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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ NOVEMBER 2010

Farewell, Old Friends



Tango Gelato is closing, too

They've been scooping up frozen treats at 2015 Fillmore for ages, first as Rory's Twisted Scoop, and for the last decade as Tango Gelato, a destination for true Argentinian gelato, sorbetto and — for a while — Sunday afternoon tango lessons. The store will close in a few weeks and be replaced by a Vietnamese sandwich shop.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
TIM WILLIAMSON

OPENING: 4 RESTAURANTS, 3 SHOPS, 2 BAKERIES

THEY KEEP COMING: This fall is bringing a bumper crop of new tastes to the neighborhood.

Already Sweet Maple and Sweet Lime have opened, bringing breakfast and a new Thai spot to the corner of Sutter and Steiner. Mehfil has just opened at Fillmore and Clay, serving Indian cuisine, and the long-anticipated Citizen Cake is now said to be opening imminently.

Patisserie Delanghe disappeared overnight at the end of last month; in its place a father-daughter team has opened

the Fillmore Bakeshop at the Bush Street corner. Bittersweet Cafe is to be succeeded — next door to Citizen Cake, no less — by yet another new bakery. And while Tango Gelato is closing, Yoppi will soon bring more frozen yogurt to 2208 Fillmore.

Fashion boutiques continue to seek out Fillmore Street. T-shirt darling James Perse has opened a sleek new store at the long-shuttered 2028 Fillmore. And where Calvin Tran recently trod at 1940 Fillmore, jeweler Alexis Bittar will open his first West Coast boutique.

Fillmore Hardware Is Calling It Quits

ONE OF Fillmore Street's iconic institutions will disappear by the end of the year when Fillmore Hardware closes its doors promptly at 5:55 for the final time.

"Simply put, we are tired," owners and sisters Patti Lack and Terri Alonzo write in a letter to their customers and neighbors, which is published on page 3.

For 49 years — since 1961 — the store has been the ultimate neighborhood-serving business. Originally twice its present size, it was a full-service hardware and glass company that furnished the materials used to renovate many of the Victorians in the neighborhood. In recent

years it became a more eclectic emporium, keeping the basics but focusing more on housewares and whimsy.

"We considered staying one more year so we could celebrate 50 years in business," the sisters write, adding, "It just isn't worth it."

The sisters have been running the store since their brother-in-law, Phil Dean, retired in 2005 after nearly 40 years as manager. Their father, Jim Hayes, remained actively involved in the business until his death last year at age 89.

"We never could have closed while he was alive," Patti Lack said. "It kept him going."

She said they will gradually sell off the store's considerable inventory in the coming weeks and hope to be out by December 31. They own the building and have retained a broker to offer it for lease. She said they had not considered selling the store, which was started by their grandfather.

"Nobody wants to buy a hardware store," she said. "The only reason we've lasted is because we own the building."

Lack said it was an especially difficult decision given the number of people who come in regularly and tell them it's their favorite store.

"It's just time," she said. "But we're gonna totally miss it."

■ A GOODBYE LETTER | PAGE 3



Phil Dean ran the store for 40 years before retiring in 2005.

JAMES MOORE

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Calvary Presbyterian Church, the Jewish Community Relations Council, and the San Francisco Interfaith Council invite you to a very special event:

The Interfaith Amigos

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 Program with Q&A: 7pm (Reception to Follow)

Sunday, November 21
 One Service of Worship at 10am:
 The Interfaith Amigos will lead worship, with encore presentation from Saturday night to follow

Come hear Sheikh Jamal Rahman, Rabbi Ted Falcon & Pastor Don Mackenzie (known as "The Interfaith Amigos") as these three friends and teachers discuss both the circumstances that brought them together and the awkward and challenging—yet very rewarding—work of interfaith dialogue.

Too often religion seems to fuel more hatred than love, more conflict than collaboration. The Interfaith Amigos, through their book and presentation, "Getting to the Heart of Interfaith," offer insight and encouragement to those who strive to open up to the beauty and wisdom of others' faith.



FREE ADMISSION - ALL ARE WELCOME!
 Calvary Presbyterian Church
 2515 Fillmore Street (at Jackson)
 complete details at
www.calvarypresbyterian.org or
www.interfaithamigos.com

TRANSITION



Dominique Delanghe on his final day with one last croquembouche.

Au Revoir Delanghe, Hello Bakeshop

THE NEWS came as a sudden shock: September 30 was the final day of business for Delanghe Patisserie at the corner of Fillmore and Bush. After 26 years of buttery croissants and mini eclairs, *finis*.

It seemed impossible to the Francophiles who loved the place and the locals for whom it was always there. No notice! Not even a chance to say goodbye!

On October 1 the keys went to Elena Basegio and her dad, Doug Basegio. Work commenced with a fury. On October 21, the Fillmore Bakeshop opened.

At first, the reaction was wary.

