



NEW NEIGHBORS

J-Pop in J-town

Not quite Tokyo, not quite San Francisco

A GUIDED TOUR | PAGES 8 & 9



FASHION

On Fillmore, supermodels

PAGE 10

THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ NOVEMBER 2009



At the stylish new Out the Door restaurant on Bush Street, a dozen wines are offered every day on tap.



At OTD, the Wine Is on Tap

By CHRIS BARNETT
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIM WILLIAMSON

THE PRICE on the wine list looks like a proofreader's mistake. But celebrated chef Charles Phan of Slanted Door fame — and owner of the new and wildly popular Out the Door Vietnamese bistro on Bush Street, just off Fillmore — is selling a 2008 sauvignon blanc from Sonoma's Dry Creek Valley for \$4 a glass — or \$16 for a full bottle.

Just don't ask to see the bottle. Or smell the cork. The sauvignon blanc and 11 other varietals flow from chrome spigots attached to sleek stainless steel cylinders connected to five-gallon kegs hidden behind closed doors. It's wine on tap. And if you're feeling a little tapped out these days, the \$4 glass of sauvignon blanc gets you a 5½ ounce pour of a crisp, clean, tasty white wine from a Sonoma vintner called, appropriately enough, Free Flow.

TO PAGE 7 ▶

The End of an Era

Good taste suffers a setback as designer John Wheatman retires

By THOMAS REYNOLDS

IN THE SPRINGTIME came the annual invitation to stop by the corner of Alta Plaza Park and tour the elegant home of interior designer John Wheatman.

Hundreds of current and former clients walked through on May 3, a cool, grey Sunday afternoon, to admire the treasures Wheatman has acquired and the good taste with which he has arranged them — and his garden, looking splendid in the mist, and

grown entirely in pots and planters on the rooftop.

The tour coincided with the annual Decorator Showcase in which Wheatman, as usual, had designed a choice room — the only one, a critic said, that wasn't overdesigned.

So it was a surprise when his letter of September 30 arrived. "I have decided to retire," he wrote. "I have loved every minute of my involvement with you." And in merely a month the end has come, after 45 years, for John Wheatman & Associates.

TO PAGE 14 ▶



Every year, his clients are invited to tour John Wheatman's home.

DANIEL WATKINS

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Black Fleece or Brooks Brothers?

I am writing to clarify the article on Black Fleece in the October issue ["Brooks Brothers Runs Up Against Chain Store Law"].

Black Fleece is a brand new concept to showcase the fashion designer Thom Brown. Claudio Del Vecchio, who is also a Brooks Brothers owner, is sponsoring him and helping him to get started.

We flew to New York City to see their only store, which is on Bleecker Street in Greenwich Village. We found the store and its merchandise to be outstanding. It would be a great asset for Fillmore Street's merchants, neighborhood and personality. We hope you will feel the same.

response to Black Fleece's (a division of Brooks Brothers) interest in renovating and occupying 2223 Fillmore, Mr. Scott responds, "How many bloody face cream stores do we need?"

This provocative and highly suggestive comment does not represent all residents of our community. My hope is that future discussion will stay on point and that Mr. Scott's comments will not contribute further to an already highly charged topic.

TRACY HOFFMAN

Please mention the dirty awning and storefront at 1637 Fillmore Street, the Central Builders Supply. It's all marked up and it's very dirty — and it's been that way for ages. It doesn't even fit into the block that it's in.

VIA VOICE MAIL

THE NEW FILLMORE

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Every month, 20,000 copies of the New Fillmore are delivered to homes and businesses in the Fillmore, Pacific Heights and Japantown. We focus solely on people and issues in the neighborhood and invite your contributions.

Archive of recent issues: www.NewFillmore.com

We welcome your comments and letters about our small town in the big city.

Hospital Plan Back Before City Planners

PUSHING FORWARD with plans to build a new high-rise hospital on Cathedral Hill and expand its existing facilities near Fillmore, California Pacific Medical Center comes before the Planning Commission this month seeking approval of its institutional master plan.

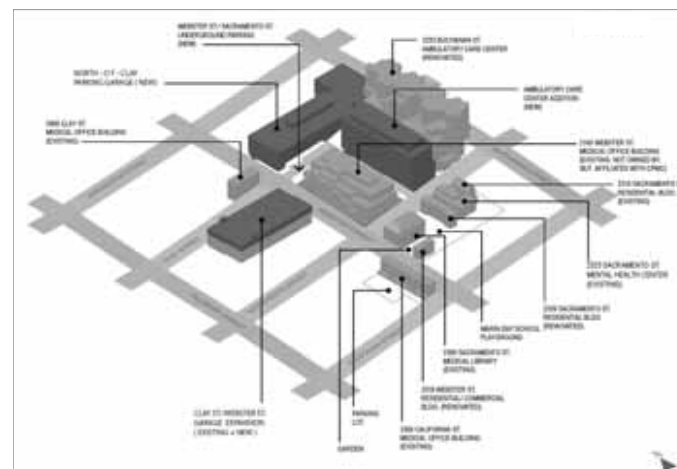
Hospital officials presented their plan to the Planning Commission at its October 15 meeting and asked for approval to proceed. But as midnight approached and public comments continued, the hearing was put over until the commission's next meeting on November 19.

In addition to a new hospital on Cathedral Hill, the plans call for expanding the existing hospital on Buchanan Street, constructing new garages nearby and expanding the existing garage on Clay Street.

The hospital's facilities on California Street near Laurel Village would be closed and eventually sold.

Neighborhood groups continue to oppose the hospital's plans.

"The proposed scale and scope of the Cathedral Hill project will overwhelm our neighborhood and gridlock the Van Ness corridor," Marlayne Morgan, president of



Cathedral Hill neighbors, said in a letter to the Planning Commission. Her group opposes what she calls a "555-bed mega hospital" that would replace the Cathedral Hill Hotel at Geary and Van Ness.

