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February
2013
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Photo: CJ Gronner

VNC Monthly Meeting: The Great Storage Bin Debate

By Jamie Virostko

It was a particularly long night at the VNC monthly meeting on January 22nd with the Winter Shelter Storage Program Motion taking over an hour of the night’s minutes. Other motions on the Agenda, included a Resolution on a Proposed \$3 Billion Street Repair Bond Measure; Speed Monitoring Radar Signs on Pacific, and; Reconsideration of a Vote to Approve the Mural Ordinance.

During Announcements, the community was introduced to Greg Smith, a politician running for City Attorney, and also met a representative from Snap Tech, a company that has recently moved into 523 Ocean Front Walk.

Later in the meeting, the LAPD reported that, in 2012, overall crime was down 5.8% in Venice, with a 6.9% drop, specifically, in the Oakwood area. There was also a report from the Department of Transportation concerning its plan to address the proposed terms of a settlement agreement following the Coastal Commission’s twice rejection of the City’s application for overnight parking districts in Venice.

Shortly after calling the meeting to order, Linda Lucks “broke the rules” and gave the floor to Bill Rosendahl, out of order, to provide his Government Report, as he would have to leave early. He gave us the rundown of issues currently on the top of his agenda, namely his long battle to fight the expansion of LAX and to close the Santa Monica Airport.

Before discussing the first motion of the night, the LA City Attorney addressed a recent court case which impacts how the City of Los Angeles must deal with the personal property of homeless people. The Federal Government has told the City that it cannot summarily destroy the property of a homeless person. The Constitution protects the right to own personal property regardless of whether one has a residence or not. Now, the City of LA has the complicated problem of not being able to remove what may or may not be the abandoned personal property of a homeless person without due process. That due process could get expensive.

Shortly thereafter, we got to the Winter Shelter Storage Program Motion, which would be debated for a very long time and relates to the above in that it could be a potential, at least partial, solution to the City’s homeless clutter problem. For now it is simply a short-term, pilot program. Council President, Linda Lucks, recused herself, as she works for the VCHC and has a conflict of interest. Steve Clare, who operates the Winter Shelter and Arturo Peña were on hand to explain the details.

The Winter Shelter closes on March 1st and is operating at 70% capacity, which means over 40 empty beds. It is a high funded program where the homeless are put in contact with health care and other city services. Each empty bed represents a person who is not being helped and funding that is going to waste.

Continued on page 8

El Bordello Alexandra

By CJ Gronner

I’ve walked by the big, crazy looking gargoyle house on Westminster and Speedway for years, always wondering what the story of the place could possibly be. I finally got the chance to hear it the other day when I sat down to talk with owner, Tony Wells. I had heard varying stories of its origins, none of which were correct. The one I most wanted to be true was the one I’d heard about an old man building it for his love to be protected from evil spirits by the gargoyles (as in Venice, Italy) as a Valentine to her. Not true ... but it is still a love story of sorts ... to Venice.

The building was a rat trap back in 2001, populated by tweakers passed out in the hallways, and left to crumble in its squalor. Wells and his partner, Brittany Stevenson, were looking for rental properties (both are in real estate), and were intrigued by the cool balcony on the front of this particular house. They liked Venice and its eclectic people, and thought they could maybe unearth a treasure if they bought it and gutted it.

As they began to renovate, they dug out the walls, finding a whole bunch of nice, restorable shiplap wood underneath, and then the real treasure was discovered - a hatbox of notes from a Madame Alexandra, who ran the bordello that was this house back when it was built in 1906. The railway lines ended nearby, and the ships pulled up to shore not far away, so it was an excellent location for this mysterious woman (no photographs were found) to run her business servicing the railmen and sailors. Racy. Stevenson always felt the house had

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Dear Beachhead,

The Venice Neighborhood Council Board Meeting on Tuesday, January 22 voted unanimously to revisit their vote to accept the Los Angeles City Mural Ordinance due to final changes made by Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) on January 15th that resolved the issues in question. The VNC Arts Committee will reevaluate the final ordinance recommendations by PLUM, and bring it to the next VNC meeting for a final vote. The VNC Arts Committee and myself made a few recommendations to add to the current ordinance for reconsideration.

I am very glad that the Venice Neighborhood Council responded to my objections to their premature vote, and are willing to reconsider their vote to make recommendations to the LA City Council for their final decision on accepting the Mural Ordinance. These final recommendations by PLUM make the ordinance a very solid protection of murals in our city.

There are many muralists, artists, various art groups from all over the City of Los Angeles who have been working on this ordinance for the last 10 years, and came together when the City of LA started a Mural Working Group led by Tanner Blackman and Whitney Blumenfeld for the last 3 years.

Thank you Venice Neighborhood Council and the Beachhead for your support.

Respectfully,
Emily Winters
Jan. 25, 2013

DECLARE A "SHELTER CRISIS" IN LOS ANGELES

One of the state's most powerful tools to assist the vulnerable homeless population is hardly being used. Buried within California's legal codes is a 25-year-old statute that allows counties and municipalities to declare a state of emergency when a "significant number" of homeless people exist in a community, allowing them to convert public facilities into shelters and even to change zoning codes to site shelters in most neighborhoods.

