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Coming Home to the Fillmore

Treasures from her travels at a native's new gallery

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'It Has Made a Huge Difference'

The new Hamilton pool is a multicultural mecca

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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ NOVEMBER 2017



Celebrating life and color

"Hula Hoop"
 RHONEL ROBERTS

Rhonel Roberts has loved art and music since he was a child growing up in Stockton. His breakthrough came when he combined the two in a series of paintings of his musical heroes — and one was chosen as the poster for the Fillmore Jazz Festival. A new book tells his story and presents a selection of his work.

See **LOVING HIS COLOR** | PAGE 11

1300 Takes a Time Out

The long wait at the Fillmore Heritage Center claims another victim

THE DECISION could have been made anytime since July 1, 2014, when Yoshi's pulled out next door. But the owners of 1300 on Fillmore restaurant hung on, committed to the resurgence they had helped spark.

They even doubled down and opened a barbecue joint across the street.

Finally on October 19 came the word: 1300 would close. Final call was on October 25, a closing party that former mayor Willie Brown called "a classic — more like the dance palace of the Fillmore of yesteryear."

Owners Monetta White and David Lawrence insisted they are just taking a break — a "hiatus," White called it — from trying to keep open an upscale restaurant. Business has gotten slower and slower during the 3½ years since Yoshi's jazz club and restaurant called it quits, and city leaders have dragged out a decision about what to do with the space.

"Something had to be done," White said. "We hope to revamp, revise and relaunch in 2018."

In the meantime, Black Bark BBQ will continue and they will rent out 1300 and its Fillmore heritage lounge for pop-ups and private events.

"It's a short-term decision for a long-term stay — hopefully," White said.

Like nearly everyone else associated with the Fillmore Heritage Center — which houses 1300, the massive Yoshi's restaurant and showroom, an art gallery, a screening room and a public parking garage — White expressed frustration with the city's delay in finding a buyer for the complex. The project defaulted to the city when the developer went bust.

"Why is it taking them so long to deal with this building?" lamented White. "Who is in charge over there? They told me to hold for one year... it's been three!"

Willie Brown spoke for many fans of 1300: "Thanks for the memories. Bring it back soon."

■ FILLMORE BEAT



Harry's Calls Off the Deal

PAGE 5

A PARKING SOLUTION

I HAVE WALKED the streets of Pacific Heights for years with my beloved dog, Bubba, and I have been noticing something getting worse: “No Stopping” signs are sprouting all over the streets, especially on Sacramento, Steiner and Fillmore.

There are two problems with what the two responsible city agencies — the Department of Public Works (DPW) and Parking and Traffic Control (P&TC) — are doing. DPW is charged with putting up these signs for construction work and P&TC is tasked with putting up moving signs.

The problem with DPW signs is that they are too generous with the number and hours posted. Some do not allow parking until 6 p.m., while some forbid it on Saturdays. I have observed that construction work almost always ends by 4 p.m. and almost never occurs on Saturdays.

Signs also stay up too long. An example is the 2200 block of Steiner. The Water Department had about 10 signs put up in December, January and February. They didn't come to do the work until the end of February. They closed off the block and completed the work in about four hours.

Sometimes they don't take the signs down when they complete their work.

A few years ago a contractor redoing curb cuts on Fillmore left before finishing the job. After several 311 calls to DPW, the work was still not completed. It took a call from Supervisor Mark Farrell's office to get the work completed. DPW realized that their supervisors were not supervising the work and depended on the computer to see if the work was completed.

My recommendations:

- DPW should make almost every sign effective 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

- Determine how many signs are really needed.

- Ensure that contractors start their work as soon as the signs permit and take them down when work is completed.

Now it seems DPW does whatever the contractor requests. One contractor on Pierce Street had signs up for six years to do a job that should have taken a week and a half. A neighbor called 311 and the city told the contractor to return to work.

The signs issued by P&TC have one price, whether the applicant wants one sign or five. The number of hours seems to be up to the requestor. Just recently, a person moving out of a one-bedroom apartment got signs for 160 feet, even though there was space for only 100 feet. They did not need 160 feet, or even 100, but 160 feet cost the same as 20 feet. The signs were in effect until 6 p.m., even though the move was completed well before 4 p.m., as are most moves.

I have recommended the obvious to P&TC: Charge much more for more than two spaces to discourage large, unneeded space restrictions, and charge for the length of time the signs are in effect. The person moving should find out how much space is needed and for how long. The movers know what the job entails and how long it takes. They schedule their arrivals, which are usually at about 10 a.m., know the size of their van and how long the work will take. Then they should be required to take down the signs when they are no longer needed.

But it is not only DPW's or P&TC's responsibility; it is also ours. We must take signs down when no longer needed, take up only the space necessary — and notice and report abuses to 311. Then perhaps we could have fewer parking problems in our beloved Pacific Heights.

JOHN KAYE

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FAREWELL

The Bodhisattva of Browser Books



Latif William Harris — post-Beat poet and Bodhisattva of Browser Books on Fillmore — died on October 15 at age 76.

The author of hundreds of poems, Harris's most significant achievements came toward the end of his long career. In 2006, *A Bodhisattva's Busted Truth* was published by Browser Books Publishing. In 2009, Harris edited the monumental *Beatitude Golden Anniversary 1959-2009*, a massive and diverse anthology of that fabled magazine. But perhaps his greatest work — the effort of many years and phases of life — would prove to be the last published within his lifetime: *Barter Within the Bark of Trees*, published in 2015.

He is survived by his son Raphael and his wife and partner of 36 years, Alpha Gardner. Harris met Gardner at the original location of Browser Books, beside the Clay Theatre, where he was working and also living at the time.

— ERIN C. MESSER

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■ STREET TALK

Let us count our Michelin stars

How fortunate are we to live in this neighborhood? The new Michelin guide offers a clue.

■ Three Fillmore restaurants got a star: **SPQR**, **THE PROGRESS** and **STATE BIRD PROVISIONS**, plus **OCTAVIA** at Octavia and Bush and **SPRUCE** on Sacramento.

■ At 3127 Fillmore, **ATELIER CRENN** got two stars.

■ And we can still claim **QUINCE**, now all beautifully grown up in Jackson Square, which got a full set of three stars, and first planted its roots where Octavia is now.

That's not all: **DOSA** and **SOCIALE** are on the Bib Gourmands list of restaurants with "exceptionally good food at moderate prices." (And so is Quince's little brother, **COTOGNA**.)

■ **WILL SNUG BE A FIT?** Things are looking promising at the corner of Fillmore and Clay. Construction is full speed ahead for the opening this month of **THE SNUG**, a new craft bar with 20 taps. The name and the look are a play on the private booth area of traditional English pubs. The partners have impressive mixological pedigrees, mostly in beer, and the food comes from Brian Shin, a veteran of Benu and In-Situ.

■ **POPPING UP:** The wine shop once there is only a memory, but there's finally new life at 2424 California: **A RUNNER'S MIND** has popped up, offering shoes and other gear. Expect more pop-ups as retail continues to shake out. . . . Over at 2815 California, near Divisadero, the new **TEA HUT**'s boba tea has become a favorite of Drew School students. . . . And poke is coming to 1515 Fillmore, formerly the Prime Dip, where **I'A POKE** will open a third outlet.



Renowned gardeners Shigeru Namba (right) and Isao Ogura are to create the Zen garden.

Alta Plaza Makeover Scaled Back

GRAND PLANS to renovate Alta Plaza Park have been scaled back due to a lack of funding, but more limited measures to conserve water are proceeding.

The Recreation & Park Commission has awarded a construction contract to replace the sod and irrigation system on the north side of the park and to install perimeter drainage intended to address longstanding water seepage onto the sidewalks surrounding the park. Construction is expected to start during the winter, but the schedule has not yet been announced.

In addition, the project includes a "donor recognition circle" near the playground, which was renovated a decade ago, and a concrete driveway at Scott and Washington leading up to the donor site.

