

PETS

For kittens, no place like home

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FOOD

A new joint for barbecue

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JAZZ

Sugar Pie's back on the charts

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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ SEPTEMBER 2009



Portrait of an Artist

In our midst lives a California painter for the ages

THROUGHOUT California's history, some of its most important artists have lived, worked, played and prayed in the neighborhood.

Think of the great early California painter William Keith and his close association with the Swedenborgian Church, whose rustic sanctuary on Lyon Street is still graced by his murals of the four seasons. Or Arthur and Lucia Mathews, whose studios and furniture shop were on California Street where Whole Foods now stands. Or the esteemed photographer Ruth Bernhard, whose legendary nudes were shot in the studio behind her Victorian flat on Clay Street.

Today, at the San Francisco Towers, the residence for seniors on Pine Street, still drawing and painting every day, lives William Theophilus Brown, one of the pioneers of the Bay Area Figurative Movement, which helped change the course of art history in the 1950s.

Brown, now 90, moved to the Towers in 2001. "I'm glad I'm there," he says. "It's pretty posh. If you want to see friends, all you do is get on the elevator." He has found among his neighbors collectors of his work old and new. And a connection all the way back to the beginnings of the figurative movement: His fellow painter Richard Diebenkorn's widow Phyllis also has an apartment at the Towers.

He has recently joined a new drawing group and moved his studio nearby. "I go every day," he says. "I paint three or four hours every day. I like to work. I think it's the secret to staying alive and interesting and as vital as you can be. And besides, there's no telephone in the studio, so it's peaceful."

His health is good, although at the end of the month he will have his second knee replacement. "After that," he says, "I hope I'll have a lot more energy. I'm gonna get serious one of these days."

LEFT: THEOPHILUS BROWN "SELF PORTRAIT" 1997
AN APPRECIATION | PAGE 5



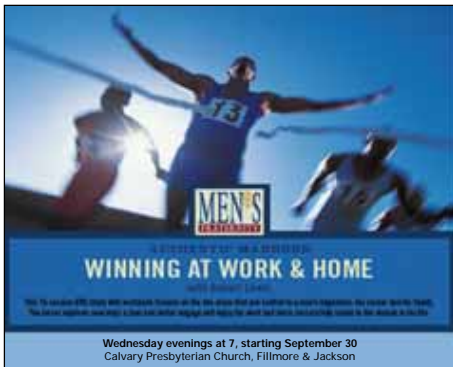
KATH OLIVARY

A gallery of wearable art

Mio, the women's fashion boutique on Fillmore, has always offered some one-of-a-kind creations for shoppers in search of pieces they won't see coming and going. This month, owner Miyo Ota (left, with featured designer Ariel Bloom) will install collections by a group of local designers who have pieced, sewn, slashed, felted, dyed, woven or handpainted unique wearable art — including (right) the textured work of Elisa Ligon.

BLOOM IN BLOOM | PAGE 7
MIO GOES LOCAL | PAGE 8





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FURTHERMORE



James Moore: Here's hoping his example will continue and spread.

The Meaning of Life

A FEW WEEKS AGO I moved into the Fillmore and have been enjoying it tremendously. I love the architecture, the views, the central location, the daily hum, the nightlife and the convergence of cultures from the jazz district, Western Addition, Japantown and Pacific Heights.

Mostly, though, I appreciate the people. While looking at several San Francisco neighborhoods this summer, I was struck by the smiling faces on Fillmore. No other neighborhood I saw matched it.

A clue to those smiles was in a recent edition of your paper. When I first moved into the neighborhood, my building had a small stack of the *New Fillmore* in the lobby. I took one and read the whole thing as an introduction to the neighborhood.

One article in particular stood out: "Everybody Loves James," about James Moore's retirement from Mollie Stone's.

As a theology professor at the University of San Francisco, I constantly ask myself and my students questions such as "Why do we live?" and "What's it all worth?"

One of my favorite answers to these questions is that even the

most mundane things can have transcendent meaning and beauty. Such is the sentiment in Bobby McFerrin's song, "Simple Pleasures," and Martin Luther King's speech, "What is Your Life's Blueprint?" King encourages us to do whatever is our calling, "as if God Almighty called you at this particular moment in history to do it ... like Michelangelo painted pictures ... like Beethoven composed music ... like Shakespeare wrote poetry ..."

According to your article, James Moore has done this not once, not for a year or two, but for a lifetime. I'm certain his warm greetings and genuine concern for the people he served have had a powerful, positive influence on the community. I'll bet it's a source of some of those smiles I've seen on Fillmore.

I hope that, even in his absence, his example will continue and spread. In this hope I posted your article at USF for my students to read. Thank you for your write-up. And thank you, James Moore, for your story.

MARK T. MILLER
University of San Francisco
Department of Theology
and Religious Studies

IN REGARD TO FILLMORE STREET:

There's an awning — a filthy, dirty awning — on the Pride of the Mediterranean restaurant at the corner of Sutter and Fillmore. Is there any way to get those owners to change that awning?

Another thing: On the northwest corner of Sacramento and Fillmore, there's a coffee shop. The sidewalks really are filthy. They need steam cleaning. They sweep them every once in a while, but it's not that clean there.

Hopefully these things will be fixed.

VIA VOICE MAIL

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The neighborhood connection

Every month, 20,000 copies are delivered to homes and businesses in the Fillmore, Pacific Heights and Japantown. We thank you for your support and encouragement and we welcome your ideas and suggestions.

Archive of recent issues: www.NewFillmore.com

Comments and letters about neighborhood issues are welcome there, too.

