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Rare lamp auctioned

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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ JUNE 2012



PHOTOGRAPH BY CARINA VOLLENBERG

One of a Kind

EVEN AS CHAIN STORES THREATEN THE INDIVIDUALITY of many neighborhoods, Fillmore Street has maintained some of its chic-by-jowl authenticity because of its distinctive shops. Among them is Nest, the gift boutique run by mother-daughter proprietors, which has anchored the corner of Fillmore and Clay for the last 17 years. From estate sales, antique markets and contemporary artisans, they assemble the shop's unusual offerings.

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GETTING TO 11

It's Not a Chain Store
Until There Are 11,
So the Rush Is On

RETAIL SPACE on Fillmore Street has become among the most desirable in San Francisco, second only to Union Square.

Much of the demand comes from national brands finding creative ways around the city's attempts to curb the proliferation of chain stores. The city defines "formula retail" as companies with 11 or more stores. So major retailers are launching new concepts under different names on Fillmore before they "get to 11."

■ Gap Inc. opened its first Athleta store at 2226 Fillmore before rolling out the line of athletic wear nationwide.

■ Soon Starbucks will launch a new juice bar at the corner of Fillmore and Sacramento — across from its outpost at 2222 Fillmore — as part of a worldwide rollout.

They join Ralph Lauren, Marc Jacobs, Jonathan Adler and Brooks Brothers' Black Fleece line, some of which opened before the chain store limits passed in 2008.

Demand is so strong among fashion labels that real estate brokers have begun offering "key money" — sometimes \$100,000 or more — to entice longtime merchants to give up prime storefronts to bigger companies with better credit willing to pay higher rent.

Recent months have seen an influx of nationally expanding fashion retailers eager to open near Pacific Heights before they have 11 stores:

■ Fillmore's newest boutique, Steven Alan, got in just under the wire by opening its 11th store at 1919 Fillmore in May.

■ In April, Alice + Olivia opened its eighth store at the corner of Fillmore and Clay. A few days later, designer Roberta Freymann opened her ninth store at 2053 Fillmore.

■ James Perse, Cotelac, Curve, Peruvian Connection and Drybar also opened on Fillmore in recent months before they crossed the 11-store threshold.

Chase Bank is also rapidly opening new branches throughout San Francisco, including one on California near Fillmore. Financial institutions are not subject to the city's chain store ordinance, although a move is now afoot to include them.

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FAREWELL



Paul Guest and Roger Basso-Kleiser helped establish a local historic district. A plaque on Cottage Row (below) commemorates the effort.

THEY MADE HISTORY

By AUDREY SHERLOCK

AIDED by the research of the late local historian Anne Bloomfield, Bush Street residents Paul Guest and Roger Basso-Kleiser initiated and spearheaded the plan that placed the Victorian houses along Bush Street and Cottage Row on the National Register of Historic Places.

On December 27, 1982, the Bush Street-Cottage Row Historic District was created. It was one of the city's first. But then Paul and his partner Roger were ahead of the curve in a number of ways.

Long before the neighborhood became fashionable — or even really safe — they bought and moved into their home on Bush Street and transformed it into a true showplace, combining a sensitive Victorian restoration with a superb collection of French antiques.

They were openly gay long before the era of Harvey Milk and gay activism. Being gay for them was not a statement. It was simply a fact — one of many — of their lives. Similarly, during the pre-AIDS era of rampant promiscuity, they remained a committed couple in a closed relationship.

Paul had a style that was uniquely his own. On some, his mannerisms might have

been preposterous. But he always somehow managed to carry them off. Early neighborhood risers could often see him on the sidewalk in his silk pajamas and ankle-length raccoon coat supervising his little dog doing her business.

Paul and Roger also owned a villa in St.-Paul-de-Vence, France, a magnificent property cascading down a hill with a swimming pool and views of the village. A friend and I visited, and later stayed at their villa in August 1989.

During our stay they took us to Le Moulin de Mougins for dinner — a memorable dinner because Haiti, and his wife Michele were dining there, as was the premier of Italy, although not together. Michele spent most of the evening making out alternately with the bartender or one of their bodyguards.

Paul and Roger also frequented the Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc, a hangout for the rich and famous, near the place Roger was born and raised in Cap d'Antibes.

Roger Basso-Kleiser, who died in 1995, is commemorated with a plaque in Cottage Row. Paul Guest, who retired as chief laboratory technician at California Pacific Medical Center, died on April 2. Their contributions to the neighborhood will live on.



THE NEW FILLMORE

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2130 Fillmore Street #202 • San Francisco, CA 94115 • 415.441.6070
editors@newfillmore.com

Editors | Barbara Kate Repa & Thomas R. Reynolds
Production | Ginny Lindsay Profreader | Donna Gillespie
Marketing Manager | Alison Short

Advertising inquiries ads@newfillmore.com or 415.441.6070
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CRIME WATCH

Driving Under the Influence Sutter and Gough May 1, 11:30 p.m.

Officers responding to an accident scene were directed to the individual who caused the incident. They noticed obvious symptoms of alcohol intoxication — bloodshot eyes, unsteadiness, an odor of alcohol. The man was so intoxicated that he could not perform field sobriety tests. The police asked him several questions, to which he responded with either "Nah," or foul language. Then the man spontaneously stated, "I'm drunk; take me to jail." He was transported to Mission Station for a blood-alcohol test and booked at Northern Station.

Hot Prowl Van Ness Avenue and Fern Street May 5, 4:42 a.m.

Officers received a 911 call from a resident stating that an intruder was on the fire escape, attempting to enter his apartment through a window. The caller gave a thorough physical description of the man and his clothing. Officers arrived to find both the caller and the suspect standing outside the apartment building engaged in a verbal dispute. The resident identified the man as the person who had attempted to enter his residence, and officers detained him. A computer check revealed an outstanding arrest warrant for the suspect. He was booked at Northern Station.