Members of the Pacific Heights Residents Association have expressed dismay at plans to reconfigure the Buchanan Street hospital into an ambulatory care center, arguing that it will bring more traffic and more people into the neighborhood for

shorter treatment. Demolition and development of new buildings and garages would require a decade of ongoing construction, they say, in the largely residential neighborhood.

To encourage public support for its plans, the hospital has launched a petition drive, and they say nearly 7,000 people have signed on as backers of the plan.

At no cost to taxpayers, the petition says, the hospital will:

- build a new Women's and Children's Hospital at Van Ness and Geary, plus what it says will be "world-class cardiac and stroke care centers"

- rebuild a smaller St. Luke's Hospital in the Mission and create a neuroscience center at Davies Hospital in the Castro
- meet seismic standards with new "green" buildings, and

- create 1,500 construction jobs and inject \$2.5 billion into the local economy.



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CRIME WATCH

DUI Eddy and Buchanan Streets September 5

Officers were summoned by a security guard who was detaining a man. The guard told the officers that he had seen the man run a stop sign, then followed his car. Eventually the man stopped, opened the door and fell out of his car. The officers discovered the man was heavily intoxicated. The suspect's car was released to his friend and he was transported to county jail.

Burglary Franklin and Eddy Streets September 9

Officers received a call concerning a theft from a vehicle. A witness provided a description of the suspect, and the police located him in the area. They then contacted the owner of the car, who identified the property that had been removed from the vehicle. Officers searched the suspect and found narcotics paraphernalia. The man was arrested and taken to Northern Station.

Fraud Fillmore and Clay Streets September 9

Officers received a call from Bank of America regarding a man who was attempting to pass a fraudulent check. They conducted an investigation, determining that the check was not valid; it had been stolen during a previous robbery. The man who attempted to use the check was taken into custody and booked at county jail.

Reckless Endangerment California Street and Van Ness Avenue September 14

A citizen informed an officer on foot patrol that a nearby man was swinging a metal chain over his head in a reckless and dangerous manner. The officer located a man who matched the description and detained him. A search revealed that the man had put the chain, along with a knife, inside his pocket. The witness signed a citizen's arrest form. While enroute to Northern Station, the officer became convinced the man in custody was a danger to himself and others. The officer cited and released the man at S.F. General Hospital.

Narcotics Buchanan and Eddy Streets September 14

Officers on patrol in a marked vehicle observed a man talking on his cell phone while driving; he was also not wearing his seat belt. They carried out a traffic stop and discovered the driver was on probation. During a search, officers located 25 small baggies of marijuana — some on the driver, others stashed inside the vehicle. The suspect was transported to Northern Station. His car was towed. Officers who searched the man's residence found large quantities of money in addition to narcotics. The suspect was booked at county jail.

Battery Fillmore and Sacramento Streets September 25

Officers received a call regarding a fight. A witness claimed one man had punched another in the face. The witness followed the alleged assailant and pointed him out to the officers. The man who had been struck suffered minor injuries. The witness identified the suspect and chose to make a citizen's arrest. The suspect was transported to Northern Station, where he was cited for battery and released.

Outstanding Warrant for Assault Lottie Bennett Lane September 25

An officer was sent to the scene of a fight, where he found two women engaged in a heated shouting match. He separated them

and checked both for warrants. He learned that one woman had an outstanding warrant for assault. The officer transported her to Northern Station. She was later booked at the Youth Guidance Center.

Auto Boost Post Street and Van Ness Avenue September 26

Officers in plainclothes responded to a report of an auto boost. They searched the area, locating a man who matched the witnesses' description. A witness made a positive identification and officers searched the suspect. In his pockets, they found a metal pipe and a pill bottle filled with narcotics. Officers later determined that the suspect was on probation for narcotics possession and also had a pending vehicle burglary case. He was booked at county jail.

Theft Fillmore and Pine Streets September 26

Officers working undercover heard a radio report concerning an employee of a bakery who claimed someone had stolen money from the tip jar. Officers got a description of the suspect and began a search of the area. They quickly located a man matching the description loitering at Sutter and Fillmore Streets. The officers detained the suspect. The employee of the bakery identified him as the man who had taken the money. The suspect was booked at county jail.

Robbery Eddy and Buchanan Streets October 6

Officers received a report that a woman had been robbed by two men. The woman told the officers that she parked her car, then walked around to her trunk. Two men approached her; one told her to give him her wallet. He had a gun. The other suspect reached into her trunk and took her bag. Both men then ran off. After taking descriptions from the woman, officers broadcast the information to other officers. A nearby police sergeant spotted a man matching the description and gave chase. The man ran, but was taken into custody. Another officer in the area saw the second suspect and took him into custody. One suspect was holding the woman's bag. Officers also found the gun, which turned out to be an air pistol. The suspects were booked at Northern Station.

Robbery Eddy and Buchanan Streets October 10

Officers received a call concerning a woman who had been robbed of her cell phone. The woman stated that she was certain she would recognize the man if she saw him again. From her description, officers believed it was an individual with whom they previously had contact, and took the woman to Northern Station to view a photo line-up. Soon afterward, officers on patrol informed the officers who had responded to the woman they had just arrested the suspect for vehicle theft. He was transported to Youth Guidance Center, where he was booked.

Shoplifting Webster Street and Geary Boulevard October 12

Officers responded to the Safeway store; security officers there were holding a man for shoplifting. The suspect was observed taking liquor bottles from the shelves and putting them into his backpack. The man walked past the open cash registers, making no attempt to pay. The officers took custody of the suspect and discovered he had an outstanding narcotics warrant amounting to \$15,000. The suspect was transported to Northern Station.

