



# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: November 8, 2021

## BIORDI ART IMPORTS

*Application No.:* LBR-2020-21-029  
*Business Name:* Biordi Art Imports  
*Business Address:* 412 Columbus Avenue  
*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Deborah S. Baldini, Owner  
*Nomination Letter Date:* December 16, 2020  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Biordi Art Imports (originally Biordi Artigianato Italiano) is an Italian ceramics store opened by Emilio Biordi at 412 Columbus Avenue in 1946. Mr. Biordi, born in the Abruzzo region of Italy, ran the business until 1977, when he sold it to Gianfranco Savio. When Mr. Savio took over, he traveled throughout Italy, establishing long-lasting relationships with many artisan families represented in the store today. Now run by its third owners, Deborah and Michael Baldini, Biordi Art Imports continues to be the city's premier destination for high-quality, Italian majolica. The store features an array of hand painted cookware and decorative items that celebrate a variety of Italian regional styles. Biordi Art Imports is committed to maintaining its relationships with artisan families in Italy and helping to ensure the continued vitality of this 500-year-old craft.

Biordi Art Imports has been an iconic member of the North Beach business community for three quarters of a century. Its customers are a mix of locals, tourists, Italophiles, and celebrities including Julia Roberts, Francis Ford Coppola, and former mayor Willie Brown. The business is also an active participant in the North Beach community, holding monthly events on Italian culture and helping support neighborhood festivals, community groups, and schools. Recently, Biordi Art Imports established a thriving online retail business to help adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and connect with new customers around the world. On May 1, 2021, Biordi Art Imports was honored with a proclamation from the City and County of San Francisco celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### CRITERION 1

**Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?**

Yes, Biordi Art Imports has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

412 Columbus Avenue from 1946 to Present (75 years)

### CRITERION 2

**Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?**

Yes, Biordi Art Imports has contributed to the history and identity of the North Beach neighborhood and San Francisco.

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The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- The business is associated with the artisan craft of Italian majolica.
- The Columbus Avenue property is located within the boundaries of the community sponsored North Beach Survey, which is currently being reviewed by the Planning Department. The building is a Category A structure that has been identified as potentially eligible for listing on the California and National Registers as part of the community sponsored North Beach Survey.
- There have been countless media publications over the 75-year history of the business. Biordi Art Imports has been featured in many magazines including: Interior Design Magazine, Sunset Magazine, and La Cucina Italiana.
- The business received a proclamation from then-San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom proclaiming November 15, 2006, "Biordi Art Imports Day." The business also received a proclamation from Supervisor Aaron Peskin proclaiming May 1, 2021 to be "Biordi Art Imports Day" in honor of their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### **CRITERION 3**

**Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?**

Yes, Biordi Art Imports is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Biordi Art Imports qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Historic features of the 1922 Columbus Building.
- Relationships with artisan families in Italy.
- Exterior signage.
- Recessed entryway.
- Transom windows.
- Tilework beneath storefront windows.
- Green color palette in entryway.

### **CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS**

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Pottery and ceramics store.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Biordi Art Imports currently located at 412 Columbus Avenue in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Program Manager  
Legacy Business Program

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# Small Business Commission

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_

November 8, 2021

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**Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Biordi Art Imports, currently located at 412 Columbus Avenue.**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included on the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on November 8, 2021, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Biordi Art Imports in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Biordi Art Imports.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Historic features of the 1922 Columbus Building.
- Relationships with artisan families in Italy.
- Exterior signage.
- Recessed entryway.
- Transom windows.
- Tilework beneath storefront windows.
- Green color palette in entryway.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Biordi Art Imports on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Pottery and ceramics store.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on November 8, 2021.