If funding permits, some new benches may also be added.

"Please bear in mind the reduced nature of this project," wrote Janet Gamble and Anita Denz for Friends of Alta Plaza Park in an update to neighbors. "The entire north side will be excavated to replace the antiquated irrigation system and new sod will be planted. Some of the existing plants and shrubs will have to be removed and there is no funding for replacements now. The beds will be filled with mulch."

A master plan for Alta Plaza approved by the Rec & Park Commission last year called for new pathways, furnishings and plantings. Those have been deferred.

Zen Garden Back On Again

THE ON-AGAIN, off-again plan to create a memorial Zen garden at the foot of Cottage Row — once a Japanese enclave — is back on again.

On October 19, the Recreation & Park Commission approved the garden, a memorial to the founders of Japantown.

But approval on the commission's consent calendar came only after another attempt to derail the project by the husband-and-wife team of Bush Street residents who have doggedly opposed the garden. Mary King and Marvin Lambert both argued again that honoring only the Japanese founders leaves out many others who have lived near Cottage Row.

So far they have managed to delay the garden, which was to be created last year in honor of the 110th anniversary of the founding of Japantown after the 1906 earthquake. At the October 19 hearing, Lambert repeatedly demanded that the issue be removed from the commission's consent calendar. He said he has created his own memorial that would include all who have lived in the neighborhood.

But commission chair Mark Buell said the issue had already been discussed in a lengthy committee hearing and that only commission members could remove an item from the consent calendar. No one did. The garden passed unanimously.

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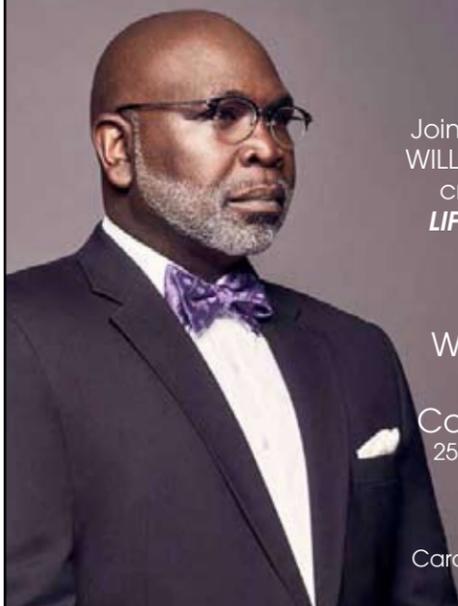
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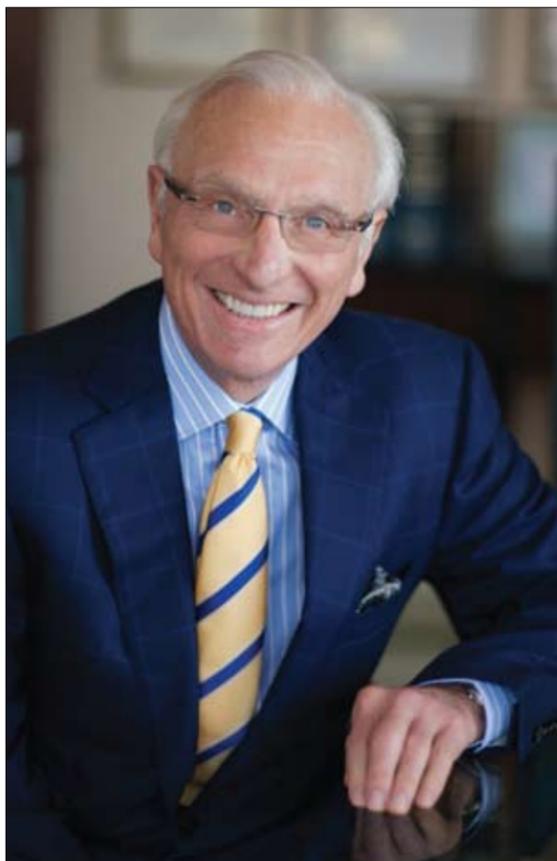
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CRIME WATCH

**Robbery, Assault
Franklin and Grove
September 2, 12:54 p.m.**

A man was putting money in a parking meter when another man came up from behind and punched him. The man at the meter fell to the ground, sustaining injuries that later required him to be transported to the hospital. But when he realized the assailant was running off with his cell phone and wallet, he got up and gave chase.

A passerby came to his aid and together they managed to recover the phone and the wallet. When police arrived, they placed the suspect in custody.

**Theft
Van Ness and McAllister
September 15, 1:36 p.m.**

An elderly man was sitting next to a woman on a Muni bus. When she got off the bus, he also exited and followed her. Once outside, he came up behind her, ripped off her necklace and walked away. The woman, 72, was not injured. The matter is still under investigation.

**Shoplifting, Robbery
Cabrillo and 7th
September 23, 6:30 p.m.**

An unknown individual entered a supermarket. A security officer saw the man place a two-pack of deodorant into the pocket of his jacket. The man then moved toward the exit without paying. The security guard caught up to him and asked him to return the deodorant. The man replied: "I will fight you. I will hurt you."

The shoplifter then lunged at the security officer. To prevent the attack, the guard tripped the man, causing both of them to fall. Then the suspect grasped the security guard's wrist and twisted it, causing severe injuries to the guard's hand. In the struggle, the shoplifter managed to snatch the guard's cell phone. Another employee shouted at the suspect, who then fled with the stolen items.

Officers canvassed the area for the robber, but could not locate the suspect or the stolen cell phone. The investigation is ongoing.

**Recovered Stolen Vehicle
Geary and Masonic
October 1, 10:19 a.m.**

Officers on patrol spotted a Subaru with all of its doors open. Items were scattered on the ground all around it, and two white males were loitering nearby. The officers spoke to the two men, who told them that a friend had loaned them the vehicle. The officers then conducted a records check and learned the car was stolen. As the police attempted to detain the men, one bolted off. Officers captured him and placed both men in handcuffs.

One suspect was booked at county jail for possession of a stolen vehicle, burglary, possession of stolen property and violating his probation. The second man was released.

**False Registration Tabs
Fulton and Masonic
October 7, 3 p.m.**

Officers monitoring the volume of pedestrian and vehicular traffic saw a car with a suspicious-looking registration tab. It seemed to be glistening, and they suspected tape had been used to secure the tabs to the plate.

The officers followed the car and ran its license plate through the DMV database. The vehicle's registration had expired in 2013. The officers performed a traffic stop and, after interviewing the driver and checking further with the DMV, determined the suspect had falsely attached registration tabs to the license plate, and had no current insurance. Officers cited the

driver for the violations, seized the license plate as evidence and towed the vehicle to the impound lot.

**Shooting
Buchanan and Turk
October 10, 9:51 p.m.**

A young man reported to the police that an unknown individual ran toward him and started shooting. The shooter then fled on foot. A second youth was struck as well. The two victims, who were 18 and 16 years old, were transported to the hospital and are expected to survive. No arrests have been made in the case and the matter is being investigated by the gang task force.

**Attempted Carjacking
Fillmore and Grove
October 11, 7:45 p.m.**

A man had just parked his car and was about to exit when two men approached him. One was carrying a handgun and he ordered the man to hand over the car. The driver hit the accelerator and got away uninjured. Police are investigating the matter.

**Hit and Run
Franklin and Turk
October 18, 12:21 p.m.**

Officers were conducting a firearms violation investigation when they spotted a man they believed was carrying a gun. When the man realized the police were watching him, he fled in the SUV he was driving and struck one of the officers. The vehicle was later found abandoned near Buena Vista Park.

A manhunt immediately began for the perpetrator. At approximately 4:30 p.m., police located the suspect and arrested him. The officer was taken San Francisco General Hospital in critical condition.