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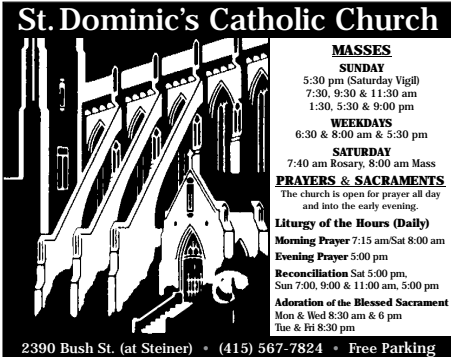
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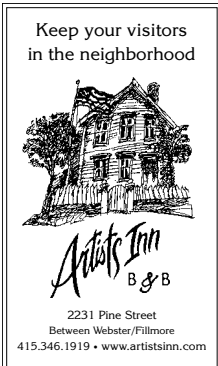
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Mon & Wed 8:30 am & 6 pm
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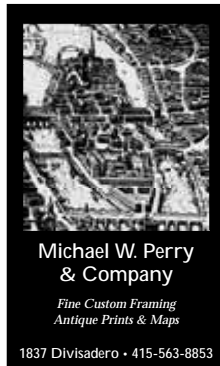
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CRIME WATCH

Extra Ticket?

Outside the Fillmore Auditorium,
a large stash of counterfeit \$20 bills

ON JULY 31, a woman standing outside the Fillmore Auditorium sold her extra concert ticket for \$20. She then went to a bar and paid for a cocktail with the \$20 bill. The bartender told her it was counterfeit. Bar security called the police, who, after interviewing the woman, returned with her to the auditorium. The woman spotted the man who had given her the \$20, still standing outside. He was placed under arrest.

The suspect was found with a large stash of counterfeit \$20 bills.

"We nipped it in the bud this time," says Northern Station Captain Croce Casciato. "It was this person's first time attempting to use these bills."

With the help of today's technology, turning out convincing bills is becoming easier, Casciato says. "They produce them on color copiers. Stores have pens that check them; it's more difficult to pass them at stores. In a dark, busy bar — that's the target; there, they have a better chance."

Casciato says there are a number of ways to tell legal tender from counterfeit bills.

• **LOOK AND FEEL.** Make sure you look at money carefully — and feel it as well. A real bill has red and blue fibers imbedded in the paper. The bill also has a distinctive texture. The lines are sharp and clear, not broken or fuzzy.

• **MIND THE COLOR SHIFT.** Bank notes larger than a \$5 bill use color-shifting ink to print the number of the denomination in the lower right hand corner. Look at the numbers head on, then from an angle. If a bill is genuine, the color on it will shift from copper to green to black. You can also hold the bill up to a light to get a better look at the coloring.

• **CHECK THE WATERMARK.** All bills over \$2 now have a watermark. It's visible when you hold the bill up to the light. The image will match the portrait, unless it's the new \$5 bill. The watermark is part of the paper and it's visible from the rear of the note as well.

• **FOLLOW THE SECURITY THREAD.** All bills larger than \$2 have a security thread running vertically through them. Like the watermark, it's visible when you hold a bill up to the light. The thread has text giving the bill's denomination as well as an image that's unique to that denomination. Different denominations have the threads in different places, so you can spot the bills that

have been bleached and reprinted with a higher denomination. The threads also will glow a different color when placed under ultraviolet light.

If someone tries to pass a counterfeit bill and he or she is still on the scene, call 911. If you notice a counterfeit bill later and the suspect is no longer present, call 553-0123.

Other arrests in the neighborhood during the last month:

Drug Paraphernalia
Franklin and O'Farrell Streets
August 15

Officers on patrol recognized a man with whom they had had numerous previous contacts. One officer knew the suspect had a "stay away" order from the neighborhood in which they had spotted him. They detained the man and conducted an arrest search, finding drug paraphernalia in his pocket. The man was transported to the station and later booked at County Jail.

Vandalism to a Vehicle
Sutter and Webster Streets
August 17

Officers responded to a call from a witness who reported that he had seen someone throw a brick at a car window. The witness pointed out the suspect, who was still at the scene, sleeping near a staircase. The witness signed a citizen's arrest form. After a thorough investigation, the suspect was cited and released.

Driving While Talking on a Cell Phone
Laguna and Turk Streets
August 17

Officers on patrol observed a driver in a Toyota talking on his cell phone while driving. The officers carried out a traffic enforcement stop. After identifying the man by his driver's license, they discovered that his license was suspended. The driver was cited and released from the scene and his vehicle was towed.

Police contact numbers:
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Anonymous tip line: 885-5187
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At 90, One of California's Great Artists Is Still at Work

By ANTHONY TORRES

HERE in Pacific Heights lives William Theophilus Brown, an artist born of greatness and a man whose life has been marked by travel and adventure, hard work, dedication, individual perseverance and resilience — and whose noteworthy artistic accomplishments have ensured him a place in the history of art.

Born in Moline, Illinois, in 1919, Brown's creativity flows from his rich ancestral history. His paternal great grandfather, Theophilus Brown, and his wife, Sarah Ann Brown, were famous literary benefactors. Their home was a gathering place for the leading thinkers of their day, including friends Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and the transcendentalist Amos Bronson Alcott, father of Louisa May.

Brown's father, also named Theophilus Brown, was a legendary inventor of agricultural implements — including the hydraulic lift for tractors — who held at least 159 patents, and for 30 years was director of the experimental engineering division of the John Deere Company.

Steeped in this creative heritage, Brown showed early promise. When he was 11, his father submitted a portrait his son had drawn to a regional art contest juried by Grant Wood, the iconic Midwestern artist whose *American Gothic* is one of the nation's best-known paintings. Brown was selected for a third place award, which Grant Wood himself presented.

"He was amazed to see this kid walking up the aisle," Brown says, "I remember him leaning and reaching down from the stage, and me reaching up to receive the prize, and we shook hands. It was a really great moment in my life."

BROWN WENT ON to study music and painting at Yale University, graduating in 1941. After serving in World War II and fighting in the Battle of the Bulge, he relocated to Paris, where he met and spent time with artists Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso and Alberto Giacometti. He studied briefly with Fernand Léger.

In 1950, Brown moved to New York and became deeply immersed in the budding development of Abstract Expressionism. Among others, he developed a close and lasting friendship with Willem and Elaine de Kooning, who were instrumental in securing him a studio and had a strong influence on his work.

Increasingly dissatisfied with the dogmatism and subjectivity of Abstract Expressionism, Brown decided to leave New



The artist William Theophilus Brown at home in the San Francisco Towers.