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Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
Director

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Ayes –  
Nays –  
Abstained –  
Absent –

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# Legacy Business Registry

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2020-21-029  
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*Applicant:* Deborah S. Baldini, Owner  
*Nomination Letter Date:* December 16, 2020  
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**CRITERION 1:** Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes  No

412 Columbus Avenue from 1946 to Present (75 years)

**CRITERION 2:** Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes  No

**CRITERION 3:** Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes  No

**NOTES:** NA

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** October 6, 2021

Richard Kurylo  
Program Manager, Legacy Business Program

## Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

**AARON PESKIN**

December 16, 2020

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
San Francisco Office of Small Business  
City Hall, Room 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi:

It is my honor and privilege to nominate Biordi Art Imports for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Biordi Art Imports has provided vibrant, handcrafted ceramic goods to San Francisco for over 70 years. Giovanni Savio, traveled throughout Italy in search of the finest artisans, establishing long-lasting relationships with many artisan families represented in the store today. After a lifelong dedication to Italian Arts and Culture, successfully establishing Biordi Art Imports as the premiere retailer for high quality, Giovanni Savio has placed the future of Biordi in the hands of Michael and Deborah Baldini, ensuring that the Biordi legacy continues.

Biordi Art Imports selects the most finely crafted objects d'art; hand painted dinnerware and unique decorative accessories to line the walls of its North Beach location. Biordi Art Imports would benefit greatly from being listed on the Legacy Business Registry.

I hereby, respectfully, recommend Biordi Art Imports for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aaron Peskin".

Aaron Peskin

# Section One:

## Business / Applicant Information.

Please provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

<b>NAME OF BUSINESS:</b>	
Biordi Art Imports	
<b>BUSINESS OWNER(S)</b> (Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business):	
Deborah S Baldini	
<b>CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:</b>	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b>
412 Columbus Ave. San Francisco, CA 94133	415 3928096
	<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
	customerservice@biordi.com
<b>MAILING ADDRESS – STREET ADDRESS:</b>	<b>MAILING ADDRESS – CITY AND STATE:</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business Address	
	<b>MAILING ADDRESS – ZIP CODE:</b>
<b>WEBSITE ADDRESS:</b>	
www.biordi.com	
<b>FACEBOOK PAGE:</b>	
https://www.facebook.com/biordiartimports/	
<b>TWITTER NAME:</b>	
<b>APPLICANT'S NAME:</b>	<b>APPLICANT'S TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b>
Deborah S Baldini	
<b>APPLICANT'S TITLE:</b>	<b>APPLICANT'S EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
Owner	
<b>SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:</b>	
1086938	
<b>SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (If applicable):</b>	

## Section Two:

### Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS	ZIP CODE	START DATE OF BUSINESS
412 Columbus Ave. San Francisco, CA	94133	1946
<b>IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?</b>	<b>DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATION</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	1946 - present	

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
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OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:



## Section Three:

### Disclosure Statement.

#### San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

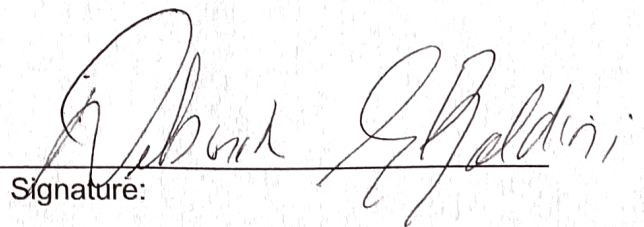
Deborah S Baldini

1/6/21

Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:



# **BIORDI ART IMPORTS**

## **Section 4: Written Historical Narrative**

### **CRITERION 1**

**a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.**

In 1946, Emilio Biordi, a native of the Abruzzo region of Italy, opened Biordi Artigianato Italiano at 412 Columbus Avenue in North Beach. The store is still in the same location today.

Emilio featured a broad range of Italian handicrafts and products including espresso machines, ravioli cutters, rolling pins, and pasta machines. Ceramics were tucked away in every corner. Locals and visitors came from far and wide on the spreading word of the beautiful Italian majolica ceramics available at Biordi.