**Shooting, Attempted Armed Robbery
Clay and Laguna
October 21, 8:52 p.m.**

An Uber driver was approached by two armed men who attempted to rob him. One suspect fired his gun and hit the driver in the leg. When officers arrived, they found the driver with the non-life-threatening gunshot wound and called an ambulance.

On October 26, police arrested one suspect. The second man is still at large.

**Shooting
Lafayette Park
October 24, 2:15 a.m.**

A man was walking in the park when he was approached by a man in his mid-20s who asked to use his phone. When the man out walking produced his mobile device, the man who had approached him tried to grab it from his hand and the two became locked in a struggle over the phone. When the assailant pulled out a gun, the man who had been attacked broke away and ran. The suspect shot at him as he fled, hitting him in the hand. When the police arrived, they called an ambulance for him.

Police have not released a detailed description of the suspect, who is still at large.

**Shooting
Fillmore and Turk
October 27, 7:25 p.m.**

Gunfire broke out on Fillmore Street in front of a liquor store and a restaurant near Northern Station. Witnesses reported hearing shots fired and seeing panicked people screaming and running for safety. Several witnesses claimed to have seen a man in a hoodie walking down the street, randomly shooting people. Four young black males were struck; all were hospitalized but none had serious injuries. The police have two suspects in custody. The gang task force is investigating the matter.

Thai Stick Deal Is Dead

THE MUCH BUZZED ABOUT bid by the two owners of **HARRY'S BAR** to take over the **THAI STICK** on the corner of Fillmore and Pine has collapsed. **RICK HOWARD** and **GEORGE KARAS** reportedly pulled out of the deal, with no reasons given. The bar stays open, but food service has been cut back somewhat while owner **PAUL POLEMASUPPAPOL** looks for new buyers.

Regulars seem to be relieved. They had pitched in and held a pre-death pot luck on October 17, bringing in their own platters of food, veggies, dips and desserts, telling stories and sharing memories about "the Stick." Paul P. didn't attend. And the Harry's boys were nowhere to be seen.

A couple of Tuesdays later, on Halloween night, with the sixth game of the World Series on the Stick's many television screens, there was a festive feeling in the air as word of the dead deal began to circulate. Spunky Bangkok-born bartender **MAY PANICHSUSAWAT** was in opera hose, short skirt, polka dot top and pink rabbit ears, handing out Snickers and Kit Kats to trick or treaters. "We're partying," she said, pouring a full glass of \$5 happy hour Sonoma chardonnay.

"I love this place," said **NATALIA LEWIS**, an app developer who lives in the Fillmore. "It's fun and familiar." Chef **MANNY VERA**, who works in the financial district, was thrilled. "I'm going to continue supporting my friends here," he said. "I like the ambiance, the bartenders, the games and happy hour prices, and it's on my way home. High school teacher **NANCY DAY**, costumed as a white-coated forensic scientist, and a loyalist since the days of the Pacific Heights Bar and Grill, said: "I'm selfishly happy it didn't sell. The crowd here is not super young, super attractive — just nice, friendly people who come here for the awesome bartenders and its location, location, location."

Longtime customer **FINOLA KELLY**, from Galway, Ireland, thinks the Thai Stick could survive and flourish if Paul P. put in a good manager. "It's a great place for neighborhood people to meet," she said. "The girls (bartenders) here are amazing. I come in to read my *Hello* magazine, have a fairly priced drink and watch the games. It's my Zen place."

DEAL OVER: Across the street at **HARRY'S**, the outsourced chef brought in a few weeks ago to take over its kitchen, **BRIAN BEACH**, is already gone. Now running the kitchen: **DERRICK SOAREES**, who oversees the food at other bar-restaurants helmed by the Harry's owners. An ex-frontman for a Tokyo-based Asian touring rock band, he's already lived up the menu. Example: Texicano Tots, a pile of tater tots dressed up like spicy nachos. Plus, the sports saloon has hired a congenial GM, **SALIM MOHNEED**, and is starting themed brunches.

Meantime, the **ELITE CAFE** didn't manage to get its historic neon marquee fixed in October as promised, but the Elite's new GM, **OLGA DVORYASHINA**, promises it will be refurbished during the first week of November. Live jazz is now playing again at the Elite — from 7 to 10 p.m. on Wednesdays.

NO DEAL: Still no decision on who will take over the still shuttered **FILLMORE HERITAGE CENTER**. Insiders at City Hall will say nothing about who's likely to take over or when a decision might be made. Now the delay in choosing among five bidders has taken another casualty: **1300 ON FILLMORE**, the southern-inspired restaurant and bar famed for its Sunday gospel brunch and co-owned by talented, London-trained chef **DAVID LAWRENCE** and his wife, the lower Fillmore powerhouse **MONETTA WHITE**. Meanwhile, one city source says the original five bidders who've submitted proposals to operate the complex have not been whittled down to one or two as rumored.

DONE DEAL: A fast-growing Copenhagen-based chain, **JOE & THE JUICE**, has opened its sixth San Francisco outpost at 2213 Fillmore in the old Noah's Bagel space, with a witty menu, cool decor, healthy juices, sandwiches and coffee — all handcrafted, with calorie counts and husky prices. But it is providing a new and stylish gathering place.

RAW DEAL: The **SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY**'s popular resale shop at 2436 Fillmore, **REPEAT PERFORMANCE**, was burglarized again, for the second time in two months. Thieves smashed a window, grabbed vintage jewelry and "other things they can quickly turn into money," said manager **PAUL DELUCCHI**. The tab to repair the store: \$5,000. In the same week, **POSH**, the hair salon next door at 2444 Fillmore, was burgled again, its glass front door shattered.

Don't be bashful. Send sightings and newsy local items to chris@cbarnmedia.com.

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From Fillmore to Union

Juicy News has a new location, but a familiar feeling

BY LESLEY LEONHARDT

WHEN MOE SALIMI moved Juicy News from its longtime home at Fillmore and Jackson down the hill to Union and Fillmore in 2015, he was expecting a completely different neighborhood, even though he'd moved only a few blocks. But he didn't find it.

"There are more similarities than I would have thought," Salimi says from his perch in the bright front window of his newsstand at 2181 Union. "Only generational differences are apparent, with a younger demographic found on Union and more established families shopping in the old location."

Unable to renew his lease on Fillmore, Salimi moved his magazine, newspaper and book shop at a time when many small businesses in the city were struggling — especially bookstores and newsstands. Many owners would have given up and moved on to another challenge, but Salimi persisted.

"I felt I offered something people wanted and needed — a place to share their interests and meet up with other like-minded folks," he says. "I'm happy to say both neighborhoods are supportive of a business like mine because of my inventory of literary magazines, papers, books and gifts for all ages."

The approach that worked well during his years on Fillmore is garnering new fans in Cow Hollow. He estimates that 75 percent of his Fillmore clientele followed him when the shop relocated. Many new neighbors have also found the shop. "The Union Street neighborhood was instantly supportive of my concept," he says.

It may be a boon for his business that Salimi easily converses on most any subject and is also pas-

sionate about food, wine, soccer — and of course literature.

"I was interested from a young age in history, even reading the complete collection of *The History of the French Revolution*," he says. "I was 11 or so and it took me a year to complete. That did it. I was hooked on reading and knowledge."

Unlike many people, Salimi sees the digital world as no threat.

"Contrary to popular belief, print is not dead and never will be," he says, and neither is neighborhood shopping.

"People are social animals," he says. "They crave the face-to-face experience that retail provides. My observation is that customer interaction in the retail setting will always be in demand."

He adds: "I wanted my shop to be a gathering place for the community to share thoughts and ideas, as well as support the printed word."

Customer preferences drive his selections when Salimi puts together the collection of titles in his shop. His offerings include magazines covering interior design, fashion, travel, food, business and finance, with pop culture in the mix. "I use no industry algorithms to make my selections," he says, instead relying on his own observations of what the public is interested in reading.