Just under a year ago the Huffington Post made the following report - but nothing has changed and, in fact, it's probably become worse - with no relief in sight: California Homeless Crisis Grows As State Is Reluctant To Use Powerful Law (CA. GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 8698-8698.2)

"Across the country, women and children are the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population," the alliance says. And shelters across the state have only enough beds for a small fraction of the dispossessed: The St. John's Shelter for Women and Children in Sacramento turns away hundreds of people each night for this reason and leaves them to fend for themselves.

Yet since the law was passed in 1987 -- and as the homeless population increased -- few communities have invoked the statute, and when they do, it is almost always just to set up temporary winter shelters. As a result of a lack of political will, neighborhood resistance and budget constraints, this law has rarely been tapped to ease the suffering of the dispossessed."

Dear Beachhead,

Do you think your mission of a Free Venice might be a little outdated?
The Beat, the Hippie eras have been over for fifty, sixty years now. Beachfront properties are very expensive. Do you still think Venice must be a haven to the homeless and the marginally indigent? Venice Beach has had a longer than usual run and it might be time to be thankful we had that and try to adjust to the time that is now.

Don Schraier, 40 year Venice resident

The Beachhead Collective responds: No, Sir. We completely disagree.

Please help sustain the Free Venice Beachhead

Details at www.venicebeachhead.org

Thanks for your generous donations!

- Barbara Palivos
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- Michael Millman
- Khaos Digital
- Ra Rishikavi Raghudas

Dear Beachhead,

I wanted to let others know that Buddy Clark has opened a thrift store on Lincoln Blvd. The address is 835 Lincoln Blvd., at the intersection of Lincoln Blvd and Brooks, across from the pet store. The hours are 7 - 7, seven days a week. Buddy spoke of his desire to open a thrift store in town that would also work as place for meetings, as well as a technological hub. Well, he did it! Stop by to buy, sell, or trade merchandise. My friend, Gerry has already booked the space for an upcoming event, another friend, Clay is doing computer repairs onsite, and today, as I was meeting with Buddy about his vision, my friend Antoinette arrived to drop off donations, as guided on the phone by another friend, Ivonne. Buddy envisions a community thrift store and wants suggestions, so tell him what's on your mind!!

Lisa Green,
Venice Artist

"It is almost unparalleled in its potential," National Coalition for the Homeless executive director Neil Donovan said about the statute. "But it's a challenge [for California] because of the financial crisis that they're in. Other communities use similar statutes far more effectively. I'm thinking of Boston, which opens up its armories when overcrowding happens."

The reluctance to take action frustrates advocates for homeless people.

"It's a very powerful statute in the sense that once a shelter crisis has been declared -- it could be done on a statewide level by the governor or on a county level -- there are just about no restrictions to housing the homeless anywhere," said civil liberties lawyer Mark Merin. "But there are very few instances where it has been invoked. Any mayor or board of supervisors which has not declared a shelter crisis should be asked - Why not?"

Please sign our petition to send a message to Governor Jerry Brown and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa that we need to start making good use of this statute to DECLARE A "SHELTER CRISIS" IN LOS ANGELES (CA. GOV. CODE § 8698-8698.2) - http://chn.ge/X9H5xI

Barbara Peck
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Chuck Cheats at Ballona

By John Davis

It is no surprise to environmental advocates that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is trying to cheat environmental laws to build a 46,000 square foot building that would include an auditorium, parking lot, and retail (business) on the sensitive Ballona Wetlands Ecological Preserve.

Charles Bonham, the Executive Director of the Agency began an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the site in 2012 and held a public scoping meeting in mid 2012.

Now Chuck wants to start another EIR under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), at the same place. However, CEQA makes no provisions for two EIRs to occur at the same place and time. EIRs can be amended or superseded only after they are finished. A subsequent, supplemental, or tiered EIR can add to or change an existing completed process.

Here, Chuck wants two at the same time, which is clearly illegal. The press release was issued on January 28th and the contact was Jordan Traverso. I asked her several questions about the process regarding public outreach for the project and how the current EIR process would be considered in the new proposal.

On January 29 she stated the following: “Yes, of course it will go through CEQA. A new NOP should be issued this week.” Traverso is indicating that another Notice of Preparation (NOP) was being completed by the Agency for the new development. This CEQA would rest on top the EIR that is currently being undertaken.

The State is using your tax dollars to foist an illegal development on lands saved by the people and purchased by the State of California to preserve the sensitive habitat that contains endangered species and other important wildlife.

No consideration has been given to locating the proposed facilities off site. Chuck wants to build it right on the ecological preserve. He has been induced by money offered by the Annenberg Foundation. The Agency has gone so far as to enter a Memorandum of Understanding with other Agencies that are also promoting changing a portion of the ecological reserve into an auditorium, restaurant, and parking lot. The other signing Agencies include the State Coastal Conservancy and the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission.

While the proposal would have great merit if it were legal and located anyplace except in the preserve, it currently has none. There is no indication as to which retail business would be approved. Perhaps it will consist of either another Home Depot or a fast food joint ran by a clown named Ronald, or both. In keeping with the nature of the illegal proposal, be prepared for heron burgers and fried eagle.