A dare sparked a movement — and an exhibition

An exhibition opening this month reflects the legacy of the Bay Area Figurative movement and its influence on contemporary portrait painting.

The exhibition, titled "TIL BET YOU CAN'T PAINT A PORTRAIT," was juried by legendary figurative artist Theophilus Brown, now a resident of the San Francisco Towers at Pine Street and Van Ness Avenue. The exhibition was sparked by a story Brown told recalling a rhetorical dare posed by painter David Park to Richard Diebenkorn, which evolved into what is now known as Bay Area Figurative art.

"One day I was with David Park and Dick Diebenkorn," two of the giants of Bay Area painting, Brown says. "When I first met Diebenkorn, he was doing non-objective abstract paintings. David said to Dick, 'I'll bet you can't paint a portrait.' And that's when Dick painted his first portrait."

More than 100 artists from throughout California entered the competition that led to this exhibition. Brown chose the 12 artists whose work is included in the show.

"I was amazed at how much good painting there is out there," Brown says. "It was very, very difficult to reject some of them. It pleases me to see painting I like — and I don't see that much in the New York magazines."

The public is invited to a free opening reception on Friday, September 25, from 6 to 10 p.m., honoring the participating artists. Artists whose works are honored with awards will be announced at the reception. The exhibition continues for only two days: Saturday and Sunday, September 26 and 27, from noon to 5 p.m., at Art Space 712, located on the second floor at 712 Sansome Street. For more information, visit www.artspace712.com.

York. In 1952 he headed for the West Coast and began graduate study in painting at the University of California, Berkeley. He soon met the young painter Paul Wonner, who would become his life partner.

"I'd never been to California before," he says. "I arrived in Berkeley on the train. On the third day I met Paul."

THEY FELL IN with Richard Diebenkorn, whose paintings were already drawing considerable attention. Along with Elmer Bischoff and James Weeks, they began to experiment and extend David Park's re-

introduction of the human figure into their paintings. At a time dominated by abstract painting, Brown and these other artists combined abstract and figurative painting and evolved into what became known as the Bay Area Figurative Movement.

"Getting to know those people had a huge influence on me," Brown says. "I didn't get much out of the art department at Berkeley. But Paul and I got a studio downtown in Berkeley. One day there was a knock on the door. I'm freezing my butt off. How're you doing in here? That's how we met Dick Diebenkorn."

What developed was a complex and di-

verse range of artistic practices united by the re-introduction of figurative subject matter — landscape, still life, portraiture and nudes — with Abstract Expressionism's formal concerns and vigorous handling of paint.

Brown and the other artists associated with Bay Area figurative looked outward at their experiences of living in California. They painted the world around them. At the time, their move toward the figure and their environment was denigrated by many as a reactionary step backward. They had lost their nerve, some critics said.

In fact, exploring the tension between abstraction and figuration opened a range of new possibilities, apparent in the diversity of these artists and the subjects and techniques they pursued.

In 1956, Brown gained national attention when three of his paintings of football players, with abstracted images of bodies in motion, appeared in a spread in *Time* magazine. The work caught the attention of Los Angeles gallery owner Felix Landauer, who began to exhibit Brown's work. It set him on his lifelong path as a serious artist whose paintings have been widely admired and collected.

NOW, AT 90, his mind and wit remain razor sharp. He continues to be a fully committed practicing artist who goes to his studio every day to work and is involved in a range of artistic activities, including three museum and gallery exhibitions this year. He also participates in weekly live drawing sessions and sits in with the San Francisco College Collective. As he has throughout his life, he plays classical piano with considerable skill, often accompanied by a violinist.

His exhibition this summer of a new body of abstract collages at Elins Eagle-Smith Gallery, in Union Square, revealed a qualitatively different direction for Brown. After a lifetime of figurative work, this was an exhibition of abstract paintings.

"Dick Diebenkorn once told me I'd never be an abstract painter," Brown says. "But he was wrong."

This month, Brown juried an exhibition of contemporary portraiture titled "Til Bet You Can't Paint A Portrait: The Genesis of Bay Area Art Now." The exhibition honors the history of Bay Area Figurative art and its influence on contemporary portrait paintings by artists from throughout California.

Theophilus Brown, an artistic giant, is pursuing his work the same as always, with dedication, focus and inspirational fortitude. He shows no sign of slowing.



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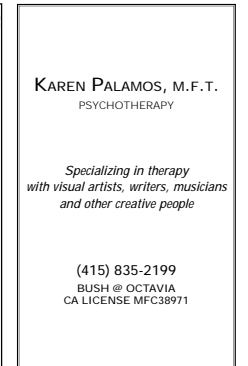
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BY SARALEE

FIRST THINGS FIRST: I've gotten my kittenish figure back — or nearly. That's no small feat, since I gave birth to 11 kittens just six weeks ago.

I've taken a lot of ribbing since my story appeared in last month's *New Fillmore* and some people began comparing me to Octomom. Honestly, I have no desire to star in a reality TV show. But nearly everyone has been kind and supportive, confirming my belief that I'm lucky to live in such a great neighborhood.

One of my first visitors was Dawn Sutton — a woman who allegedly retired from rescuing cats a while ago — but she sure came to my rescue. She enthusiastically offered lots of good birthing suggestions to the friends who took me in. By far her best advice: "Leave her alone. She knows what to do."

Dawn also brought over a kitty condo to house me and mine when the blessed moment arrived. Between you and me, I just assumed the condo would be outfitted with a trash compactor and a bidet and such. In reality, it looks more like a cage. But it's spacious, and it felt like a safe haven to me. So I had those new babies there, in a room of our own filled with baskets of yarn and a gaggle of stuffed sock monkeys.

Once my kids were born, you could hardly swing a cat around here without running into someone who wanted to help socialize the kittens. As nearly as I can figure, that means the humans sit around the condo on pillows, cooing and oohing and ahing and playing with the kittens. Often wine and cheese and olives are involved.



Just Looking for a Home

A bumper crop of kittens, now growing up

And while none of the socializers share their snacks with me, their kitty cocktail hours allow me a break from my motherly duties.