"People were coming in saying, basically, 'So where are they?' as if we'd taken over their place and buried them out back," said Elena Basegio.

The father-daughter team of Swiss bakers approached Dominique Delanghe last spring. Talks were start-and-stop. They weren't sure until early September he was actually retiring and the deal was going through.

"There was a lot of trepidation among the customers during the remodeling," she said. "As much as people were mourning for Delanghe, things began to change when we opened and people saw we mean it. We're the real thing, too."

After only a few days in business, they're now being welcomed by the neighborhood. "It feels so good," Elena Basegio says, "to be in such a big city and have it feel like such a small town. I'm surprised no one's brought us a casserole yet."

She lives only a few blocks down Bush Street from the bakery — a good thing, since she gets up long before sunrise to start baking, just as Delanghe did.

"I don't think he realized how much people loved this place," said Doug Basegio. But he learned. At a neighborhood dinner party a few days after they closed, Dominique and Marie-Jeanne Delanghe acknowledged how touched they were by the outpouring of affection when the neighbors learned they were retiring. Before leaving for their second home on the Ile St. Louis in Paris, Dominique left a note:

"During the last few days of Patisserie Delanghe it was difficult to be cynical and tough due to the overwhelming response from all of you. Thank you San Francisco and each of you for 26 years of support."



Elena and dad Doug Basegio opened the Fillmore Bakeshop just in time to pay tribute to the Giants in pastry: a white chiffon cake filled with chocolate mousse and covered in chocolate ganache.

THE NEW FILLMORE

newfillmore.com


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Connecting the neighborhood

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

 newfillmore.com | updated all month, plus video and an archive of back issues

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Candidates Square Off in District 2

THE FOUR-WAY fight to represent District 2 on the Board of Supervisors moved up the hill from the Marina October 25 to a lively neighborhood forum sponsored by the Pacific Heights Residents Association.

It ended in something of a draw, with all four candidates — attorney Kat Anderson, financier Mark Farrell, Golden Gate Bridge board vice chair Janet Reilly and assistant U.S. attorney Abraham Simmons — agreeing on most issues.

"We have four excellent choices," moderator Daniela Kirshenbaum said at the end of the forum. "Any one of them would be a terrific choice."

Anderson agreed. "This is an incredibly impressive group," she said in her concluding remarks. "Everyone here is smart enough to do this job." She urged voters:

"Try to see if you can look into our hearts." But there were fireworks during the debate, especially over campaign spending. Real estate investor Thomas Costes has contributed \$100,000 and socialite Dede Wilsey \$50,000 to an independent group supporting Mark Farrell and opposing Janet Reilly.

"I don't control what other people do," Farrell said to hisses from the audience. "I do wish money didn't play the role it does. But that's reality."



'The Fillmore Stoop'

As part of a city program to create new public spaces, the local design studio Siot has proposed plans for the Fillmore Stoop, which would be built in the two parking spaces in front of Delfina Pizzeria and Zinc Details on California Street. City planners promise permits for 25 new parklets. If chosen, the Fillmore Stoop will be built next year.

Anderson slammed Reilly for the large number of brochures and mailings she has distributed, dramatically tossing a fistful into the air.

"I'm getting buried in paper and I'm feeling sorry for all those trees," Anderson said. She prompted more hisses from the audience when she suggested that Reilly had "an inferiority complex."

All four candidates agreed that the plan to build a new high-rise home for California Pacific Medical Center on Cathedral Hill is, as Reilly said, "the most crucial issue" in the district.

"You are in danger of losing a lot of resources if this is built out the wrong way,"

Simmons said of the \$2.5 billion project.

"A hospital has to be a good thing," said Anderson. "We want to support it. We just need it to be a good neighbor."

All four candidates called for reforming and speeding up the city's planning process and said they support efforts to limit chain stores in neighborhood commercial districts and promised to review them on a case-by-case basis. All supported the Target megastore proposed at Geary and Presidio.

And all touted their individual experience, whether in finance, labor law, community activism or government. Reilly vowed: "I promise to spend more time in the neighborhoods than in City Hall."

Talks Continue Over Future of the Clay Theater

THERE'S BEEN NO breakthrough yet, but negotiations are continuing between the owner of the Clay Theater and the San Francisco Film Society, which hopes to make the theater its home.

In addition, the owner's architect has met with the CEO of Landmark Theatres, the current operator, about renovations that might make the theater attractive to Landmark as a long-term operator.

"We are actively engaged," said architect Charles Kahn. He said it appears that both Landmark and the Film Society prefer a single-screen theater over his proposal to create three smaller theaters, and that owner Balgobind Jaiswal is agreeable.

More contentious is Jaiswal's desire to build four townhouses above the theater and excavate underneath for parking.

"The theater is secondary to their desire to build condos," said Graham Leggett, executive director of the Film Society. "We worry it's not going to be workable for us." Getting permits and building the condos could take years, Leggett said, and require the theater to go dark during construction.