DEPARTURES

Mayor of Fillmore Runs Out of Lives

Nearly everyone knew Boomer, who has now caught his final mouse

By DONNA GILLESPIE

BOOMER, the beloved orange tabby many locals called the mayor of Fillmore Street, and an accomplished — perhaps too accomplished — mouse, died on October 14. Rat poisoning was the cause.

Boomer had style, and a marked predilection for mingling with humankind. In his heyday, he was a welcome sight as he made his calls up and down Fillmore Street, padding from office to studio to store just to check in and see how everybody was doing.

"I can't even count how many stores were on his rounds," Boomer's owner, Gretchen Barley, said of her cat's uncommonly extroverted personality.

Some merchants kept kibble on hand just in case Boomer wandered in wanting a snack. Most considered him an essential



Boomer. He liked people.

part of their store's ambience.

Thomas Kuhn's dental office on California near Fillmore was arguably Boomer's favorite place to meet and greet.

Shannon Johnsrud, the receptionist there, says that when they learned of Boomer's death, they sent an email message to all the dental patients to let them know. One patient replied: "I came because of you, Dr. Kuhn. But I stayed because of Boomer."

Johnsrud reports that another patient called from the hospital while attending her husband in intensive care to express her grief about Boomer. "She said she had an older son who was schizophrenic," Johnsrud said. "And her son would bond with Boomer. She said, 'I would almost feel jealous. My son was never able to give me that much attention.'"

Johnsrud also reports that one of the therapists in the offices upstairs sometimes

used Boomer as part of the treatment. Once, she said, a couple was sitting with Boomer between them. When the couple started arguing, Boomer leaped away from them and into the therapist's lap.

But Boomer's adventurous lifestyle had always been fraught with hazards. The final poisoning incident was the third he had suffered in his 13 years. This time, he didn't make it. Barley said the vet believed the cat's system had been too greatly compromised by the prior incidents. Boomer died while receiving emergency treatment.

"He went fast," Barley reports. "I came home from a trip and the vet told me he was gone."

Barley is passionate about discouraging people from using poison to combat mice and rats. By the time the symptoms — lethargy and trouble breathing — are apparent in cats, it's often too late.

STREET TALK

Harput's moves to Union Square

Harput's, the longtime — and for many years nearly the only — retail business on lower Fillmore, closed its doors and moved to Union Square last month. Harput's Union is located at 140 Geary. Prada's former home, in the heart of the Union Square shopping district.

"There are five great retail blocks in this country," says owner Gus Harput. "and I'm on one of them." Harput was a leader in the long-running efforts to revitalize the area now promoted as the Jazz District, but had sometimes been at odds with the owners of new businesses that opened in recent years. His family's original Adidas store will continue on Fillmore.

THE GREAT FLOOD: It was only a few weeks ago that Alaska — the high-end leather goods store at 2033 Fillmore — announced plans to remake its slubby space and focus solely on clothing and accessories for men. Now the store is closed, along with next-door neighbor Betsy Johnson, after a plumbing problem in an upstairs apartment flooded both stores, as well as a third shop that until recently housed My Bougie. It may be a few weeks before the stores are able to reopen.

GOOD TASTE: Right from the beginning people were calling it the "first annual" Taste of Fillmore. The new neighborhood street party — with local restaurants and stores offering food, wine and fashion — held on October 3 drew praise all around. Now the Fillmore Merchants Association has made it official: There will be a second annual Taste of Fillmore next fall.

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The Artists Inn, at 2231 Pine Street, offers three rooms in one of the oldest houses in the neighborhood.

HALF A BLOCK UP Pine Street from Fillmore, behind a perfectly maintained white picket fence, stands the Artists Inn. A flag flies in the breeze, but there is no sign of what lies behind the pale blue and white facade: three former art studios that a decade ago were transformed into a charming bed and breakfast.

"Never did it cross our minds we'd run a B&B," says the inn's co-proprietor Denise Shields. She and her husband, the respected artist Bill Shields, bought the house in the mid-70s when it desperately needed their love and care — and a major remodel.

"People said we were crazy to buy this house," says Denise.

"It was a real mess," adds Bill.

Built in 1863 during the Civil War, this was one of the first farmhouses in what was then mostly grazing land. Years of neglect left it worn and unremarkable. Still, the old house sparked the creative spirit in Bill, a lifelong artist and designer.

"I went in and took a look and said, 'Let me have it!'" he recalls. He considers the remodel his greatest art project.

Denise, formerly an interior designer, says they fell into the hospitality business after a friend — another bed and breakfast owner — remarked that the studio space would make a perfect B&B.

The rooms — in a separate building that sits behind the original house — are Bill's own creation. He envisioned and then built the shingle-style rear building that originally housed three art studios, taking the upstairs space as his own and

LOCALS



Proprietors Bill and Denise Shields: "Never did it cross our minds we'd run a B&B."

The Artistic Innkeepers

Bill and Denise Shields provide a neighborhood home away from home

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY CARINA WOUDEBERG

renting the other two studios to two other artists. Those rooms — Virginia's Room and Robert's Room, both named for the artists who once worked in them — plus the neighboring Garden Room make up the Artists Inn.

Denise estimates that a third of the inn's guests are parents with children who live in San Francisco — many nearby in the neighborhood.

"It's sort of their home away from home when they visit their kids," she says.

The inn also attracts a number of regulars — frequent visitors who stop in for a few days several times a year.

Kirk Larson and Susan Gantt are among the regularly returning guests. The couple flies in from Atlanta several times a year for Gantt's work in psychology. October marked seven years of stays at the inn for the couple, who estimate they are in residence with the Shields a month of every year.

"We're not hotel sort of people," says Larson.

"We love the neighborhood," says Gantt.