The inventory changes often, and his loyal fans include visitors as well as neighbors.

He likes to tell a favorite anecdote.

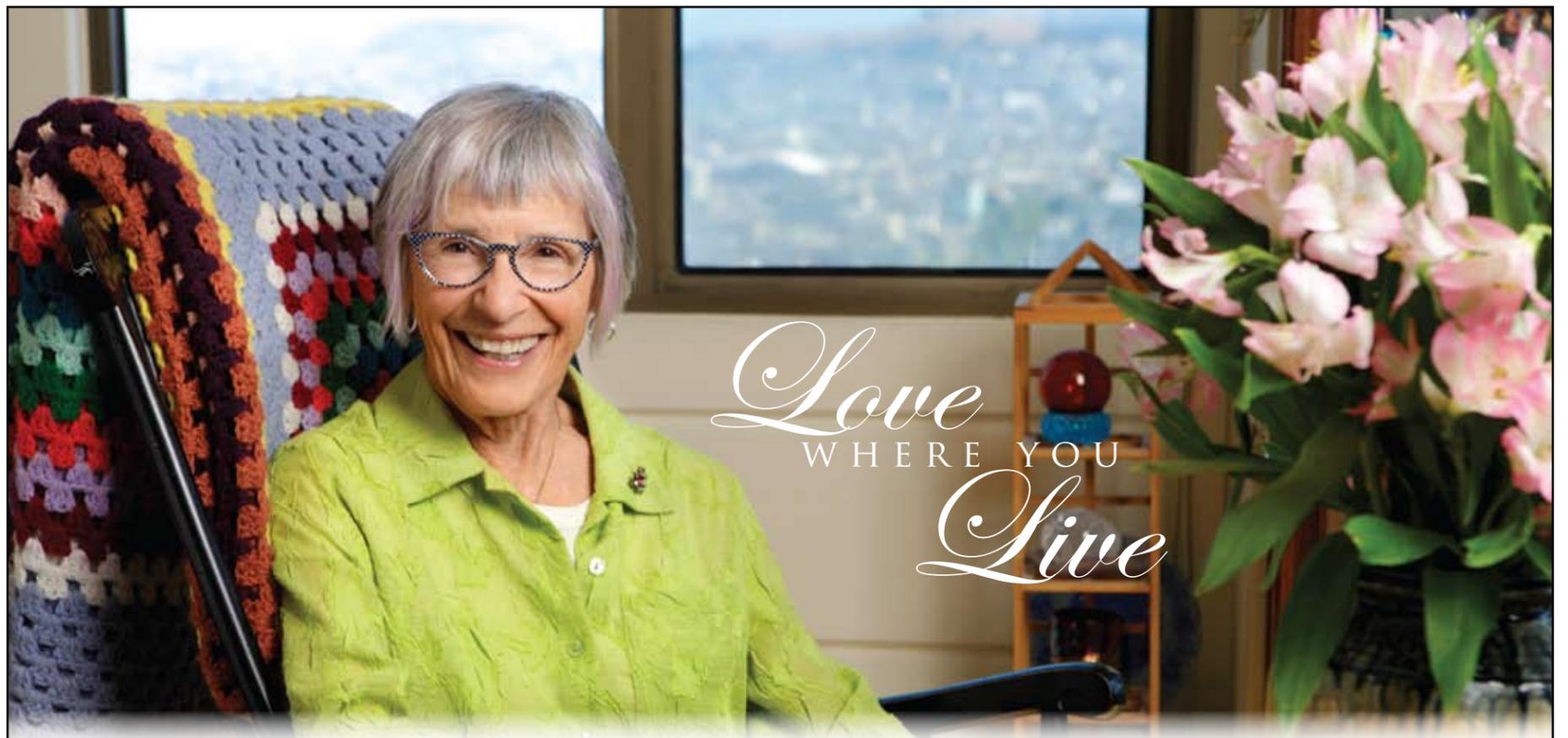
"Two customers unknown to each other — one from the west coast, one from New York — were both attending a garden tour in Dublin," he says. "As they became acquainted, they found they had one thing in common: Both enjoyed their visits to Juicy News."



LUCY GRAY

"I felt I offered something people wanted and needed."

— MOE SALIMI, owner of Juicy News



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A Fillmore native brings her enthusiasms
back home to the neighborhood

By FRANCINE BREVETTI

IF YOU ARE a tribal man of Niger intent on wooing a lady, you will likely wear a Wodaabe tunic at the Geerewol festival. “That’s where the handsome men of the tribe compete in a contest of endurance and beauty,” explains Shiffen Melaku.

Your sister would have embroidered this ritual robe for you to wear at the weeklong festival where young people meet to find mates among the other cattle-herding nomads.

Here in the neighborhood, you can buy such a garment at Shiffen’s Baraka Gallery, formerly of Oakland, and newly installed at 1230 Fillmore.

Shiffen prefers only her first name. For her gallery, she chose the name Baraka — Arabic for blessed or blessing — because elders would frequently say, during her travels in Morocco, “You’ve got the baraka.”

She says the raiment of the Wodaabe people has been the most difficult tribal textile to acquire. “They are not usually sold,” she says. “And those that are tend to go to the European market.”

Shiffen has been collecting textiles and artifacts from tribal societies in Ghana, Senegal, Niger, Madagascar, Morocco and Mexico for many years. She acquired the unusual textiles she shows and sells in the gallery during travels to those countries. Intermediaries also bring her goods from Mali and India.

Baraka Gallery also offers native jewelry, masks, toys and furniture, much of it handcarved. Shiffen is also preparing a space where she hopes to curate shows of local artists.

For its debut, the narrow boutique holds a profusion of tribal art, especially soft goods.

“I have a textile habit,” says Shiffen. She explains the difference in technique between Wodaabe tunics and Ghana’s strip weaving cloth called Kente while browsers can look at the real thing. It is also easy to see how they are made and worn from photographs and books on tribal art.

“Lately, there is a craze for indigo,” Shiffen says. The vegetable is powdered

and fairly hammered into the cloth itself. With some pressure, she fingers a native skirt and shows the blue dye flaking off on her hands.

Learning is part of the adventure of visiting the new gallery. Suspended from the ceiling near the window onto Fillmore Street is a painted object carved in wood. Shiffen explains that it is in fact a hornbill puppet meant to be worn on top of the head by a performer who manipulates its wings.

A Fillmore native, Shiffen worked for 16 years at the Xanadu gallery on Maiden Lane before it closed two years ago. Housed in a shop designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright, Xanadu specialized in Asian and African arts.

“I learned about everything in that gallery, but my main interest was the textiles from all over the world and the ethnographic folk arts from Africa, Asia, Papua New Guinea and Latin America,” she says.

Xanadu’s closure gave her the impetus to branch out on her own and open her own shop in Oakland three years ago. “My experience at Xanadu gave me the contacts and connections I needed to source my products,” she says.

Shiffen first opened across from the Grand Lake Theater in Oakland. “But it was in an out-of-the-way place and I was always looking,” she says. “Then I found this opportunity to come back to San Francisco.”

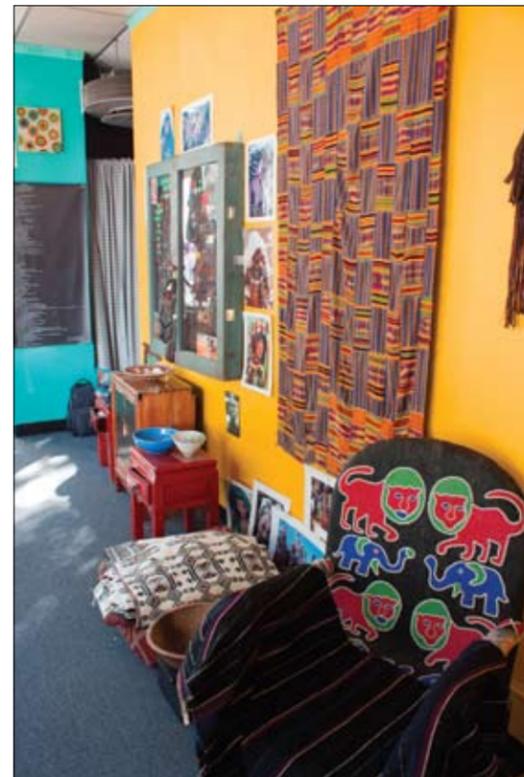
She laughs at her reverse migration as many artists are moving to the East Bay. “Who comes back from Oakland?” she says. But she grew up at Pine and Buchanan and her mother still lives in the neighborhood.

