

# Mind-blowing innovation at Maker Faire SD

By Elisabeth Handley

Innovators and creators of all kinds take over Balboa Park October 6-7 at the fourth annual Maker Faire San Diego. This festival of innovation and creativity will highlight the people, places and organizations that make Southern California a great place to live and work, and allows attendees to get hands-on with new tech, or explore age-old forms of making.

The purpose of Maker Faire is to encourage its attendees to test the limits of what is possible through building, creating, and imagining. With this in mind, the Maker Faire team has carefully curated a special lineup of inspiring exhibitors, speakers, and hands-on activities, including over 250 makers, inventors who embrace the do-it-yourself (or do-it-together) spirit, whose work will be showcased throughout the Park. Among these creative displays will be other festival features, including food trucks, robots, drones, soldering, art, music, and much more.

With seven participating venues and 12 zones — both within and around Balboa Park museums — the possibilities are endless.

“There is a greater variety of things to see and do hands-on than ever before,” event

producer Cody Nelson told me. “We’re excited to highlight local makers from Mexico, and the collaboration with the future Comic-Con Museum.”

The Comic-Con Museum presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for event patrons to extend the magic of Comic-Con year-round by helping the team envision and design this new pop culture community hub, which in the future will be permanently housed in the Federal Building. Additionally, there will be some exciting pop culture themed maker activities.

Five sculptural spectaculars will showcase a range of human ingenuity and artistic exploration as visitors work their way between the 12 venues of the event. The first is Zap, an LED-lit, fiery, praying mantis made of lightweight metal with moving parts (located in the Plaza de Panama), and Robot Resurrection, a towering, 30-foot tall, fire-breathing articulating sculpture made from 90 percent recycled materials and reclaimed airplane parts (located adjacent to the Casa del Prado). Then there’s Do You Trust, a huddle of five beings which aims to inspire feelings of trust when one feels lovingly held by a tribe of benevolent guides; it will broadcast devotional poetry in different languages. The 11-foot tall interactive metal sculpture, Unfolding Humanity, calls attention to the connection and contrast between humanity and technology, with an underlying design that alludes to unsolved mysteries in mathematics and the shape of the universe. Finally, Light Project is a large scale sculpture representing the exchange of ideas within an innovative mind that multiply and improve by collaboration.

Across this bi-national region, technology is empowering numerous communities. This year, the Maker Faire San Diego team partnered with El Garage Project Hub in creating the Mexicali Pavilion. “Our third year participating at Maker Faire San Diego is very special for us,” said Barbara Yarza, creative director for El Garage, “because we are in charge of promoting and curating a Mexicali Pavilion that will host a wide variety of Mexican makers. It is a great opportunity to create a link between the two countries by making and sharing experiences.” The Mexicali



San Diego Maker Faire

This year’s Maker Faire includes more than 250 makers – inventors who embrace the do-it-yourself (or do-it-together) spirit. Their work will be showcased throughout Balboa Park.

Pavilion will feature robotics, video games and an interactive art project that encourages children’s participation between Mexicali and San Diego.

Also from Mexico is Epic Queen, a non-profit in Latin America, which seeks to close the gender gap by involving girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) through the maker movement. Founder and director Ana Karen Ramirez will be presenting her passion about technology and gender equality inside the Fleet Science Center. Ramirez is an ambassador of Singularity University in Mexico, a program of NASA and Google, and is a member of the World Economic Forum community, “Global Shapers.”

Maker Faire aims to offer something for everyone with all manner of passions and interests. The San Diego Museum of Man highlights those skills fundamental to human culture, from home brewers to cheese makers, weavers to stitchers, to jewelry making through electroforming. Passionate about Steampunk? The San Diego Automotive Museum’s current exhibition will be open to attendees, showcasing unique cars

and artwork inspired by this sub-genre of speculative science fiction and fantasy, generally inspired by the works of H. G. Wells and Jules Verne. Steampunk incorporates fashion, design, art, music, vehicle creations, literature, and more. A wide array of robotics, art, engineering, costuming, science, and technology will be on display at all participating venues.

Advance ticket adult prices start at just \$21, children at \$13. A ticket includes general admission to all participating museums. A weekend pass, which includes general admission to all of the museums participating in this event, can be purchased in advance online at the Maker Faire San Diego website. Proceeds from this event benefit participating museums.

So whether you’re into artificial intelligence, comics and cosplay, crazy feats of engineering, artisanal crafts, brewing culture, kicking off your own start-up, or just curious to see what you can learn to make, Maker Faire San Diego is a festival that has it all.

**Elisabeth Handley** is Principal at San Diego-based Elisabeth Handley Communications.



ELISABETH HANDLEY