Street Robbery California and Franklin Streets May 7, 7:45 p.m.

Plainclothes inspectors were following a car filled with male passengers who were suspects in a series of previous street robberies. While officers observed, one man jumped out of the car and started studying a woman sitting alone at a bus stop who was focused on the touch screen of her phone. The man pulled down his hoodie so that it covered his face. When the woman saw him approaching, she hurriedly put away her phone. The man then retreated to the waiting vehicle. Several minutes later, officers saw the same man approach a lone individual who also was preoccupied with his phone. The officers intervened, announcing themselves as police, and the suspect fled. When the officers caught up to him he punched them. The officers shouted, "Police! Stop resisting," but the suspect continued to fight. After a struggle, they arrested him. In the getaway vehicle, they found stolen property. Both the man who assaulted the police and the driver of the car were booked at Northern Station.

Robbery With a Knife Sacramento and Laguna Streets May 9, 11:54 p.m.

Officers on patrol observed a man

attempting to rob a woman and intervened. When the suspect resisted violently, additional officers responded to the scene. The suspect kicked at the officers and attempted to get away. Eventually they subdued the man, and found a large knife nearby. The woman said the man had used the knife to intimidate her and rob her of her purse; he discarded the knife when police arrived. Officers learned the suspect had committed numerous robberies earlier that day, and booked him at Northern Station.

Forgery, False Identification Van Ness Avenue and Olive Street May 10, 7:30 a.m.

Officers received a call concerning a woman who had attempted to pay for an auto repair with a bad check and false identification. When the officers arrived, the woman was leaving the garage. The police followed her, but she broke into a run; they pursued and detained her. The mechanics in the garage identified her as the fraud suspect and she was booked at Northern Station.

Intoxicated Person Sacramento and Octavia Streets May 10, 5:33 p.m.

Officers received a call about a man who was attempting to start fights on the bus. The caller told police the suspect was "going crazy," challenging other passengers to fight while swinging his fists in the air, and appeared to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Witnesses said passengers were fleeing the bus in fear for their safety. When officers arrived they asked the man to leave the bus. The suspect became confrontational and verbally abusive with the police, but they eventually managed to escort him off. Because the man appeared unable to care for himself due to his high level of intoxication, he was placed under arrest.

Forcible Entry Fillmore and Ellis Streets May 21, 1:40 a.m.

Officers received a call concerning a burglary in progress at a convenience store. At the scene, they learned a security guard had detained the man. The guard told officers he had been making his routine nightly patrol of the premises when he'd heard several loud booms. The guard moved in the direction of the sound and discovered a man swinging a pair of pliers at a window, damaging it. The guard called 911 and stood watch over the suspect until police arrived. While being transported to Northern Station, the suspect told officers, "I just wanted to get a pack of smokes." He was booked for attempted burglary.

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Cake Plate will be open for only a month testing the waters at 2411 California Street.

A Temporary Boutique Pops Up

TEMPORARILY popping up in the space at 2411 California Street — former home of the short-lived Dumplings & Buns shop — is **CAKE PLATE BOUTIQUE**, a women's contemporary dress store. The owners are sisters Paige Smith and Lindsay Kroll, who operate their flagship store in Napa. They will be here for the next month testing the waters for a second location in San Francisco.

The store just off Fillmore offers a hand-picked selection from a small collection of designers.

"We chose lines with average prices that the everyday woman can wear to work and then out to dinner," says Smith. "And we're really attuned to offering bright colors and patterns — cheery clothes."

In addition to clothing, the shop also offers jewelry, pillows and throws by the featured designers — including a home

collection by Trina Turk previously only available online.

Smith says that the aim is "to bring a little Napa to San Francisco," and adds that she's already seen lots of faces she recognizes from the wine country store.

While Smith and Kroll have the space only until July 6, they hope to snag a permanent spot somewhere on Fillmore. "It's a great community — and people have already been so nice to us here," says Smith.

Despite its name, Cake Plate offers no edibles — but the name does portend the future. The next occupant will be **SIFT CUPCAKE & DESSERT BAR**, which already has stores in Napa, Cotati and Santa Rosa, plus a traveling mobile cupcake truck. And that new neighbor will live up to its name, bringing cupcakes, cookies and custom cakes to the neighborhood.

RETAIL REPORT

Fillmore 'Just Made Sense' for Designer Steven Alan

WHAT'S SHOCKING about the new **STEVEN ALAN** boutique, recently opened at 1919 Fillmore, is the amount of fashion terrain it covers, for both men and women. There's jewelry, scarves, underwear, cologne, shoes, purses, sunglasses, watches, hats, sweaters, dresses, ties — even pajamas in soft cottons with whimsical prints. And there's also even more unexpected items such as bottles of ginger and lemon syrup.

While Alan has deep roots in retail and design, he blasted onto the fashion scene in 1996 by opening the Steven Alan Showroom in New York, intended as a forum for a select group of indie designers he favored most.

A couple of years later, Alan launched his own line focusing on menswear with detailing he wasn't able to find by anyone else. An experiment with reverse seaming that was accidentally applied to every seam created a happy accident: his signature tailored shirt that creates a definitive line on the body. He followed that with a classic collegiate button-down in unique fabric weaves, then duplicated the look for women.

Shoppers will find plenty of Steven Alan's designs in his new Fillmore boutique, as well as the other 10 locations — six in New York, four in other parts of California. The last store opened in Hayes Valley less than a year ago. But he's retained a generous offering of other designers, too.