While Emilio was building Biordi as a business, Gianfranco Savio, who would eventually become Emilio's successor, was absorbing the glorious Renaissance art and architecture of his native Florence. Arriving in San Francisco in his early 30s, Gianfranco taught Italian at Holy Names University in Oakland and worked for an Italian bank, as he longed for a career that connected more intimately with Italian culture. Hearing that Emilio's Biordi Art Imports business was for sale in 1977, Gianfranco ("I already loved the store") met Emilio, who was then 75 and ready to retire. He discovered a kindred spirit in Emilio, which led to Gianfranco's 42-year ownership of Biordi Art Imports.

The store changed from Biordi Artigianato Italiano to Biordi Art Imports when Gianfranco Savio purchased the business in 1977.

For a full year following Gianfranco's purchase, Emilio mentored and guided Gianfranco in every aspect of the business and his place in the North Beach neighborhood. Gianfranco traveled throughout Italy in search of the finest artisans, establishing long-lasting relationships with many artisan families represented in the store today.

After a lifelong dedication to Italian arts and culture, successfully establishing Biordi Art Imports as the premiere retailer for high-quality, original majolica in the United States, Gianfranco retired and placed the future of Biordi in the hands of Michael and Deborah Baldini, ensuring that the Biordi legacy continues. Like Emilio Biordi in the past, you will on many days find Gianfranco at the store, welcoming customer friends and visitors alike.

The Baldini Family passionately accepted the tremendous honor leading Biordi Art Imports into the future. Gianfranco Savio and Emilio Biordi before him built the Biordi brand into an internationally-renowned retail business:

“We have been so touched by your love for Biordi and your support for us as we embarked as curators of the Biordi retail legacy. There is nothing better than hearing the oohh’s and ahhh’s as you are enveloped in the beauty of our featured Italian artisans’ creations. Long-time Biordi customers, we are the third Italian family to hold the Biordi passion for Italy and Italian majolica ceramics.

“Our families, of Italian descent, are of the Earth – agriculture and viticulture. We have an appreciation of the Italian clay earth from which emerges Italian majolica, wine, and culinary delights, which soothe our soul, warm our hearts, and tease our sensibilities. A visit to Italy - stepping through the open door of Biordi and strolling through our North Beach neighborhood, you will find yourself inquiring of your parents and checking family histories to confirm what you feel is true – ‘Sono Italiano!’

“Our hopes are to increase the awareness of Biordi Art Imports to a broader audience, ensuring that collectively we can sustainably support the incredible Italian artisan families that create the art Biordi presents, ensuring this centuries old hand-crafted art legacy continues for the generations to come.”

Grazie mille. A presto a Biordi Art Imports!

**b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?**

Biordi Art Imports has not ceased operations for more than six months.

Biordi Art Imports closed for four months during the early part of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 as San Francisco businesses were shuttered. The new owners launched a website in November of 2019, which was the driver of the business in 2020, and that helped to ensure business continuity during the most challenging days of the pandemic.

**c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.**

Biordi Art Imports is a family-owned business. Deborah and Michael Baldini, spouses, currently own Biordi Art Imports. Deborah Baldini is the majority owner with 50.1% of the business. Valerie Hall is a minority owner with 9.9% of the ownership. Valeria is family not by blood, but as a lifelong close friend.

**d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.**

The ownership history of Biordi Art Imports is as follows:

1946 to 1977:	Emilio Biordi
1977 to 2018:	Gianfranco Savio
2018 to Present:	Deborah Baldini (50.1%); Michael Baldini (40%); Valerie Hall (9.9%)

**e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Documentation of the existence of the business verifying it has been in operation for 30+ years is provided in this Legacy Business Registry application.

**f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.**

The historic resource status of the building at 412 Columbus Ave. is classified by the Planning Department as Category A, Historic Resource Present, with regards to the California Environmental Quality Act.

## **CRITERION 2**

**a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.**

Biordi Art Imports is in the heart of North Beach, the Italian neighborhood in San Francisco. Since 1946, Biordi has been the place for the Italian community to come to purchase Italian imports from Italy, their home country. Biordi Art Imports is an iconic business in North Beach and considered an important piece of the history of the neighborhood, along with Molinari's and Cafe Trieste. Today, Biordi Art Imports is known internationally for offering the finest Italian majolica in the United States.