The two often jog to their favorite destinations. When she's in the city, Gantt works at Fort Mason, an easy 20-minute walk. Both like that the



Susan Gantt and Kirk Larson enjoy the sunny courtyard at the inn on their frequent visits from Atlanta.

neighborhood is "part of the flow of living in the city," rather than a destination for visitors.

Gantt also admires Denise's "comfortably elegant" B&B style, and says she loves the flowers in the courtyard between the house and the studios.

"There's always something blooming in the courtyard," she said. "Sometimes on a windy San Francisco day, it's a warm little oasis."

Denise takes pride in the effort she and her husband put into running the B&B. Every bed is comfortable and outfitted with good cotton sheets. Each room has its own entrance, bathroom and access to a refrigerator. The rooms are all equipped with televisions and wi-fi, and all are hung with Bill's paintings.

But Denise says she likes to keep it simple.

"There's no frou-frou here," she says. "I don't have a bunch of little things the guests have to move before they can put down their stuff."

Bill, now 84, and Denise, 65, say they love operating the bed and breakfast. Yet only a couple of years ago, they considered closing it down.

"Because of age — and just because," Denise says. But neighbors and loyal customers protested, and the Shields, feeling the love, changed their minds.

"We decided to stay open but not serve breakfast," she says. "So now I go to yoga every morning."

For more information about the Artists Inn, at 2231 Pine Street, call 346-1919 or visit www.artistsinn.com.

At OTD, 12 Wines on Tap

• FROM PAGE ONE

If anybody is still feeling flush, the wine list also includes a 2008 Natural Process Alliance skin-fermented chardonnay made from Sonoma grapes and custom-blended for OTD, offered on tap for \$13.50 a glass or \$54 for a 750 ml carafe. A 2008 Scholium Project sauvignon blanc from Farina Vineyard in Sonoma goes for a hefty \$16.50 a glass or \$66 a carafe.

But most of the wines on tap are under \$10 a glass.

"I got the idea from a story about a Los Angeles hamburger place that has affordable wines on tap," Phan says. "Up here, Bruce Hill's Pico in Larkspur also has wines on tap." And so does Delfina Pizzeria on California Street.

I said, "That's cool stuff. We can do that."

The project was put in the hands of Gus Vahlkamp, a sommelier for the Phan family empire, who was up for the challenge. "It's always befuddled me why a glass of tasty, well-made wine can't cost the same as a glass of good beer," he says.

The sommelier originally envisioned three wines on tap — a red, a white and a rose. But Phan had a grander plan: 12 spigots offering a spectrum of prices and quality. The wines would rotate as more vintners were willing to custom blend wine for



It's wine on tap: At the new OTD, a dozen chrome spigots attached to sleek stainless steel cylinders are connected to five-gallon kegs.

OTD that could be stored in a keg pressurized to ensure freshness.

The gas may turn off some purists, but Vahlkamp says pressurization effectively protects the wine. And the kegs may sound off-putting to oenophiles who fancy their wines aged in vintage French oak. OTD's tap wines are stored in converted Cornelius kegs once used for tap beer and soda pop.

Phan envisioned tapping into the market for really fine wines by the glass and pouring different size servings. OTD offers a half glass, full glass, half carafe or full carafe, with the price doubling each step up.

For fun and buzz, the tap wine is served in carafes that are actually Pyrex flasks. And

the steel cylinders and chrome taps add to the restaurant's ultra-modern look.

Phan and Vahlkamp don't tout it, but much of the wine OTD is pouring is also green. The 2008 Natural Process Alliance chardonnay is made from organically grown grapes — no pesticides, no manufactured fertilizer. A pinot blanc from Orsi Vineyards on the Russian River is the product of biodynamic agricultural techniques.

Vahlkamp says he doesn't insist that OTD's tap wines be certified biodynamic, but he's adamant about avoiding vintners who want to sell him tricked-up tap wine.

Traditionalists still have plenty to choose from at OTD. It may be stored out of sight,

but there is a fine selection of corked Austrian, German, Italian, French and Spanish whites and reds on a list that's heavy on Reslings because of their compatibility with Vietnamese food.

Vahlkamp keeps his promise that a glass of wine should cost about the same as a glass of beer. The \$4 sauvignon blanc is only a quarter more than an 11 oz. bottle of Hoegaarden wheat beer from Belgium. But then OTD also pampers true beer aficionados with a diverse list of rare suds. The Flemish Brasserie Dubuisson "Scaldis" strong ale (24-proof) costs \$27 for a 25.4 oz. bottle.

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New People in the Neighborhood

J-Pop Center brings new energy to Japantown

By ANNE PAPROCKI



MANEUVERING another bite of warm beef curry into my mouth, I debated whether to check out artist Yoshitaka Amano's show or take in the matinee of the movie *Maiko Hanaani!!! (Geisha Full Throttle)*, a comedy about geishas in training.

Just then, a group of teenaged girls wearing thigh high black vinyl boots, striped leggings, puffy mini dresses and huge hair ribbons sauntered by.

This wasn't some hip corner of Tokyo's Harajuku district. I was right here in the neighborhood — and out to explore the recently opened New People complex, also called the J-Pop Center, at 1746 Post, between Buchanan and Webster Streets.

Opened in August by Japanese manga and movie mogul Seiji Horibuchi, the

stylish complex houses a first-run Japanese language cinema, a cafe and several shops, plus an art gallery on the top floor.

The first new commercial space built in Japantown in decades, New People feels edgy and dynamic. Its sleek building, with giant windows and a bright red entryway, stands out in the neighborhood. Though at first glance it may seem like an urban mall, New People, like many of the objects inside, is not what it appears.