You may remember that the friends I live with rescued me, about to give birth, from an uncertain fate at Animal Care and Control. Since two of my kids from a previous litter already lived with them — and seem to rule the joint, although far be it from me to meddle — they feared those two wouldn't take kindly to their mother moving in.

So they tried to get me a temporary

home at Pets Unlimited, that fancy veterinary center over on Fillmore Street that always has those pictures of fetching cats in the window, many with signs saying they've already been adopted. But a worker there said they don't take in local cats, welcoming only animals from other shelters that euthanize — what an awful word — and I guess I can't begrudge them that.

Now that my brood has blossomed and they're all practically teenagers and ready for new homes, the folks at Pets Unlimited said there might be a possibility that my kids and I could come in if we all surrender together. But I don't like the militaristic

sound of that. As my past proves, I'm more a lover than a fighter.

None of my newest kittens have left the basket yet to go off to their new families, but a number of people — all connected to the neighborhood — have put dibs on some of them.

One local fashionista says she wants two. But they both need to be black so their shedding won't show on her wardrobe — which is all black, of course.

A handsome man from Florio and his handsome partner have been by to socialize three times now. They might take two of the little boys. They seem to have their eyes on Jack, the littles in the litter — and possibly the handsomest, too.

A teen who's an aspiring journalist has her sights set on the kitten with a mustache who has an uncanny resemblance to Walter Cronkite. For her, it was modern love at first sight. Her mom was over socializing my kids one night. She snapped a picture of Walter and sent it on her cellphone to her daughter — who's now got little Walter as the first thing you see on her cellphone.

A gentle soul from International Orange, the yoga studio on Fillmore, had hoped to take in one of my kids so pretty they call her the Princess — but the landlord nixed the notion, as if she were a dog or something.

So it looks as if a few of my kids are on their way to new homes with really nice people from the neighborhood. But some of my favorites have not yet been chosen. If you have room in your heart and your life for a kitten, please contact my friends at editors@newfillmore.com or call 441-6070.

BY BARBARA KATE REPA

Bloom in Bloom

Local designer Ariel Bloom breaks through



"I make clothes for women of a certain age who are not concerned with trends, but want an architectural, Japanese-inspired, flattering but not fitted shape."

— ARIEL BLOOM, wearing a Boro-inspired vest from her new collection

"MY MOM TAUGHT ME TO SEW when I was 8 — and I never stopped," says San Francisco fashion designer Ariel Bloom. "I'll never forget overhearing her say to the neighbors, 'I taught her how to sew a year ago — and she's already better than I am.' I felt so proud."

Bloom also remembers playing a starring role modeling one of her early creations, a brown and cream herringbone shift, in the Home Ec fashion show when she was 13. All the other students were showing off homely dirndls and aprons. She says, "That's the first time I thought: 'Hey, I've got something going on.'"

But she recalls that the real beginning of her fashion design career kicked off in the late 1970s. She was making and selling dolls then, and living in a communal house with Lea Ditson, one of the first designers who clothes were featured in the Obiko boutique, a fondly remembered gallery of wearable art near Union Square.

Ditson urged her to design on her own — and so she did, fashioning one-of-a-kind creations that were also offered at Obiko. Bloom filled in the gaps making costumes for the theatre and for belly dancers. In 1989, with her costume work informing her fashion designs, she also began working at Obiko, where she occupied a favored position as in-house designer.

"I would get to do this, that and the other thing, and was introduced to the fabrics of various parts of the world," she says. "It was a very important part of my development as a designer. That's where I grew up."

Obiko owner Sandra Sakata's unusual way of stocking the merchandise — by color and feel and theme and sometimes by whim — allowed Bloom to contribute what and when she wanted. "Other stores need designers to provide pieces seasons ahead," she says. "But at Obiko, I got to run in and say, 'You can sell tomorrow what I made today.'"

AFTER SAKATA DIED and Obiko closed in 1997, Bloom worked on her own for a while, but the life and work of a solo designer got even tougher after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and Bloom went back to work in a fashion shop — this time at Mio on Fillmore.

"It gave me a chance to put my finger back on the pulse," she says. "I forgot how much I missed that." She worked and designed there for nearly eight years. Then a sense of design wanderlust hit.

"I had been making clothes for 25 years, and I needed a break," she says. "What started out as a break turned into a sabbatical."

Or almost. For two years, Bloom worked at the jewelry gallery Velter da Vinci, on

Polk near Pacific, and applied her handcrafting skills to making framed textile pieces instead of clothing. She created a series of small hand-stitched studies, closely framed beneath glass based on Japanese Boro, which means "tattered rags," traditionally discarded cotton clothing and futon covers pieced and stitched together.

"It's all sort of raggedy edges and random patchwork," says Bloom. "Looking at antique textiles, I realized how mesmerizing handstitching is — and I find myself celebrating its soulfulness while much of the rest of the world is going to mass-produced things."

Then about four months ago, she stopped in to Mio to say hello to old friends and former co-workers — and owner Miya Ota encouraged her to start designing clothing again. She made a couple of blouses that sold at once, but was disappointed that she was mostly remaking the same designs and

styles she'd made in the past.

"Then I realized I could apply the same aesthetic to clothing I had been achieving in my framed pieces," says Bloom, whose new collection at Mio will feature separates including vests, skirts, jackets and coats.

HER NEW COLLECTION will also include a pattern that has recurred in her work since the beginning: stripes. "I love stripes," she says. "I'm now working on a striped collection augmented by Japanese details. It's about angle and proportion and conscious asymmetry. And one thing I do — I've always done — is leave out anything that's unnecessary."

Some garments, for example, don't need a snap or other closure, she says, because they drape closed on their own.

Pockets, however, are never expendable in a Bloom design. "I must put a pocket on a piece or it's not finished," she says.

"People need pockets for hankies and keys. I know I always want one."

But she concedes her creations aren't for everyone. "My demographic is not young people wearing jeans and T-shirts. I can't compete with the Gap," says Bloom. "I make clothes for women of a certain age who are not concerned with trends, but want an architectural, Japanese, flattering but not fitted shape."