"Steven looks for designers who have

something to say," says Lindsey Hanka, manager of the Fillmore store. "If someone else is doing something well, he'll take them in and show them off."

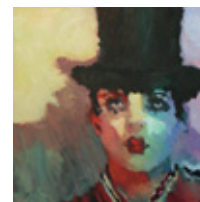
She sweeps a case in point from the rack: a slightly fit and flared dress by Sea in flowing silk.

"The designers don't know what they're making until the fabric comes in to inspire them; the design then makes the most of what the fabric has to offer," she says. Another example: L.A.-based Clare Vivier's simply designed leather goods, from coin purses to foldover clutches and carryalls.

One of Steven Alan's own designs, the Crawford dress — a dropped sleeveless below-the-knee number in vibrant blue cotton blend with back tie — is \$179. "It looks like nothing on the hanger, but it conforms right to the body," says Hanka. "Once one person tries it on, others see it and need it."

As if on cue, a woman emerges from the dressing room in a version of the Crawford in a green baseball print. Staffers and several shoppers burst into spontaneous applause. "Do you have it in other colors for me?" asked her companion.

Hanka describes the store's typical customer as "someone who's interested in something special — especially a fun, casual approach to weekend wear." As for the latest expansion into the neighborhood, Hanka says, "Fillmore just made sense. You won't see Steven Alan in a mall."



CIRQUE DÉSOLÉ

Drew Fagan ■ Solo Exhibition of Recent Oils

As a young boy, Drew Fagan dreamed of running away to join the circus. Five years ago he met a model who helped spark a new series of paintings that create the circus of his imagination.

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Nest owners Marcella Madsen and Judy Gilman share an aesthetic and a sense of humor.

Feathering Their Nest

A mother-daughter team has operated one of Fillmore's distinctive gift emporiums for 17 years

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY CARINA WOUDENBERG

FOR JUDY GILMAN and her daughter Marcella Madsen, owners of Nest, the eclectic gift shop at 2300 Fillmore, a shared love of art and eye for snagging old and new treasures has enabled them to nurture a loyal following over the past 17 years.

"I've been going to the antique markets since I was on my mom's back in a carrier," marveled Madsen, who now has a 9-year-old of her own.

While many of the individually owned stores on the street have disappeared under financial pressures, Nest's owners say they've managed to weather the storm by relying on their well-rooted customer base and anticipating when fans are ready for some changes.

"We're always evolving," Madsen said. Once home to a drug store, the building at the corner of Clay and Fillmore sat vacant for about three years until the artists-turned-businessowners spotted it. The

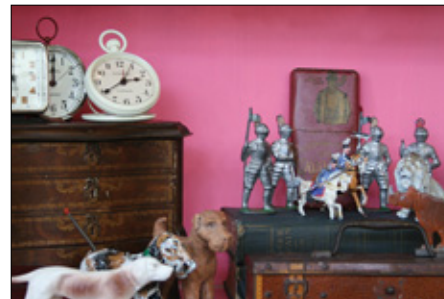
two had dabbled in antiques, but never had a store of their own. They saw potential in the newspaper-covered vacant storefront on a prominent corner.

Seeking a lease, they met with the building owner at her home, and she asked the entrepreneurs what they wanted to sell.

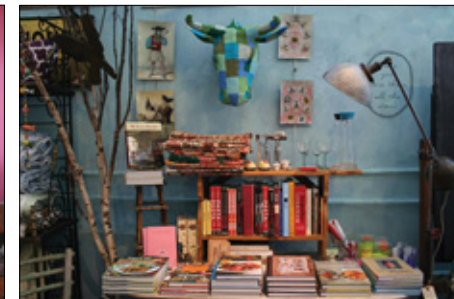
Glancing at the woman's coffee table, they gestured toward her trinkets and told her they would sell similar items: knick-knacks.

"I love knickknacks," Gilman recalled the woman saying. "And that's how it evolved."

But some things have remained much the same. Today the shop's interior is itself a work of art. The designs painted by the owners when they first moved in have gently weathered through the years. Dressed in rich colors, the walls and ceiling provide shelter for gauzy tops and flowing dresses, pillows and blankets, handbags and jewelry and cookbooks with colorful photographs



Much of the inspiration for Nest comes from the south of France. Other items are imported from India, Morocco, England and Italy. And some are gathered from antique shows.



of mouthwatering dishes on their covers. They also stock artful cards, decorative soaps, perfumes, glassware and much more fodder for lengthy browsing sessions.

"People spend hours in here," Gilman said.

"They always say 'thank you' when they leave, like it's a museum," Madsen added.

Much of the owners' inspiration for Nest comes from the south of France where the pair used to travel. Other items are imported from India, Morocco, Turkey, England and Italy. And some they gather from antique shows around the state.

Even closer to home, Gilman and Madsen carry work from San Francisco artists — including art from two of their employees, Lisa Wood and Risa Culbertson. Wood provides miniature bug terrariums that house dioramas of insects doing human activities such as going on picnics and reading the paper. Culbertson supplies popular handmade cards she

makes through her company, PapaLlama.

Though both mother and daughter majored in painting at the San Francisco Art Institute, they don't sell their own art at Nest. It can be found throughout the store, however, in Madsen's hand-stenciled

"We spend a lot of time on our displays here," Gilman said. "We're known for that."

The owners say they get a lot of repeat customers — both locals and returning tourists — and so they strive to change

said with a smile. However, there are benefits from drawing from the same gene pool, too. "We have the same aesthetics and sense of humor," Madsen added.

Though they both used to live in San Francisco, Gilman and Madsen are now living in separate homes in Berkeley just 10 blocks apart.

Madsen's son doesn't spend a lot of time in the store, but when he does, she says he loves "shopping" for books and other items and is free to take whatever he wants.

