



Melissa Mercado

Melissa was born and raised in Aurora, Illinois. She is a graduate of **East Aurora High School** and the **University of Illinois**. She holds a BFA degree in Graphic Design with a minor in Art History.

Melissa is very involved in the arts movement in downtown Aurora and loves being involved in her community. She currently sits on three boards: **Cultural Creatives** – a group dedicated to making downtown Aurora a better place to live work and play responsible for the **Aurora ArtWalks** which later evolved into First Fridays. **Fox Valley Music Foundation** - whose mission is to preserve, promote and protect the wonderful music of the Fox Valley area while providing Music Education to people of all ages and from all walks of life, and **Aurora Downtown** - an organization of community members and property owners who work cooperatively with the City of Aurora to implement projects funded by a Special Service Area tax, underwriting a variety of downtown improvements and enhancements, and sponsoring events like **First Fridays** and **Winter Lights** which she co-founded and co-chairs.

In addition to the above, Melissa curates the **Paramount Theatre Art Gallery** (since 2007,) researching and selecting established and aspiring fine artists to hang in the gallery, often showcasing student work from Waubensee Community College and North Central College in Naperville. Melissa is active in several art critique groups based in and around Aurora, and has served as a juror for numerous contests. She is a strong advocate for artists and educating artists in the business of art. A founding member of **FVMF**, previously **Blues on the Fox Committee**, which began the annual two-day **Blues on the Fox Festival** in downtown Aurora and the inaugural **Blues on Water Street Festival** in downtown Batavia, Melissa continues to promote the rich history of the Blues in Downtown Aurora through the **Poetry in Public Spaces** project, a collaboration between the Cultural Creatives and **A-Town Poetics** to make poetry accessible to the public.

Melissa works part time at the College of DuPage **McAninch Arts Center**. In addition, she owns and operates **Loco Logos Graphic Design and Consulting** out of her home where she resides with her husband Claudio. Melissa has two grown daughters Gabriella & Amalia. She enjoys art, traveling, music, reading and creating things.