A Consequence of Being Human: Homelessness and Human Rights

By Daniel James Keegan O’Connell

We all lay down once in a while. Be it sunbathing, napping, reading a book, or just stretching out, we all do it. Personally I like the beach; I can do all of the above on the beach. The thing is, the act of lying down can be controversial, because it has been occasionally illegal. Not here though, at least not in LA anyway. The 2006 Jones v. City of Los Angeles case found the need to lay down, specifically to sleep, to be a consequence of being human. Furthermore it found that "needing to sleep" when there is nowhere available to sleep, should not be an act for which a homeless person might be punished, ticketed, or woken up and told to move on, when there is no available option. So protected by the 8th amendment, under cruel and unusual punishment. Additionally, in the 2012 Lavan v. City of Los Angeles case, the court ruled that if one happens to leave their belongings upon the street, that said property cannot be legally removed and/or destroyed, as protected by the 4th amendment. They may be removed, if found to be causing an obstruction or a hazard, but they must be held somewhere and the owner identified (most likely by a posting), so that they might be recovered again. Much like that unfortunate towing-of-my-car incident of 2010.

Interestingly, these rulings combined, not only apply to a happy Englishman like myself who might fall asleep on the beach, or allow his parking meter to wane. These things also apply to the 51,000 homeless men, women and children (yes, children) who are currently thought to be displaced or homeless within Los Angles. Let’s consider that number for a moment, approximately fifty one thousand people who do not have the credible option of going to sleep anywhere tonight that doesn’t consist of a charity bed, a mobile home, or a combination of cardboard, blankets and the sidewalk. The traditional ‘park bench’ is not an option though; as parks have the right to close and kick us all out, understandable. This issue comes down to streets.

We are all aware of homelessness, sometimes we see it, and sometimes we do not. Often times we see it and are not quite sure what might be done about it. Occasionally we see it and a strong emotion is invoked within us. That emotion is really the point of this. What do we feel and what are we to do with that feeling about the issue of homelessness? Someone must help them though; someone must be able to do something? Of course, organizations and systems exist: Shelters, and services, and intake, and support. We all know this. But what can we do? I feel the question is equally what should we do as it is what shouldn’t we do. I discussed this with the office of Councilman Bill Rosendahl, relatable to West LA, specifically Venice. We spoke about the points raised above, we mused over what it is like to be a resident and a social advocate, and we came to this one conclusion: It is a matter of heart and mind, a battlefield if you will, whereby we struggle with how homelessness affects us emotionally and intellectually.

The 9th Court of Appeals has helped us with that, we can now say with intellectual certainty that the homeless community are disadvantaged and their rights must be protected. A matter of fact. We must also consider it a matter of rights, human/civil or otherwise. And if we are to trespass those rights of another human being, because we don’t like to see what we see when we look at people sleeping on the streets, we might also ask ourselves: how is it that I am so privileged to the protection of the amendments and that person is not? When we call someone to tell them about what we see, we must be thoughtful of who we call, unless there is a crime, we can frustrate the police, who now face limited powers. Perhaps we might call a charity, like PATH, and ask them advice on how to help a person, not necessarily money, just how better to assist or where to kindly report a person who must sleep on the street, as a consequence of being human, and having no home. They must be somewhere, just as we must be somewhere, and we should not try to punish people for that.

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The Gun-Control Debate

By Mark Lipman

Finally, a serious debate and the political will for gun control has emerged in this country, and it only took the massacre of a school full of children to do it.

In the wake of the Newtown shooting, President Obama delivered what I consider to be the best speech of his career, where he spoke sincerely about a culture of violence, whose systemic root causes go much deeper than just the regulation of arms, but of a problem that pervades every aspect of our society.

Yes, I fully agree that no one should have the right to carry assault weapons. There is no need for these instruments whose only function is to kill masses of people within a matter of seconds. There is no place for these weapons anywhere on this planet, and least of all in our schoolrooms and city streets.

Yet, this is far from the end of the conversation. They talk about mental illness, how it is spreading, that what we have seen to date is merely the cracks in the pavement, where below huge sinkholes of deep national trauma exist. Twelve years of war will do that to a people.

And it is all connected, from Guantanamo Bay and other torture chambers, to secret kill lists and drone wars that sterilize murder; war makes us all more violent in subtle and growing ways that go unnoticed until it is too late. When civil war returns to the United States – and we are quickly heading in that direction – it will be the bloodiest carnage in history. We must reverse course with all urgency – and that includes our government.

In a time of economic crisis, with austerity looming at every turn, we are ramping up our police budgets to militarize our local departments with tanks and sound cannons and bat-mobiles – all aimed at the general population, while continually expanding our prison-industrial system, farming out management to for-profit corporations that require maximum return on investment, meaning a body for every bed, so the schools-to-jails, defund-public-services, while criminalizing-the-poor, politics as usual is just as much a part of the underlying problem, as are the armor piercing bullets.

However, to solve this it would mean restructuring our entire society from a war-based economy, to a peace-based economy. Right now, every single congressional district in this country employs workers to build something in support of war, to ensure the war-makers and profiteers are able to maintain a stranglehold on our economy, the direction of this country and our very way of life. We must divest from war and invest in peace.

It is a question of retooling our factories, our government and our frame of mind, and that takes courage.