"I think he thinks I'm famous," she added.

The bottom line is that they don't take themselves too seriously. Madsen said. While there are a lot of frilly items, there's room for a joke here and there too — especially with the cards.

"It's a girly store, but men like it too," Madsen said, adding, "All the women tell the men to come here and get the jewelry."

"I've been going to the antique markets since I was on my mom's back in a carrier."

— MARCELLA MADSEN
co-owner with her mother of Nest

nest patterns featured on the walls and Gilman's nest-inspired wiry chandeliers that hang gracefully from the ceiling.

The two think a lot about design and say they love flipping through decorating magazines looking for ideas and inspiration.

things up so their visitors have something new to admire.

Working as a mother-daughter team has its occasional challenges due to the inevitable creative differences, Madsen admits.

"You can hear us argue upstairs," she



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FOOD & DRINK

By CHRIS BARNETT

CAFE MURANO, a compact hole-in-the-wall at 1777 Steiner Street, just south of Sutter, almost always attracts a crowd — and not just because the wi-fi is free. Or that two computers are available at no charge. Or that it's usually library quiet, even when busy, and you can work, read, think and have a long and quiet conversation.

This slightly out-of-the-way eatery has won the affection of locals because it has mastered the four fundamentals of cafe society: It has creative, fresh, flavorful food; fair prices; a tiny but friendly staff; and offers a comfortable setting to visit solo or to catch up with friends. On sunny days, there are also four tables outside where diners can sip and schmooze *al fresco*.

But the food is the seduction. On its limited, nothing-fancy, breakfast and lunch menu, Cafe Murano has two familiar dishes that are among the tastiest and best value for the money in the neighborhood. One is a hearty bowl of oatmeal, for \$4.50. The other is a chicken Caesar salad — not exactly authentic, but it's inventive, healthy, and fills a huge plate — and for \$5.95, it's a steal of a deal.

First a little culinary history. What is likely the world's most celebrated salad was originally tossed not in Italy, as most believe, but in the gritty border town of Tijuana, Mexico, in 1924 by Caesar Cardini, an Italian immigrant, chef and owner of the Hotel Caesar. Food historians claim Cardini invented it under the gun. When his kitchen ran out of salad fixings on July 4 of '24, the boss scrambled for leftovers



Two red movie theater seats and an assortment of mismatched chairs give the colorful cafe a comfortable, lived-in atmosphere.

At Cafe Murano, They've Grown Accustomed to the Space

Two familiar fresh and tasty dishes are among the best values the neighborhood

and anything he could find that could fire up the taste buds. Cardini, who apparently liked to slap his name on things, made his Caesar seem sophisticated and showy. He mixed and tossed it tableside with great flair, a performance that flourished through the years, although it has been harder to catch in recent years.

The ingredients in Cardini's original salad mix included romaine lettuce, freshly crushed garlic soaked in olive oil, lemon juice, salt, fresh ground black pepper,

wine vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, raw or codded egg yolk, freshly grated Parmesan cheese and freshly baked croutons. Over the years, Caesar addicts have added anchovies, tomatoes, bacon bits, mustard, avocado, capers, chicken, steak strips, shrimp and scallops to the authentic recipe.

Cafe Murano's version won't thrill Caesar purists. It differs dramatically depending on who's on duty. Amy, who lived in Milan and was a photo stylist for Conde Nast magazines, makes a mile-high Caesar

with big chunks of chicken breast, hearts of romaine, pieces of fresh mango around the edge of the plate, all sprinkled with croutons and thinly sliced almonds and crowned with a strawberry. Michelle's take on the 78-year-old salad is a little more slapdash and includes blueberries, raisins and smaller chunks of chicken. It's served with a couple of pieces of white toast, perhaps so that you can craft your own croutons.



Two local favorites at Cafe Murano: a bowl of oatmeal with fresh fruit and nuts, and the chicken Caesar salad with mango. Outside tables are an extra draw on sunny days.

If asked, all three latter day Cardinis will top the Caesar with slices of smoked salmon for an extra buck.

The other signature dish at Cafe Murano is oatmeal — the kind of heart-healthy oatmeal your mama probably never made. A generously sized bowl cooked from scratch outclasses most served elsewhere, and the tariff is a mere \$4.50. Here the oats are mixed with water and half-and-half, microwaved (there's no stove) and topped with all sorts of fresh fruit depending on the season — strawberries, mango, cantaloupe, kiwi, blueberries, bananas — with almonds and raisins mixed in. Then it's sprinkled with cinnamon; add honey and brown sugar if your lipids can handle it. For less than a five-spot, it's a bargain power breakfast.

Cafe Murano also serves fresh-squeezed OJ and real Italian sodas, lattes and espres-

so. Its regular coffee made from ground beans, however, has sparked a controversy among first-timers and regulars alike. While Yelpers and other self-anointed online critics almost universally give the cafe five stars for the total experience, its coffee generates gripes. I found it on the weak side but a small cuppa joe costs only \$1.50, a bit less than most neighborhood coffee shops.

A newly posted menu has scuttled some of the paninis and paninis that have long given Cafe Murano its European heritage. But a half-dozen or more husky sandwiches at \$6.95 survived the cut. Other offerings include cups of fruit, muffins, croissants, European and Mexican beers, plus decent wines at \$4.50 to \$5 a glass.

Best of all, it's easy to grow accustomed to the space. The cafe's centerpiece is two old movie theater seats with cuphold-

ers facing a faded brown and gold striped sofa, separated by a beat-up coffee table. A number of small, scarred tables for two with Italian paintings laminated to the top are accompanied by a mismatched collection of chairs, including wireback ice cream parlor numbers and some wooden chairs with upholstered seats.