**b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?**

For the last several years, Biordi Art Imports has been a sponsor of the Italian Heritage Parade. Prior to the 2020-2021 coronavirus pandemic, Biordi hosted monthly cultural events featuring Italian authors, chefs, and Italian organizations including Le Donne. The business has been fortunate to have the Italian Consulate General, Lorenzo Ortona, at several events in the last several years. The Consulate purchased a spectacular Raffaellesco Platter from Biordi to recognize the winner of the 1st Annual Carol Field Prize awarded to Larry Mindel, creator of the Poggio Restaurant and il Fornaio bakery chain. Biordi's has hosted Italian authors for book signings and Zoom events including Carla Gambescia, author of the best-selling "La Dolce Vita University."

In September 2021, Biordi Art Imports was featured in a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Small Business Fireside Chat highlighting the business' success during the pandemic.

**c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?**

There have been countless media publications over the 75-year history of the business. In particular, Biordi Art Imports has been featured in many magazines including:

- Interior Design magazine in 1985 for new store design.
- Sunset Magazine 2005
- VIA AAA Magazine 2020
- La Cucina Italiana 2020

The business also received a proclamation from then-San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom proclaiming November 15, 2006, "Biordi Art Import Day."

On May 1, 2021, Biordi Art Imports was honored with a Proclamation from the City and County of San Francisco honoring the business for its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The Proclamation was presented on Labor Day in Italy to commemorate the dedication Biordi Art Imports has had to Italian artisans.

**d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?**

Biordi Art Imports has been a favorite among many celebrities and local personalities who have been store patrons including Nicholas Cage, Francis Ford Coppola, Carmen Policy, Julia Roberts, Mayor Willie Brown, and Supervisor Aaron Peskin. Chuck Williams of Williams-Sonoma was known to purchase items from Biordi's, including the famed Rooster pitcher.

**e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?**

Biordi Art Imports has been an important part of the North Beach community since 1946. Since purchasing Biordi Art Imports, Deborah and Michael Baldini have supported the neighborhood with sponsorship of the Italian Heritage Parade, North Beach Neighbors, and donations to many local schools.

**f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.**

North Beach is the Italian neighborhood in San Francisco, sometimes referred to as "Little Italy." Biordi Art Imports is fortunate to be located in a popular district for locals and tourists alike. Home to many wonderful Italian restaurants, typically the area is bustling with energy on the street. Biordi's customers are locals as well as tourists (prior to the 2020-2021 pandemic). There are many long-time customers, with Italian heritage, who have been shopping at Biordi's for generations. There are also local Bay Area customers, many whom are Italophiles. They may not be of Italian descent, but they love Italy and shop at Biordi because it brings back memories of a very special place. Young, urban professionals are a new customer base for Biordi's, brought to the store by the addition of new modern pieces. Prior to the pandemic, at least 50% of the customer base were tourists, exploring the wonderful North Beach.

**g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?**

Biordi Art Imports occupies a street-level portion of the 1922 Columbus Building near an intersection where streets converge at 45-degree angles. The Columbus Building has Italian Renaissance-style pediments above the second-story windows. The Gothic Revival church, St. Francis of Assisi, was built in 1849 and is located around the corner. Molinari's is located across the street from Biordi's.

**h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?**

Biordi Art Imports is of historical significance in North Beach. Since 1946, Biordi's has been satisfying a desire for beautiful, hand-crafted ceramics. There is no other place in the United States that has this level of quality in Italian ceramics. Though the 2020-2021 pandemic has been challenging with the store sales down dramatically, the owners has been able to maintain the business because of their strong customer loyalty. On a daily basis, it could be heard from passersby, "This is my favorite store in San Francisco – I love this place." Indeed, North Beach and San Francisco would be a less interesting place without Biordi Art Imports.