We must redirect our entire culture and actually say to Hollywood and X-Box that yes, we do have the right to censor your violence, for just as it is illegal to incite a riot, the filth that you are projecting – primarily to the youth of this planet – is a danger to the well-being of our entire civilization.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is where the discussion needs to be going.

Denny Lyons
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Some Will Never Be Gentrified

By John O’Kane

Many have expected Venice to become another upscale coastal community ever since the early 60s, when the city directors began dozing the architectural gems copied from the Italian source. The gentry go after good business deals and cheap property wherever they may be. Once the poor man’s beach, Venice lagged behind other coastal areas due to a Depression made worse by the discovery of oil, and has been targeted by developers ever since.

But Venice has been more than undervalued property, and still is to some extent: a creative bohemia, relatively independent political city-state, and alternative cultural haven. The members of these communities have always been refusers who believed in living differently, and unplugging from the mainstream. They’ve fought back against efforts to make it an homogenous, upscale-consuming community, and they had the numbers to succeed for many years. These old Venice types were not merely colorful under-consuming eyesores vibrating some extinct religion, though there are a number of these around. They’ve always needed low rents to survive, and sought out cheap hoods to subsidize their art-making and lifestyles.

As the history of bohemia shows, however, they only have so much time before the entrepreneurs find them and they have to migrate. While their lease has been nearly up for years, they’ve helped keep Venice other than a top-end shopping mall.

In the early phases of gentrification aspiring members of the bohemian club, whatever the strain, dedicated themselves to poverty as a way to symbolize their refusal of the material world, but also as a way to manage their time and resources better so they could live a more spiritually-rewarding and insightful existence. They were educated folks, religiously inspired, and breathing the city’s beaten legacy nurtured over

the years by diverse performers. High rents have made this dedication difficult. But the upgrade of this craft can be found in various states of withdrawal from the rat race and passionate devotion to the quality life.

High consumption has always coexisted with real and dedicated poverty here. Abbot Kinney, the city’s founder, constructed an upscale resort with cultural attractions, but was its first bohemian. He was not happy with the quick arrival of the Coney Island carnival mind, since his culture was upscale too, but he believed in culture. These attractions inspired a climate that welcomed creators of many stripes, and encouraged a marriage of culture with the circus. The resulting mass entertainments were distractions for many over the years, but they mushroomed into unique pop forms that became part of the identity of the refusers, their ways of expressing themselves: performance art, rock music, surfing sub-culture, murals, street theater...

These free forms were valid alternatives to the upscale ones, and they remain today. Somehow it seems Abbot would have at least appreciated Jim Morrison’s free verse poetry, and the “doors of perception” metaphor his band borrowed, as well as the automatic writing of the Beats who made the city’s postwar identity that persists in alternative circles.

After all, he showed sympathy for the lives of interest to the Venice Kerouacs and Ginsbergs in building Tent City while he constructed Venice. It was for those who came to buy plats but were written out of the plots. The nitty-gritty of lives down below fueled the Beats’ mojo, that of the beatens who mirrored them, as well as that of the surrealists whose names and actions found a secure existence here. They were all fascinated by the zen principle of bewitched bodies finding spiritual meaning and transcendence in the contrasts of ordinary objects, structures and events in

the everyday world, and fused these elements into new meanings.

Some would say that Abbot’s sympathies toward the lowly are most evident in his bringing of pigeons here, leaving his first family on Paloma Ave to breed like some drugged-out kin network.

Ray Manzarek, a surviving Door, says that what distinguishes this bohemia is the freedom of everyone to explore states of mind, no matter what your state in life. Its source is in the variety of stimuli from nature and the playful amusement scene, an explosive cocktail that vaults you beyond yourself to yourself. No need to even worry about the mushrooming valet culture on Rose Ave or elsewhere. You make freedom in the cracks of the glistening facades, and in the contrasts between the downbeat liquor store and the upbeat boutique next door that keep citizens aware of their surroundings.

For over a century this impulse has breathed through residents like a contagion, often erupting accidentally through the most unsuspecting citizens, turning them into momentary visionaries. And it’s safe to say that Venice is haunted with the memory of these transactions. People come here and change, never leaving. They become possessed and metamorphose into a peculiar kind of Venetian that is neither wealthy nor poor, but rich in spirit.

Will gentrification ever leave Venice immune from recession and the scars of downbeat worlds; reach a point where the ghosts of the past are exorcized and alternative residents cease being formed? Not likely, since profits need low wages; wealth needs contrast. And the creative life is too entrenched, blurring the divide between new and old. The scene will always bring those who want to discover. And certain sectors as well as citizens simply can’t be gentrified.

There’s always a chance the gentry will get caught in a hotspot, donate their wealth, and slum it on the beach with the pigeons...

Obit: Nick Lenin Conn

Nick Conn, long-time Venice resident, died at his home at 224 San Juan Avenue on Tuesday Evening, November 13, 2012. Born Nicolai Lenin Conn on February 22, 1925 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, he was the middle son of three, his older brother, Karl Marx Conn, born in 1920 and Anatole France Conn born in 1926.