Kahn said the condos are essential to fund the renovation of the theater. He said the owner is "absolutely committed" to finding a way to save the theater.

"It seems problematic at the moment, but at least there's a dialogue," Leggett said. "It's a work in progress."

Fillmore Hardware Says Goodbye

Dear customers, friends, neighbors and fellow merchants,

Our grandfather, Jack Hayes, started Fillmore Glass on Post Street near Fillmore in the 1940s. The glass shop moved to the top of Bush Street behind Jack's home, where he worked with his son John. Jack built Fillmore Hardware, replacing his parking lot at 1930 and 1932 Fillmore Street. His eldest son, Jim, was a San Francisco police officer who married Mickey and they had 3 daughters, Nancy, Patti and Terri. Mickey ran the hardware store, which opened in 1961. When she died unexpectedly in 1966, Jim retired from the force and asked his son-in-law, Nancy's husband Phil, to help out for a while. Patti and Terri worked at the store at different times over the years, but moved away with families of their own. Patti came back to stay in 1984 and Terri in 1999 and both worked once again at the store.

We had a fire in 1972 and Jim decided to divide the store in two and rent out one half. Phil continued on as manager and Jim was happy to work from home. Years later Jim taught himself the computer and tried to single-handedly bar code the store, which kept him going until he died in March 2009. Phil retired at the end of 2005, but continues to come by once a week to sell his eggs to his Fillmore friends. This now brings us up to the present and the reason for this letter.

Simply put, we are tired. Retail takes its toll on the body and retirement sounds pretty good to the two of us. We considered staying one more year so we could celebrate 50 years in business, but when you have to spend at least a full day in the easy chair getting over the days you just worked and ready for the days to come, it just isn't worth it. We're not the spring chickens we used to be.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Phil for staying with us almost 40 years and allowing us the freedom to pursue our lives outside the store until we returned home. Thanks to Patti's daughter Katie for 18 years, and bringing the fun and "cute stuff" to our shelves. Thanks to Phil's son Eric for 13 years and taking us out of the dark ages by replacing our old hand-built shelving system with the ones you see today. Thanks to our workers, who seem more like brothers and sons. Nate, our captain and MacGyver — almost 11 years. Ken, our "Irish guy" who never lets us down — 7 years, and Tony, our fix-it guy, almost 5 years. You guys made the days fun and helped us out in more ways than you will know.

Lastly, a big thank you to our customers, who seem more like friends. Hearing so many of you call us your favorite store made it all worthwhile. Thank you for your support which kept us going for all these years. We will miss this part of our lives but look forward to a little easier life in the not too distant future.

Sincerely,

Patti & Terri

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Evening Prayer 5:00 pm

Reconciliation Sat 5:00 pm,
Sun 7:00, 9:00 & 11:00 am, 5:00 pm

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UCSF Medical Center

The UCSF Medical Center at Mount Zion is proposing a new parking garage at 2420 Sutter Street near Divisadero that would serve patients, visitors, medical center physicians, and the general public. Currently an empty lot, this site was the home of the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis (SFPC) until December 2007.

UCSF is negotiating with Urban Pacific Properties to construct a building, which would contain approximately 230 parking spaces. Since our communication with neighbors in June, the project has been revised: it will no longer house SFPC, and is now proposed for parking on one level below ground and six levels above ground.

An important part of this planning process is to gather community input on the initial building design concepts and to provide the opportunity for neighbors to ask questions and identify potential areas of concern.

Please join us at a UCSF community meeting to discuss this proposed project:

Thursday, November 18, 2010
UCSF Medical Center at Mt. Zion
Herbst Hall & Auditorium
1600 Divisadero Street, 2nd Floor
6:30 pm

If you would like to be placed on UCSF's notification list for this or other projects, please email community@ccr.ucsf.edu or call 415-476-3206 and indicate which campus locations interest you: Parnassus, Mount Zion, Mission Bay, Laurel Heights.

* UCSF fully ascribes to the Americans with Disabilities Act. If at any time you feel you have a need for accommodation, please contact UCSF Community & Governmental Relations at 415-476-3206 with your suggested accommodation.

CRIME WATCH

Auto Burglary Webster and Hollis Streets September 23, 7:10 p.m.

Patrol officers responded to a report that someone had broken into a car. The owner of the vehicle returned to his car after a short shopping trip to find his window smashed and his cell phone missing. A witness had observed the incident and called police. The officers stopped a party of juveniles who matched the description. As the officers questioned them, one person dropped a cell phone to the ground. The witness identified the juvenile who had broken into the car; it was the same person who dropped the cell phone. The man who owned the car identified it as his phone. The juvenile was charged with auto burglary and possession of stolen property.

Shoplifting California and Franklin Streets September 24, 1:40 p.m.