This genre-bending spot also sells Blue Bottle coffee — not exactly a Japanese original, but a steaming cup of the San Francisco specialty from the lobby cafe helps form a bridge from one culture to another. The cafe menu also includes Bento boxes and beef curry from Ferry



J-Pop in J-town

Through the bright red door of New People's J-Pop Center at 1746 Post Street (far left) are a cafe, cinema, gallery and shops featuring unusual clothes, including lacy baby dresses for kids and grown-ups (center left). Starting November 21, the Superfrog gallery (near left) will host "Creator's Market," which will include affordable art by five Japanese artists. Check www.newpeopleworld.com for movie selections and times, store hours and special events.

Market favorite Delica (\$8.75-\$9.95). For moviegoers and daring foodies alike, \$4 bags of "j-pop corn" reinvent the American classic with flavors such as curry, wasabi and shichimi.

It's this continual conversation between American and Japanese pop culture that makes the J-Pop Center feel unique.

New People proclaims that it has "anything and everything kawaii, fun, fabulous and bizarre." After verifying that kawaii does indeed mean cute, I have to agree the slogan is right on point. The store also specializes in objects that aren't quite what they seem. In the first floor shop, there is an entire section of candles shaped and scented like pastries and desserts. There's a calculator made from computer keys—one of my favorites, but

at \$50, unlikely to come home with me. There's also a ring that looks like a dollop of frozen yogurt, resting prettily in a paper ice cream cup instead of a jewelry box, and iPod speakers shaped like mini Mini Coopers (\$139.95).

The store's proprietors promise the objects in the store will change, ultimately creating a Japanese pop culture emporium shaped by San Franciscans' taste.

There is an elevator, but the stairs offer the most adventure for moving from one floor to the next. Illustrations cover the walls, depicting everything from a bored-looking boy to bent pencils and what can only be described as a furry slug. Like almost everything about New People, I found that the unlikely drawings forced

me to slow down and really look at the surroundings.

Be sure to check out the second floor bathroom, equipped with Toto washlet toilets, which are very popular in Japan. The walls and door are filled with funky illustrations: a fox, a row of ants and evil looking twin girls with bees for eyes—all creating a vaguely unsettling atmosphere.

Elsewhere on the second floor, three boutiques sell unusual clothing and accessories — everything from funkified split-toed Japanese work shoes, goth-like black jumpers and lacy baby dresses for grown-ups. A sweet tiered miniskirt is paired with shocking black boots.

While all of New People felt a bit like a gallery to me, my favorite part was Superfrog, the gallery space on the top

floor. Through November 8, the gallery is showing "Deva Loka USA" by Yoshitaka Amano, who is well known for his work with Japanese cartoons and Final Fantasy video games. The artist notes that he was "very much influenced by American comics and pop art of the '60s," and this exhibit pays homage to those influences.

Also not to be missed is New People's cinema, which was the original inspiration for the complex. In addition to his anime empire, which notably brought Pokemon to the United States, Horibuchi is the CEO of VIZ Pictures. He has managed to acquire exclusive first-run rights to Japanese films for New People. While sipping Ito En tea in the state-of-the-art theater, visitors can watch the same movies being shown in Japan today.

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Clearly disobeying instructions by flashing a smile, Marjorie Leet Ford leads the models from the Limu boutique out for a bow at the end of their presentation. At right, fashion — and model — with attitude.

FIRST PERSON

Finding Fierceness at a Fashion Show

At Taste of Fillmore, discovering an inner model

By MARJORIE LEET FORD
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIM WILLIAMSON

“WOULD you like to have an ass?” Simone Derayah asked. She wasn’t asking me. I had my own. She was showing a foundation garment to a few other models-to-be in the fashion show for the first annual Taste of Fillmore celebration on October 3. She held up a knee-length girdle with two bubbles, like falsies, sewn into the rear.

Everyone giggled. I hadn’t seen anything quite like this, but I recalled that, in a Paris pharmacy, there had been a whole wall of packages holding *culottes pousse-derrieres*, or push-up panties, which may explain why French women have such shapely bottoms.

Along with a number of wineries and a dozen Fillmore restaurants, there were fashion shows all afternoon presented by several neighborhood boutiques — from Betsey Johnson to Repeat Performance to Toujours.



Derayah owns Limu, the chic shop at 2237 Fillmore that offers innovative and intricate fashions by new designers from Italy, France and other places around the world. She’d enlisted several gorgeous girls — all 18 years old and eight feet tall — to model selections from her shop that day. I’m a multiple of that age and a fraction of the height. That was why she wanted me.

“These girls would look great in gunny sacks,” Derayah said. “But my customers aren’t teenagers. And they’re not all incredibly tall and narrow.” I reluctantly accepted her invitation to model. We talked a little about clothes, but mostly about *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. Derayah was born in Tehran and grew up in London, taking her summer vacations in France. Her mother is still a professor at the university where the author of the book taught. As I left, she said, “Practice your fierce walk.”

I gathered she wanted us to look mighty,



The fashion show by local boutiques at Taste of Fillmore ended with more typical models outfitted in silks and accessories from Toujours, the French lingerie shop.



to seem to prow. A few minutes a day, I stomped around the apartment. I stalked myself in the mirror, trying to look blasé. I told my second cousin, Tallulah, all about it. At age two, she is already a fashionista. When she sees me, she runs up and touches a colored stripe on my shoe and lights up. She started practicing her fierce walk as I was practicing mine.

The Monday before the event, the crew gathered to rehearse in a yoga studio. We were all late because Dino’s 21st anniversary party jammed the sidewalks at Fillmore and California with families getting free pizza. It was a struggle for us to move an inch a minute. Perhaps we should have walked more fiercely.

At the meeting, two women seemed to be in charge. One demonstrated the walk and the facial expression. No smiling! Don’t look at your friends! With a grim look on her face, she marched like a drill sergeant,

commanding us to walk and act like her. There was a choreography of walking halfway down the runway, looking over your left shoulder once, then proceeding to another point, turning your shoulder three times, in three directions, left-right-center. Or should it be left-center-right? There was a lot of confusing I was glad when the rehearsal ended.