His parents were Russian Jewish immigrants to the United States from the Ukraine via Winnipeg, Canada. Both were prolific readers and saw education as of paramount importance. His mother, Dina Conn, also a Venice resident from the early 1950s to her death in 1969, was self-taught and spoke five languages. His father, William Conn, was a Communist involved in Syndicalism. After moving from Canada, William remained an illegal immigrant never obtaining citizenship from the United States. He started as a mechanical engineering student in Canada, becoming a tool and die maker in the United States and then a union organizer for the United Auto Workers. In the late 1930s, he was arrested for organizing during a strike in Michigan and spent several years at Steilacoom Federal Penitentiary where he earned a bachelor’s degree.

In the late 1920s, the two separated and Dina took her three sons to New York where she had family and friends. Nick grew up there attending secondary and high school and joining the Science Club and learning photography. After the outbreak of World War II, he joined the army and ultimately participated in the invasion of Normandy.

After the war, Dina and the three boys tried Florida for a short period and then in the late 1940s they made their way to the Southern California coast joining millions of others in search for a sunny life near the sea. They began living on the southwest corner of Ocean Avenue and Venice Boulevard in two small houses. The boys were attending college and enjoying a vibrant social life. Nick began going to law school and completed West Los Angeles College of Law.

He spent most of his professional life as an insurance investigator and adjustor with the firm of Michael Wishengrad & Staff in the San Fernando Valley.

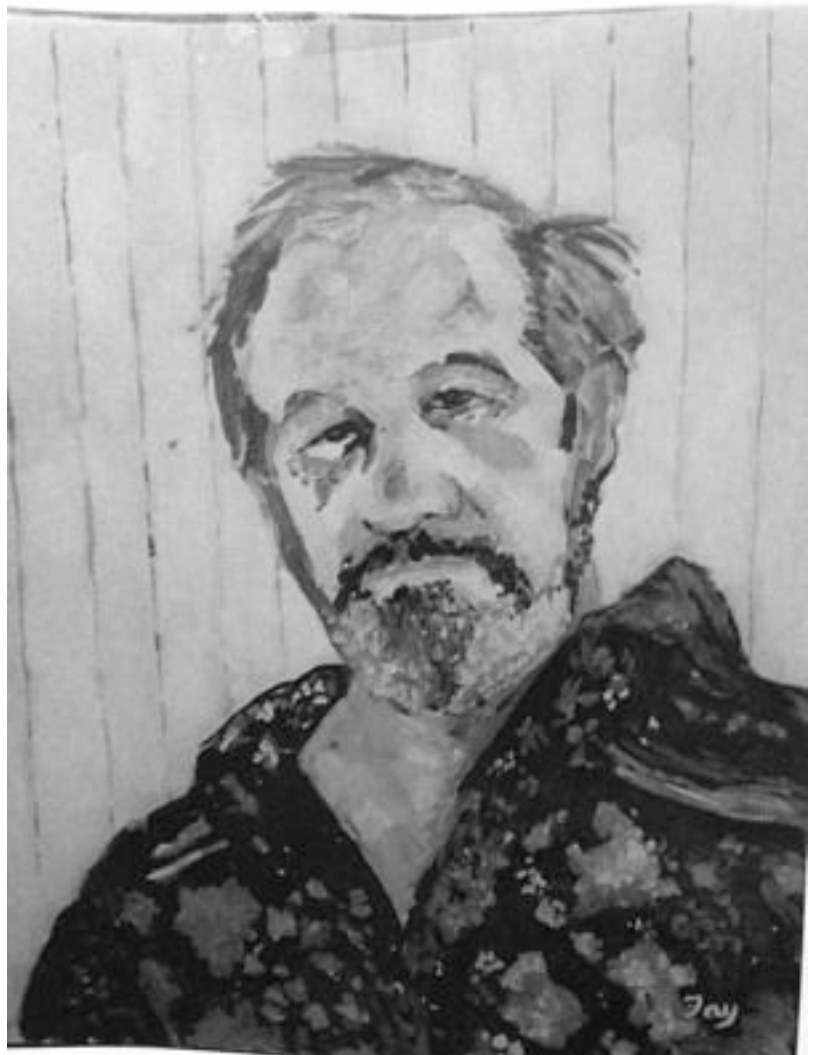
The work as an investigator provided him with enjoyable autonomy and the opportunity to travel throughout Southern California, especially in Los Angeles County.

All three of the brothers shared a great enthusiasm for sailing and owned a number of boats over the years. Throughout his life, Nick relished his sailing trips with family and friends in the Florida Keys and along the Western Continental Coast. After he retired from his career in insurance, he continued his interest in sailing and became an instructor with the U.S. Power Squadron, a non-profit organization dedicated to boat education and safety. Through this activity he met and retained many friends. He loved to quote the Water Rat from Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* saying:

“Believe me, my young friend, there is NOTHING – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.”

His enduring interests were in law, science and politics and reading was his lifelong abiding passion. He volunteered at the Venice Library in their literacy project for a number of years. His compassion for others, particularly those less fortunate than he, was well known in Venice and many people over the years have been the recipients of his generosity and kindness. He never forgot his parents’ teachings regarding equality and fairness.

His interest in the Venice Community lasted throughout his life and he participated in many efforts to retain autonomy from the pressures of the City of Los Angeles. Nick lived in Venice for over 60 years, except for a short period when he pur-



chased a home in Mar Vista. He married and had three children and five grandchildren.

He believed in the fundamental importance of civic participation and voted at every single election leaving the stickers he received on his front door in a growing list as a statement of pride. We could all do well to emulate him.

