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May
 2014
 #391



Above: Latest mural in Venice, at Breeze and Ocean Front Walk, on the Venice Breeze Suites Hotel. Artist: Marioe. Photo: Greta Cobar. Read about more Venice murals on page 5.

What's Up With the Beach Curfew?

By Peggy Lee Kennedy

On March 13 a coalition consisting of the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LACAN), Occupy Venice and the Venice Justice Committee appeared before the California Coastal Commission meeting in Long Beach regarding the City of Los Angeles' illegal curfew law enforced on Venice Beach and the Boardwalk (Ocean Front Walk). Why is it an illegal curfew law? Because, according to the California Constitution and the California Coastal Act, no beach can be closed without first obtaining a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) from the Coastal Commission. This is State law, which a City has to comply with. And L.A. has not.

Opposing this L.A. City beach curfew law is not a new effort. The first complaint was filed in November 2007, when the Venice Justice Committee discovered that the City had closed the beach without a CDP. They are State law breakers. Even more egregious to denying us all our right to access of the beach, the City was arresting people with this illegal law. That is why the effort to oppose this law became part of a local Homeless Bill of Rights campaign.

Further to this, a comment was published regarding the illegal beach closed matter in a Coastal Commission staff report June 2013 (on a somewhat separate matter) that created more urgency with the issue. The terms of amending this law, without any recognition that the law itself is a violation, were being negotiated between Coastal Commission staff and the City.

The coalition of Occupy Venice, the Venice Justice Committee, and LACAN collected almost 1,000 recent signatures by hand on a petition to open the beach. Copies of the petitions were taped together into a scroll that doubled across the room and up the stairs behind the three speakers' presentation given in the March 13 Coastal Commission meeting during general public comment. It was so compelling, the Commission instructed staff to act on this enforcement issue and to report back at the April 2014 Commission meeting. See http://youtu.be/wIP4vTAn_aM for the excerpt of the meeting.

Unfortunately, Coastal Commissioners instructing its staff to act on the matter also is not new. Since the original November 2007 complain was submitted, multiple other complaints or mentions of this violation have been submitted to the California Coastal

Commission. The past Commission Chair, Sara Wan, instructed staff to act on the matter in 2009. Lawyers defending criminalized homeless people in 2010 urged for Coastal Commission enforcement to act. Multiple letters from the Coastal Commission staff enforcement person were sent to the L.A. City Attorney in 2010. The prior and now deceased Executive Director of the Coastal Commission, Peter Douglas, then wrote a serious four page letter dated August 2010 stating that further action was at hand, which would be a cease and desist order.

That is what we asked the Coastal Commission for on March 13 – a Cease and Desist Order. What happened was a weak conciliatory letter sent in April to the L.A. Department of Recreation and Parks. Why was it weak and conciliatory? The law is illegal and prior letters were submitted to the City Attorney demanding action. These prior letters were not lost. In fact, we just gave copies to staff and the Commissioners. The April letter offered mitigation solutions to an unproven reason for closing the beach. No beach can be closed, with or without mitigations and with or without proof of a public safety reason, prior to first obtaining a CDP (Period). The law is a violation of the California Constitution and the California Coastal Act.

So here we are. I suppose one important part of the story I haven't mentioned so far is how the City decided the beach curfew should also pertain to the Venice Boardwalk (Ocean Front Walk) in March 2012. These are two different lands: Venice Beach and Ocean Front Walk. Ocean Front Walk was deeded as a forever sidewalk by Abbot Kinney. It is also a walk street and a Boardwalk. Venice Beach, not to be confused with using the term to describe the whole of Venice, is the area west of Ocean Front Walk.

This leads to the other important and final part of this story: this is about criminalizing homeless people. The City of L.A. wanted to squirm out of following the Jones Settlement in Venice, which allows homeless people to sleep on sidewalks between 9pm and 6am. They were already unjustly arresting and criminalizing people for being on the beach after midnight, so they just arbitrarily moved the illegal beach curfew law to include Ocean Front Walk. That's our city. So

Stopping Hyper-gentrification, One Conversation At A Time

By Krista Schwimmer

Across the nation, individuals and communities are gathering to talk about one thing: the tsunami wave of hyper-gentrification. This newest form of gentrification is gutting old communities, particularly minority and working class communities. These homes are often replaced by out-of-character, massive structures, or what Venice resident Laddie Williams calls "BUBs" – Big Ugly Boxes. More importantly, however, hyper-gentrification is pushing out real people, with real lives in these very communities.

Recently, one such conversation took place at Electric Lodge in Venice. On Wednesday, April 30, Occupy Venice finished its series of films with one on gentrification. The public was invited to both a healthy meal and a lively discussion, featuring an interesting panel of experts on this topic, as well as four short, documentary films, addressing a variety of topics around this issue. For those who do not know what gentrification is, in the first film, "Gentrification & Urban Planning in Chicago," David Stovall, Associate Professor in Urban Education gave this simple definition: "one group in, one group out," with often times the rich group being white, and the poor, colored.

According to the first panel speaker, Erin McMorrow, an urban planner herself, there are ways to attack the wrongs of evil development projects. Each community can create their own community plan, called a "sustainability plan." She said that San Francisco has done it. "This could be a new moment", McMorrow said to have such a conversation to create a community driven vision.

Excerpts from the second film, "There goes the neighborhood – Anacostia," set the tone for discussing just what is happening to African-American communities across the country. Anacostia, east of the river it was named after, is a largely African-American community with the right mix of history and location in Washington, D.C. to attract the gentrifiers. Following this film, Laddie Williams talked about how this is happening here in Oakwood, an area of Venice with some African-American families going back to the time of Abbot Kinney himself. Laddie's own grandfather moved to the area in 1945 because he was tired of the lynching and the killing in the south. Today, a mix of LAPD and developers are pushing these long-time resi-

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The FREE VENICE BEACHHEAD is published monthly by the Beachhead Collective as a vehicle for the people of Venice to communicate their ideas and opinions to the community at large. The Beachhead encourages anyone to submit news stories, articles, letters, photos, poetry or graphics of interest to the Venice community.

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Dear Venice Beachhead,

Esteemed salutations extended to the indomitable Venetian spirit and those who embody that eclectic spirit.
Well, since my last letter (April 2013), my circumstances and struggle for vindication have improved significantly. I felt compelled to share these positive developments with the community and any who read my first letter and may find inspiration in my progress.

Well, to begin. The catalyst for my opportunity to work towards my objectives of freedom and growth was my release from the oppressive confines of California’s prison torture unit, the “SHU” (Security Housing Units) after seven years of the sensory/human deprivation of being all but excommunicated from humanity.

Since then, approximately one year ago, I have created a website to share my life’s work and story with the world and this has opened many doors and allowed me to create relationships with the most influential people in my martial arts. It was through my work, as expressed on my website, muaysena.com, and youtube videos that I was fortunate enough to establish friendships with Ultimate Fighting Championships (UFC) founder and gracie Jin-Jitsu’s most important grand master, Rorion Gracie and Muay Thai Boran’s most sensor grandmaster “GM Woody” (Chinawut Sirisompan) and many others.

As I am sure some will recall from my last letter, I was facing the death penalty for defending myself in prison from a knife-yielding would be assassin, which unfortunately resulted in my assailant’s demise. After five years of fighting with the DA, showing no signs of compromise, my “Big Bro” Rorion Gracie intervened and agreed to testify on my behalf as an expert (martial arts) witness that my actions, while imperfect, were justified and unavoidable. As soon as the DA learned of Rorion’s defense of my response, and who Rorion is, he immediately submitted and agreed to a compromise of a 9-year plea bargain.

While I knew within myself I was completely innocent of any malice and only defending myself, I also knew from my first experience that in our legal system innocence did not guarantee victory. So I accepted the compromise and took the 9 years.

I have been in prison for 11 years for a crime I did not commit. I am now focused on locating any of our community who witnessed the murder that occurred on June 9, 2003 on Lincoln and Brooks in front of Red Hot Videos, who are willing to testify, or at least write a declaration that it was not me who committed this hideous crime, so that I can somehow hire a lawyer to file rights of habeas corpus and end this nightmare.