An officer was called to Whole Foods to take custody of a shoplifter. A man had entered the store and ordered two pounds of wild fresh shrimp worth about \$17 a pound. He then moved to the bottled water aisle, where a security officer observed him placing the seafood into a large bag. The man then left the store without paying. Store security halted him and called the police. He was cited and released.

Burglary Franklin and Sutter Streets September 26, 8 p.m.

A man went to Starbucks before it was open and verbally attacked the employees because he was angry that he couldn't get a coffee yet. The argument became so heated that the employees called the police. The man fled but dropped his wallet. Officers responded to the address in the wallet, but the man wasn't home.

Within the hour, officers received a call from the suspect's building. The same individual had thrown a heavy object through his neighbor's front door, entered the apartment and demanded "this stuff" back. The neighbor frightened him into retreating into his own apartment.

Officers knocked on the suspect's door. He screamed at them through the door, and then threw many heavy objects at it. One officer then thought he heard the slide of an automatic weapon. The building was evacuated while the officers attempted to talk the man into coming out. The initial incident occurred at about 7:30 a.m. and did not end until 8 p.m., when SWAT officers forced their way into the suspect's apartment and took him into custody. He was charged with numerous felonies.

Felony Assault California and Franklin Streets October 1, 2:40 p.m.

Officers responded to a report of an assault on a Muni bus. One woman who had been assaulted was riding a crowded bus with her mother when another woman got on and pushed her way to the back of the bus. The suspect then pushed the woman's mother, and insisted that the woman apologize to her. The woman, who did not consider herself at fault, apologized anyway. The suspect then sprayed mace into her face and quickly got off the bus. Officers located the fleeing woman, who was carrying mace in her pocket, and charged her with assault.

Fraud Van Ness Avenue and California Street October 2, 1:50 a.m.

Officers were dispatched to the scene of an argument. When they arrived, a man was getting out of a taxi. Officers asked him if there was any problem; he said everything was fine.

Officers then asked him for identifica-

tion. He told them he did not have any. But they could clearly see the outline of a wallet in his back pocket. So an officer asked again, pointing to the wallet.

The suspect placed the bag he was carrying on the ground and ran from the officers. They picked up the bag and chased him, capturing him at Franklin and Pacific. They searched the man's wallet and backpack and discovered he carried numerous forms of identification — all belonging to other people — along with fraudulent credit cards. In the backpack, officers also found materials to make credit cards, stolen property and methamphetamine. The suspect, who had a warrant for a parole violation, was charged with numerous felonies.

Felony Theft Webster and O'Farrell Streets October 7, 6:30 p.m.

Officers were called to the Safeway store after security guards saw a person there grab several large handfuls of gum and stuff them into a large black plastic bag. In all, there were 127 packs of gum, which have a retail value of \$394.33. The man then walked out of the store with security guards in his wake. They stopped him, placed him under citizens arrest and called police. He was charged with burglary, not shoplifting, as he had no means of paying for the gum. Officers learned he had four outstanding warrants for the same offense.

Auto Theft Van Ness Avenue and Bush Street October 11, 1:35 a.m.

Officers on patrol observed a car moving recklessly across lanes. They pulled alongside the car and noticed the very youthful appearance of the driver. The vehicle bore a City of Pacifica logo. They stopped the car and asked the driver for his license. He said he didn't have one, then provided them with a false name. After numerous attempts to identify the driver failed, officers asked for his parent's phone number. After an additional delay, the 16-year-old driver admitted to the officers that he'd found the keys to the car on the ground next to the vehicle and decided to go for a ride. He was arrested for auto theft and giving false information to a police officer.

Felony Assault Eddy Street and Van Ness Avenue October 17, 10:50 a.m.

A man was riding a Muni bus with two friends. When the bus stopped at Eddy, another passenger struck the man in the head from behind. The suspect had hit the man with a golf club, then shouted that he was going to kill him. But before the golf club-wielding man could strike again, the man who had been attacked grabbed the club. The two struggled over control of the golf club until they both fell off of the bus. Meanwhile, several passengers called the police. A nearby San Francisco sheriff deputy responded and took the suspect into custody until Northern Station units arrived. The man who had been struck suffered serious bumps, bruises and cuts. The assailant was placed under arrest.

Felony Fraud Van Ness Avenue and Sacramento Street October 20, 2:05 p.m.

Bank officials called the police when they recognized a customer who had tried in the past to cash fraudulent checks. This time he came in with the type of checks commonly received in the mail from credit card companies. Bank officials called the person whose name appeared on the check. He told them he had torn the checks up and they were no good. Bank employees then asked the suspect to endorse the check. He complied, and was charged with multiple felonies.

RETAIL REPORT

10/10/10 brought Fillmore's newest boutique to the street: Los Angeles designer James Perse opened shortly before noon in the long-vacant space at 2028 Fillmore. Shortly after noon, the locals were already streaming in to check out what the company calls its "seamless blend of luxe and casual."

