

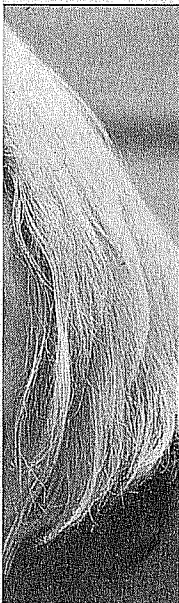
view of the week  
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# A three-hour tour that's worth taking



Martin Monica, left, says Sheriff Laurie Smith wrote a letter of recommendation for him a few years back to keep him from running against her last time.

COURTESY OF MARTIN MONICA



MERCURY NEWS ARCHIVES

edges writing to agreement.

going with this?" he wasn't authorizing him to withdraw to happen. "She but he's going to and post it on his at he's not telling a, though Smith bottom line is it's a te," said Monica. t all my informa-

South First Fridays, the monthly event that showcases downtown San Jose's arty SoFA district, kicked off its fifth year Friday.

It's a lot to tackle in one evening, with more than a dozen galleries and other venues putting up art shows or showcasing local music.

It stretches along South First Street from San Carlos to Reed streets, with a few venues outside that route, too.

Thankful for a dry evening, my wife and I set out — with our 3-month-old daughter in tow — to discover how much culture we could soak up in a three-hour span.

If you're planning to go (the next one is set for March 5), strategize early. A few days before the event, most galleries' offerings are listed at [www.southfirstfridays.com](http://www.southfirstfridays.com). So we knew going in what places we didn't want to miss.

Parking was the next hurdle, as it often is downtown. Arriving at 6:25 p.m., we found a metered space — free after 6 p.m. — on South Second Street between San Carlos and San Salvador.

If we hadn't been lucky, we would have paid to park at the garage on Third and San Carlos streets or the Convention Center, both just a short walk from the action.

We hoofed it to First and Reed and the Institute of Contemporary Art, which regularly has a no-host wine reception well before South First Fridays' official 8 p.m. start.

In the crowded gallery, we ran into friends Rick Holden and Sandra Moll and chatted with ICA Executive Director Cathy Kimball about the fascinating new show "By a Thread," which features various pieces that use thread as a medium.

From there, we trilled



AROUND TOWN  
SAL PIZARRO

didn't have time for a sit-down meal. Fortunately, Vince Guasch had his Louisiana Territory catering truck set up in the parking lot of San Jose Stage at First and William.

We chowed down on reasonably priced servings of jambalaya and blackened chicken pasta. Guasch, co-owner of PSRT catering, says he plans to be back each month, which is great news.

With time already running short, we made quick stops at the Art Glass Center of San Jose, which is expanding its operation next month, and Works/San Jose, for its sad-and-funny auction of "Anti-Valentine's Day" art.

We checked out the "Still Crazy" show at the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles, and chatted with Los Angeles-born artist Jane Castillo, whose new work is on display at MACLA.

Our next stop was Anno Domini, the gallery where owners Brian Eder and Cherri Lakey launched the South First Fridays concept in early 2006.

"It's just been amazing," Eder said of the art crawl's growth. "It's great to see more businesses and restaurants trying to make art and culture part of what they do."

It's still growing, too. During warm-weather months, a street market brings even more artists and bands out. And Eco City Cycles has its pedicabs at the ready for anyone tired of walking.

Finally, we stopped in at Caffe Trieste, where owner Roger Springall was dealing with a packed house there to see seven singers from Opera San Jose.

We noticed that the opera's founder and general director, Irene Dalis, had snagged a table in front with San Jose Councilman Pierluigi Oliverio and downtown residents Pieter and Jacqueline Smith