peace and beauty as opposed to the world of horror these children come from. I had to mold my art into a form that would bring solace and relief from the pain, rage, despair and fear that accompany victims of abuse. If I succeeded, I believe that is the highest reward an artist can ever dream of." According to Shapiro, Melotti's images, "invite the children to escape into a world of beauty, peace and perhaps a little magic."

Melotti is a talented artist whose work has been exhibited internationally. Many of her paintings are included in some of Italy's most prestigious private collections. In addition to the original murals she painted for QCAC, she also loaned her painting, "The Release of the Firebird" to the nonprofit for display in its reception area. Shapiro says it symbolizes "the healing we hope to provide at our Center."



"The images Cristina painted invite children to escape into a world of beauty and peace."

Despite her busy career, Melotti generously volunteers her time for many important causes. She teaches art to disadvantaged New York City youth and has served meals at the Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen, using the opportunity to get to know its patrons. She recorded the many stories she heard there and published them in an Italian newspaper, "to let people know the fantastic role of soup kitchens and the broken, marvelous souls that populate them." She adds that all of her community service activities have greatly enriched her life.

A Manhattan resident, Melotti was born in Milan, Italy, and has two children.

—Claire Curry

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