Tina Morehead - January 27, 2013

Jazz in the Canals

By Anne Alvarez

Chris Bennett sits still during a moment of reflection on the patio of her home overlooking the Venice Canals, as she takes me back through a multi faceted career that spans 3 decades, various genres of music and a Grammy nomination for co/writing and singing the title track for the film *Midnight Express*. Bennett worked alongside composer, Giorgio Moroder, who went on to win the Oscar for the film's musical score.

Her resume is extensive, including among other things being a pianist, songwriter, jazz performer, choreographer and former disco queen. Having sung back up for Johnny Mathis, Rita Coolidge and Donna Summer on her hit "MaCarthur Park" and "Heaven Knows", as well as song writing for singer Tina Turner on her 1979 disco music album *Love Explosion*.

Bennett, an only child of a conservative Illinois Judge and her music teacher mother, grew up listening to Big Band melodies and Broadway show tunes, and was playing the piano by age 5. She often chose practicing instead of doing chores. It wasn't until her high school days that she developed a love for the performing arts, specifically dance, that led her to open her own dance studio at the age of 16. She pursued the love of performance art after leaving her family behind, and moving to Los Angeles to attend UCLA. However, within a few months of being in town, she was approached by Jim Nabors, known mostly for his role as sidekick on *The Andy Griffith Show*. Nabors asked Bennett to join his Las Vegas revue which would eventually tour across the country. Getting to perform on stage every night in new venues, and playing to a variety of audiences in different cities helped Bennett gain the confidence and experience of a seasoned professional.

By her mid-twenties, Bennett had become a worldly woman and a well-known vocalist throughout the music industry. In 1976, while touring Germany, she was scouted and hand picked by composer/producer Giorgio Moroder, a man many credit with pioneering electronic music. Moroder asked her to join the popular disco group, Munich Machine, choosing Bennett to be the lead vocalist for their sophomore album which included a dance version of the Procol Harum rock classic, "A Whiter Shade of Pale." Bennett not only recorded the entire album, she also posed for the groundbreaking cover art, entirely naked. Bennett's runway model's body and movie star looks caused an international sensation and made for one of the highest charting and highest grossing disco albums of 1978. As exciting as this period in Bennett's career was, she knew this wasn't all she wanted to do. Her main passion had always been jazz, so she took time off, to focus on songwriting, composing and her marriage.

Re-emerging in 1993 a full fledged jazz

singer, she produced and independently released an eponymous album that featured an eclectic assortment of covers, including "My Funny Valentine," the Hollies' "Bus Stop," and Leon Ware's "Somewhere", along with her own original compositions.

Going through Bennett's repertoire, it is easy to see why she is regarded as one of the most under appreciated singer/songwriters of our time by many in the jazz community, who compare her near vibrato-less voice to Chris Connor's airiness. While echoing the purity of Doris Day, and at times channeling jazz idol, Anita O'Day, her ability to sing bitter-sweet melodies and rockin' swing tunes make her unique. Bennett has released a total of 11 solo albums, including two live albums, a Christmas platter, and most recently *Sail Away - The Tahiti Sessions*.

She has also become an advocate for equal rights within the gay community, having composed the song, "Everybody Has The Right" with co-writers, Lisa Catherine Cohen and McKinley Marshall, which she performed alongside disco diva



queen Pattie Brooks in major events for the Gay Pride events. Bennett, a heterosexual, firmly believes that everyone should have the same basic rights, a point of view which the Gay and Lesbian community warmly embrace.

Asked why she chose Venice as her home, she answers with a sigh and a warm smile, "There's no place like Venice anywhere in the world. It is a great place to get older, lots of artistic people with individual ideas are around, and for me it offers the best quality of life one can experience."

Currently, Bennett tours as one quarter of the disco group, Club Majestic with Pattie Brooks, Suzi Lane and Billie Kaman. Bennett is also collaborating on a musical soundtrack for an upcoming Broadway play by Hollye Leven, alongside acclaimed composer/conductor Maestro Dino Zonic. She takes me into her in-home recording studio, sits in front of her 1928 Steinway and begins belting out one of the most beautiful melodies I have ever heard, "Sail Away", a song about love lost.

One thing is for certain, the only place Chris Bennett is sailing into is peoples' hearts with her gentle and unassuming presence and style.

To Learn more about Chris Bennett check out: <http://www.chrisbennett.com/>

Edward Biberman Mural

By Delores Hanney

Since the recent slipping into private hands of the 1939 WPA-built post office in Venice, there has been much anguish and gnashing of teeth mainly due to the loss of an almost constant availability of the pleasure afforded by an offhand gaze at its iconic mural, *The Story of Venice*, tucked up inside the building. The 6'6" by 15'10" oil-emulsion tribute to the town's past is the work of one Edward Biberman done in 1941.

The Work Projects Administration was a New Deal agency created during the Great Depression to provide useful employment to the otherwise jobless: constructing roads and bridges, parks and public buildings. Many of those buildings were then festooned with murals capturing a topic of local significance, painted by talented artists such as Biberman who were also working under New Deal programs, The Section of Fine Arts in Biberman's case.