Perse offers clothing for both men and women almost entirely in black, gray and white, plus indoor and outdoor furniture and a few other California essentials including surfboards and beach cruisers. Perse describes his design philosophy as "low maintenance high fashion — emphasizing elegance and comfort, pairing sophistication with simplicity."

It's the designer's second store in San Francisco — he opened near Union Square last fall — and part of a fast-growing group of boutiques in Southern California, Las Vegas, Aspen and New York.

The company brings new life and a minimalist look to a storefront that has sat empty and untended for six years since Departures from the Past, a vintage shop, closed.

Perse, 38, was born and raised in Southern California. He made his first mark on the fashion world as a teenager when he set out to design the perfect baseball cap, which was featured in his father's tony Los Angeles boutique, Maxfield. He followed ventures into designing T-shirts, casual wear for men and women, children's clothing and, most recently, furniture.

Perse is best known for his basics — with what a sales associate calls "ultra-soft cotton tees made of the best cotton he can get his hands on" topping the list. His new Fillmore outpost is well stocked. They line



Simple cotton T-shirts adorn the windows of the minimalist new boutique at 2028 Fillmore.

A Taste of L.A.

James Perse brings his luxe casual wear to Fillmore

the walls and racks in the remodeled space, its stark white walls adorned only with a few black and white photographs. Classic rock — Rod Stewart, Beatles, Eagles — plays, prompting many shoppers to hum along.

The clothing selection includes the James Perse Los Angeles collection — those ubiquitous Ts, along with casual seasonal tops and hoodies, pants, shirts, skirts, dresses and loungewear for both men

and women. A new line of resort wear is expected mid-month.

Accessories include knit hats and scarves in plush cashmere and two lines of footwear: one from Paris-based Repetto, maker of iconic ballet flats — the first of which was reportedly crafted for Brigitte Bardot — and sporty slip-ons and desert boots from the California company Sevens.

Also on the shelves are robes, blankets, throws, duvet covers and 500-count sheets

lined in jersey that echo the mantra of casual comfort.

The store has only a couple of chairs from the furniture collection, done in simple, straight lines and upholstered in a white cotton-linen blend. But shoppers can choose among the full line from a look book, including indoor and outdoor furniture and a dog bed and bowl.

Perse's Union Square location, on Grant near Market, opened a year ago. But that locale, substantially larger than the new Fillmore shop, is intentionally industrial, with white flooring and metal shelving units. The Fillmore location is lighter and brighter, with some warmer touches.

"Fillmore is a neighborhood store — and we really shine as a brand when we're in a neighborhood," says corporate spokesman Noah Stone. "We've tried to make the Fillmore store a James Perse home environment with custom oak floors, custom fixtures and pieces from our furniture collection."

Stone promises the Fillmore shop will offer a few things new to San Francisco, including Perse's Yosemite line of sportswear for yoga, hiking, biking, tennis and surfing.

The Fillmore store is the company's 10th boutique, and another 35 are planned in the next five years.

"We have a few different retail concepts, including a stand-alone Yosemite store in Malibu and an upcoming furniture store," Stone says. "But with Fillmore, we're bringing a little of everything into one space. Our seasonal men's and women's collections live alongside Yosemite, our performance brand, and our home collection."

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Helping Local Talent Turn Pro

A new music series ushers performers onto a bigger stage

By ERICA REDER

ON NOVEMBER 16, drummers from around the Bay Area will perform at the Boom Boom Room for a shot at high-profile recognition.

The event is part of a new monthly music series called Beyond the Music Label. Founder Jewell Sparks aims to help performers get recognition — and paid work. Boom Boom Room owner Alex Andreas donates his club to the cause once a month so that Bay Area artists have a shot at getting their big break on the corner of Fillmore and Geary.

Since the first event in August, Beyond the Music Label has featured acts ranging from pop bands to R&B soloists. Each month the focus is on a different genre. In November it's percussion.

Interested artists must submit samples to a selection committee, which includes people from Epic Records, the William Morris Talent Agency and the Jini Hendrix Foundation. The three top submissions take the stage each month. Performers receive feedback from a team of talent developers, as well as audience members, who are invited to fill out ballots. Sparks says over half the audience has participated each month.

After the show, Beyond the Music Label works to carry out suggestions for improvement, then produces a



Founder Jewell Sparks (second from left) and the Inter-changeable Hearts outside the Boom Boom Room.

compilation CD, with proceeds going to the artists and the program's nonprofit partners.

Sparks says she created the series to fill a need in the community. A longtime presence on the San Francisco art scene, she says she has witnessed local musicians' struggles firsthand.

"There's so much talent," she says, "but it's hard for them to make it or get recognized here." Without the entertainment industry of Los Angeles or New York, Bay Area performers have trouble going professional.

"A lot of these people have day jobs," Sparks says, "but

if you talk to them, over 50 percent would say they want to do this professionally."