About the only way to describe the decor is eclectic. From the black ceiling that resembles a low-down fly in a live theater hanging two spinning fans and iridescent light fixtures, along with colored Christmas lights that stay up all year long. A motor scooter is parked high and out of reach atop what is the roof of the joint's bathroom. A white circa 1950 home bar holds a Dell computer and a new, flat-screen monitor with a well-worn stool for customers sans laptops or smartphones. The rest of the cafe is plastered with old Italian and French posters. A fun piece: a red Coca

Cola cash register that might have last seen duty at a drug store soda fountain.

Clearly Cafe Murano owner George Boudames isn't out to impress the trends. But his spot does have a loyal fan club. Among its members is Mia, who calls herself a "muse." She chooses Cafe Murano over Starbucks or Peets, she says, "because I can usually get a table, I like the coffee, I have no problem getting on the Internet and I like the unexpected treat — all the fresh fruit." Nicole Sroka, a grad student in sustainability, drops by, encouraged, she says, because it's not a mainstream chain coffee shop. "Everything I eat and drink is delicious and I like the breeze from the fan on my back," she says.

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■ EXCERPTS

Harmless fun or a grievous crime?

Since the earliest periods of recorded history, lawmakers have tried to set boundaries on how people take their sexual pleasures, and they have doled out a range of controls and punishments to enforce them, from the slow impalement of unfaithful wives in Mesopotamia to the sterilization of masturbators in the United States. At any given point in time, some forms of sex and sexuality have been encouraged while others have been punished without mercy. Jump forward or backward a century or two, or cross a border, and the harmless fun of one society becomes the gravest crime of another.

Sex was evidently more micro-managed in the ancient world than even now, with the surprising exception of same-sex relations—which were ignored almost entirely by the law until the Hebrews labeled homosexuality a terrible crime on a par with murder. Additionally, sex was sometimes used as a punishment in itself, as when the wife of an Assyrian rapist was ordered to be raped in turn as punishment for her husband's crime, or when men who damaged Egyptian property markers were required to deliver their wives and children to the rough affections of donkeys.

Rape, adultery, incest and all the other issues that unfold in the arena of sex law have been taking place since the beginning of human existence. All that changes are the methods people use to exercise control over one another's bodies, and the reasons they give for using them.

— FROM *SEX AND PUNISHMENT*

BOOKS

Preoccupied With Sex

The law has forever been used to punish desire, finds a local lawyer-author

By ERIC BERKOWITZ

IT TOOK 25 years, but I have returned — to a city that feels like home even after a decades-long absence; a city that warms my spirit even as its fog freezes my bones; a place where I can be the public interest lawyer I want to be, and where a local publisher is publishing my book.

The epic journey of the human spirit, which forms the basis for every good story since Homer's *Odyssey*, involves a person leaving home, undertaking a long journey, then returning with the benefit of experience. *Odyssey* did it. Forrest Gump did it. And, in my own small way, I did it too. I left San Francisco in 1985 an unhappy young attorney who felt that deep inside he was really a writer, and came back a writer who happily gives legal services to the poor — and just had a book published.

My new book, *Sex and Punishment: Four Thousand Years of Judging Desire*, published May 8 by Counterpoint Press, was researched in Los Angeles and written in Paris. But the book's true roots, like so much else important in my life, are here in San Francisco.

After studying history at UC Santa Cruz — some of us actually did study there, even in the 1970s — I knew two things: I needed a career and I wanted to live in San Francisco. I enrolled at USF Law School in 1981, when the Haight still had cheap apartments and the Fillmore was a neighborhood in decline. True, there was a



foreign cinema and a terrific bookstore, but that part of the neighborhood was way out of reach for a student.

One day, I hoped, I would find success, my girlfriend Jennifer would marry me and we would live in Pacific Heights surrounded by everything in the Sharper Image catalog. I did well in law school and got a job at a small commercial law firm near Union Square.

But just when I thought my life was set, everything fell apart. Within a few months, Jennifer left me. I realized I disliked being a lawyer and my salary was barely covering my expenses. A well-paid legal opportunity then arose in Los Angeles. It couldn't make

me happy representing bad guys, but it would pay some bills and give me space to heal my broken heart. I moved south.

Jump cut to 2004: After a 20-year career as an L.A. litigation attorney and many years of happy marriage with Jennifer, I got up the nerve to leave my law firm and enroll in the graduate journalism program at USC. There, I remade myself into a writer. I was a curiosity to my 22-year-old classmates, but I applied myself with a vengeance. Upon graduating I got a good position at a legal newspaper. But a freelance piece I had written for the *L.A. Times Magazine* on corruption among California's private judges infuriated my bosses and the writing was soon on the newsroom wall: The job would not last.

In 2007, my family and I moved to Paris for what we thought would be a one-year sabbatical. My book project had started with a question a friend posed: What was the first law? As I started researching, I learned that the earliest lawmakers were preoccupied with sex. Everywhere I looked, there were rules on sexual relations with pigs and oxen, prostitutes and family members.

Extraordinary flesh-and-blood cases jumped out of every dusty volume begging to be told. My book would bring them to life — all the way up to Oscar Wilde's imprisonment for "gross indecency" in 1895. This would not be a book for lawyers or academics; they have enough to read. It would speak to the general reader and



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By Althea, age 11

follow royal mistresses, gay charioteers, medieval transvestites, priests, prostitutes and London rent boys. Through these fascinating and often tragic lives, readers would gain insights both into history and many of today's hot-button political issues.

Our one-year stay in Paris stretched into three years. I wrote, rewrote and wrote some more. The nearby Luxembourg Gardens gave me a place to dream.