Playing dress-up is a girly pleasure. The dress everyone liked best on me was a Jackie-O style — body-skimming, with a matching brocade jacket.

“When you get to the photographer, jut out your shoulder and put your hand in your pocket,” I was instructed. Which shoulder? I kept forgetting. The dress was a little too mother-of-the-bride for my taste, until Simone brought out the shoes: silver-gray flats. Suddenly, with black tights, the look was modern.

As I faced a mirror, Simone showed me

that I have a tendency to tilt my head, as if questioning. She gently took my head in her hands and straightened it out. “Shoulders back. Ribs up. Focus on what’s straight ahead. And don’t smile!” She pointed me to the chandelier.

I walked — the right way — and she applauded. When I told Tallulah’s mother about the challenge, she burst into laughter. I’d Freudian-slipped and referred to the runway as “the gangplank.”

I was nervous. The night before the big event I woke up at 3 a.m. and didn’t sleep again. First thing in the morning, I had to report to have my hair styled into something bouffant. It was blown, ratted and turned up at the neck with a curling iron into a little flip. Then the make-up, for which I was grateful after seeing the circles under my eyes.

I was the second to step out on the

platform. Behind the scenes I was supposed to wait for one of the grim women to point a finger, meaning GO! I stood, waiting for the signal. I must have tilted my head, maybe even smiled. She snarled at me: “I want attitude!”

I was furious. When she gave her finger-point, I had no trouble stomping down that gangplank. Talk about a fierce walk. There was no danger that I’d smile — even when I heard a few hoots and whistles and some applause. She’d gotten what she wanted by insulting me.


When it ended, Tallulah stomped over fiercely, her baby-blue dress flying and her arms wagging out for a hug. She, her mother, her grandpa and my husband Phil and I joined the crowd, nibbling deviled eggs from the Elite Café, ribs from 1300 on Fillmore and little sandwiches from La Boulange. We sipped some fantastic wines, we bumped into people we liked — and I no longer felt quite so fierce.

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The Cuban Son Is Rising This Month at Yoshi's

By ANTHONY TORRES

SEPTETO NACIONAL — officially the Septeto Nacional de Ignacio Pineiro — is a group credited with expanding the Son, a musical style that originated in Cuba and gained worldwide popularity during the 1930s.

The group comes to Yoshi's on Fillmore this month, appearing November 23 to 26, with a special Thanksgiving Son celebration on November 26 at 8 p.m.

Son is a conflation of the structure and elements of Spanish cancion (song) and guitar with African percussion rhythms and instruments. It is considered the basis for Salsa and is one of the most influential and widespread forms of Latin American music.

Son is thought to have begun during the end of the 19th century. It became popular during the 1920s with the arrival of radio and mass American tourism to Cuba to evade Prohibition. From the '20s through the late '50s, Cuba was synonymous with an "anything goes" adventure in a tropi-



If you like the music associated with the Buena Vista Social Club, the Septeto Nacional (left) is a group to see.

cal paradise and was vigorously promoted around the world by the travel industry.

The Son music that developed in this environment, like Cuban culture itself, was a product of the intermingling of African-derived music and the music of the descendants of Spanish colonists. Son was originally a rural musical form that developed as an accompaniment to dancing, then became the dominant popular urban music in 20th century Cuba. Typically, Son instrumentation includes the tres — a type of guitar with three sets of closely spaced strings — plus standard guitars and various percussion instruments.

Septeto Nacional began in 1927 in cen-

tral Havana as a sextet led by Cuban sonero and composer Ignacio Pineiro. Later the group developed into a septet to overcome his dissatisfaction with the existing sound of the Son groups, which were mainly anchored in vocals, percussion and strings. Pineiro created his new group, the Septeto Nacional, by adding a trumpet as lead instrument for the first time in the history of Son.

The added trumpet completely changed the sound and Son quickly became the most celebrated music in Cuba, and later outside the country. In 1928, Son and Septeto Nacional were the sensation of the world exposition in Sevilla. Son became the basis for a range of other Latin American

music styles, including Mambo and Salsa.

The current group continues the Son tradition as a third generation of all-star musicians who play beautifully orchestrated arrangements that speak both to the history of the group and to the contemporary cultural relevancy of the music. Today's audience will find it hard to believe that Septeto Nacional was founded in 1927, since the group and the music transcend origins with fresh musical translations of the traditional music of Cuba that sound as wonderfully fresh now as ever.

If you like the music associated with the Buena Vista Social Club, this is a group you do not want to miss.

The Story of a Magical Plant

And the determined gardener who helped it live

By JEAN COLLIER HURLEY

THIS IS A STORY about kindness, determination, beauty — and an unusual bougainvillea plant.

Over the years, the front yard of the little house at 1923 Webster Street had become a junkyard, its wooden fence a dilapidated eyesore. The kindly owner, who had raised her family there, was too old and frail to do anything about it. In April 1993, her next-door neighbor offered to plant a garden, turning neighborhood blight into a blooming oasis.

At the nursery selecting plants, the neighbor, Loretta Bakker, saw a small Tahitian Gold bougainvillea with unusual gold and fuchsia bracts. "I'd give this plant three years," the nurseryman said. "This variety only grows in warm Southern California climates. It may not make it here, but if you can keep it alive for three winters it may survive."

"I'll take it," said Bakker. One winter went by, then two winters, then came the third, which was exceptionally cold. By spring, the plant had lost its leaves and everyone but Bakker pronounced it dead. Finally she agreed that if there were no sign of life by the end of May, she would take it out. By mid-May, however, tiny green leaves began to sprout and slowly the plant came back to life. A scant few blossoms appeared, and not until August.