Shiffen says she likes the diversity of the area and she has no worries about attracting a clientele. Tribal art is especially appreciated by those who are well traveled, she says.

Baraka Gallery is open most days from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 1230 Fillmore. For more information, call 510-823-0823 or visit barakagallery.com.



The owner of the new Baraka Gallery, Shiffen, with some of the treasures she has collected in her travels and now offers at 1230 Fillmore.



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BY SUZIE BIEHLER



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By ANDREA CHASE

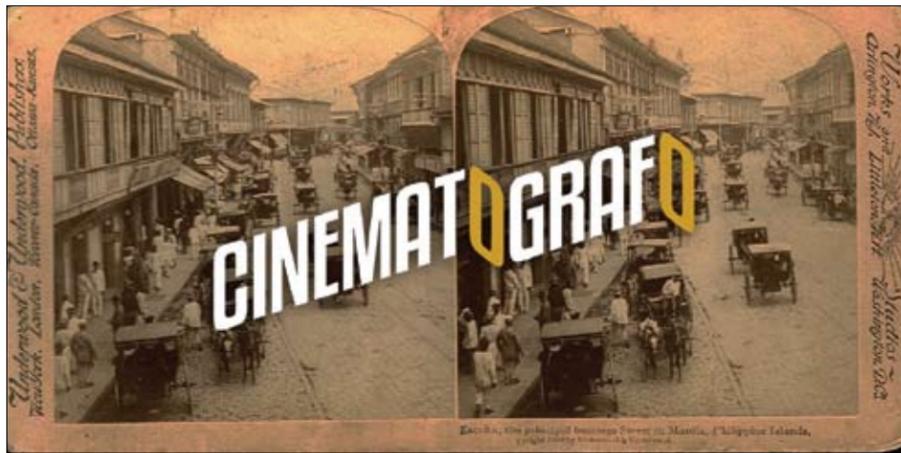
NOVEMBER BRINGS a vibrant mix of film festivals to the neighborhood — ranging from Asian films, to genre films that will chill your spine, to a brand new festival focusing on a self-described invisible minority, to Italian treats for every taste.

The **SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL** returns to New People Cinema at 1746 Post Street from November 9 to 12. Opening night offers *Abu (Father)*, a heart-rending and perceptive documentary by Arshad Khan that traces his difficult relationship with his father after the family's emigration from Pakistan to Canada. Khan offers a compassionate look at the inevitable clash of generations when old world values of parents are left behind by their children — and the added tension that ensues when Khan comes out as gay.

For slightly lighter fare, there's *Newton* (November 12, 2:45 p.m.), which pits a high-minded election clerk against small town bureaucrats, marauding Maoists, the local military and an indifferent voting population.

Also highly recommended is Shanker Raman's *Gurgaon* (November 10, 9:30 p.m.), a crisp neo-noir set in Delhi that explores sibling rivalry, patriarchal obliviousness and the corrupting nature of greed; and *Shepherdess of the Glaciers* (November 12, 1 p.m.), directed by Stanzin Dorjai and Christiane Mordelet, a ravishingly beautiful documentary that chronicles four seasons of life tending a flock of sheep and pashmina goats in the Himalayas.

For more details, go to thirdi.org.



The Cinematografo festival, at the Kabuki, is named for the first theater in the Philippines.

Film Fests Abound

Four widely different local festivals this month

How **ANOTHER HOLE THE HEAD FILM FESTIVAL** got its name is one of the great stories of the San Francisco film scene. It started when Jeff Ross founded IndieFest, which went on to produce several other film and music festivals in the Bay Area. A newspaper story reporting on the founding of IndieFest opined that "San Francisco needs another film festival like it needs another hole in the head."

And thus Ross had the name for his annual celebration of genre and horror that plays at New People this month. On November 6 at 9 p.m., the festival shares a rare treat: three art films from Christopher Coppola's student days that ask provocative philosophical questions that may or may not have answers. They play along with *G-Men*

From Hell, a slick tale of FBI agents convinced they should not have been damned for eternity who find their way back with a ticked-off Satan on their heels.

Closing night features *Replace* (November 8, 7 p.m.), a creepy German horror flick by Norbert Keil about a beautiful woman with a disease that rapidly ages her skin, and the choices she is forced to make when she falls in love with another woman who has flawless skin. It's followed at 9 p.m. by *Akira*, the 1988 anime classic by Katsuhiro Otomo, screened with a scintillating live performance of the score.

For more details, go to abith.com.

The **CINEMATOGRAFO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**, named for the first movie theater in the Philippines, debuts at the AMC Kabuki

Theaters, 1881 Post Street, on November 9 at 6 p.m. with *The Portrait* by Loy Arcenas. Set in Manila just before World War II, it follows the two daughters of a famous artist forced to contemplate selling their father's last great painting. The filmmaker will be in attendance for a Q&A afterward.

The festival will also honor renowned filmmaker Ramona Diaz with a retrospective of her work. Included is *Imelda* (November 10, 11 a.m.), her documentary about the shoe-loving ex-first lady of the Philippines, as well as a screening of her latest film, *Motherland* (November 11 at 7:30). Diaz will be on hand for both films and will also participate in one of the festival panels, "State of the Nation" (November 10, 4 p.m.).

Closing night features *The Ghost Bride* by Chito S. Roño (November 12, 6 p.m.). The ghost, though, isn't the bride herself, but rather the wealthy Chinese man she married in a post-mortem ceremony to save her family from financial ruin.

For more details, go to cinematografofilm-festival.com.

Also this month, **NEW ITALIAN CINEMA** returns to the Vogue Theatre, 3290 Sacramento Street, from November 9 to 11, with great contemporary finds including Andrea de Sica's eerie tale of a boy's boarding school, *Children of the Night* (November 10, 9 p.m.); Pierfrancesco Diliberto's brightly colored mad romp through World War II, *At War for Love* (November 11, 4 p.m.); and *Walking on Water* (November 12, 11:15 a.m.), a revealing and timely documentary about the devastating Venice flood of 1966 by Giacomo D'Agostino.

For more details, go to newitaliancinema.org.



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PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANIEL BAHMANI

Longtime lifeguard Chuck Louden has helped many aspiring swimmers at the neighborhood's Hamilton Recreation Center improve their stroke and technique.

'It's Made a Huge Difference'

The renovated pool at Hamilton Rec Center is home to a diverse group of swimmers

BY DANIEL SCHILLER

IF THERE'S A story that needs telling, you'd want Neil Hart to tell it. That became apparent one recent bright morning when, after a 3,000 yard swim, he turned to one of his favorite topics: San Francisco Tsunami Aquatics, the gay, lesbian, trans and straight-friendly adult swim league that has been a fixture at Fillmore's Hamilton Recreation Center for three decades.

Hamilton's dedicated aquatics community helped launch the team in 1986 and, in the aughts, helped renovate and reshape the multigenerational facility at 1900 Geary Boulevard the neighborhood's diverse population enjoys today.

When Hart began swimming there in the early 1980s, he was a bit of a magpie who swam where it was convenient. "I used to go between Hamilton's pool and the North Beach pool with my Rec and Park tear-off tickets," he says.