To address this desire, Sparks has assembled a team of industry insiders, media sponsors and nonprofits whose goal is to get local artists "generating revenue by doing what they're passionate about," she says.

The Boom Boom Room's Andreas calls Beyond the Music Label "a great concept for emerging talent." He estimates that between 60 and 100 people have attended each event, with numbers steadily increasing. "I'm always looking to foster new talent," Andreas says.

According to Sparks, Andreas's generosity is rare in the music business. "Many people approached me," she says, "but they wanted to charge," some as much as \$5,000 per month.

Free rent isn't the only thing drawing Beyond the Music Label to the Boom Boom Room.

"There's a lot of history here," Sparks says. "It's a perfect location." She says the Fillmore District is "like the New York of San Francisco," citing its diversity and wide appeal. And the neighborhood is "traditionally known as the music district" in the city, she says.

That tradition has already helped attract an audience for the Beyond the Music Label's programs. The first event in August coincided with a Billy Idol concert across the street at the Fillmore Auditorium. People stopped by on their way to hear the English rock star, inspiring Sparks to pursue a more formal neighborhood alliance. She hopes to coordinate future events with the Fillmore so people can frequent both venues on the same night.

As Beyond the Music Label gets settled into the community, Sparks is planning the next step. In December, the series will expand to other cities. First on the list is Park City, Utah, to be followed by Portland, Austin and Chicago — all places that share San Francisco's rich talent base and limited business opportunities. Sparks says she hopes the expansion will make more musicians visible nationally — while helping them keep doing what they love locally.

For more information about the new series, go to beyondthemusiclabel.com.



A Relationship With Readers

By KEN SAMUELS | PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATHI O'LEARY

THE OTHER DAY, while selling some books to a couple of young men, I realized I'd known them since they were little kids pleading with their mothers to buy them Berenstain Bears books.

That sums up my decade and a half at Brower Books on Fillmore and Sacramento selling books to the families of this neighborhood. I get to know them as they return again and again. Some kids are shy, nudging their parents to the counter to ask a question, while others march up and confidently fire away with their requests. Hands down, these are the most rewarding moments of my workday.

I never forget how booksellers shared their enthusiasm for literature with me when I was a child. Along with my family, they made me a lover of books — and in time a writer. I don't know if I'm helping neighborhood kids become writers, but I hope I'm helping them become book and bookstore lovers.

Brower Books, like all independent bookshops, faces many challenges these days, but our relationship with the readers in this neighborhood is what sustains us. It begins with the young ones. One minute they're reading *Harold and the Purple Crayon* and before you know it they're on to *War and Peace*. After all these years, I still love to watch this development.

To me, that's the definition of being a local, neighborhood bookseller.

Ken Samuels has worked at Brower Books at 2195 Fillmore Street since 1996.



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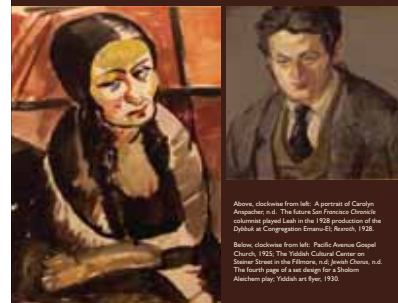
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Zakheim's Fillmore



Above, clockwise from left: A portrait of Carolyn Atwood; and: The Silver Ball Promenade. Opposite: Bernard Zakheim in the 1930s. Below, clockwise from left: The Yiddish Cultural Center on Steiner Street in the Fillmore; and: Jewish Center, n.d. The fourth page of a set design for a Sholem Aleichem play, Yiddish art. 1930.

In the 1920s and 30s the ethnically diverse Fillmore was a hub of intellectual ferment, artistic creativity, and social protest. Zakheim lived and worked in the neighborhood and was one of its leading figures. He co-founded the leftwing Yiddish Folkschule on Steiner Street, where he taught art and sculpture and designed theater sets. With the bohemian poet Kenneth Rexroth, he founded the Artists' and Writers' Union, which helped generate the Coit Tower mural project and later stridently protested its temporary closing.

"The Fillmore was an entertainment center for the entire city...the streets themselves had the aura of an amusement park, resembling Coney Island more than Hester Street...By the early 1940s people were coming to the Fillmore for jazz." — Fred Rosenbaum, *Gonzo: A Social and Cultural History of the Jews of the San Francisco Bay Area* (UC Press, 2009).



BACK IN THE FILLMORE — Bernard Zakheim's artwork returns to the Fillmore in "The Art of Prophetic Justice," a new exhibition at the Jazz Heritage Center, at 1320 Fillmore Street, which continues through the end of the year.

The Provocative Muralist

You've heard of Diego Rivera and Rockefeller Center. Here's the tale of Bernard Zakheim and Coit Tower.

By FRED ROSENBAUM

AS MUCH as any rabbi's sermon in Depression-era San Francisco, the life and work of an immigrant Jewish artist vividly reflected the class war on the streets. Bernard Baruch Zakheim, a Yiddishist and a Communist, a portraitist and a muralist, would be at the center of the greatest controversy over public art in the city's history.