And more of her designs — at least for a while — are sure to include her Boro-based touches. "Breaking the edge is so much more interesting," she says. "The imperfections let the soul breathe through the piece. The ripped and stitched, patchy, washed and felted, stitched around holes — all that gives a piece soulfulness," says Bloom.

"I used to try to allow myself to be messy. Now I am. I feel like: Woo hoo — I broke through."

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Mio Goes Local

This month, the boutique launches a new showcase for area designers

MIO, the longtime Fillmore fashion destination for women, this month will add a new boutique within its boutique month featuring unique handcrafted items by local designers.

Miyo Ota, owner of Mio, has always offered one-of-a-kind designs and creations. But she was inspired to add a new section featuring art to wear after seeing the "Artwear in the Galleries" exhibition at the De Young Museum in May.

Beyond an annual craft show at Fort Mason, most local designers have a hard time finding a forum, according to Ota. "I wanted to offer a showcase for local designers because they don't have regular or constant venues for their work," she says. "When I saw them, my heart went out to them — and since wearable art has always been my love, I put the two together."



The work will be featured in a designated designer corner at Mio. "It won't be quite like Obiko, but a small tight group that creates wearable art," she says, recalling the Sutter Street boutique founded by Sandra Sakata, who is widely hailed as one of the originators of the art-to-wear fashion movement. Obiko, which featured one-of-a-kind hand-knits, woven pieces, hand-dyed silks and jewelry, mostly by Bay Area designers, closed in 1997 after Sakata died.

"There's been a void since Sandra passed away. She was very special," says Ota. "I'm more of a sportswear and separates person — and the pieces I am choosing to showcase are individual enough that they don't look alike. Their styling works in a modern mix-and-match way. They don't look 60s-ish and time-stamped."

The designers Mio will feature include Jean Cacicado,

Deborah Cross, Ellen Hauptli, Ana Lisa Hedstrom, Susan Kirschner, Elisa Ligon, Carol Lee Shanks and Arlene Wohl. All offer individually created pieces that are the opposite of mass produced: Instead they are pieced, sewn, slashed, dyed, woven or hand-painted to create unique fusions of color, texture and pattern.

The lineup will also include local designer and artisan Ariel Bloom, who works part time at the shop, and whose creations have been featured at Mio for several years.

"We've done well with Ariel," says Ota. "She designs and sews every piece by herself. There's a lot of love and attention in each one."

The designer corner will be launched on Tuesday, September 15, at Mio, 2035 Fillmore, from 5 to 7 p.m. The public is invited to preview the pieces and meet the designers.



Mio's local designer boutique will feature intricate latticework pleating by Elisa Ligon (far left), geometric patterns constructed of cloth by Ana Lisa Hedstrom (center) and cutwork jersey knits by Jean Cacicado.



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BY ANNE PAPROCKI

THE TANGY SMELL of barbecue sauce greets customers as soon as they step into Dibbs BBQ & Grill, a new barbecue joint at 1109 Fillmore Street, between Golden Gate and Turk.

A nod from the friendly chef and manager, Sam Dabai, is sure to follow.

Although the Fillmore Jazz District has welcomed many new restaurants in the last two years, it wasn't until Dibbs opened three months ago that barbecue finally returned to the neighborhood. A memorial sidewalk plaque still marks the spot at 1335 Fillmore where the Kansas City Hickory Pitt once served up pulled pork and ribs; now locals can walk two blocks south and taste the real deal for themselves once again.

Dibbs BBQ & Grill is casual and basic, with a takeout counter, a row of coolers and a handful of small wooden tables — not so different from the barbecue spots that used to dot the Fillmore. Customers order from the menu board either to eat in or take out.



Sam "Dibbs" Dabai

Be warned: This is a place to go when you're really hungry. Offering breakfast, lunch and dinner, the choices range from a hickory breakfast sandwich with eggs, bacon, grilled ham, cheese and barbecue sauce (\$6) to beef brisket (\$9.99), a full slab of baby back ribs (\$18.99) and a variety of



"I just want people to come try us," says the chef at Dibbs BBQ & Grill — and they are.

'Que on the 'Mo

Barbecue returns at a new Fillmore joint

enormous barbecue sandwiches (\$6 to \$7). Many dishes come with a choice of classic sides, including baked beans, macaroni and cheese, buttered corn and coleslaw.

"I have a true passion for barbecue and smoking meat," says Dabai, whose father owns the restaurant. A self-taught chef, Dabai has been experimenting with soul food since he was young. His Middle Eastern family didn't do much barbecuing, but the car wash on his corner boasted a barbecue every weekend.

"That's how I first got into it," he says. "Every Saturday and Sunday there was this

big gathering around the food." Along the way Dabai picked up the nickname Dibbs.

Everything in this new spot is house made, and Dabai is especially proud of his barbecue sauce.

"Barbecue is all about the sauce," he says. "If the sauce is good, the barbecue is good." Customers are served the mild sauce by default, but sweet and spicy sauce and hot sauce are also available for those who ask. Dabai won't reveal the secret to his sauce, though, insisting, "People need to come in and try it for themselves."

For first time visitors, Sam Dabai rec-

ommends the ribs. "They're my favorite," he says. Also good are the daily specials, which range from turkey legs to phillies and come with a choice of sides.

Dabai's experience includes running Fort Mason Market & Deli, a corner store with a popular deli on Greenwich Street in Cow Hollow. His sandwiches were so sought after that some of his old customers now track him down at Dibbs.

When he saw the space at 1109 Fillmore, he was eager to open his own place and focus on barbecue.

"I thought, what a great area for a barbecue place," he says. In fact, Pittman's, a longtime Fillmore barbecue hot spot, was located just two doors down until a few years ago. Neighbors still talk about it, and some have mistaken Dibbs for Pittman's.

"The barbecue method at Dibbs is exacting and traditional. I start by preparing the meat with a dry rub," Dabai says. "Then I smoke it, grill it for that charcoal flavor and finally put my sauce on top."