In May 2010, our eldest daughter graduated her lycée. My book wasn't quite finished, but it was time to return to the United States. But where would we go? I loathed Los Angeles and did not want to repeat my earlier mistake by going back there to live. And after experiencing the pedestrian-friendly city of Paris, there was also no way we could return to a life built around the traffic patterns of Wilshire Boulevard.

San Francisco exerted its pull. We decided to sell our Los Angeles house and restart ourselves in the city we had always loved.

We arrived back in California on the day our house sold and immediately headed up Highway 5 to look for a place here. After a manic few weeks of house hunting, we nabbed a grand Victorian on Pine Street, just a couple of blocks from Fillmore. It had been a rooming house during World War II and then a hippie commune in the 1960s. It has since been lovingly restored by a succession of owners. I finished the book here and began to work for a number of legal aid organizations, the most fulfilling legal work I have ever done.

Last month, my book was published. It's available at Brower Books, the neighborhood shop that seemed so out of reach way back when.

For an interactive timeline on sexual law, visit sexandpunishmentthebook.com.

Far and Wide, High and Low

A pioneering food critic's biographer is reminded: We are blessed to live here.

By THOMAS MCNAMEE

WHILE WRITING my new biography of Craig Claiborne — *The Man Who Changed the Way We Eat* — I traveled far, in my mind, from our quiet Victorian home near Fillmore Street and from the fresh, simple food that for me is the best of San Francisco. Whether cooking the wondrous provender that my wife and I find every week at the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market or dining at Florio or SPQR — our local favorites — I always try to remember how richly blessed we are by our time and our place.

My work took me to places and times long lost and in them I found a certain sweet melancholy. I was obliged to occupy my own past, 35 years and more ago, when I was living in New York City with my young bride and learning to cook from Craig's *New York Times Cook Book*. Thanks to a rich uncle from Mississippi who visited often, we were able to dine in New York's finest restaurants of the day, the ones Craig esteemed above all others, and gave his highest ratings. These were mainly French and formal: La Grenouille, La Cote Basque, Quo Vadis, La Caravelle, Le Cygne, Lutèce.

All but La Grenouille are now gone, trampled in the onrush of modern informality. Their style of cooking — the classic French *haute cuisine* — has also largely disappeared. Craig explored and savored all the foods of the world, from far and wide and high and low, but he



to witness the near-disappearance of traditional French cooking from America, I know he would be sad.

Yet he also would have loved the seafood stew and the sweetbreads at Florio. He would have been dazzled by the inventiveness of Shelley Lindgren's wine list there would have amazed him, too. In his day, Craig could nowhere in New York have found pizza as good as Delina's. He could have found nothing to compare with the range of small-maker Champagnes at D&M.

But in the restaurants of our neighborhood he would seek in vain for calm and quiet. In all the Bay Area, indeed, those qualities grow ever rarer. One characteristic that Craig treasured in the great old French restaurants was their civilized atmosphere, and particularly the sense of relaxation and peace it imparted. The barbaric bellowing that has supplanted conversation in so many restaurants would enrage him.

Since completing the book, I have been cooking my way through a number of time-proven French dishes, all from Craig Claiborne's cookbooks. I hope we will not lose that great cuisine altogether. Perhaps it will return — and perhaps quiet conversation will find its place again as well.

Thomas McNamee is also the author of *Alice Waters and Chez Panisse* and many other books, essays and articles. He lives on Bush Street.



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LOCALS

TURNING 85

A child of the neighborhood celebrates a milestone

A LONGTIME neighborhood presence known as the saint of St. Dominic's Church, Father Felix Francis Cassidy will celebrate his 85th birthday this month, also marking decades of service at St. Dominic's, where he was baptized.

Francis Edward Cassidy was born in San Francisco on June 3, 1927, to Mildred and Edward Cassidy. He grew up on Vallejo Street, attended Grant Elementary School, and took Catholic educational classes at St. Vincent de Paul School on Green Street. He knew he wanted to be a priest even before he attended high school at St. Ignatius, where he was a swimmer and cheerleader before graduating in 1945.

During World War II, he served in the Merchant Marines and traveled around the world before returning to his San Francisco roots and attending the University of San Francisco. He joined the Dominicans at St. Albert Priory in Oakland and attended Mount Angel Seminary, where he obtained a theology degree. On June 11, 1954, he was ordained at Old Saint Mary's Church and celebrated his first mass at St. Vincent de Paul Church. He has served the Dominican Order in Vallejo, Chiapas, Portland and Reno.

In 1979, he returned to St. Dominic's as associate pastor as he celebrated his 25th anniversary of ordination. He has since served as a chaplain to the Shrine of St. Jude.

While touring the neighborhood, Father

Felix will point to every corner and remember all the former landmarks: "That's where the laundry facility was." "That's where the hospital used to be." "I used to take the cable car from here." His memory is frequently jogged by local residents' houses in which he has said mass, anointed the sick or offered communion. He also knows the best shortcuts for getting through city traffic.

On rainy days, it's not unusual to hear Father Felix playing slide piano in the rectory, perhaps with a medley of "Stormy Weather," "Come Rain or Come Shine" and "Singin' in the Rain."

Parishioners admire his many kindnesses. Not coincidentally, the lines for confession with him are often longer than for other priests. He will bless people, statues and cars — usually with a twinkle in his eye. When Francis Cassidy joined the Dominican novitiate, the fathers named him Felix, Latin for "happy" — and he lives up to his name.

"Father Felix loves the definition of religious life as 'pitching in,'" said Father Xavier Lavagetto, pastor at St. Dominic's. "He always wants to lighten the load of people."

On Sunday, June 3, St. Dominic's Church will celebrate Father Felix's 85th birthday with mass at 11:30 a.m., followed by a barbecue from 1 to 4 p.m. in the church parking lot. All are welcome to attend.