### **CRITERION 3**

**a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.**

Biordi Art Imports is the leading retailer for the finest Italian ceramics including Home Décor and Dinnerware. Biordi Art Imports is not only a retailer, it is an internationally known brand. Once only sold in the historic store on Columbus Avenue, distribution has expanded with their products now available on the internet at Biordi.com, as well as through select brand-enhancing retailers including Chairish, an upscale online marketplace; Girasole; and VJB Cellars.

The description of Biordi Art Imports by Carla Gambescia, a well-known Italian author, in Ambassador magazine accurately describes the character of the business in words that make you feel the brand:

"Biordi's stated mission is 'To preserve, experience and celebrate the Italian culture.' If that sounds like inflated rhetoric, especially applied to objects which begin as clay, consider this: many of the ceramics at Biordi proudly attest to their historic or regional influences. Most are utilitarian. All exhibit the highest level of artistry. What could be more culturally Italian than a dual affinity towards beauty and practicality, both informed by tradition and infused with local pride?

"Biordi's eye-popping variety of ceramica (also known as majolica) includes traditional pieces in the style known as Raffaelesco, colorful and intricate designs with a dragon motif based on similar details in works by the Renaissance master Raphael and now hand-painted by master artisans from Deruta in Umbria; religious pieces in the style of

the celebrated Della Robbia family from Montelupo Fiorentino in Tuscany; festive tableware emblazoned with symbols of the 17 contrade (neighborhoods) of Siena, most famously associated with the pageantry of that city's centuries-old horse race, the Palio; and many others.

"Of course, even traditions evolve. Just as post-war Italy broke new ground in film, fashion, design and cuisine, that was also been the case with Italian majolica over the last two generations, often from some of the most established ceramic centers and artisan families. Surprisingly, contemporary designs can be found on Biordi's shelves sourcing from Italy's oldest ceramic community of Faenza in the northern region of Emilia-Romagna all the way down the Apennines and over to Sicily. Hypnotic schools of anchovies, kaleidoscopic peacock feather patterns, fields of 24-karat gold studs, and other captivating surface treatments can be found on these pieces.

"But often in Italy—and always in Italian ceramics—the cultural is personal. Each artisan piece is decorated by hand. Most are also formed by hand. Biordi's 20 mostly-exclusive artisan relationships are with families, a few dating back to the store's founding in 1946. Likewise, many Biordi customer relationships are longstanding. Co-owner Deborah Baldini claims that these often begin with Italophiles, whether or not of Italian descent, who connect with a particular piece because it evokes a fond travel memory of Italy. (Gee, that sounds familiar!)

"Artisan ceramics are not just handmade objects, but arguably the original handheld devices—and they hold so much more for today's collectors than floral arrangements or food."<sup>1</sup>

**b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)**

Biordi Art Imports is committed to maintaining its historical tradition as a retail of Italian ceramics. During the pandemic, Biordi's with the support of their customers, were able to continue purchasing from the artisans, thus ensuring this 500 year old craft stays alive.

**c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).**

Biordi Art Imports is committed to maintaining the historic features of the 1922 Columbus Building.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.italiancs.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Ambassador-Vol-32No3.pdf>, Ambassador, National Italian American Foundation, Vol. 32, No. 3, Spring 2021, pages 36-39

**d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Documentation that demonstrates the business has been an Italian Ceramics retail business for 30+ years is included in this Legacy Business Registry application.



PARMA  
CAFFÈ ESPRESSO MACCHINA

HOME OF THE ORIGINAL ETRUSCAN CHICKEN

412  
BIORDI  
ARTIGIANATO ITALIANO

412  
BIORDI  
ITALIAN IMPORTS











**BIORDI'S**  
**ART**  
**IMPORTS**  
*Italian Handicrafts*















# Proclamation

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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**WHEREAS**, In the eighth century, the Moors of Spain had fashioned a technique to glaze ceramics on the Island of Majorca and the twelfth century the merchants of the Italian state of Pisa had begun importing these beautifully shaped and colored ceramics; and

**WHEREAS**, In America, Biordi means Maiolica, the beautiful ceramics first brought to Italy from the Spanish Island of Majorca; and