Although it began to thrive as the years



The odds did not favor the little plant, but it has thrived.

went by, its beautiful gold and fuchsia blossoms still did not arrive until August, and then only on the sunny south side.

In 2004, the owner of the little house died. Contractors descended and began to tear out the garden. Bakker asked them to spare the bougainvillea. They did — the only plant that survived. A wooden safety barrier surrounded it during construction. "The plant just sat there looking dilapidated, but hanging on," she recalled.

When construction was completed, workers began pouring concrete. Again she interceded. A

small circular opening was left around the base to make it possible to water the plant.

Bakker returned to the nursery for advice on how to care for what had grown into a substantial plant — an island in a concrete ocean. The nurseryman rolled his eyes. The odds were slim it would survive. But she followed his advice and watered the plant only once every three weeks, no more and no less, in spring and summer only. She entered it on her calendar and has never missed a watering.

In February, she does heavy pruning. In March, green leaves appear. In April, it begins to bloom. It displays 20 or more feet of lush blossoms, in unusually beautiful colors, until the rains come in November. The plant becomes dormant until the cycle begins again.

There is a sacred rite involved: Once a week during blooming season, she gives the plant a good shake to let the dry blossoms fall.



The unusual Tahitian Gold bougainvillea: an island in a concrete ocean.

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Cultivate the mind of a three-year-old, Wheatman urges his clients, so that everything is new and an adventure.

The End of a Design Era

► FROM PAGE ONE

"I CAN leave my house on Alta Plaza and walk to the Presidio," he says, "and be able to say a hundred times along the way, 'I worked on that house,' or 'I did a showcase in that one' or 'I used to live down there on the wall.'"

Wheatman's designs have been mostly residential, and while he has worked all over the world, a great many of the homes he has created are in the neighborhood. His own residences, first in Oakland, then on the Presidio Wall, and for 35 years on the park — plus his expansive office and showroom at 1933 Union Street — have been showplaces for his ideas. As he walked through his empty empire during its final days, everywhere he looked he saw an important principle he had learned along the way.

"It's attention to detail more than anything else," he says. "You think about everything — the texture on the floor of a shower, the steps leading to the house, the staircase that becomes a piece of sculpture, the way the slate in the garden gets wet in the fog and acts like a mirror — especially when there's moonlight on it."

He believes in an abundance of mirrors and lots of glass, including glass shelves, sometimes with a glass wall behind them when it can open up a view to the garden. Above the doorways are his signature "eyebrows" — shelves to store books or hats or to display collections. "They link tons and tons of spaces," he says.

He often favors dark colors — "they make the room look bigger" — especially



Wheatman's office and showroom on Union Street has been a living example of his principles.

on window walls — "so your eye goes outside" — and in paneled rooms "to unite the woodwork." The color goes all the way down to the floor, including the baseboards.

Wheatman and his colleagues have designed and made much of the furniture they use — probably a third, he estimates, pointing to a gracefully proportioned bookshelf he has used often, and a dining table over there, and a chair

from Paris that was a model for 16 more.

"You walk into a room and begin to think, 'What can I do to make it better?' First we take what they have and then see what else they need," he says. "You work for a different kind of perfection: getting the eye to enjoy the space."

He fairly swoons over photographs of some of the homes his firm has designed.

"Oh God, what a house!" he exclaims over one. "The singularly most beautiful shingle house in the Bay Area," he says of another.

Yet he claims that a project with an extremely limited budget was perhaps his most exciting job last year.

"It's even more important when working with someone who has to be frugal to show them how great it can look," he says. He shakes his head at some of the excess he's seen. "There's just too damn much money — it's almost sinful."

BUT IT IS a shortage of money — or credit, at least — that has finally brought the 83-year-old Wheatman to retire.

"All of this happened suddenly," he says.



DAVID WARE

"I was in New York and I got a call from the office. The banks weren't willing to carry on with us as they have for years." So he came home and with his associates made the decision.

"We pulled the plug," he says simply. "There will be another business, he says, although the details are still to be determined."

"We're simplifying," says Wheatman's right hand, designer Jason Collard. "We're changing with the times. We're rethinking."

Wheatman will consult with his former associates. "I know so much and I've been able to enrich so many people's lives that it would be sinful for me to stop," he says. He flips through his calendar, still fully booked, and steps out of the room to look for details of a house he is remodeling in Ireland.

"I love that man," Collard says softly. "He is going to continue to work and we are going to keep him as busy as possible."

Since his letter went out announcing his

retirement, there have been calls and letters and tears. He reaches for a few favorites, like the one from the couple who thanked him for "gracing our life and our home and making it easily accommodate 60 people, but keeping it wonderfully intimate for the two of us."

"The most charming of all," he says with a twinkle in his eyes, "was from a client who wrote that she would miss us most of all because 'Every time I get pissed off at my husband I come and visit' and start a new remodeling project."

He's remodeling the Italian restaurant Acquarello, on Sacramento Street, with the colors of Italy and wrought iron, and mirrors, of course — plus a new private dining room. "It looks like Italy now," he says, but he cautioned the owners not to do it all at once. "People feel it's their place," he says. "They don't want it to change too much too quickly."

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"Your needs change with time," he says, which has led to something of a Wheat-

man mantra: A good house is never done. He wrote a book by that title, and another called *Meditations on Design*. He has a third one in the works.

"It's the story of living in three different houses" — his three houses — "and the things that move with you," he says. Take the stained glass in his dining room, for example. He had it made for his first house, in Oakland. Then when he moved to a house on the Presidio Wall, it didn't fit vertically. So he installed it horizontally. Now, on the park, it is vertical again, this time backlit against a dining room wall.

Back in his office, he launches into another design rhapsody, emphasizing the importance of opening up walls to enhance the flow of space, and getting the eye to move, and the value of great shutters, and piercing walls, and the introduction of color.