Drawing a contrast with the McDonald's located directly across the street, he notes that his hamburgers are made from fresh 100 percent beef. He smiles and says he's hoping to win over some of the competitor's customers.

He's also hoping to win over more of the neighborhood.

"I just want people to come try us out," he says. "A lot of people walk down Fillmore and stop at the Fillmore Center. Come a little farther."

Dibbs BBQ & Grill is located at 1109 Fillmore Street and is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Leon's Was the Place for Barbecue

Leon McHenry was a bridge between old and new Fillmore

BY LESLIE HARLIR

BARBECUE. You think juicy, hot, earthy, succulent. It's sexy food, homey stuff that anyone with a hearty appetite can enjoy, preferably not while dressed for success. Barbecue is food of the people, American regional cooking that reflects the personality of the chef.

Consider the success of Leon McHenry, who became famous for barbecue, and whose special bottled sauces are still in grocery stores throughout the Bay Area 10 years after his death.

One of the few merchants to survive the transition from the old Fillmore to the newer, gentrified neighborhood, Leon beefed up a solid following in the many years he had his doors open at 1913 Fillmore Street. That's one reason he was able to stay in business when the other barbecue spots that used to pepper the street had long since closed.

From the *New Fillmore* archives, an interview with Leon McHenry published in the March 1987 issue:



SCOTT MCEL

"You start to think about barbecue and you think about good times."

— LEON MCHENRY, longtime proprietor of Leon's BBQ on Fillmore

In talking to Leon McHenry, you quickly understand why the man has employees working for him for 10 years and meat distributors dealing with him steadily

for 20 years. Leon is one of the calmer restaurateurs I've ever met. On the day I interviewed him, a man was waiting to see him when a teenage girl burst into the shop

with some urgency, also needing his time. In a gentle, soothing way he made it clear he would be free as soon as possible. I got his full and complete attention until the interview was concluded.

Everyone gets treated like that. Leon, quite simply, is a man who cares.

This comes through in the relaxed way he sits across the table, massive arms hanging at his sides, a mellow chocolate moon of a face, his black eyes looking at me directly and occasionally crinkling with humor.

THOUGH he achieved success as a San Francisco landmark, he was born and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

"My father and mother were in the nightclub business in Tulsa," he said. "They served barbecue and fried chicken. And Dad was a politician as well as a businessman. He used to give big rallies with barbecues where we'd roast a whole cow, goat and pig, rotating them around. Everybody loved it. I guess that's where I first got a love for barbecue."

"And the atmosphere — well, everyone's having such a good time. You start to think about barbecue and you think about good times."

McHenry moved to San Francisco in 1959, cooking, among other places, at the Seal Rock Inn near the Cliff House. But he wanted a restaurant of his own.

"I figured, after standing over a hot grill for 15 years, cooking pancakes and omelets, that barbecue would be easier," he said. "I used to go down to a little barbecue joint on Market Street that was busy all the time. It seemed so popular, I figured barbecue would be a good choice."

TO PAGE 12 ►

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We Gladly Accept:   

Leon Became Famous for His Barbecue

FROM PAGE 10

He opened his first location in 1972 on Sloat Boulevard, across from the San Francisco Zoo. Aided by his wife Veretta, who worked with him to devise just the right barbecue sauce, the Sloat location became popular in short order.

The Fillmore Street restaurant opened in 1977.

KEEPING the stores going means 12- to 16-hour working days for Leon, who generally arrives at the Fillmore store around 8 a.m. to set up, get the brick ovens going, and put the meat in so it will be ready by lunchtime.

"You have to start early because barbecue needs to cook a long time — real slow cooking so the meat is tender and the fat drips off," he said. "I cook my beef and pork ribs and chicken in the brick oven. The sauce goes on when they're ready to be eaten. For cooking,

there's just some seasoning like pepper, paprika, a little onion flavoring. And I like to vary the wood. I'll use mesquite or charcoal or fruitwood like apricot, peach or cherry wood. Depends on my mood."

"One thing that's kept my interest in barbecue is that it's such a personal food," he said. "You devise it the way you like it. Each place would have its own sauce. It's part of the appeal — no two taste the same. My sauce is a hit, I guess, because I've had so many requests for it. I started to bottle it and now I'm selling it in Safeway and Petri's. All these years developing, and in the last year it's finally taking off."

ONE of Leon's most colorful employees on Fillmore is a 66-year-old German lady named Ruth. Some customers find her a bit acerbic — they come in for ribs, and they get grilled.

"People come in with an attitude," Leon said. "If anyone gives Ruth a hard time, she gives one back. But really, she's the sweetest, nicest person. Some of the regulars holler, 'Hey, Momma.'"

Once Leon figured he was onto a good thing with barbecue, he kept his menu pretty basic all these years. Pork ribs are the most popular item. You can also have barbecue beef, chicken, hot links or beef ribs. With a meal at Leon's, you get meat with a corn muffin and a choice of sides.

"They say Fillmore's becoming another Union Street, and the rents are going sky-high," he said. "It's certainly changed since I started here. When I opened, it was 20 cents a square foot to rent, and they were having trouble renting out all the stores on my block. I got a 10-year lease. Then it became 45 cents a square foot. Once the neighborhood began changing, around 1982, and my landlord changed as well, rents quadrupled."

"What can you do?" he asked philosophically. "You have to keep your product as good as you can, make sure it's personal and everything is done right. Then you've got your following and you hope they keep coming back. If you keep your doors open, you must be doing something right."



Leon's sauce is still available

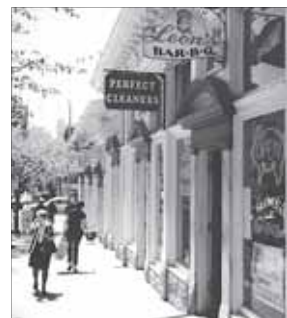
When Leon McHenry opened his first barbecue restaurant on Sloat Avenue in 1973, he began buying meat from a young salesman from Armour Foods named Terry Keenan. Within a few years, he teamed up with Keenan to open Leon's BBQ on Fillmore.