– Continued on page 10

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Venice Arts Council
Jim Smith
Eric Liner
Loraine Ebbins

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Dear Beachhead,

I hardly ever pick up your newspaper. Today must have been my lucky day. I saw the article by Marty Liboff about his mother Ruthie. Oh what memories it brought back. We adored her. She always gave my son (starting 1962 – when he was 2) a BIG hug & a free cookie every time we'd go in. We were loyal customers until the bakery closed. Ruthie, how we missed you. Please thank Marty for bringing back such memories of a wonderful time.

Sincerely,
Nesha DeAngelis

P.S. I am sending the article to my 54 year old son in Tucson.

Dear Beachhead,

I support your endeavors and want to continue reading your Free Press! There is so much going on and people bury their heads in the sand. Thank you for exposing the truth(s)!

Mary Richards

Dear Beachhead,

So, as we were walking last night and bemoaned the two home fate of the church at 6th and San Juan, I heard from a reliable source that church was donated by Mrs. Abbot Kinney to the Venice Community.

Now it's been a very fast and hush hush kind of deal with somebody buying it and it soon to be demolished.

Nobody even knew it was for sale. The Venice Historical Society wasn't notified.

Um...This is too under the radar. And, another icky decision impacting the neighborhood.

Yours,
Jeff Weiss



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Showdown at Ballona Gap

By John Davis

Last year the Beachhead reported illegal drainage systems had been installed in the Ballona Ecological Reserve. The overall effect was to dry out and ruin the wetlands by preventing groundwater recharge that occurs when rainwater seeps into the soils. This is what keeps the wetlands wet. Grassroots Coalition, a local non-profit dedicated to protecting the environment, initiated the complaint to the Coastal Commission last year leading up to the showdown at the Ballona Gap.

The California Coastal Commission demanded that the Playa Capital limited liability company (PC) stop destroying the State owned wetlands. PC is the shady money behind the gargantuan Playa Vista Project. Deceptively, PC insisted to the Coastal Commission enforcement staff that the drains were legal and approved by the Commission as part of a Coastal Development Permit.

After several months, on April 14, the Commission called PC on their numerous lies in support of their claim. The Commission went through each argument and refuted all of them, leaving PC without a leg to stand on.

PC claimed that the City wanted the drains installed to prevent flooding on Jefferson Blvd, which is nonsense. The Coastal Commission gave PC until April 25 to contact them and agree to a consent cease and desist order, whereby they would admit their guilt, remove the systems that have been damaging the environment for over 7 years, and pay penalties which could be very substantial, given the length of time the illegal drains have operated. In 2013, there was little rain, but what fell was drained away. Playa Capital hates groundwater because it interferes in the Playa Vista development, PC's bread and butter.

The Playa Vista development is situated in a flood plain delta and at the end of Ballona Creek.

The LA River spilled into the creek before it changed course in the 1800s. Groundwater still flows in the former river channel under the development. This causes problems for Playa Capital because of the hydrostatic pressures caused by the massive amounts of groundwater pushing against the underground foundation and parking garages of the project as it flows to the wetlands and then the ocean.

To overcome this problem, the project has installed a complex of pumps in the basements of many of its buildings. The State Water Code defines such unnatural extractions of groundwater as "water wells" and the groundwater is defined as State property, "waters of the State". There is no evidence that PC complied with laws required to install such wells.

Playa Capital did obtain permits to discharge groundwater, but apparently, not to extract it. Since the installation of these wells Playa Capital has wasted vast amounts of public groundwater and discharged it to the surface and into the sewer. This has prevented the upper level of groundwater from flowing down gradient to replenish the Ballona wetlands. Add to that the fact that the same business is also responsible for the illegal drains in the wetlands, and that spells trouble for PC. The State Porter Cologne Act designated the Santa Monica groundwater basin and the Venice sub-basin as potential sources of drinking water. Rather than allowing the groundwater resources called aquifers to recharge from rainwater, PC is causing them to dry out. And, given the drought we are in and the importance of water conservation today, the only one who profits from the destruction of public groundwater resources is Playa Capital LLC, while the rest of us pay the price for its demonstrable greed. That groundwater is now forever lost to future generations. And, the amount of damage to wildlife using the Pacific Flyway to survive is immeasurable.

OTHER BALLONA NEWS

By John Davis

The Beachhead published two recent articles in its March and April 2014 editions about another private business, calling itself the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation, or the Bay Foundation, exposing the truth of its formation and how it provided employees of the business to purportedly act as agents of the State Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission. For instance, around 2005, a paid employee named Shelly Luce walked into the State Commission, claimed she was its Executive Director, and then proceeded to impersonate an agent of the State for years, while the State Commission just played along. On April 24, Luce claimed she resigned from the Commission, knowing it was impossible for an impostor to resign from a position she was never appointed to. The Commission went along with this charade and gave her an award. This is like giving a medal to a general who drops a bomb on the wrong village, to cover it up. The incorporator of this business is Katherine Tyrrell, who has been employed by Playa Capital LLC, which is responsible for the illegal wetland drains described on the left.

Dr. Bradley Bobbs
Scientific Consultant
and Beachhead Sustainer
Lasers & electro-optics
PhD in Physics from UCLA
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Venice Activists mediate in Beach Cleanups

By Eric Ahlberg

I had the good fortune of being asked to join a 6:15 am crew of fellow Venetians out on Ocean Front Walk, to monitor and document the roughly bi-weekly cleanup performed by Parks and Recreation, and the Police, along Ocean Front Walk. This kind of cooperative, on the street involvement by concerned and humane citizens of Venice is a great example of the meaning of Occupy, to manifest your love in the now.

These cleanups have been notorious in our community for their destruction or confiscation of any personal property that may be in the way of the cleanup, and for the harassment by the Police. The victims of the policy are more than the homeless. Artists, vendors and musicians may also find that their property has been thrown away or confiscated. Even locked bikes have been previously removed. Our role as interested community members is to warn everyone on Ocean Front Walk that they are coming, so that they can move their stuff to the beach or to the side streets. We also keep an eye on the police and crews in case there are problems.

The Parks and Recreation crew sprays down the western side of Ocean Front Walk with a dilute solution of bleach. The cleanup caravan is composed of a Parks and Recreation Van, a Police SUV, two Parks and Recreation Pickups, a Parks and Recreation Stake Truck, a Watershed Protection SUV, a pickup pulling a trailer with a pressure washer, and a Hazardous Materials Truck. They are accompanied by community service trash picker-uppers, and about a dozen cleaner-uppers-workers in white Tyvek overalls, hats, gloves, and dust masks. We received several reports of headaches and respiratory irritation from people on OFW, including businesspeople.

It is unclear what the liquid that they are spraying is supposed to eliminate, its efficiency is very questionable, and the amount of money spent on these cleanups must be exorbitant and could be better spent to actually help people as opposed to temporarily moving them and their belongings from one place to another. And if the liquid being sprayed is safe for humans, birds, dogs and plants – as it should be – why are the workers wearing the hazmat outfits?



Left: Ocean Front Walk "cleanup"
Photo: Eric Ahlberg

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A Grunion is a fish about the same size and shape as a large sardine. Grunion are found ONLY around Southern California. The amazing thing is that at various times during the Spring, the females LEAVE THE SEA and squiggle onto the beach, where they lay their eggs in the sand. They are followed by hundreds of lusty male fish, intent on fertilizing these eggs. The seashore is covered by hundreds of SEX CRAZED FISH. You are cordially invited to witness this extraordinary event with us!

Topless Ladies Wearing Roses...