Father Felix Cassidy was baptized at St. Dominic's Church, grew up on Vallejo Street, went to Grant Elementary School at the top of Pacific Heights and then, coming full circle, returned to St. Dominic's in 1979.

TOM HOUSTON

MUSIC

By JAMES DeKOVEN

CONSIDERING that my favorite bands in high school were the likes of Black Sabbath, Mountain and Thin Lizzy, it made little sense that I was also buying Van Morrison records. His songs didn't include blistering guitar solos or prophecies of nuclear Armageddon. Yet as a music-obsessed teen, I recognized that he deserved investigation. First I tried *Astral Weeks*, then *His Band* and the *Street Choir*, then *Saint Dominic's Preview*, which became my favorite of the bunch.

Years later, when I moved to San Francisco, I ended up living a few blocks from St. Dominic's Church. And I began to wonder whether there was a connection between the album and the imposing Gothic church at Bush and Steiner Streets.

Morrison certainly had links with the Bay Area. In 1968, he married Marin county native Janet Planet and eventually they settled in Fairfax. He played the area's funky dives, hung out with the locals, and even brought his parents over from Ireland and gave them a record store to run on Bolinas Avenue. According to legend, the store's patron was a secret, the only evidence being an entire wall devoted to their son's album covers.

His iconic album, *Tupelo Honey*, was recorded at the famed Wally Heider Studios in San Francisco, and a number of sessions for *Saint Dominic's Preview*, his next album, took place there in 1971. Released in July 1972, *Saint Dominic's Preview* climbed as high as number 15 on the Billboard charts.



The St. Dominic's Connection

Was Van Morrison singing about the local church?

With his Bay Area ties a few years strong, you'd think there could indeed be a connection between the song and the church. But no proof appears in the album's liner notes. The album cover shows Morrison sitting on the steps of what appears to be a church, but it's actually the Montgomery Chapel at the San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo. Morrison himself offered conflicting accounts about the song's origins. In one article, he said he was inspired to write the song "Saint Dominic's Preview" after seeing an ad for a peace vigil to be held in the neighborhood at St. Dominic's.

But an interview in the June 22, 1972, issue of *Rolling Stone* reveals a different tale. There he is quoted as recalling: "I'd been working on this song about the scene going down in Belfast. And I wasn't sure what I was writing, but the central image seemed to be this church called St. Dominic's where people were gathering to pray or hear a mass for peace in Northern Ireland. A few weeks later I was playing at a gig in Reno, Nevada. I picked up a newspaper, and there in front of me was an announcement about a mass for peace in Belfast to be said the next day at St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco."

Totally blew me out. Like I'd never even heard of a St. Dominic's Church."

Such is the nature of rock and roll history, a blend of alternating fact and mythology. Many believe that the Eagles' "Hotel California" was a commentary on the excess of the 70s in the Golden State. Some reports, however, have the band claiming it was to honor Jackson Browne's wife Phyllis, who committed suicide as they were recording the album. Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free Bird" was supposedly a tribute to southern rock deity Duane Allman. But other accounts say the song's roots come from the girlfriend of Skynyrd guitarist Allen Collins, who asked him one day, "If I leave here tomorrow, would you still remember me?" — which, years later, became the song's memorable opening line.

Morrison had similar confusion even about his own inspiration. As he said in that same *Rolling Stone* interview: "I'm not surprised that people get different meanings out of my songs. But I don't wanna give the impression that I know what everything means 'cause I don't." In fact, when asked why he named the song "Saint Dominic's Preview," he replied, "You know something? I haven't a clue what it means."

On November 25, 1976, Morrison performed two songs — "Tura Lura Lural" and "Caravan" — at Winterland Ballroom at Sutter and Steiner Streets, now home of an apartment complex just a block away from St. Dominic's Church. He was there as one of the special guests performing in a six-hour concert honoring The Band's final performance, famously known as The Last Waltz.

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1885 Jackson St #201	2	2	1	1028	33	5/15/12	\$749,000	\$760,000
2194 Pacific Ave	1	1		1095	35	4/27/12	\$795,000	\$775,000
1840 Washington St #503 1	1	1		837	33	4/30/12	\$799,000	\$799,000
1938 Scott St	3	1	0	1818	32	5/11/12	\$799,000	\$811,000
1870 Jackson St #201	2	2	1	1270	48	4/26/12	\$879,000	\$885,000
2937A Webster St	3	2	1		19	4/25/12	\$899,000	\$910,000
2090 Pacific Ave #305	1	1		1458	32	4/24/12	\$925,000	\$925,000
1840 Washington St #501 2	2	2	1	923	47	5/10/12	\$965,000	\$960,000
1840 Washington St #404 2	2	2	1	955	24	4/17/12	\$965,000	\$965,000
1760 Pacific Ave #2	2	2	1	1859	9	5/4/12	\$949,000	\$1,000,000
2360 Union St #1	2	2	2	1780	435	4/27/12	\$1,049,000	\$1,049,000
2100 Pacific Ave #1A	2	2	1	1750	94	4/27/12	\$1,199,000	\$1,199,000
1925 Pacific Ave #3	3	2	1	1634	31	4/18/12	\$1,215,000	\$1,200,000
2958 Bush St	3	2	3	2061	14	4/18/12	\$1,298,000	\$1,342,000
2349 Vallejo St	2	2.5	1	2000	299	4/17/12	\$1,495,000	\$1,449,000
2865 Jackson St #5	3	2	1	1752	168	5/7/12	\$1,565,000	\$1,565,000
1734 Gough St	3	4	2		33	5/1/12	\$1,695,000	\$1,750,000
2635 Buchanan St	3	3	1	2633	44	4/27/12	\$1,849,000	\$1,780,000
2003 Lyon St	4	2	1	2598	55	5/4/12	\$1,895,000	\$1,875,000
2427 Divisadero St	4	3	1	2108	28	4/23/12	\$1,995,000	\$2,055,000
2686 Union St	3	2.5	1	2204	15	5/3/12	\$2,200,000	\$2,535,000
2200 Pacific Ave #11C	3	4	2		189	5/7/12	\$3,300,000	\$3,200,000
1940 Broadway #6	3	3	2		219	5/1/12	\$4,200,000	\$4,000,000