"I loved his products," says Keenan. "The ribs were delicious and the sauce was fantastic." So when they spotted a corner space on Fillmore Street and Wilmot Alley, where Design Within Reach is located now, they cleaned it up and opened a second location.

"Oh boy," Keenan says now. "The dividing line was California Street. South of California was the Wild West in those days." The restaurant took off, and Leon bought out his partner a couple of years later. Just about that time the building was renovated and the rent went up. Leon downsized into the space next door, now home to the restaurant SPGR.

A new partnership between the two friends began a few years after that when Keenan took Leon's barbecue sauce and hot links to market and began selling them in grocery stores throughout Northern California. They're still available today, a decade after Leon died in 1999.

"The sauce is still exactly the same," says Keenan, who maintains a website at www.leonsbarbq.com. "I think Leon would be pleased."



For years, Leon's was located at 1911 Fillmore Street.

JAZZ

Sugar Pie's Got Another Hit

One of Fillmore's own is back on Billboard's blues chart

By LEE HILDEBRAND

VETERAN R&B singer-songwriter Sugar Pie DeSanto is in shock. This summer the feisty 73-year-old Oakland resident found herself back on a Billboard magazine chart for the first time in 43 years.

The Afro-Filipina vocalist's last national hit, a duet with her old Fillmore District friend Etta James titled "In the Basement," peaked at No. 37 on the trade publication's R&B singles chart in 1966. That song and 23 others that DeSanto recorded for Chess Records in Chicago were reissued in May by Ace Records in London on "Go Go Power: The Complete Chess Singles 1961-1966."

The CD entered Billboard's blues album chart at No. 15 on May 30, which is quite unusual for an import with independent distribution in the U.S.

Born Umpeyia Balinton in Brooklyn and raised in the Fillmore, she was discovered in 1955 by bandleader Johnny Otis, who renamed the petite singer "Little Miss Sugar Pie." Oakland basketball star, disc jockey and nightclub owner Don Barksdale added "DeSanto" to her stage name.

Her biggest hit was "I Want to Know," recorded by Oakland producer Bob Geddins in his studio at 11th and Clay. It reached No. 4 on Billboard's R&B singles chart in 1960, leading Leonard Chess to sign her to his company and James Brown to hire her as the first female vocalist to be featured with his revue.

Although DeSanto spent six years as an art-

ist and staff writer at Chess, where her compositions were recorded by the Dells, Little Milton, Minnie Riperton and others, she was not among the figures portrayed in "Cadillac Records," the recent motion picture about the Chicago firm.

"I think Beyonce is very pretty and she is a pretty good actress, but I don't think that her vocal thing fit Etta James," DeSanto said of the film. "Her thing was too light, because Etta never sung that light in her lifetime. They needed someone with a gruffer, heavier voice to portray Etta. Actually, they could have gotten me, but they didn't."

Things have been looking up of late for DeSanto, who barely escaped a 2006 Telegraph Avenue apartment fire that took the life of her husband Jesse. Last September, she was given a Pioneer Award by the Rhythm & Blues Foundation in Philadelphia. Others honored at the ceremony included Chaka Khan, Teena Marie, Bill Withers, the Whispers, Kool & the Gang and the late Donny Hathaway.

During a typically acrobatic performance of "I Want to Know," she caught the attention of Aretha Franklin, who was in attendance. Three months later, DeSanto reprised the song at the Queen of Soul's private Christmas party in Detroit.

"After the show, she said, 'Girl, you stole the show!' DeSanto said of Franklin. "We hugged each other, and that was it. She told my manager (Oakland record producer James C. Moore), 'I've got to have Sugar.' Next thing I know, I was on my way to Detroit."

Reprinted from the San Francisco Post.



Aretha said, "Girl, you stole the show!" Next thing I know, I was on my way to Detroit to sing at the Queen of Soul's private Christmas party.

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VANGUARD PROPERTIES

A Birthday Tribute to John Coltrane

Asian American Orchestra returns to Yoshi's this month

ANTHONY BROWN'S Asian American Orchestra has received international critical acclaim by blending Asian instruments and resonances through the vehicle of a jazz big band.

Founded in San Francisco in 1998, the orchestra has become a performing and recording innovator that combines jazz, classical, world and popular music, performance arts and the spoken word.

The orchestra returns to Yoshi's September 23 to present a birthday tribute to John Coltrane, one of the greatest jazz musicians of all time, who played with vision and spirituality that drew on influences and cultures from around the world. A symposium on Coltrane's music next door at the Jazz Heritage Center precedes the concert.

In the Yoshi's concert, the twin themes of India and Africa are acknowledged as two of Coltrane's most profound musical influences. Leader Anthony Brown will arrange music that brings the orchestra together with local guest musicians and former collaborators from South India and West Africa.

Coltrane's musical and spiritual quest was influenced by his encounter with the music of master Indian sitarist Ravi Shan-



Preceding the Asian American Orchestra's concert on September 23 is a symposium on John Coltrane's music next door at the Jazz Heritage Center.

kar and Nigerian drummer Babatundé Olatunji. Coltrane also drew on American gospel, spirituals, blues and jazz. This fusion of music genres culminated in his 1964 masterpiece, *A Love Supreme*.

Coltrane's local connections and influence are exemplified by the photograph that appears on the cover of *Harlem of the West*, the 2006 book celebrating Fillmore's jazz era, in which Coltrane is seen jamming with San Francisco jazz legends John Handy and Pony Poindexter at Bop City in the 1950s.

The Asian American Orchestra is also making an important contribution to the musical life of the Bay Area. The ensemble's

approach is to take existing jazz works that were groundbreaking in their time and innovate further.

This process began with their 2000 Grammy-nominated reinterpretation of Duke Ellington's *Far East Suite*. Their next recording, *Monk's Moods*, a collaboration with legendary producer Orrin Keepnews, earned a five-star review and recognition as Best CD of 2003 by *Downbeat* magazine. Their 2005 recording, *Rhapsodies*, includes a recomposition of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, completing Anthony Brown's trilogy of homages to American composers.