By Marty Liboff
(Love to John & Anna Haag)

For countless millennia the Chumash, Tongva, Kizh, Gabrielino – the People danced, prayed and sang on our beaches. The rivers ran to the sea watering the lands around Venice and Santa Monica. The men smoked pipes and sang songs of peace and plenty to the great spirits. They enjoyed roasting fish, clams and abalone along our shores. They built long boats and sailed to our islands catching tuna and halibut. Their beautiful topless ladies wore lovely necklaces of shells and seeds. Men tended wondrous rose gardens and everyone wore flowers and ate the hops. Women gathered acorns and made delicious foods. The marshes around Venice and the Marina had an abundance of deer, ducks and elk. Fighting was rare and it was good times. They revered the magic owl

and the swimming porpoise people. Then one day a gigantic canoe was sighted off our shores. They sailed out to greet these very strange men from a distant world, but they were unfriendly. One day more of these strange ones came riding beasts and carrying sharp long knives and spears and fire sticks and ordered them to move from the rivers and their rose gardens. The next day these new settlers put a dam in the river to grow crops. The Venice marshes dried up. The fox, deer, rabbits and ducks lost their homes. The People were told to work building their missions and homes and tending their crops. The women were forced to wear cloths even in the terrible heat. They were ordered to stop singing and dancing to their ancient gods and to only pray to someone called Jesus. They were told Jesus was love, but these strangers didn't seem to hear their own words. Used and abused, killed and forgotten,

tens of thousands died. Disease and unhappiness filled their lives. Some hid in the hills, but were hunted and murdered. Soon their garden of Eden passed out of memory. Cattle, sheep and farms replaced the sacred trees and marshes. Even the great grizzly bear disappeared forever. The songs and dances and drums and flutes were forgotten. Time passed and giant cities fouled the land and even the fish were poisoned. Millions of strangers from unknown worlds far, far away replaced the People and their rose bushes and their topless maidens. These strange ones called it the New World, but wasn't it their old lands? Then one day a giant space canoe came down from the heavens from a distant world with new strange settlers from a distant galaxy. The next day we were ordered to move and we too became as the Gabrielino, Chumash and the grizzly bear...

Venice Neighborhood Council Elections Sunday May 18, 10am - 6pm, Westminster School *The Beachhead Recommends:*

President <input type="checkbox"/> Matty Goodman <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Newhouse	Communications Officer <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew Beltran <input type="checkbox"/> Tatyana Charnis <input type="checkbox"/> Scott Kramarich <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jed Pauker	<input type="checkbox"/> Melissa Diner <input type="checkbox"/> Thomas Elliot <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Will Flynn <input type="checkbox"/> George Francisco <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> George Generis <input type="checkbox"/> Noel Gould <input type="checkbox"/> Brandon Gross <input type="checkbox"/> Colin William Hornett <input type="checkbox"/> Nick W Kislinger <input type="checkbox"/> Matthew Kline <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tore Knos <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ira Lawrence Koslow <input type="checkbox"/> Chris Lechner <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lisa Lubchansky <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eduardo Manilla <input type="checkbox"/> Christina Marquez <input type="checkbox"/> Ronnie McCowan <input type="checkbox"/> John McManamy <input type="checkbox"/> Oliver Mossi <input type="checkbox"/> Joe Murphy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Abigail Dunlop Myers <input type="checkbox"/> Tracy Randall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Petra Rudisill <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Charlotte Rules <input type="checkbox"/> Rick Selan <input type="checkbox"/> Ravi Shah <input type="checkbox"/> Maxwell Sloan <input type="checkbox"/> Marisa Del Solomon <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tommy O Walker <input type="checkbox"/> Michael Watkins <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kelley Willis
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Secretary <input type="checkbox"/> Idalia Munoz <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Helen Stotler	At-Large Community Officers (vote for one - top 13 win) <input type="checkbox"/> Beth Allyn <input type="checkbox"/> Sarah Blanch <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Bravo Jr. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clarence "CC" Carter <input type="checkbox"/> Marc Castleman <input type="checkbox"/> Federico Ceballos <input type="checkbox"/> Curtis Darling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Erin Darling <input type="checkbox"/> Kevin Alan Dempsey		
Treasurer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hugh Harrison			
Chair of Land Use Planning Committee (LUPC) <input type="checkbox"/> Challis Macpherson <input type="checkbox"/> James Murez <input type="checkbox"/> Monica Ramone <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robin Rudisill <input type="checkbox"/> Thomas Sauer			

LUPC meeting Wednesday, 5/6, 6:45, Oakwood Rec.: Yahoo proposed development at 320 Hampton on the agenda!
Yahoo's expansion was presented to the California Coastal Commission without going through LUPC or VNC
Community activists alerted the commissioners, who sent Yahoo back to the community for approval
The Coastal Commission also banned de minimus waivers following Yahoo's tricky tactics
Show up and speak up! Hold your elected representatives accountable for community representation!

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Above: Recently cleaned and restored Endangered Species mural by Emily Winters, long-time Venice resident and artist, and Chair of the Venice Arts Council. Originally painted in 1990 and restored in 2009, the mural illustrates how the misuse of technology can destroy the quality of our lives. The cleaning process was done by Social Public Art Resource Center with the help of a generous donation by local resident Patricia Greenfield, who wanted to have the mural cleaned for the May Garden and Home Tour. The mural was extremely dirty with sand, salt, old wax, remnants of tagging and general grime to the extent that some images could not be delineated. “Now it looks like brand new – the images emerged,” said Emily Winters. “I am appreciative of the partnership between SPARC, the Venice Arts Council, and the community working together to make it happen,” Winters told the Beachhead. Photo: Carlos Rogel

Lawsuit Filed over “Brooks Avenue Painting”

By Greta Cobar

Following the destruction of Venice’s oldest mural, which had been located at 55 Brooks, a lawsuit was filed April 21 against Ralph Ziman, owner of the building, and John Roe, the contractor who pressure washed the mural from the wall.

The plaintiff is Victor Henderson, who along with the late Terry Schoonhoven created the mural in question, known as the “Brooks Avenue Painting.”

Building owners do have the right to paint on their buildings, as long as mural artists are notified 90 days in advance. Henderson was not notified by Ziman, and was not aware that his mural was being destroyed. Would he have known, he could have photographed it, removed it from the wall, or negotiated with Ziman to restore it. “Instead it is now gone forever, and has been replaced by a replica that does not reflect the quality work of Henderson and Schoonhoven,” according to the lawsuit filed.

Henderson is represented by Eric Bjorgum, of the Pasadena law firm Karish & Bjorgum. Bjorgum also represented Ken Twitchell in the case against the city of L.A. that awarded Twitchell a million dollars after his three-story high Ed Ruscha (1987) mural disappeared in 2006.

In 1969, same year that the mural on Brooks was created, Henderson and Schoonhoven also created the Los Angeles Fine Arts Squad with the purpose of questioning the established culture of contemporary art by painting museum-quality work outside, making it freely available to everyone to view.

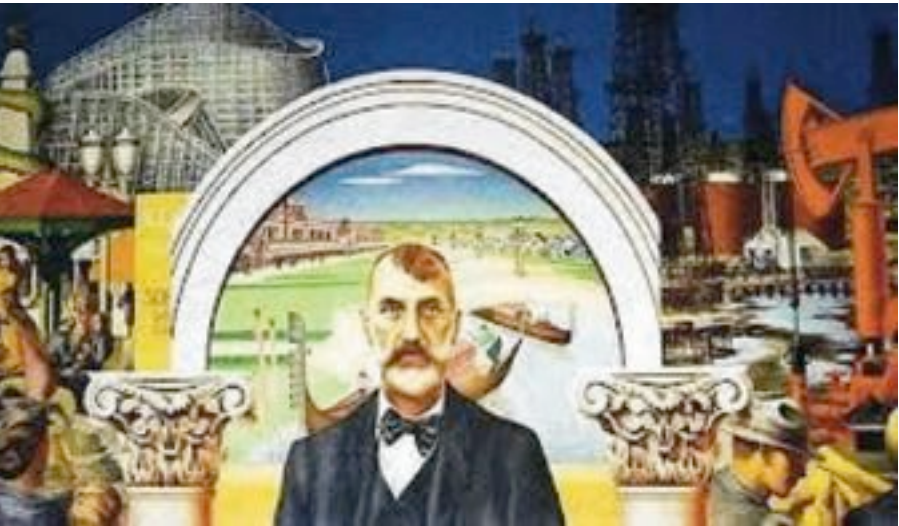
The “Brooks Avenue Painting” was the first painting by the Los Angeles Fine Arts Squad (out of a total of six), and it signaled a change in muralism in Los Angeles by not having political or socio-economic overtones, but by being a realistic piece with accurate perspective depicting a street scene in Venice.