"It's the end of an era," he says, "But it will be a beginning."



The gospel according to John

In his own home on Alta Plaza Park, John Wheatman lives the design principles he advocates to his clients.

■ **A GOOD HOME IS NEVER DONE.** When the 1989 earthquake damaged his home, he used the opportunity to create a baronial new entrance (center left).

■ **BRING THE OUTSIDE IN.** His rooftop garden (above) is divided into a series of outdoor rooms visible from many places inside his home.

■ **DISPLAY THE THINGS YOU LOVE.** Many things can be grouped to make a collection, which can be organized into a beautiful design (left).

■ **INVEST IN QUALITY.** "The couch in my living room is 50 years old," he says, "and it still looks good."

He remembers the opportunities that came from the earthquake almost exactly 20 years earlier, which did considerable damage to his home on the park. So he took out doors and windows and converted a maid's closet into usable space and opened things up to get better vistas. He turned the entry into a grand arrival hall.

"It made all the difference in the world," he says. "I always believe something good comes from something bad. What's happening to me now is going to result in something great."

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man mantra: A good house is never done. He wrote a book by that title, and another called *Meditations on Design*. He has a third one in the works.

"It's the story of living in three different houses" — his three houses — "and the things that move with you," he says. Take the stained glass in his dining room, for example. He had it made for his first house, in Oakland. Then when he moved to a house on the Presidio Wall, it didn't fit vertically. So he installed it horizontally. Now, on the park, it is vertical again, this time backlit against a dining room wall.

Back in his office, he launches into another design rhapsody, emphasizing the importance of opening up walls to enhance the flow of space, and getting the eye to move, and the value of great shutters, and piercing walls, and the introduction of color.

"It's the end of an era," he says, "But it will be a beginning."

NEIGHBORHOOD HOME SALES

Single Family Homes	BR	BA	PK	Sq ft	Date	Asking \$	Sale \$
3009 California St	2	1	1	1125	9/24	928,000	888,000
2764 Greenwich St	2	2	2		10/9	1,799,000	1,500,000
2851 Filbert St	2	1	0		9/30	1,838,000	1,750,000
14 Harris Pl	3	2.5	1		10/9	1,995,000	1,950,000
1871 Green St	3	4	2	2319	10/6	2,395,000	2,330,000
2832 Union St	3	3	1	2475	10/9	2,200,000	2,420,000
2529 Vallejo St	3	2.5	3		10/12	3,250,000	3,250,000
3098 Pacific Ave	4	5	2		9/22	3,650,000	3,650,000

Condos / Co-ops / TICs / Lofts

1800 Washington St #614	0	1	1	476	9/25	375,000	360,000
1450 Post St #217	1	1.5	1	1067	9/29	480,873	480,000
1990 Green St #302	1	1	0		9/22	565,000	556,500
333 Presidio Ave #1	1	1	1	715	10/9	564,000	564,000
2040 Sutter St #506	1	1	1	730	10/6	599,000	599,000
1914 Pine St #8	1	1	0	1190	9/24	639,000	639,000
1998 Broadway #1502	1	1	1		10/7	674,000	655,000
1945 Washington St #603	2	2	1		9/23	719,000	705,000
1966 Pacific Ave #102	2	2	1	1115	9/29	730,000	742,000
256 Presidio Ave #1	2	1.5	1	964	10/9	749,000	752,000
1835 Franklin St #1203	2	2	1	1400	10/2	829,000	795,000
2775 Greenwich St	2	1	0	862	9/18	799,000	805,000
2200 Pacific Ave #9D	2	2	1		9/22	899,000	899,000
1870 Jackson St #701	2	1	1		10/9	975,000	955,000
1919 Octavia St #4	3	2	6	1900	9/29	1,395,000	1,395,000
2863 Washington St	2	2.5	1	2440	9/23	1,695,000	1,600,000
1908 Filbert St	4	3	1	3100	10/9	1,975,000	1,750,000
3471 Jackson St	3	2	2	2628	9/24	2,195,000	2,195,000

A great piece of land — or a sizable condo



The fall market remained strong with 26 closings, up 10 percent from last month. And with 3.8 months supply of housing inventory, the local market continues to show signs of recovery.

In reviewing the current sales, 3098 Pacific is one that stands out. The home has been in the same family for more than 45 years. It received several offers immediately after coming on the market, and while the sales price was not disclosed, it is said to be over the \$3.6 million asking price. Another home, near the Presidio at 2851 Filbert (left), was also owned by one family for an extended period of time. Given its modest condition and oversized lot, it seems likely the house will be razed and a new one built. The property sold just over the asking price, but it was a probate sale, thus the relative bargain at \$1.8 million. Just up the street, 1908 Filbert, a condo, also sold at \$1.75 million, considerably below the initial asking price. So now you know: A couple of million will buy a teardown — albeit on a great piece of land — or a 3,100 sq. ft. condo.

There have been a couple of impressive listings on the upper end that received immediate attention:

■ 3855 Washington (6 bedrooms, 6.5 baths, listed for \$8 million) is a gracefully proportioned home that has been thoroughly renovated.

■ 2430 Broadway (5 bedrooms, 6 baths, listed for \$9 million) also has been beautifully renovated, with impressive views of the Marin headlands.

Both homes went into contract within days of being listed.

■ Also, the 8-bedroom, 8-bath mansion at 2505 Divisadero is back on the market. This time priced just under \$9 million. The property was originally listed for \$12.5 million in December 2005, eventually being reduced to \$9.5 million in March 2008. We'll see if it finally sells this time around.

■ Looking for a single family home for the price of a condo? 1350 Baker is a 2-bedroom, 2-bath home that just came on the market for \$699,000.

— 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.

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