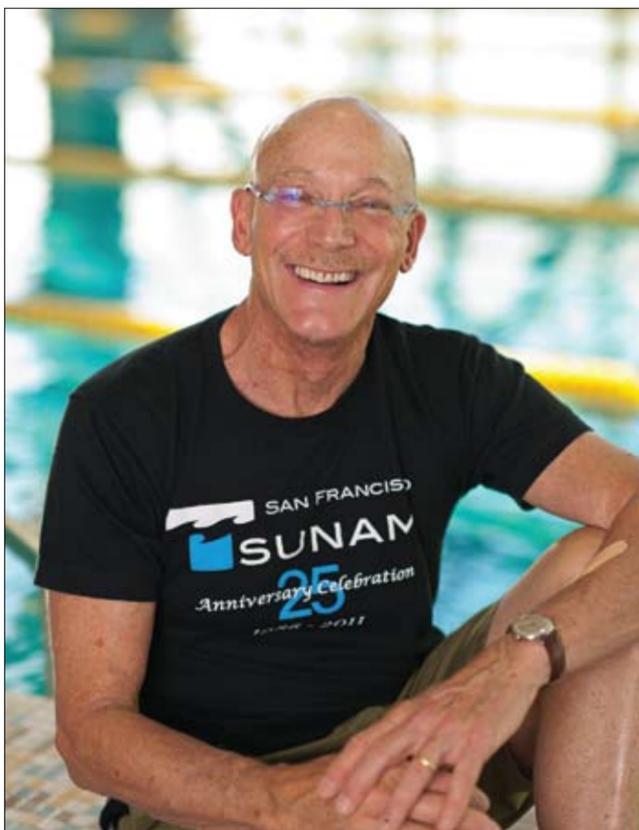
Hart lived in the Marina then, so either location worked. Yet Hamilton had a particularly welcoming community of swimmers and lifeguard Chuck Louden — he's still a lifeguard at Hamilton today — who helped many aspiring swimmers refine their stroke and technique. It was also a place to meet others who were passionate about swimming and looking to make new friends.

Hamilton's pool, though grittier then, provided an oasis for the team. "They did an excellent job of keeping the basketball players and swimmers coexistent," says Hart. "And it was safer and easier to get there."

Once the team established a home at Hamilton, it grew and prospered. "People would see us and ask to join," Hart says. "Rec and Park would recommend us to interested swimmers. We picked up a good number of members that way."

Now the Tsunami team's membership stands at about 300, due in no small measure to having a stable and secure home base.

Some may recall that the old Hamilton Rec Cen-



Neil Hart has been swimming at the light and airy — and now renovated — pool at Hamilton Rec Center for decades.



ter was inauspicious at best — especially compared to the bright and welcoming multigenerational gym, pool and playground at the corner of Steiner and Geary streets today.

"Ten years ago, the idea of children's swim time and toddlers on swings was laughable — or terrifying," says Hart of the broken glass and grimy interior that confronted visitors. "Today we have community space for seniors and a playground where there was once a glass strewn parking lot. It's truly a multi-generational facility."

To the delight of swimmers with a taste for lane lines and chlorine, the post-renovation pool boasts a significant increase in capacity and upgrades including water slides, new locker rooms and meeting facilities. It is open to all for a modest fee.

"The goal with any improvement is to maximize use and serve diverse communities," says Connie Chan of the city's Recreation and Park Department.

That lofty goal often becomes enmeshed in nitty gritty details like pool length. Many city pools were designed at a nonstandard 100-foot length to discourage use in competitions. But that design actually serves to constrain capacity for all other uses as well. By standardizing the length at 75 feet, Rec and Park was able to add a dedicated wading pool area and increase available lap lanes.

"The result is that lap swimmers, senior citizens and toddlers can all use the facility at the same time," says Chan. Hamilton's pool, with its new design, is open an hour less per week than Balboa, but offers 250 percent more time for lap swimming and swim lessons.

As more people use the Hamilton Rec Center, it enlivens the surrounding neighborhood. Hart sees these changes as a plus. "Now it's a facility that knits this diverse community together," he says. "That's really awesome."

Longtime lifeguard Chuck Loudon will tell you it's all about those sleek new slides. "We're booked nine out of 10 weekends with children's parties," he says. "It's made a huge difference."

Singing the Complexities of Modern Opera

BY PAMELA FEINSILBER

A LONG WITH other opera lovers, neighborhood resident Chester Pidduck is eagerly anticipating *Girls of the Golden West*, by Berkeley composer John Adams, which will have its world premiere at the War Memorial Opera House on November 21. The difference is that Pidduck, as a member of the San Francisco Opera Chorus, will be enjoying all eight performances from the stage. He's also singing in Jules Massenet's *Manon*, which starts November 4.

Did you always want to be an opera singer?

After going to grad school for vocal performance, I decided to pursue an opera career, although more focused on being a soloist. Then I got an offer from the S.F. Opera Chorus. It was a big turn-away — a full-time chorus job instead of traveling all over the country as a soloist. I do love traveling, but it was almost too much. And I have sung many solo roles here and can do other gigs.

What draws you to John Adams' new opera?

In the opera world, you think of Verdi, Puccini, Mozart, but I'm partial to modern composers. Their music is more complex, less predictable. Sometimes it takes longer to appreciate it. I consider Adams' *Nixon in China* my favorite opera ever. I wasn't in it when the S.F. Opera performed it in 2012, but I went to see it five times.

Most operas are set in Europe way back when. *Girls of the Golden West* is set during the Gold Rush. We're not having the women in the chorus sing at all. The chorus represents all those miners. We've been discussing with



STEFAN COHEN

A Gold Rush opera makes its debut

The hottest ticket in town this month is surely the world premiere of *Girls of the Golden West*, the tale of the California Gold Rush premiering November 21 at the War Memorial Opera House. The music is by Berkeley composer John Adams — justly famed for his opera *Nixon in China* and many other opera and

symphonic works — and the libretto and directing are by Peter Sellars, one of today's most innovative stage directors.

Sellars drew on original sources, including the vividly detailed letters of Louise Clappe, or "Dame Shirley," who came west with her husband in 1848. In addition to Dame Shirley,

the "girls" include Ah Sing, a Chinese prostitute; Josefa Segovia, a Mexican barmaid; and Lola Montez, who entertains the miners with her scandalous "spider dance."

Above, members of the opera chorus — including Chester Pidduck (center left with shovel) — rehearse their roles as Gold Rush miners.

this amazing stage director, Peter Sellars, the horrific history of the time and how it relates to today, as racial tensions and violence are increasing, as they did with the beginnings of California.

What do you like about living in the neighborhood?

I love the variety here. A lot of my favorite spots are an easy walk from my home in the Fillmore: Miyako Ice Cream, Jai Ho Indian grocery, Sheba Piano Lounge, which has live music every night. There's also a great Ethiopian coffee place, Zo11. Japantown has my favorite mall of anywhere I've been to in the world. Nijiya Market feels very authentic, like I'm back in Japan. Benkyodo is an amazing combination of a Japanese pastry shop and a classic American-look restaurant.

Tell me about the ping pong table in the basement of the opera house. Do you play?

A few of us play regularly and have gotten really good. I didn't realize we had become kind of legendary around the opera world until Larry Brownlee, one of the more famous tenors, came here for *Don Pasquale* last year and said he had been hearing about us. He and I decided we should have an official tournament. I beat Larry on the way to the final!

So that was a highlight of your time with S.F. Opera?

That and singing a solo in Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick*. I had to climb 30 or 40 feet up a ladder, looking for whales — especially *Moby-Dick* — and yell down: "No, they're all black whales." And we had a fight scene involving 20 or so guys. That was so much fun.