Not being painted directly onto its host wall, *The Story of Venice* is separated by process – if not purpose – from those pictographs of the cave painting sort harking back to times of antiquity. By contrast, the Venice post office version of visual life recordation is an oil on canvas that Biberman created in his studio on Vine Street in Hollywood. Actually, the oil was mixed with a wax preparation following a recipe he was given by Hilarie Hiler, a WPA mural-maker working out of San Francisco. It imbued the surface with a lovely eggshell quality and a gentle sheen as opposed to a shine. In completion, the painting was affixed to the wall through a technique called “marou-

flage,” a kinky kind of name for a procedure not that far removed from a do-it-yourselfer hanging wallpaper in the dining room.

He was way jazzed to receive the commission for this, his second mural. “It's a painter's dream to run into that kind of rich material, which also happens to be true,” he told an interviewer for the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian twenty-three years later. “Everything about the place is something which one would imagine to have been created from a figment of some very rosy imagination.”

Biberman's approach, to this pictorial – and picturesque – historytelling project of his, is delicious, as all who ever saw it can readily testify. Following the ersatz triptych model employed on his first mural painted for the Federal Post Office Building in downtown Los Angeles, Venice founder Abbot Kinney is the central image in *The Story of Venice*, behind him the visionary rendition of his cultural Shangri-La. To the left Biberman depicted its honky-tonk manifestation; to the right in its industrialized form. In this manner, he captured not only Kinney's fancy but also how it evolved upon making contact with real life. “It's a wry commentary on what can happen to a man's dream,” the artist observed. Venetians promptly claimed it as their own.

Stylistically influenced by the work of important Mexican muralists such as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Jose Clements Orozco, all of whom he knew from his days back in New York, it's not just a sentimental reminder of things past. The

piece exudes a certain romantic muscularity that embraces both the idealistic and the pragmatic in a sideways kind of optimism for the future. It offers, however, no hint of the somber social advocacy that later would become the primary focus of his fervor.

For more than seven decades, Edward Biberman's awesome mural was there to welcome Venice post office patrons who bustled about, task oriented, towards a swift completion of business. The government retains ownership of the treasure but the covenant signed by the building's new owner, movie producer Joel Silver – of *Die Hard*, *The Matrix* and *Lethal Weapon* fame – would have him restore it for public viewing at his new digs, by appointment on a bi-monthly basis. *That* eventuality would have the effect of lifting said mural-viewing from an incidental part of an ordinary day's errands to the status of a special event. But as Greta Cobar reported in the Free Venice Beachhead, a law suit was filed in Washington D.C. for reconsideration hopefully resulting in re-emplacment in the Abbot Kinney library: the best possible outcome for Venice homies.

In his moody and mystical and impassioned poem, “Sacred Places,” Jim Smith evokes that old post office to enshrine it as a temple, the mural image of Abbot Kinney inside as its resident deity. With it, a piercing howl of pain breaks from Smith's soul.

Primeval articulation of a community's grief for things as they stand now.

Two Venice Artists Who Work and Live Well Together: Barbara Mastej and John Ransom

By Greta Cobar

It might not be breaking news that Venice attracts artists and fosters creativity, but take a moment and listen to the story of Barbara Mastej and John Ransom, who for nineteen years have watched their love, creativity, co-habitation and body of work steadily grow in a green little bungalow in the Canals.

Beachhead: Why do you create?

Barbara: It's a compulsion, I can't stop. Not one day goes by that I don't make something.

John: It's something that needs to come out – like an exhale.

Beachhead: Are you a vehicle?

Barbara: I'm a radio. I think that there's something in my make-up that's like a receiver.

While John paints abstract surrealism, Barbara experiments with just about anything and everything from realistic paintings to collages, sculptures, mosaic, thread, and so on.

John: Barbara is the most creative person I've met in my life. I describe her as the artist in the true sense of the word.

He described their life together as a puzzle piece, where things need to move around to make space for other pieces to move from one place to another. I could see how they graciously move around each other in order to move forward, together. Having met while working in the advertising business for Saatchi & Saatchi, they've lived in the same little house on the Canals for the past nineteen years, and are now running their own advertising company while trying to make a living off of just selling their artwork.

Barbara: We were the only people in the agency that lived in Venice, everyone else was afraid of Venice back then.

Beachhead: What's your definition of good art?

John: Commercial art is mind manipulation. I think that when something evokes an emotion, it's good art. My abstract paintings are meant to allow the viewer to go to dozens of different places. When someone hangs one of my pieces in his or her place, they may ultimately find secrets in the painting that reflect secrets in themselves.

Barbara: One of my current projects is a series of portraits of popular Venice residents like Suzy Williams, Sponto, Frank Lane, Robert Harris. On some paintings I work for long periods of time, some come quickly. Although they need to be recognizable, the portraits are not photo-realistic and I consider them done when they exhibit that intangible quality of personal energy.

Beachhead: John, your "Top of the Bottom" - the "Ravens" series depicts realistic-looking birds in an other-wise abstract painting.