Born into a wealthy Hasidic family in Warsaw in 1896, Zakheim was sent to a yeshiva but cut class in order to explore the city's colorful neighborhoods. He developed an aversion toward both Judaism and capitalism, dropping out of the yeshiva and later a business school intended to groom him to run the family's enterprises. Instead he gravitated toward painting and, over the objections of his widowed mother, entered the prestigious Warsaw Art Academy.

World War I, however, forced him to postpone his dreams. He fought against the German invaders, was captured and spent nearly a year in a POW camp. After the armistice Zakheim had high hopes for the new Polish republic, but he soon became disillusioned when a right-wing dictatorship took power. Hoping to put the trauma of the war and its aftermath behind him, he and his new bride immigrated to San Francisco, "as far away from Europe as they could possibly go."

They had a daughter in 1921, and economic necessity forced Zakheim to put painting aside and work as a designer and manufacturer of fine furniture. Business was brisk, but, lacking the time or energy for his true passion, he despaired and sought refuge in alcohol.

An opportunity came in 1929, when



Bernard Zakheim led the project that created the murals at the base of Coit Tower. His own mural, "Library," was among the most controversial.

Diego Rivera, to whom Zakheim had sent some sketches, invited him to Mexico City to work as an assistant muralist. During his six months there — during which he left his business and child in his wife's care — he learned about Mayan and Aztec art and studied wall painting at the feet of a master.

Zakheim returned to San Francisco with a deepened understanding of the relationship between art and ethnicity. Before leaving for Mexico he had been active in the left-leaning Folkschule at the Steiner Street Yiddish cultural center, where he occasionally taught wood-carving, sculpture and painting, and organized Jewish art exhibitions. His experience in Mexico confirmed his belief that "an artist's native soil will always impress a certain character on his work."

Like Marc Chagall, who retained his East European sensibility after he immigrated to a modern Western metropolis, Zakheim would produce art that reflected the yearnings of the Jewish people.

Despite the birth of a second daughter, Zakheim left his family again, this time to study in Paris and travel throughout Europe for a year. Returning in 1932, he discovered that his wife had lost the furniture factory in the Depression, so he scratched out a living as an upholsterer, continued to paint and battled his drinking problem. Finally, a fresh opportunity arrived: He won a competition to create a fresco in the courtyard of the new Jewish Community Center.

Completed in mid-1933, *The Jewish Wedding* would be one of the most notable works of art in any Jewish building in the American

TO PAGE 10 ►

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From the Fillmore, Zakheim Created Art, Controversy

► FROM PAGE 9

West. The local press lauded the hundred-square-foot representation, indeed celebration, of life in ancient Israel with human figures that seemed to originate in Africa, Europe and the Far East as well as the Holy Land. Zakheim's multicultural vision was also eclectic in form, combining geometric techniques he had learned in Mexico, modernist styles he had just seen in Paris and, of course, Jewish symbols with which he had grown up in Warsaw. For Joseph Danysh, arguably the city's most influential art critic and dealer, Zakheim had "made his wall come alive" with Jewish "movement" that ranged from religious to recreational activity, creating a work especially befitting a JCC.

After years of struggle and pain, recognition had finally come Zakheim's way. At the gallery he co-owned with Ansel Adams, Danysh scheduled a one-man show of the enchanting watercolors, many of them on Jewish themes, that the artist had painted in Europe.

But that accomplishment was soon dwarfed by the commission to create a huge wall painting, and indeed to conceptualize the entire "mural program" executed by 26 local artists, for San Francisco's newest public building, Coit Tower. Funded through a bequest seeking to honor San Francisco's firefighters, the tall, cylindrical, fluted landmark, with its dazzling marine views, was destined to become a popular attraction. The 3,700 square feet of its interior walls — providing more space than all the murals in the state combined — were to carry scenes of everyday life in California.

The offer came from an unexpected source: Herbert Fleishacker. The conservative banker had not only over-



'The Jewish Wedding'

Bernard Zakheim completed "The Jewish Wedding" in 1933 for the Jewish Community Center at California Street and Presidio Avenue. In 2001, as the JCC planned to raze its outmoded building and replace it with a new facility at the same site, it appeared the mural would be demolished. Only a last-minute plea from Zakheim's family saved it. The wall containing the mural was removed, restored and in 2004 triumphantly installed in the new building. Ironically, the project to save the mural was supported by the Fleishacker family, whose patriarch had been Zakheim's nemesis during the battle over the Coit Tower murals. (Above, a study for the JCC mural.)

seen construction of the tower as president of the Park and Art Commission, but he was also the most powerful member of a committee recently formed to allocate federal funds to arts projects on behalf of the New Deal's WPA. He invited Zakheim to his mansion, and the Communist noted the "exquisite wines" and "wonderful goodies" that "this Fleishacker" served in the depths of the Depression.