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RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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BY KEITH HOWELL

RHONEL ROBERTS' first love was music. But painting is his passion. The two came together for the Fillmore resident in a series of artworks he created celebrating great jazz musicians — Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, John Lee Hooker, Ray Charles and South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela. His career took off when his painting of Masekela was chosen in 2011 for the Fillmore Jazz Festival poster. It was one of Roberts' particular favorites because he remembered the trumpeter's rendition of "Grazing in the Grass" playing at his 13th birthday party.

Roberts' work has two clear characteristics: mood and an exuberance of color. "Musicians embody mood probably more directly than any other artists," he says. "That is especially true of black singers and instrumental virtuosos."

And color has emerged as the motivating force in his art. "I made a choice that I wanted to celebrate life and color early on in my artistic journey," Roberts says. That is why his new book, published this fall by Norfolk Press, is called *Love Your Color*.

Growing up in Stockton, Roberts had little exposure to the visual arts. Although his mother and a teacher encouraged him to paint, he saw no evidence that painting was relevant to African Americans.

"The few black artists I knew about were musicians, athletes and some actors," he says. His peers were musicians, and if he wanted to be recognized for his creative talent, he knew it would be through music. So that's where he directed his energy. Even after he won a scholarship to study art at the University of the Pacific, he was still focusing on music, and soon abandoned college to promote his band.

But the muse never left.

Roberts kept sketching and painting and eventually began selling greeting cards online through Blue Mountain Cards, and hawking them to florists and stationery stores. His first art exhibition, "Living Colors," was presented at San Francisco's Main Library. While he wasn't

allowed to sell his work there, it was seen by some of the doyens of the art world, who encouraged him.

In 2003, when his son was invited to go to Paris with the San Francisco Boys Chorus, Roberts jumped at the opportunity to visit. There, visiting galleries and museums, he discovered that Parisians held black performers in high regard. And even though he didn't speak the language, he felt more at home than he had ever felt as an adult in his native country.

"I came back from Europe with a clearer understanding of my value to society," he says. He also came back just as an artist's studio in Hunter's Point Shipyard became available. His exhibition, "Destination Paris," packed the house and led to his becoming

an artist in residence the following year.

With new confidence, Roberts became even more serious about his art and also began to teach. He joined ArtSeeds, a non-profit focused on teaching self-expression and creativity to children. That led to an invitation to teach art to grade school kids in an after-school program, first as a volunteer and then as a teacher's aide. He found he delighted in teaching children and was soon in demand by public and private schools in San Francisco and Marin County.

As Roberts listened to children of privilege talk about their spring breaks in Europe and Asia, he realized that what had held him back in his own artistic development was the lack of any exposure to African American artists. He had never visited a gallery or museum until he was in his late 20s. He had grown up without a role model, and he didn't want that to happen to the next generation. "I want them to feel part of it all," he says.

Soon after his work was selected for the Fillmore poster in 2011, Roberts visited Paris a second time and felt totally at home. "When I returned to San Francisco, I saw my posters all over Fillmore Street," he says. "Wow! My color was all over the Fillmore!" He was ensconced in a booth at the festival in the thick of it all. "I met wonderful, enthusiastic people," he says. "Seeing people buying T-shirts with my image and signing posters — that was really amazing and gratifying." He sold small paintings of jazz musicians, sold out the T-shirts with his image and signed hundreds of posters.

In his day job, he now works as a creative pro at the showplace Apple store on Union Square. "I now have an iPad Pro on which I create art with an Apple Pencil. I love the process — and the results," he says.

"But it will never replace my paintbrushes." And he's still celebrating life and color. "Art enables me to fulfill my passion to connect people rather than separate them," he says. "Although conscious of my race, I am more interested in finding connections between people and in celebrating diversity than in sounding a bullhorn."

He adds: "Color matters, yes. But for me, it is something to enjoy rather than something to defend."

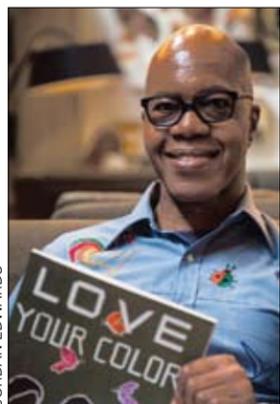
On November 9, Rhonel Roberts will be signing copies of his book at a book release party at S.F. Mercantile Gift Shop, 1698 Haight Street, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. For more information about his art, go to rhonelroberts.com. Order *Love Your Color* through norfolkpress.com.



"Tribute to Romare Bearden," a 2007 mixed media painting by Rhonel Roberts

Loving His Color

Rhonel Roberts finds his artistic path and a new book tells the story



JORDAN EDWARDS

Artist Rhonel Roberts and his new book.

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NOVEMBER

A Victorian Block

The 1800 block of Laguna Street is a remarkably intact mix of historic homes

BY BRIDGET MALEY

THE 1800 BLOCK of Laguna Street, between Pine and Bush, showcases the work of two very different Victorian-era speculative housing developers. About half of the east side of the street was developed in 1877 by builder-contractor James Clark Weir and his company, Homestead Union. The west side was built later, in 1889, by William Hinkle, who hailed from a family of builders.

The grouping of six houses on the east side of Laguna, now numbered 1800 to 1832, is often attributed to a much larger speculative developer, the Real Estate Associates. But the historical record shows otherwise.

In 1855, San Francisco passed the Van Ness Ordinance creating the Western Addition — some 500 city blocks extending west from Larkin out to Divisadero. Sponsored by James Van Ness, the city's seventh mayor, the ordinance created regular lots and provided for true deed holders to come forward and claim them. As the city's population expanded in the

1860s and '70s, real estate developers and speculators became active in developing and promoting Western Addition lots.

Weir was one of many smaller-scale outfits that offered house sales on installment. A November 8, 1877, Homestead Union advertisement in the *Chronicle* touted several houses to be sold after receipt of "one-fifth cash." This ad listed two houses on the east side of Laguna between Bush and Pine. Typical of the day, these wood frame houses were Italianate, with a prominent front-angled bay window and a heavily bracketed false-front cornice concealing a gable roof.

Water records and sales announcements in 1877 point to Weir purchasing six lots, building the six almost identical houses, then

selling them to six different buyers — with the names Buell, Ashton, Amelia Harris, Sophie Jewell, Julia Smith and T. Brown — for about \$4,500 each.

Weir was born in Sydney, Australia, in 1837 to Irish parents. Voter records indicate Weir was naturalized in San Francisco in November 1860. A reference to him



An 1877 ad offered local homes, including two on Laguna Street.



The 1800 block of Laguna Street, between Bush and Pine, is awash in Victorian details.



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The homes on the west side of the block were developed by builder William Hinkle sometime after January 1889.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHAYNE WATSON

providing a sample to a California mining museum indicates he might have had a mining career before he began building houses. He married Elizabeth MacDonald, a native of Scotland, and by the 1870 census, they resided in San Francisco, had two children, and owned real estate worth \$45,000 plus \$1,000 of personal property. By 1880, Weir and his expanding family resided at 1814 Washington Street, just off fashionable Van Ness Avenue.

Twenty years after the six houses on the east side of the street appeared, the west side of the 1800 block was developed by builder William Hinkle. This grouping was constructed sometime after January 1889, when Hinkle filed the water tap applica-

tions for the lots. This eclectic collection of two-story houses all had similar interior floor plans and detailing.

The September 27, 1889, edition of the *Chronicle* reported that William Hinkle would build 15 houses on Laguna, Bush and Pine Streets: “11 on the first and two each on the other street frontages.” Hinkle was noted as the owner, builder and architect. The total cost of the project was stated to be \$85,000.

William Hinkle was the son of builder Charles Hinkle. According to *Victoria’s Legacy: Tours of San Francisco’s Bay Area Architecture*, the Hinkle family members — William, his father and four brothers — were among San Francisco’s most prolific owner-builders. It notes: “Sometimes they

produced clusters individually; at other times they worked in partnership. They seem to have shared many of the same signature details, regardless of whose name was on the property.”