The bottom of the market may have come and gone
Property owners can breathe a little more easily as the median home and condo prices close the gap between the highs of 2007 and today. If the trend continues, the window has closed for buyers waiting for the bottom of the market. Still, interest rates remain historically low. Time will tell if last month's sales spike in the median home price is an anomaly. Multiple offers continue to drive asking prices up and all-cash buyers increase the competition.

NEW LISTINGS: Some unique offerings debuted this month, including the architecturally intact Dutch Colonial mansion designed by Albert Farr at 2950 Pacific, offered for \$16.5 million. Owned by the Newhall family since it was built in 1907, this classic home on its expansive lot with a unique setback needs a new family to update it and enliven its commodious rooms. By contrast, 3377 Pacific, a 1903 Julia Morgan design, has been meticulously maintained, with state of the art appliances, technology and mature landscaping. It's listed at \$11.5 million.

Condo offerings include the elegant full-floor co-op on the sixth floor of 2127 Broadway. It has all the pluses: exceptional views, two elevators, two car parking, a great location and it's pet friendly, offered just under \$3.5 million. Down the street at 1769 Broadway, unit #11 is a top-floor condo in a well-maintained complex. This large 1-bedroom, 1-bath condo is an exceptional value at \$685,000. The new building at 1840 Washington is now offering its south-facing penthouse, with a wrap-around terrace and luxurious finishes for just over \$2 million.

— Data and commentary provided by MARIA MARCHETTI at Sotheby's International Realty. Contact her at maria@mariamarchetti.com or call 699-8008.

"If I had but two loaves of bread,
I'd sell one and buy hyacinths
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A Piece of the Past Is on the Block

Sale of Dirk van Erp lamp will help restore the Swedenborgian Church

By THOMAS REYNOLDS

LUXURY WEEK arrives this month at Christie's in New York, and the Rev. Joseph Worcester might be rolling in his grave at the news that his beloved Swedenborgian Church will be auctioning a historic lamp from the former parsonage next door. It is estimated to fetch from \$40,000 to \$60,000.

But he would be pleased the proceeds will be used to restore the church's stained glass windows designed by Bruce Porter, a key player in Worcester's circle of artists and writers, who helped create the church and garden on the corner of Lyon and Washington Streets. Also to be restored are the church's iconic square-legged chairs with rush-bottom seats — said to be designed by legendary architect Bernard Maybeck to Worcester's specifications — which inspired the Mission-style furniture that followed.

The dignified home at 2121 Lyon Street was built for parishioner Gertrude Bowers in 1894 at the same time the church was being built next door. It was intended as a parsonage, but Rev. Worcester preferred to stay in his simple wood-shingled home at the top of Russian Hill. In 1900 the residence was bought by acclaimed artist William Keith, another key member of Worcester's circle. Keith also bought the lot beside the church on Washington Street, which is now the Swedenborgian Parish House.

In 1910, shortly before Keith's death, he sold the

residence to Isabel Baldwin, who in 1921 sold it to the Eloesser family. It remained in that family until Nina Eloesser died in December 2010. The family had arranged for the house to be deeded — at long last — directly to the Swedenborgian Church.

The church has just begun to renovate 2121 Lyon Street. But before the work could begin, the distinctive copper and mica chandelier had to be removed from the dining room. It was thought to be from the San Francisco studio of Dirk van Erp, one of the most celebrated craftsmen of what came to be known as the Arts & Crafts movement.

Collectors and the major auction houses came calling when news of the rare and unseen van Erp chandelier began to circulate. Church officials decided to put the lamp up for auction at Christie's in New York alongside a thicker of Tiffany lamps, many from the collection of the Eddie Rickenbacker saloon in San Francisco.

Christie's is promoting the lamp as "property from the Swedenborgian Church," circa 1910, "originally in the home of the painter William Keith, a friend of Dirk van Erp, until his passing in 1911."

Technically that's more or less true, but after connoisseurs arched their eyebrows, Christie's revised its online description to make clear that the lamp comes from prop-

erty owned by the Swedenborgian Church, not from the church itself.

Likewise, while William Keith owned 2121 Lyon, it was never his home. He lived across the bay in Berkeley. Keith probably knew nothing of the lamp since he sold the house in 1910, the same year van Erp opened his studio in San Francisco.

And no one can prove definitively the lamp is by van Erp. It does not bear his distinctive windmill mark, nor was van Erp known to make chandeliers. But the lamp bears all the hallmarks of his studio's work, and specifically that of his nephew and chief assistant August Tieselmeier, who was known to make chandeliers, and for a time had his own copper shop on Sacramento Street near Fillmore.

It seems likely the chandelier was added to 2121 Lyon after the Eloessers bought the residence in 1921. Van Erp continued to operate his copper shop through the 1920s, and the Eloessers also had two copper and mica table lamps marked with the van Erp windmill. In addition, van Erp created hand-hammered copper desk sets featuring the monograms of both Herbert and Nina Eloesser.

None of that diminishes the uniqueness or the desirability of the lamp. Arts & Crafts collectors and enthusiasts will be watching closely on June 14 when Luxury Week comes to Christie's.



Swedenborgian minister Rev. Junchol Lee admired the antique copper and mica lamp before it was removed.

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