**WHEREAS**, Biordi Art Imports is currently celebrating seventy-five years in business, as a unique and remarkable ceramics gallery in Columbus Avenue in San Francisco's North Beach District; and

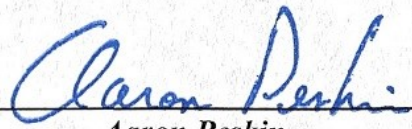
**WHEREAS**, Emilio Biordi, a longtime San Francisco native founded the store in 1946, purchased in 1977 by Gianfranco Savio and now the new owners, in 2018 Michael and Deborah Baldini and Valeria Hall are carrying forward its legacy; and

**WHEREAS**, Biordi is a nationally renowned showplace for fine Italian ceramics that is as much museum as a business; now

**RESOLVED**, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco commends Biordi Art Imports for its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and for creating opportunities for artisans in Italy amid the pandemic; and

**FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco proclaims May 1, 2021, signifying the importance Biordi Art Imports has played in the artisans in Italy, as a Biordi Art Imports Day.





Aaron Peskin  
San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
May 1, 2021

Thursday, September 23, 2021



# Biordi Art Imports, a San Francisco Institution, Announces New Ownership and Gianfranco's Retirement

## Share Article



After 42 years at the helm of Biordi, Gianfranco Savio, is retiring, and placing the future of Biordi in the hands of the Michael and Deborah Baldini, ensuring that Biordi legacy will continue. The 72 year old business, founded by Mr. Biordi in 1946 and purchased in 1977 by Gianfranco has become a landmark in San Francisco, offering the finest Italian handcrafted majolica ceramics.

### SAN FRANCISCO (PRWEB) JUNE 28, 2018

Gianfranco Savio, a kind and knowledgeable man, has always taken great pleasure in sharing his expertise in art by entertaining his customers and friends with rich and enchanting stories. Having grown up in Florence, Gianfranco's childhood was shaped by the incredible art and history of the Italian Renaissance. These surroundings allowed him to develop a keen eye for quality and unique artistic pieces. After purchasing the store from the original founder, Emilio Biordi, Gianfranco travelled throughout Italy in search of the finest artisans to establish a long-lasting relationship; some of these same artists continue to work for Biordi to this day. Throughout the years, thanks to Gianfranco's artistic vision, personality, endearing spirit, and hard work, Biordi Art Imports has become a true institution known all over the world. After a lifetime of dedication in successfully establishing Biordi Art Imports as "the place" for high quality and original artistic Majolica, Gianfranco is ready to pass the baton.

The Baldini family, Michael and Deborah, are long-time Biordi customers with a passion for Italy and Italian Majolica ceramics. Gianfranco Savio searched for the perfect family to carry on the Biordi legacy. Deborah Baldini will serve as the Owner / CEO; she has spent over 30 years in

“What an honor it is to lead Biordi into the future! Gianfranco Savio has built an iconic brand, as Emilio Biordi did before him. I am excited to continue Biordi's wonderful legacy and to develop Biordi brand, for future generations,” stated Deborah Baldini, Biordi CEO.

retail and she will drive the company's strategic direction and daily operations. Mrs. Baldini previously served as the Chief Brand Officer at Bambeco; she was President of Cambria Cove, a subsidiary of Hallmark Cards Inc. and held the position of Brand Manager at Levi Strauss & Co. for many years. Michael Baldini, Biordi's co-Owner / COO has extensive experience in retail, customer service and logistics. In addition to the Baldini family, Valerie Hall is a partner in Biordi; she brings 20 years of creative expertise. She owns a floral and garden design business. Ms. Hall has extensive retail sales, visual merchandising skills, and has partnered with leading retailers in the U.S. to elevate their customers' experience. Ms. Hall's focus at Biordi will be leading the creative strategy for the company.

We will be honoring Gianfranco Savio for his 42 years of dedication in establishing Biordi Art Imports as an institution for Italian beauty, history and tradition in San Francisco and throughout the world on June 30, 2018 from 11:00 – 3:00 at the Biordi North Beach Store, at 412 Columbus Ave. San Francisco, CA.