Hinkle’s collection on Laguna is much more decorative than the earlier Weir grouping. These houses reflect the popularity of the vertical Stick Style in 1880s San Francisco. Each house has a rectangular bay and surfaces with shingles and other decorative wood ornaments, including swags, rosettes, brackets, dentils and floral motifs. Some of these houses are topped with heavy projecting decorative gables or “hats” of varying shapes, two of them resembling a witch’s hat.

The area became a middle class enclave,

with residents of varying ethnicities, religious affiliations and countries of origin. A number of families of Japanese descent appear in the 1930 and 1940 censuses. The block is recognized as contributing to Japantown’s cultural distinctiveness. The area became heavily populated with Japanese-American families after the 1906 earthquake until they were displaced from the neighborhood during World War II, when many were sent to internment camps.

Today the 1800 block of Laguna is truly a remarkably intact mix of Italianate and Stick Style wood frame residences common to San Francisco and reflective of its Victorian past.



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NEIGHBORHOOD HOME SALES

Single Family Homes	BR	BA	PK	Sq ft	Days	Date	Asking	Sale
405 Laurel St	2	1		n/a	1	9/25/2017	1,950,000	2,250,000
1914 Webster St	5	2		3,158	8	10/3/2017	1,950,000	2,601,000
1627 Green St	3	3		n/a	10	9/20/2017	3,295,000	3,500,000
1911 Vallejo St	4	4		n/a	12	10/4/2017	3,695,000	3,800,000
2232 Jackson St	3	3		2,174	10	10/10/2017	3,700,000	4,000,000
2830 Buchanan St	5	4		4,058	109	10/5/2017	5,985,000	5,625,000
3041 Divisadero St	5	3		n/a	2	10/6/2017	4,875,000	5,740,000
2361 Broadway	5	3		5,375	10	10/6/2017	7,800,000	7,900,000
2190 Vallejo St	7	7		7,580	99	10/10/2017	9,750,000	7,930,000

Condos / Co-ops / TICs / Lofts

1450 Post St #411	1	1		740	92	9/18/2017	450,000	395,000
1450 Post St #801	1	2		724	43	9/29/2017	419,000	419,000
1883 Vallejo St #6	0	1		488	13	10/5/2017	549,000	612,000
2211 California St #201	1	1		650	13	10/6/2017	699,000	775,000
2050 Lyon St #1	1	1		876	64	10/1/2017	799,000	850,000
1551 Filbert St #4	1	1		860	44	9/26/2017	798,000	975,000
2101 Baker St #10	2	2		1,300	17	9/22/2017	1,199,000	1,210,888
1775 Broadway #9	1	1		n/a	113	9/29/2017	1,249,000	1,260,000
1859 Vallejo St #1	2	2		1,557	2	10/3/2017	1,250,000	1,275,000
2655 Bush St #303	2	2		1,164	1	9/28/2017	1,385,000	1,325,000
2171 Sacramento St #10	2	2		1,001	14	9/25/2017	1,075,000	1,360,000
2655 Bush St #403	2	2		1,164	28	9/29/2017	1,395,000	1,375,000
3246 Clay St	2	2		n/a	82	9/26/2017	1,600,000	1,600,000
436 Laurel St	3	3		n/a	1	9/21/2017	1,995,000	1,995,000
2865 Jackson St #6	2	2		n/a	31	10/10/2017	1,950,000	2,160,000
1963 Clay St	3	3		1,946	35	10/6/2017	1,939,000	2,270,000
1880 Jackson St #304	2	2		1,814	11	10/2/2017	1,920,000	2,350,000
2253 California St	3	2		1,846	11	10/6/2017	2,150,000	2,450,000
2066 Green St	3	3		2,479	4	10/11/2017	3,995,000	3,995,000
1940 Vallejo St #11	3	3		3,200	35	9/19/2017	7,250,000	7,250,000



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1:30, 5:30 & 9:00 pm

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SATURDAY

7:40 am Rosary, 8:00 am Mass

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The church is open for prayer all day
and into the early evening.

Liturgy of the Hours (Daily)

Morning Prayer 7:15 am/Sat 8:00 am

Evening Prayer 5:00 pm

Reconciliation Sat 5:00 pm,

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

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Mon & Wed 8:30 am & 6 pm

Tue & Fri 8:30 pm



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The Victorian at 405 Laurel (center) was one of three homes that sold last month the first day they were on the market.

Homes selling fast in a tight market

Tight inventory conditions and intense buyer demand are driving brisk sales this fall.

There were 29 single-family home and condominium sales in nearby neighborhoods between mid-September and mid-October. More than half of the properties sold in two weeks or less, as buyers scrambled to make offers in a tight market. Three of the homes sold in just one day; the ones that languished on the market for up to three months required price reductions.

This underscores a central fact: Homeowners in the neighborhood hoping for a speedy sale should pay close attention to proper pricing. Digital and traditional marketing efforts can also help speed transactions by alerting potential homebuyers that a property will soon hit the market.

Finally, staging a home can make it more appealing to buyers and help close a sale faster. According to a recent analysis of 3,200 Bay Area home sales by Pacific Union chief economist Selma Hepp, staged homes sold in an average of 36 days — more than three weeks faster than those not staged.

— Data and commentary provided by PATRICK BARBER, president of Pacific Union. Contact him at patrick.barber@pacunion.com or call 415-345-3001.

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When the Fillmore Was Kosher

By JUDI LEFF

SHENSON's Kosher Meat Market, on McAllister Street near Fillmore, was started by Aaron Shenson, who arrived here in 1880 from Vilnius, Russia, now the capital of Lithuania.

Shenson started as a Kosher butcher for Rabbi Markowitz and, in 1882, opened his own shop at 955 Folsom Street. After the 1906 earthquake and fire, when the Fillmore became primarily Jewish, he moved the business to McAllister Street. A religious man, Shenson served as president of Congregation Keneseth Israel for 18 years and was one of the founders of the Hebrew Free Loan Society.

Three of his four sons were in the business with him, and his grandsons, Drs. A. Jess and Ben Shenson, went on to have an impact on the medical and arts worlds that resonates to this day.

The butcher shop was a place where the values of hard work, family and support of community and the arts were revered.

Shenson's son, Louis, was once approached by White Russian importers of sausage casings from Shanghai. He couldn't use the non-Kosher casings, but through this new friendship, he developed an avid interest in collecting Chinese art, which was passed on to future generations. Another son, Jesse (Shy), began working for wholesale importers I. Shainin Company, purveyors to Gump's, and became a partner for a time.

Involvement with music began very early, with the grandsons getting lessons and attending performances grand and small, and with weekly music receptions

on Saturdays at the homes of prominent Jewish immigrant families including the Slosses, the Sterns and the Koshlands.

Ben Shenson was an accomplished pianist, winning a local piano competition despite a broken hand. Though Ben stopped playing music when he entered medical school, the passion both brothers had for art and music manifested itself in a lifetime of involvement and patronage. They practiced medicine together in offices at 450 Sutter Street and at St. Francis Hospital on Hyde Street.

Ben and Jess Shenson attended public schools, including Lowell High, where Jess developed a life-long friendship with classmate Carol Channing.

Neither brother married, but the young singers and musicians they sponsored and supported became their extended family. Their magnanimity continues to benefit the San Francisco Symphony, the San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Performances, the Merola Opera Program, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum and the California Historical Society, as well as Stanford University.

The brothers also were responsible for reviving and expanding the posthumous career of California painter Theodore Wores. They also established the Louis and Rose Shenson Memorial Fund, named for their parents, to provide no-interest loans to Stanford medical students.

Shenson's Kosher Meat Market fed generations of San Franciscans, and we continue to be nourished by that legacy.

See more history at opensfhistory.org.



Inside Shenson's Kosher Meat Market on McAllister Street when the Fillmore was Jewish.



The McAllister Street Fire House and Shenson's Kosher Meat Market next door in 1931.

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