Left: “Brooks Avenue Painting,” by Victor Henderson and Terry Schoonhoven, 1970s.

The mural became famous when locals at that time, Doors band members posed in front of it and used the photo for publicity. The Beachhead published an article after it was painted over, in the September 2013 edition.

According to the lawsuit, Henderson is requesting a trial by jury and is suing for punitive damages and to deter others from engaging in similar wrongful conduct.



Left: “Story of Venice” mural, by Edward Biberman

Right: Abraham Kim in front of his market



Kim’s Market to become an 80-seat Restaurant

By Greta Cobar

Without providing any parking in an area that is already congested, some out-of-town residents are planning on opening an 80-seat restaurant in place of Kim’s market at 600 Mildred. The proposed restaurant is planned to stay open 7am to midnight. The owners already have a restaurant in New Mexico, and plan to open one in Venice.

The law requires the owners of the business to notify residents within a 500ft radius, but residents only within a 100ft radius were notified. The owners have also been trying to circumvent LUPC and VNC by scheduling the public hearing with the City first. An informal, poorly organized and publicized community meeting took place just outside of Kim’s market hosted by the new owners on April 29. About 40 angry neighbors came out to speak against the proposed restaurant.

The restaurant would involve remodeling, with 32 out of the 80 seats being on a patio area. Windows might be planned for the wall where currently the beautiful Venice mural is, and the owners would have the right to destroy the mural - as long as notice is given to the artist. The public hearing for this project is scheduled for May 22 at 10am, at the West L.A. Municipal Building, Second Floor Hearing Room, 1645 Corinth Ave.

“I love it here, but I have to move. I’ll probably have to leave in about a year, and I probably won’t be able to stay in Venice,” Kim said. He’s been operating the neighborhood store for eleven years now.

Silver spent \$100,000 on cleaning the Story of Venice mural, but according to Suzanne Zada, Executive Director of the Biberman estate, “There was nothing wrong with it – it didn’t need any cleaning.”

On a more positive note, SPARC will be partnering with LACMA to present *Lost Horizons: Mural Dreams of Edward Biberman*. The exhibit will display Biberman’s unrealized mural sketches and several other works. They will be on loan from Suzanne Zada. Opening for the show will be Saturday, May 31, 5-9pm, and it will continue through July 31. SPARC exhibition hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 11am-5pm.

It would have been even better if the Story of Venice mural were exhibited in the show at SPARC and then moved to the Abbot Kinney Venice library for public viewing until we get our historic post office back.

“Story of Venice” Belongs in Venice

By Greta Cobar

As we continue to come together as a community to fight yet another major wave of gentrification (there have been others in the past 65 years or so), it is now worth remembering the snowball that started it all by ripping the heart out of Venice and taking away our Story of Venice mural.

Our historic post office was the heart of Venice, as all roads lead to it much like all arteries lead to the heart. The beautiful and well-preserved Story of Venice mural by Edward Biberman, which had been housed in our historic post office since 1941, was leased by the United States Postal Service to Joel Silver, the new owner of the building, at no cost.

Silver’s move to Venice and his open disregard to the community’s concerns, such as access to the Story of Venice mural, paved the way for other like-minded individuals to move in with similar attitudes.

While we continue our fights to both take back the heart of our community, our historic post office (we have an ongoing case in the 9th Circuit Court in Washington, D.C.) and to re-gain public access to our Story of Venice mural, our beloved mural will be shipped to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) for an exhibit on Venice featuring the art of Biberman.

We’re all for sharing – after all, we fought permit parking in Venice three times to ensure the public’s access to the beach. And as much as we are open to sharing the Story of Venice mural with everyone from far and wide, the Story of Venice belongs in Venice, and nobody should have to go to mid-city Los Angeles to see it.

Biberman’s Story of Venice mural will be available for public viewing at LACMA for the first time since the closure of our post office two years ago. It will be the main attraction of the *Edward Biberman, Abbot Kinney and the Story of Venice* exhibit taking place May 18 to November 16. It should not be an attraction traveling across town, but instead be allowed to continue to be a part of our community and our history, as it has been over the last 75 years. And while LACMA charges a \$15 admission fee, everyone could see the Story of Venice mural for free before our historic post office was closed.

Throughout time, the butterfly has come to symbolize many things. Serbians claim it is the soul of a witch that one can destroy by turning the witches' body around while she sleeps. Aztecs associate this wondrous creature with one of their most important deities, Tlaloc, the God of rain, lighting, and thunder. During times of drought, special rituals were often made to Tlaloc.

In 2008, the Tri-national Commission for Environmental Cooperation published the North American Monarch Conservation Plan (NAMCP). The plan outlines the necessary habitat conservation and restoration for the monarch to survive. One such critical recommendation revolves around the milkweed plant, the sole food for monarch larvae. Once plentiful in the farming areas, the current agribusiness has little use for this plant. Without milkweed, the monarchs will disappear.

Venice resident Charlotte Rule is one such individual, taking monarch matters into her own hands by planting. She planted her first milkweed, from seed, four years ago in the Venice Community Garden. Soon after, her huge milkweed plant became the home of as many as nineteen monarch caterpillars at a time. So needed are these plants, that Charlotte found caterpillars at unexpected times of the year.

When developers crushed the Venice Community Garden, Charlotte's milkweed and caterpillars were in danger. Luckily, she found places for both. One caterpillar went to the Learning Garden at Venice High School. The second one came home with her. "And that's the one that ended up emerging right in front of my face," exclaimed Charlotte.

On Friday, April 18, Charlotte, Annette Garcia-Kerslake, Nori Takei, and Stephen Lock broke ground with their first milkweed plant. With pitchfork and shovel, everyone took turns digging and then planting the single bush. Once they were finished, they placed



Left: Waiting For the Monarchs To Come!

and other wildlife. The NAMCP specifically cites commercial and municipal development in California as an immediate cause of the destruction of the monarch's habitat. In a time when reckless development seeks to destroy Venice, what better thing to do than join the folks on Market Street in their project. Who knows – perhaps the way to overthrow the powers is not by force, but by soul – by inviting true royalty into our midst: the monarch butterfly. Although this creature's lifespan may not be as long as ours, it is a life that reflects magic through its metamorphosis, wealth through its pollination, and joy through its migration.

www.xerces.org
www.monarchalert.calpoly.edu
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Let's Play House – with Dirt and Color

By Greta Cobar

The Mosaic House of Venice is more of a museum than a house. It is the creation of Cheri Pann and Gonzalo Duran, who have been living, working and loving each other inside their masterpiece for the past twenty years.

Entering their nest is like stepping into another world – one full of sparkle and color – for every surface is covered in mosaic. But it's not your usual carefully-designed and meticulously-cemented type of mosaic, but an original and wild kind instead, one that incorporates found and donated items of all types in between their hand-made and hand-broken ceramic tiles. And it all comes together magically, much like Cheri and Gonzalo did.

"I was a regular customer at Nova Color in Culver City for acrylic paints, and he was working there. I used to kiss him – once you kiss someone you don't know where it's gonna lead – might be to the rest of your life," Cheri said of how she met Gonzalo.

It turns out that their whole lives they've been chasing after each other, but through the other locations they've been about three miles and three years away and apart from each other.

"We live happily ever after surrounded by a gift box," said Gonzalo.

Twenty years ago, after divorcing her second husband, of twenty-two years, Cheri bought the house because it had a big back yard, and she wanted a big studio to paint, exhibit and store her paintings.