Share article on social media or email:



View article via:



### Contact Author

**DEBORAH BALDINI**

Biordi  
 +1 (707) 637-6652  
[Email >](#)

**VISIT WEBSITE** 

### Media



# BIORDI ART IMPORTS VIDEO



## Biordi Video Documentary Italy 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-lgK2kzYfw>

Published on Nov 23, 2012

Posted by BiordiArtImports

This 2012 video documentary showcases the Italian artists who produce Biordi Majolica.

In the future we will have more videos like this one, and we hope you will enjoy them all.

Biordi Art Imports, located in San Francisco, has been bringing the finest Italian ceramics to the United States since 1946. We were the first Majolica store and still are the leader in this field.

In this video we will take you on a journey throughout the most ancient and renowned ceramic towns of Italy. From Caltagirone in Sicily to Faenza, through Deruta, Gubbio, Castelli, Rimini, Florence and Siena.

You will see true masters at work in their studios and you will appreciate the classic designs and intricate patterns from Deruta, together with the works from the other ceramic towns.

This video was produced with love and dedication over a period of six month time by the same people who work at Biordi. In this video we want to share our profound feelings of appreciation when visiting our Italian artists.

Please visit us at [www.biordi.com](http://www.biordi.com) and, if you get a chance, visit us at 412 Columbus Ave. in San Francisco.

Please share this experience on your Facebook and Twitter with family and friends.

408-414

Columbus

street address

131  
block number

15  
lot number

2  
summary

Office/Commercial/2  
building type/use/number of floors

landmark number

RELATIONSHIP WITH SURROUNDING BUILDINGS

Relationship of setting to building -2 -1 0 1 2 (3) 4 5

Importance as contribution to a cluster/streetscape -2 -1 0 1 (2) 3 4 5

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN VALUATION

Facade proportions -2 -1 0 (1) 2 3 4 5

Richness/Excellence of detailing/decoration -2 -1 0 (1) 2 3 4 5

Unique visual feature of interest 0 1 (2) 3 4 5

Example of a rare or unusual style or design 0 1 (2) 3 4 5

Overall architectural quality -2 -1 0 1 (2) 3 4 5

PROPOSED FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

CORNICE, PARAPET, APPENDAGE

Importance of cornice to building design -2 -1 0 1 2 (3) 4 5

Cornice contribution to streetscape -2 -1 0 1 2 (3) 4 5

FACADE CONDITION

Physical condition -2 -1 0 1 (2) 3 4 5

Paint/Material color -2 -1 0 1 (2) 3 4 5

REMODELING

Appropriateness of improvements *windows.* -2 -1 (0) 1 2 3 4 5

KOTAS \_\_\_\_\_  
date

Field Notes

Columbus Bldg

Review Notes

Junior League Listing

text  index  file

Northern California Guide

Other Listing \_\_\_\_\_



photo 274-25

B7



# LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEARING DATE: November 3, 2021**

*Filing Date:* October 6, 2021  
*Case No.:* **2021-010306LBR**  
*Business Name:* Biordi Art Imports  
*Business Address:* 412 Columbus Avenue  
*Zoning:* NCD (North Beach Neighborhood Commercial) Zoning District  
40-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0131/015  
*Applicant:* Deborah S. Baldini  
412 Columbus Avenue  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Alessandro Hall – (628) 652-7336  
[Alessandro.hall@sfgov.org](mailto:Alessandro.hall@sfgov.org)

**Recommendation:** Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

## Business Description

Biordi Art Imports (originally Biordi Artigianato Italiano) is an Italian ceramics store opened by Emilio Biordi at 412 Columbus Avenue in 1946. Mr. Biordi, born in the Abruzzo region of Italy, ran the business until 1977, when he sold it to Gianfranco Savio. When Mr. Savio took over, he traveled throughout Italy, establishing long-lasting relationships with many artisan families represented in the store today. Now run by its third owners, Deborah and Michael Baldini, Biordi Art Imports continues to be the city's premier destination for high-quality, Italian majolica. The store features an array of hand painted cookware and decorative items that celebrate a variety of Italian regional styles. Biordi Art Imports is committed to maintaining its relationships with artisan families in Italy and helping to ensure the continued vitality of this 500-year-old craft.