With its new project, the orchestra ex-

tends Coltrane's inclusive vision by including musicians and instruments from the cultures that originally influenced his jazz compositions. This project blends old and new to create and express contemporary realities.

The group's legacy has been one of community building and interconnections between and within various neighborhoods in San Francisco and the greater Bay Area, exemplified by its "Bridging Japantown and the Fillmore with Jazz" initiative. Through its national profile and critical acclaim, the orchestra has brought welcome attention to San Francisco's Asian American Jazz Movement.

NEIGHBORHOOD HOME SALES

Single Family Homes	BR	BA	PK	Sq Ft	Date	Asking \$	Sale \$
2826 Octavia St	4	3	2	2771	7/16	1,850,000	1,753,125
1832 Laguna St	3	2.5	2		7/17	1,950,000	1,800,000
1907 Pierce St	4	3.5	1		7/23	2,100,000	2,040,000
2655 Scott St	3	2.5	2		8/7	3,395,000	3,100,000
2306 Broadway	4	4.5	2	4169	7/21	5,995,000	5,235,000
3778 Clay St	5	4.5	2		8/6	5,500,000	5,500,000
2510 Jackson St	9	6.75	4	10614	7/23	12,500,000	11,500,000

Condos / Co-ops / TICs / Lofts	BR	BA	PK	Sq Ft	Date	Asking \$	Sale \$
1905 Laguna St #206	0	1	0	685	7/29	235,257	235,257
1905 Laguna St #204	0	1	1	477	7/24	345,000	345,000
2727 Jackson St #2	1	1	0	812	7/21	479,000	450,000
2715 Sacramento St	1	1	0		7/17	499,000	485,000
2701 Van Ness Ave #410	1	1	1	981	8/7	649,000	629,000
3435 Clay St #1	1	1	0	1035	7/28	655,000	645,000
1521 Sutter St #306	2	2	1	930	8/3	678,900	678,900
2040 Sutter St #205	2	2	1	1063	7/28	688,000	680,000
2459 Post St #3	3	1	1	311	8/13	750,000	700,000
1998 Pacific Ave #205	2	2	1	1020	8/11	739,000	725,000
44 Service St	2	2	1	944	8/3	799,000	810,000
2211 Broderick St #3	2	1	1	1098	7/27	874,800	830,000
1880 Jackson St #1	1	1	1	1115	8/7	850,000	830,000
2240 Green St #1	1	1	1	1253	8/4	849,000	839,000
2400 Webster St #6	2	1.5	1		7/28	899,000	890,000
2725 Pine St	2	1.5	1	1730	8/7	1,050,000	1,009,000
1834 Broderick St	3	2	1	1769	7/17	1,195,000	1,100,000
2958 Bush St	3	2	3	2061	8/7	1,149,000	1,149,000
1970 Scott St	3	3	1	1844	8/4	1,195,000	1,160,000
2871 Union St	2	2	1	1490	8/11	1,195,000	1,195,000
2200 Sacramento St #1306	2	2	1	969	8/3	1,250,000	1,285,000
2766 Green St	2	1	1		7/17	1,795,000	1,744,000
2209 Scott St #2	2	2.5	2		7/23	2,085,000	2,085,000
2209 Scott St #1	3	3.5	2		7/23	2,395,000	2,395,000
1800 Gough St #6	4	5	1	3478	7/31	2,480,000	2,480,000



From its prime perch facing Alta Plaza Park, 2510 Jackson Street (far left) emerged from foreclosure to become the most expensive home sold this year.

A foreclosure sets the year's highest price

This past month was surprisingly strong for sales in the neighborhood. Traditionally the housing market falls off significantly in the summer months, then picks up again from Labor Day through the beginning of the holiday season. This summer, however, the market is showing unusual signs of strength. The stronger summer market can be tied to three factors: an increased inventory, a stabilizing economy and continued low interest rates.

Ironically, the highest priced sale this year in San Francisco was a recent foreclosure sale at 2510 Jackson, on the north side of Alta Plaza Park. This 10,000 square foot mansion was originally purchased by Critical Path founder David Hayden in 2000. When Hayden's fortunes fell in the dot-com crash of 2000, the property was reportedly taken back by his investment bank or the lender of record. It was briefly listed in 2002 for \$13.5 million, but didn't sell. It was listed again in April 2008 for \$14.9 million and eventually reduced to \$12.5 million. It finally sold at the end of July for \$11.5 million, the record price so far this year.

At the other end of the scale, the studio condo at 1905 Laguna #206 was the least expensive closing during the last month. But note that this was a restricted sale where the purchaser needed to be an owner-occupant making no more than \$81,300 annually.

NEW LISTINGS: Some notable new listings include 2221 Baker Street, which was last on the market in March 2008. The 5-bedroom, 3.5-bath home received significant structural upgrades and some cosmetic work since then, and is now listed just under \$5 million. Also, 2162 Pine Street #102 recently came on the market at \$299K. The studio TIC has fractional financing available and is listed nearly 10 percent below its 2007 purchase price.

— Data and commentary provided by JOHN FITZGERALD, a partner in the Byzantium Brokerage and an agent at Pacific Union. Contact him at jfitzgerald@pacunion.com or call 345-3034.

Zephyr Real Estate...in your neighborhood.



Lower Pacific Heights:
Stunning 2BR/2BA condo. Open floor plan of living and dining area accentuates the expansive City views, w/ two floor-to-ceiling glass doors to the balcony.
Listed at \$759,000



North Panhandle:
This 2BR/1BA hilltop condo in desirable NOPA has large bay window, an at-home office cubby and wood burning fireplace. Walk to USF, Kaiser & Divisadero!
Listed at \$769,000



North Panhandle:
Stately, grand Colonial Revival 2-4 unit building, priced to sell. Lower level au pair w/ separate entry. Beautiful public rooms and undeveloped attic space. Private showings only.
Listed at \$1,450,000



Inner Richmond:
Remodeled 2BR/1BA condo w/ eat-in chef's kitchen w/stainless appliances & granite counters. In-unit laundry, high coved ceilings, abundant storage, bright and spacious. Just one block to Golden Gate Park.
Listed at \$515,000

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