When she was eighteen she stood in front of a Van Gogh painting and figured it out: "Oh my God, I'm an artist!". After a couple of years at UCLA, she got her Bachelor's and Master's in Fine Arts from Cal State L.A. and continued to paint.

"Painting is very, very, very hard for me – the most difficult thing I could do," she told me while we were standing in front of a wall with forty portraits that she painted of Gonzalo. She told me that if it wasn't so difficult, she probably wouldn't have stuck with it.

"For me ceramics is something I love doing," Cheri says. And I found that somewhat obvious, standing in their home: the kitchen shelves are covered in mosaic, the ground and walls around the house are covered in mosaic, the bathroom and the half bathtub that serves as a bench outside are all covered in mosaic. And it seemed that the two of them are glued to each other like the mosaic to the cement, and that made sense given that she makes the tiles and he sets



them in the cement. It was difficult, at first, to really grasp where her job ended and his began, as they and their artwork seemed so interlaced and interconnected.

Gonzalo was born in Mexico and came here when he was ten. He was raised in East L.A. (so was she!) and attended Chouinard, which was the equivalent to the Otis Art Institute in the 60s.

"I was walking through a gallery, and I met someone who needed to decorate pots, and I worked for them for seven years. Then I worked at Nova Color for thirty-five years, until recently when my wife told me to stop working. She said: 'I need you at home.' Now I work for my wife – that's also fun to do," Gonzalo said.

Of course, my burning question was: how did the ceramic house come to be?

"Ugly doesn't begin to describe it," Cheri said of the house when she first bought it. "All I saw was the studio" – which did not exist, but she and Gonzalo built it in the backyard. She says it was Gonzalo's idea to put mosaic all over the front of the house.

"She made some tiles for the bathroom, and they didn't do well together – we broke them up – it was a better design – you can put only one at a time and in no time you have something nice – it was so much fun and also therapeutic," Gonzalo said of how they started putting the mosaic on the front of the house.

"I do the happy, colorful, whimsical," Gonzalo said. And indeed it is all that. The mosaic itself is mixed in with so many different found and donated



objects, that it could also be described as a collage. And both Cheri and Gonzalo's other artworks are displayed in-between the mosaic, and they too could also be part of the bigger picture, which is the collage.

He paints what she calls "vignettes of our life together," while she paints mainly portraits of him, and some of both of them together.

"I have fifty-five years of painting," she said. Before painting Gonzalo, she used to do political paintings, but decided early on to drop out of the art world. "I'm happier this way. You have to pay a huge price to be part of the art world – they tell you what to paint to sell," she said.

Cheri also makes ceramic vessels and sculptures, and enjoys making her own glazes. "I loved glaze technology at Cal State L.A.," she said.

"It's a good tax thing to do," Cheri said of their marriage, which happened nine years ago this month. Happy Anniversary!

"I was all set to live by myself, I was quite content. When I met her, she was so special – full of life, independent, red hair burning off her head, a reflection of her character," Gonzalo said. "It's been a good life," he continued.

Now 74 and 70, Cheri and Gonzalo see their art projects as if they were their kids. "Doing art is instead of having kids – neither one of us has kids," Cheri said. And then she went on to describe kids' reaction when they visit the Mosaic House: "This is my home! Do you like my house, mommy?"

When asked about the future of their mosaic project, he said that "it will go on forever, just to stay in practice."

"I'd like it there to be an end to this project – ten more years – and for it to be turned over to some public institution to become a museum," Cheri said. I hope that they both are correct – that their project will go on



forever and that it will eventually become a public museum – it could very well be our first museum in Venice!

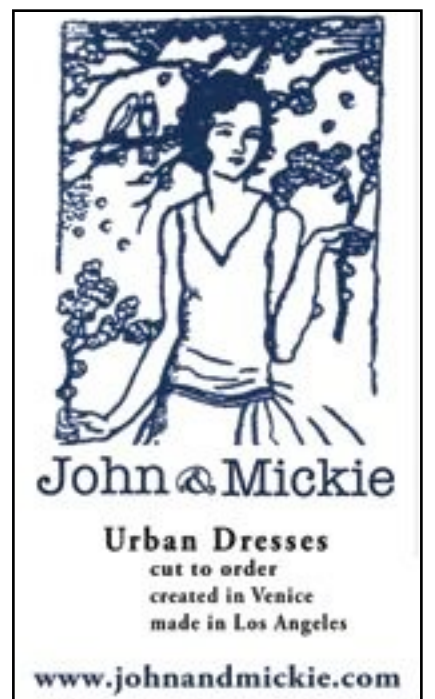
The Mosaic House was first discovered by the Venice Home and Garden Tour, which is taking place this month as well. The *Los Angeles Times* ran an article about it in 2003, and a week later HDTV came, and have been back four times since, two of which were just last year.

"This week twenty-two people are coming all the way from Australia to see it," Cheri said. Anybody can schedule a tour, which runs for an hour for \$10 per person, with no minimum. Another great thing to do is visit during their yearly free Open House, which al-



ways takes place the weekend before Halloween, this year October 26, from 12 to 5. Some of their artwork is for sale at that time, and there are some great pieces of Venice art to collect or give away (preferably both).

You can see the Mosaic House at 1116 Palms Blvd. or at www.cheripann.com.



Michael Jost — He's the Most!

By Suzy Williams

Have you ever read a review of something in the arts and just wish they could come right out and write whether the artist was great or not? Well, I'd like to try that tack, which is to state the fact that our own Venice-based classical guitarist is a phenomenon — a master, a virtuoso, an exquisite performer. Michael Jost (pronounced like “Yo,” man!) — who has lived on Ocean Front Walk for twenty years, is a respected star in Europe. However, you know the old story: sometimes people take for granted high-end talents like Jost in the States. A prophet without honor and all that.

Perhaps you've seen him playing in the background at local parties, unamplified. You know — the guy with the Jim Morrison good looks (a beautiful face, lovely head of hair, brown-black fingernails and a yummy physique) (am I too shallow writing about mere appearances?) [NO! — ed.]; sitting in the corner barefoot, leaning over his guitar, lost in the music, and letting the party rage on around him, voices increasing in volume as the night progresses? Yeah, that's him.

Well, I had the privilege to see Michael Jost in concert Thursday, April 17 at Beyond Baroque. What a difference with amplification and a captive audience! What a performance! He took on Spanish, Moorish and Turkish music, mixed it with hits by Mason Williams, J. S. Bach, and Led Zeppelin. He delivered it with magnificent classical virtuosity... and a profound humor. Dynamics? Check. Passion? Check. The thing is, he plays with a charisma that keeps you focused enough to actually grok what the man is doing with those beautiful instruments (three guitars, with occasional electronic augmentation).

Three-quarters of the way through his set, he brought up a melodica player. Hmm... what's this all about? Turns out it was the excellent local saxophonist Matt Demerit, who with the help of a well-placed microphone, turned this toy-like, blow-into keyboard



Above: Matt Demerit and Michael Jost
Photo: Margaret Molloy

into Astor Piazzolla on the bandoneon. Together, Jost and Demerit bumped the concept of “soulfulness” up a notch. I hear Michael is going to be at Beyond Baroque next month. Check their calendar.

It didn't hurt that our own Venice singing legend Peter Demian, with son Haley, played a rousing set beforehand, revving up the audience for intense listening. Talk about SOUL! We got it here in Venice, folks. Yessirree!

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Touched

By Francisco Letelier

It begins and we don’t feel it.
like the shaping of stone by water
Immersed in its touch
we do not feel its heat
until it is part of skin, part of breath
Touched
we dance around the block
touched, someone raises a voice
words never heard before
knock down heroes
and revolutions
We look down at limbs
that walk in places never walked before
the kingdom of books and words lost behind a
trail
scrambled and cleared through brush, though
emptiness
invisible and sweet
touched we see the world again

the story

with enlightenment
fronting schizophrenia
solid socrates said if after
a long spotless life
there's one last crap act
final record besmirched
for evermore

Pano Douvos '14

The Fulfiller of Expectations

By Humberto Gómez Sequeira-HuGóS

She’s not
asking for the attention
of the holy order
of stoners and slashers
when she walks
with contemplation
or dances
without reservation
in consonance
with her stimulation.