Biordi Art Imports has been an iconic member of the North Beach business community for three quarters of a century. Its customers are a mix of locals, tourists, Italophiles, and celebrities including Julia Roberts, Francis Ford Coppola, and former mayor Willie Brown. The business is also an active participant in the North Beach community,

holding monthly events on Italian culture and helping support neighborhood festivals, community groups, and schools. Recently, Biordi Art Imports established a thriving online retail business to help adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and connect with new customers around the world. On May 1, 2021, Biordi Art Imports was honored with a proclamation from the City and County of San Francisco celebrating its 75th Anniversary.

The business is located in a Category A (Historic Resource Present) building on the north side of Columbus Avenue between Green and Vallejo streets in the North Beach Neighborhood. It is within the North Beach NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District and a 40-X Height and Bulk District. It also lies within the boundaries of the North Beach Limited Financial, Telegraph Hill-NB Residential, and North Beach Special Use Districts.

## Staff Analysis

### Review Criteria

**1. *When was business founded?***

The business was founded in 1946.

**2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?***

Yes. Biordi Art Imports qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Biordi Art Imports has operated continuously in San Francisco for 75 years.
- b. Biordi Art Imports has contributed to the history and identity of the North Beach neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Biordi Art Imports is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

**3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art, craft, cuisine, or tradition?***

Yes. The business is associated with the artisan craft of Italian majolica.

**4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, or architecture?***

No.

**5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?***

Yes. The Columbus Avenue property is a Category A building that has been identified as potentially eligible for listing on the California and National Registers as part of the community sponsored North Beach Survey, which is currently being reviewed by the Planning Department.



*6. Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

No, not as of the date of this Executive Summary. However, the business is located within the boundaries of the community sponsored North Beach Survey, which is currently being reviewed by the Planning Department.

*7. Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc?*

Yes. There have been countless media publications over the 75-year history of the business. Biordi Art Imports has been featured in many magazines including: Interior Design Magazine, Sunset Magazine, and La Cucina Italiana. The business also received a proclamation from then-San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom proclaiming November 15, 2006, "Biordi Art Imports Day."

### **Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business**

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 412 Columbus Avenue

#### **Recommended by Applicant**

- Historic features of the 1922 Columbus Building.
- Relationships with artisan families in Italy

#### **Additional Recommended by Staff**

- Exterior signage
- Recessed entryway
- Transom windows
- Tilework beneath storefront windows
- Green color palette in entryway

### **Basis for Recommendation**

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative

- Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
- Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
- Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION DRAFT RESOLUTION NO. ###

**HEARING DATE: November 3, 2021**

*Case No.:* 2021-010306LBR  
*Business Name:* Biordi Art Imports  
*Business Address:* 412 COLUMBUS AVE  
*Zoning:* North Beach NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District  
40-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0131/015  
*Applicant:* Deborah S. Baldini  
412 Columbus Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94133  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Alessandro Hall – (628) 652-7336  
alessandro.hall@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR BIORDI ART IMPORTS CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 412 COLUMBUS AVE, BLOCK/LOT 0131/015

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on November 3, 2021, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** that Biordi Art Imports qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Biordi Art Imports.

*Locationz*

- 412 Columbus Avenue

*Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Businessz*

- Relationship with artisan families in Italy
- Historic features of the 1922 Columbus Avenue Building
- Exterior signage
- Recessed entryway
- Transom windows
- Tilework beneath display windows
- Green color palette in entryway

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs** its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file **2021-010306LBR**. to the Office of Small Business November 3, 2021.

Jonas P. Ionin  
*Commission Secretary*

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

Resolution No. ###  
November 3, 2021

CASE NO. 2021-010306LBR  
412 COLUMBUS AVE

ADOPTED: November 3, 2021