Fleishacker was likely familiar with the political sympathies of Zakheim, now active in the left-wing Artists' and Writers' Union and the John Reed Club, both organized by his close friend, Kenneth Rexroth, the city's best-known bohemian poet. But Fleishacker, who had staked his reputation on the oddly shaped tower, which was opposed by many neighborhood residents, felt that a lively, engaging decoration of the interior might quiet the critics.

Presiding over the largest federally funded arts project in the country, Fleishacker sought to retain artistic control over the murals. He knew that the compensation of a dollar an hour would mean a great deal to the painters during the Depression, to say nothing of the publicity they would gain. Predictably, however, Zakheim would come to resent his patron's interference, dubbing the tower "Fleishacker's last erection." The tycoon, meanwhile, would demand that a good number of the murals be removed.

The battle over the frescoes of Telegraph Hill might never have occurred had it not been for events on the waterfront below. In the late spring of 1934, while the artists worked in Coit Tower, the city was torn apart by its largest and most violent labor dispute ever. As one art historian has said, the muralists "had clear sight lines [to] the bloody hand-to-hand battles between strikers, scabs, the National Guard and the city police."

Accordingly, class struggle was a major theme of the Coit Tower artists, and Zakheim's own mural, innocuously titled *Tower*, was one of the clearest examples. Near the center of the composition sat the artist himself, intently studying the Bible in Hebrew. But his reading room also included a well-known local Communist reaching for *Das Kapital*. Perhaps most striking was a welter of people

perusing newspapers, including the *Western Worker* (the Pacific Coast edition of the *Daily Worker*), with inflammatory headlines mirroring the current crisis of American capitalism. One with grave portents announced the recent destruction of Rivera's mural in New York City's Rockefeller Center; his patron, Nelson Rockefeller, had objected to a portrait of Lenin, which the Mexican would not expunge.

In the combative context of July 1934, the Coit Tower murals led to a "grudge" match, as one journalist wrote, "between Kid Capital and Kayo Communism." Three artists in particular, John Langley Howard, Clifford Wight and Zakheim, all members of the Communist Party, were

Zakheim was at the center of the greatest controversy over public art in the city's history.

singled out in the press for having "indulged in a little Communist propaganda, and at the expense of the U.S. government."

In an effort that resembled their bumbling response to Emma Goldman's visit two decades earlier, the police raided artists' studios, searching in vain for explosives behind canvases and sculptures. But the height of Red-baiting occurred on July 5 (coincidentally "Bloody Thursday," the day police shot dead two strikers on the docks), when the *Examiner* published a reproduction of Zakheim's *Library*. Across the top of the picture the Hearst paper superimposed a hammer and sickle, encircled by the slogan "Workers of the World Unite," an icon the artist never used. The headline read "Soviet Symbol in Tower," and the caption below declared "Here is the painting in the Coit Memorial Tower that has caused a bitter dispute."

The doctored photo dampened enthusiasm for Zakheim's exhibition at the Adams-Danysh Gallery — many shunned the painter they now believed to be

a hard-line Stalinist — and further inflamed the Coit Tower imbroglio. In reality, Zakheim, like his mentor Rivera and companion Rexroth, frequently strayed from the party line, and the American Communist Party leaders considered all three renegades. But this fact was lost on the press, the art critics and, of course, Herbert Fleishacker.

Fleishacker used his influence to padlock the tower in early June — its public opening had been scheduled for July 7 — and to keep it closed until October, when tensions finally eased after the waterfront strike ended. The Artists' and Writers' Union picketed against the closure, but their actions had no effect on the "Fleishacker group," for whom some of the wall paintings were "wholly unacceptable and... dangerous." In the end, however, the murals remained almost entirely intact and may be viewed today nearly exactly as painted. (Wight's mural did in fact include a hammer and sickle, and he reluctantly agreed to remove it.)

Despite his sullied reputation, Zakheim would be commissioned for other monumental frescoes, including *The Story of California Medicine*, in the amphitheater of Toland Hall on the UC medical school campus in San Francisco. Finished toward the end of the 1930s, the ambitious 12-panel painting reflects the influence on Zakheim of another leftist Mexican muralist, Jose Clemente Orozco, and delivers a Marxist message about the exploitation of indigenous peoples.

But this proletarian art caused none of the turmoil generated by the Coit Tower murals. By the late 1930s left-wing artists and intellectuals in the city were internally divided ideologically and, most important, had lost their footing link to the working class. The establishment no longer perceived Zakheim and other radical artists as the mortal threat to society that they had seemed in 1934. That year, punctuated by violence on the waterfront, stands alone in San Francisco history as the apogee of class conflict.

Excerpted from The Cosmopolitans: A Social and Cultural History of the Jews of the San Francisco Bay Area, published by the University of California Press.

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BY ANNE PAPROCKI

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