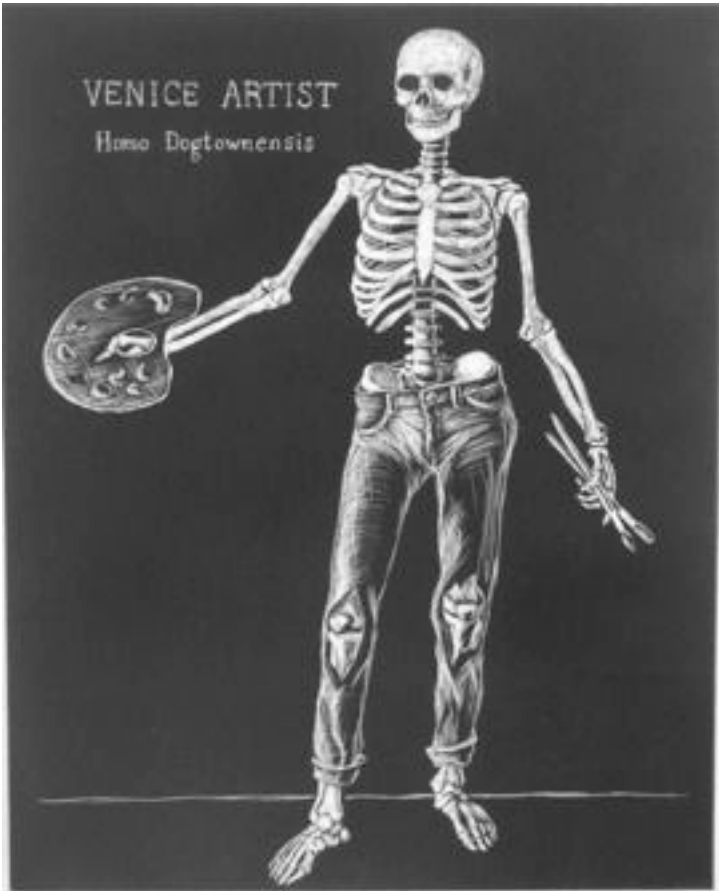
She’s got nature’s approbation
as the fulfiller of the expectations
for rain and laughter.

She does not need modulation.
She’s a woman,
right up front.

What Style is so Diluted?

By Paul Beethoven

What narrative is so profound
As to eliminate provocative sound?
What style is so diluted of thunder
As to lack the ability or forethought
That when it rains
Two lovers invariably will find
Something, or somecover to run under!



Above: Venice Artist, by Marybeth Fama

AUTHENTIC NIGHT

Rarely in the city
Does night fall
Into ebony darkneses
Unperturbed by any falseness or
Simulation of light

But when allowed, authentic night
Weaves radiances summoned from the sacred
Into wondrous manifestations
To those willing to venture into it.

This night then
Stirs ions within distant storm-clouds
To flashes of lightning, not as
Bolt brilliances that
Crackle the heavens into partings
But as mists of subtle glow....
Veils of pearl radiances
In a cadence of beat danced by the universe's breathing.

This night,
The supreme mistress of illumination is at work
To clarify hopes and dreams
As well as their obstacles
To those souls in search of destinations

To illuminate earth bound possibilities
Beyond the lava rock reef,
The ocean folds and unfurls
As fluffed seams of neon
Extended linear phosphorescences
The creation of ecstatic horizon harbors

Or as another path....

Starshine
Not puny pinpricks
But insistences of gleaming
Large orbs of beam
To guide wandering souls
Into flight toward infinities

Whatever the choice,
One's soul will be awoken with thrill
Sleep is not possible this night.

© Laura Shepard Townsend

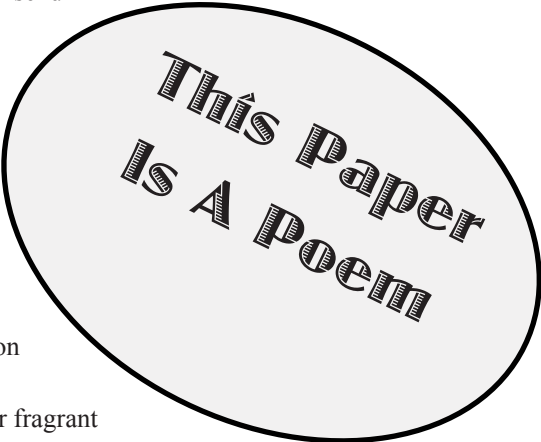
In waters of love and affection
I swim

In the spring’s breeze of your fragrant
flowered garland, I sing

In the enchanted forest of nectar
the flute’s fifth note; I dance

O’ my silly mind
Why do you resist
I think it’s time we part.

– Devakinandana



15:12 Sunday, April 13th, 2014, Adullam Began to think about this Mother's Day. Observance. Were she here, what would she say? She is the one who bore me. I could tell Her of the world, today. The living hell For some. Would ask her candidly, confide, Be honest, mom. Was I a source of pride, Or did you wring your hands? Astonishment For my arrival? Stories to invent? I kept your quilted jacket, worn outside, Our trip to Union Station. What a ride! I miss you, Mom. My soul doth wish thee well. I'd wear your apple, were you William Tell. Your essence is still here. A lingering ray Of sun's decline, so Happy Mother's Day Roger Houston

Endangered Species: Venice Artist
(Venice Selfie)

By Francisco Letelier & Marybeth Fama

As co-founders of ARTBLOCK and members of the steering committee for this event, we wanted the pieces we chose for our show to reflect the current concerns of our group. The larger purposes of ARTBLOCK (aside from putting on fun open studio events twice a year) are: to create a strong sense of community among the many artists in Venice, to empower us to interface directly with the public in our own way, and to draw attention to how our arts community makes Venice so unique.

Our neighborhood has gone through many transformations over time, from wetlands, to carnival attraction, to summer resort, to a community known for cultural and economic diversity and so on. Through all the changes Venice has retained a strong sense of diversity, creativity and life on the outer edge of Los Angeles. Those of us who have lived here for 30 years or more have never seen change happen as quickly as it is now. We are in a period of accelerating gentrification that is raising property values and bringing in a new, affluent population, attracted by our cool, arts-oriented, ocean-side community. We are starting to hear our funky artists’ haven being called “Silicon Beach.” Formerly affordable studios are being re-zoned and converted to packed restaurants, upscale boutiques and sparkling million-dollar condominiums, sold by realtors, ironically, as “artist lofts.”

While we are not against change, we would like the people of Los Angeles to consider the value of maintaining an artistic community in Venice, perhaps by designating an Arts District here, or requiring any new developments to provide a percentage of low income housing, or to set aside affordable studio spaces. Our show seeks to highlight the multi-cultural, one-of-a-kind beauty made in Venice by artists who may be in danger of being forced to leave the unique place they helped to make so appealing.

The Rich & Famous
And The Poor & Unknown

(This really happened, without the rhymes)

The Venice Boardwalk was horrible
A nut drove a car over people
It was terrible –
A rich European bride of royalty
Was killed
Blood was spilled –
Reporters the world over
Filled the boardwalk
& asked me to talk –
Did I see the blood & gore?
Tell us more, tell us more?
I replied,
I'm sorry the rich royal bride died
But you're only reporting the Venice
Dark side
There's also a bright, sunny side –
Over there is Millie the angel of Venice
She feeds the homeless and poor.
The reporters whined,
No, no we don't want to hear about the poor.
What about the royal lady
And the blood and gore?
Tell us more, tell us more?
I said, everyday Millie feeds the sick & hungry.
Maybe to you it's no big deal –
But to many it's their only meal.
She may not be rich royalty
But saving lives makes her soul rich and saintly...
The reporters frowned, thinking I'm a bore
& asked someone else,
Did you see the blood & gore?
Tell us more, tell us more?

– Marty Liboff
Written soon after the tragedy.

Love’s Recovery

By Ronald Keith Mc Kinley

What a dream
A poised perception
Chronicled by blood
Passion and possession
The melody of our song
We feel then forget
Lost by mind constructs
Thinking of but not knowing
Blaze for a short time
Back to the end
A place in a linear prison
The darkness and the noise
It is what you make it
Your hands only trace what you are ready to see
The pulse of life
Slow sometimes fast
Wait but don’t stand still
Expand and stay connected
Feel and taste the particles of vitality
Look to what you hear Love’s recovery

What's Up With the Beach Curfew?

– Continued from page 1

much law enforcement, so few solutions. When will this change?

Our not-so-progressive City Councilman for Venice (Council District 11 – Mike Bonin) apparently wants the Beach and Ocean Front Walk to stay closed. He is also in favor of thinly veiled homeless sweeps called “clean ups” that cost untold tax dollars to spray bleach, confiscate belongings and harass homeless people. If someone reading this doesn’t care about human rights, look at the fact that actual solutions cost far less than using law enforcement to criminalize or harass homeless people. The latest fake beach “clean up” had thirteen vehicles along with city staff from the LAPD, Department of Sanitation, Hazardous Waste, and others. Yet there are no emergency shelter beds in Venice, extremely limited sanitary facilities (none at night and nothing near what’s required for the amount of tourist activity in Venice), and the voluntary storage for homeless belongings is over capacity.

Los Angeles, still the shameless Homeless Capital of the United States, really needs to find a more humanitarian approach. A genuinely compassionate outreach to help poor and unhoused people would ease this tension created by the City of Los Angeles.



Stopping Hyper-gentrification, One Conversation At A Time

– Continued from page 1

dents out. The process begins with harassment. Only recently, her own mother was cited \$1,100 for a few missing slats in her fence. Luckily, she has children to come to her aid. Other residents might not have such family support when developers next come in offering to pay cash for their property. Not happy with how both the Venice Neighborhood Council and the Land Use and Planning Committee are representing Venice, Laddie and three other women have been taking matters directly to LA City Council and the Coastal Commission, through their recently formed group, Venice Coalition to Preserve Unique Community Character (VCPUCC).

Jataun Valentine, a descendent of Irwin Tabor, later spoke about how Oakwood came to be gentrified. The separation from the community began when the area was coined, “Oakwood” and more police sent into the neighborhood. Despite some of its violence, Jataun said folks living there were not afraid. Several times, she commented, too, on how people that have moved into the area more recently no longer show respect to the ones living there like they used to do in the past.

The third film of the night, “Frank Murphy – Developer,” showed one developer’s point of view. Apparently, he preferred working with Councilperson Ruth Galanter, as her “litmus test was clear.” (Ironically, during her watch, she successfully pushed through a 14 month moratorium on developments, with some conditions, something not mentioned by Murphy, and forgotten by the current VNC/LUPC!) Murphy showed his true colors when he said, “This was never a suburb by the sea. It will never be a suburb – get over it.”

Several speakers suggested everyone pressure our current Councilman, Mike Bonin. How? First, by asking him to ratify a Local Coastal Plan, apparently already authored. This would require a commitment of money on his part. Second, by asking him to uphold the current Venice Specific Plan. Finally, by offering support to the residents rather than to the developers.

Speaking to some of the current homeless issues in Venice, David Busch brought up the beach curfew. Since the beach curfew, the homeless have no toilets at night. The Coastal Commission is willing to address this curfew; to do so, however, the commission needs to see the tickets that the police are issuing to those breaking the curfew.

Excerpts from the film, “Boom, the Sound of Eviction” completed the gentrification film series. This 2001 documentary by film makers Francine Cavanaugh, A. Mark Liiv, and Adams Wood focuses on the housing crisis of San Francisco during the 1990’s dot-com era. Two other panel members, Becky Dennison of Los Angeles Community Action Network (LACAN), and Bill Przulucki of People Organized for Westside Renewal (POWER), suggested more solutions to stop hyper-gentrification. Dennison, who lives in South Central, first said that we should be unabashedly against gentrification. Organizing must then come from the position that we are the ones in the moral right. She then said we should create a common vision and stand by this vision every time. She also insisted that we dig into every single development in the community. Przulucki brought up shaking down the developers with a legally binding contract called a community benefit agreement. According to the handout distributed, “a community benefits agreement is a project-based, legally enforceable contract between a community coalition and a developer that outlines the project’s contributions to the community and ensures community support for the project.” (Could this replace the conditions that VNC/LUPC have been adding to motions when they do approve projects???)

Throughout the night, not only did the panel members offer interesting and insightful information, but encouraged by the moderator, Rob Dew, many audience members offered their experiences working in other neighborhoods such as Santa Monica and

Leimert Park. Only recently, Santa Monica residents succeeded to reverse the approved Hines Development project that would have added 7,000 new daily car trips to Santa Monica.

And so, a larger conversation has begun in Venice. A conversation, like the Venice of old, that was and will continue to be inclusive. Throughout the night, there was no one silencing anyone, no one repeatedly using the misused term, “by right”, and many valuable suggestions were made on how to continue our actions, both in groups and as individuals.

Thich Nhat Hahn, the re-known monk and activist, once said that he believes the next Buddha is not an individual, but a collection of individuals. Who knows – perhaps that’s us! In any case, let’s continue the conversation: in coffee shops, at Coastal Commission Meetings, on front porches, on blogs, and in the surf. And then – of course – let’s act!

Local Groups Working On This Issue:

Venice Coalition to Preserve Unique Community Character – Email – vcpucc@gmx.com
Los Angeles Community Action Network – cangress.org
People Organized for Westside Renewal – power-la.org
Occupy Venice – Facebook page: Occupy Venice Beach
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy – laane.org

Missed the Gentrification Films? Check them out at these links:

“Gentrification & Urban Planning in Chicago”
www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVIWoFw6pzo
“There Goes the Neighborhood – Anacostia”
www.vimeo.com/27888795
“Frank Murphy – Developer”
www.kcet.org/socal/departures/venice
“Boom, the Sound of Eviction”
www.boomthemovie.org

Dear Venice Beachhead - Continued from page 2

I hope that my story and this medium reaches the eyes of someone who can and will play an important role in saving my life and that will allow me to contribute my many positive and unique experiences and abilities to society. I believe in karma and I remain resolute and optimistic in my pursuits and belief in the human spirit and heart.

Please feel free to visit my website and learn about me and my system of martial arts at muaysena.com. My movements can be seen on youtube and I am also on Facebook, Muaysena and Muay Sena Combatives.

I end this with many thanks to the staff at the Free Venice Beachhead for all their diligent work to preserve the integrity of our community and combat the gentrification (read: normalization) of a place that is as unique and special as its esoteric inhabitants.

In solidarity, and true Venetians spirit,

Bramajarn Nick “Ninja Nutt” Sena

“The greatest skill is not to fight and win 100 foes, but to defeat the foe without fighting.” – Sun Tzu



ACTIVISM, ART & LOVE IN VENICE

By Laura Shepard Townsend

Let's face it, Venice seems to have more than its share of artist/activists. And we are darn fortunate – Venice's lure for such individuals not only infuses the community with a multiformity of artworks, but also endows the city with a hell of a lot of heart as people endeavor to maintain the wonder Abbot Kinney, its founder, instilled within his beloved city.

Laura Silagi and Dennis Hathaway are two of our community's remarkable artista/activists, married, who continue to nurture their art, their causes (on all of our behalf) and one another. They have lived among us for decades and have fought many battles while producing a heck of a lot of good art along the way.

They arrived separately in the early 1970s, their pairing seemingly impossible, given their origins from antithetical worlds. Silagi was raised by social activists in the urbanity of New York City; Hathaway came from a small farm in Iowa, raised by religious fundamentalists.

THEIR MEETING AND COURTSHIP

They met in 1978 at the Chelsea Gallery on W. Washington. The Gallery was a social nexus where people gathered to share their art with one another. Afterwards, people would congregate in Hathaway's nearby apartment to discuss the exhibits. The community-oriented group situations brought Silagi and Hathaway together and after eight months, they moved into a house on Electric between Palms and Millwood.

In those days, one did not venture further south on Electric than California Avenue, since Oakwood was rampant with shootings. Their front yard view was vacant lots inhabited by a shifting bonfire community of rowdy hardcore drinkers and the homeless. The night Silagi and Hathaway signed the lease for their house, their dog bit their new landlord, and then as he was leaving, for good measure, he was robbed. This was all part of Venetian life. If you lived here, crime was something that was accepted. Things disappeared, that's all. Silagi thought it normal, since in NY, you always had to watch your back. You didn't necessarily want to be a victim, but you didn't worry about it either.

COMBINED ART AND CAUSES

Mainly Silagi and Hathaway work on their issues as well as their art separately. However, there were a few notable exceptions. When first met, they did a performance piece at a poet's private home titled, "The Lover in Search of her Love Object or a Victim of Romanticism". They sang love songs to one another with slides of their story; Silagi in a long pink satin gown – Hathaway was naked except for a cowboy hat and boots.

Another was a political installation in one of the jail cells of SPARC, re: the war in El Salvador/US intervention. It was based on *The Apocryphal Story*, a short story by Hathaway. Big cartoon cut-outs, at a cocktail party, conversed in overhead balloons. Simultaneously, El Salvador's story was enacted with miniature elements on the floor.

Years later, at the LA River, they positioned three small viewing boxes so a person could only see pieces of L.A. river ecology. Silagi recalled the delight of seeing a bird enter the frame with the pristine LA River as background.

They agreed they enjoyed working on these projects together, but that each had their own artistic as well as activist foci and has pursued it.

SILAGI'S ART/ACTIVISM

Because Silagi's father was a liberal labor lawyer, when encountering life's problems or issues, her tendency was to seek solutions through group action. If there was not one in place, she created one. Case in point: after having a child while her then husband was attending medical school at UCSD, she started the first co-op for child care, and helped lobby for child care from the university, to which they finally agreed in 1970.

As far as Silagi's art, it has generally taken the form of a personal narrative, since she believes this to be the most effective way to communicate. This applies to herself, as well – when her marriage broke up, she documented it in hand-tinted B&W photos for an exhibit at the Chelsea Gallery.

She joined Mother Art in 1973, a collective of women artists dedicated to creating social-political art, relating the stories of women marginalized from society. Mother Art addressed homelessness, abortion and immigration in performances, photography and installations, and created a series of performances in Laundromats. Because Mother Art received a whopping \$700 grant from the California Arts Council, irate politicians insisted that government funds were being

wasted. To learn more about Mother Art's history, be on the look-out for their currently touring video documentary called *Mother Art Tells Her Story*, at film festivals as well as universities. You can also check out Motherart.org online.

But as if this is not enough, Silagi has had a few more bones to pick with the world in her endeavor to make it better. She helped defeat Lincoln Center, a massive eight story building, proposed to take the place of the Ralph's, and is still involved in the beautification of Lincoln Blvd.

Of course she was there to fight the destruction of Lincoln Place, helping to document the heartbreak of evictions, still viewable on You Tube. At the behest of Councilperson Rosendahl, the video was shown at City Hall; it appeared at the UN Conference on Housing in Washington and on German TV.

The noise of the planes flying over her house induced her to 'man' the fight against SMO, the Santa Monica Airport, as co-chair for the VNC Airport Committee. An excellent Symposium in April 2013 brought federal as well as local politicians to Venice, who made a number of promises to the community. Recently, she wrote two comprehensive articles about SMO for *The Free Venice Beachhead* in January and April 2014.

Silagi is newly involved with WhoseWater.org, and there may be more issues, just check back with her in a month.

HATHAWAY'S ART

Hathaway keeps his art and activism more separate than Silagi. He began as a poorly paid newspaper reporter out of college, before moving to Venice in the 1970s.

Here, he wrote short stories and was doled his share of rejection slips, but received favorable literary reviews when Bachi published some of his short stories. His prowess led to his winning the coveted Flannery O'Connor award in 1992, beating out 300 competitors. The short story collection *The Consequences of Desire* was published as a result of this award. Of course, the book is dedicated to Silagi.

Hathaway had always wanted to write novels, and to date, has completed six. To combat the haunting solitariness of a writer, in the mid 90s he created an online magazine, *Crania*, which he published for three years.

HATHAWAY'S ACTIVISM

To pay the bills, Hathaway became a contractor. In the 1990s, a brutal gang war between the V13 and Crypts erupted with shootings every night in Oakwood. After 13 fatal shootings, a gang truce was finally called. At Steve Clare's invitation, Hathaway volunteered for Youth Build, a program for at-risk youth to work on housing and learn building skills while completing school to get a GED. The task to teach basic construction skills to fifteen kids was daunting since even though 17 to 23 years old, they had no basic arithmetic skills to even read a tape measure.

In 1996, he gave up his lucrative career as a contractor because he "got tired of helping wealthy people build their bathrooms," and became construction manager for Youth Build for three years, working directly with the youth. He resigned after one of his favorites was shot and one OD-ed on heroin. He segued to become the construction manager at VCHC, rehabbing rundown apartment buildings for the poor.

Hathaway's latest campaign is signage and now heads Ban Billboard Blight, a watchdog group. He educated himself by talking to lobbyists, politicians and lawyers at meetings. He is passionate about combating the commercialization of public space by cor-




porations. More than visual blight, billboards bombard people with inescapable messages which have a "corrosive effect on the collective psyche." With Hathaway's help, on KCET, Karen Foshay blew the lid off LA's covert plan to convert OFW into a sea of ads. Fortunately, the VNC unanimously opposed the covert plan, but Hathaway warns we are not completely out of the woods yet.

VENICE AND LEGACIES

Both agree that part of living in Venice gives one an excellent opportunity to get involved in the community and with the community, because Venice and its citizenry gets involved, especially when it concerns development. Silagi feels that if one lives in a community, then one has the right to say something about it. And Should! Also, she feels local is best, that if the issue is too big, then one can too easily become alienated.

In terms of legacy, Hathaway has instructed to have everything he has ever written burned, and computers smashed. At this, Silagi laughs and says, "of course no one's going to listen to him once he's dead." He feels that while art is a piece of cultural change, activism has a permanent effect, not just a passing effect.

As for Silagi, she says she does not particularly care if she has a legacy, unless, of course, if someone wanted to name Lincoln Blvd after her.well, she might consider it.



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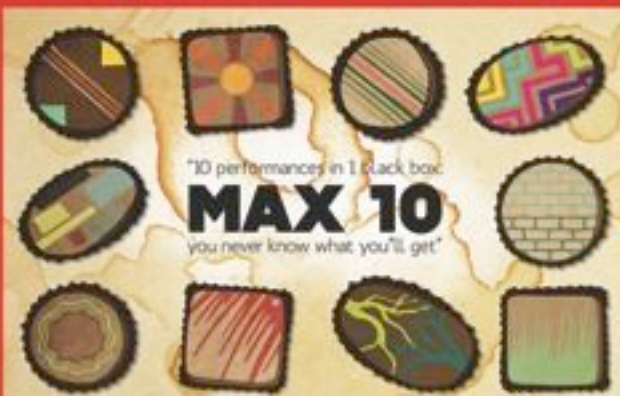


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We strongly encourage alternative transport:
Walk, bike, Blue Bus # 2 or Metro # 33 or #333.

However, we also have FREE, on-site parking.

WWW.ELECTRICLODGE.ORG



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The Electric Lodge has many opportunities for volunteers, in exchange for space. From working front of house or concessions at performing arts events to event planning and fundraising. Every 2 hours of volunteer service gets you 1 hour of rehearsal time. If you are interested in our Work Exchange Program, please visit:

www.electriclodge.org/arts/lodge/contact_volunteers.cfm