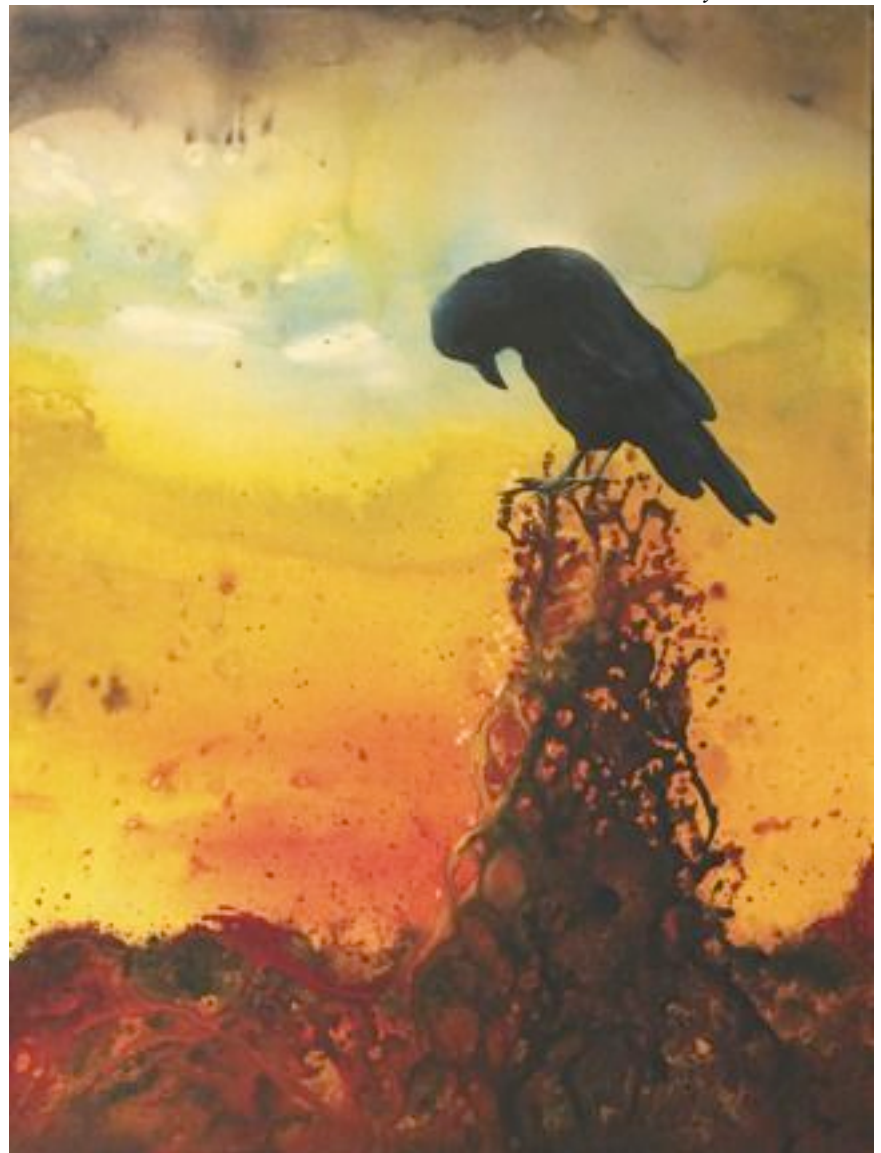
John: Yes, I often include one realistic element in each painting. It gives people a reference point, and then the mind can imagine things. My observation of ravens and crows in their day-to-day life was the inspiration for the "Ravens" series. These majestic birds exhibit certain behavioral traits that I most admire in humans. They are independent, yet communal. Intelligent animals, they train their young and maintain expectations of fellow members of their flock. Their generally business-like demeanor does not seem to prevent them from experiencing the exhilarating aspects of our planet.

I am drawn to the contrasts and the majestic feelings that I get when I look at John's work, and I smile at the familiar Venice faces so well illustrated by Barbara.

Beachhead: Barbara, how did the Venice series get started?

Barbara: When the community I loved so much gentrified and changed around me, I discovered that painting was a way to channel my grief for the loss of friends and landscape. Matt Frost was the very first portrait I did in my Venice series. I didn't know him, but had always wanted to photograph his cottage with all of the interesting stuff he displayed all around the outside. The place (no longer there...now it's a tall concrete structure) was on a corner, so you could look at it from several sides and see all sorts of cool things. I was afraid to introduce myself to Matt at first, because he was quite an imposing figure. However, one evening, I asked John to come along, and we happened to see him walking across Ocean Avenue and go into Kim's Market. He turned out to be really cool. When I asked if I could photograph him in front of his house, he said "Sure!" Turned out he had

"Top of the Bottom" – the "Ravens" series
By John Ransom



just found out that very day that the little house had been sold, and he was being forced to leave. It took me a good two and a half years to finish my portrait of him. He used to laugh and say he hoped he'd live to see it, when I'd see him around the old hood once his house was leveled. At last, I sought him out when

Continued on next page

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Barbara Mastej with her painting: "Ibrahim, Holy Man of Venice" and with Ibrahim Butler at the opening reception for the show featuring her and John Ransom's artwork at the Cadillac Hotel on Dudley and OFW.

it was finished, and had him come over. His eyes actually teared up when he saw the painting, and we were friends after that.

Beachhead: John, where do your visions and your inspiration come from?

John: Traditionally trained and a surrealist at heart, I paint from concepts, visions and dreams. The translation of thought into images is the core of my work. I avoid figurative subjects unless they play a requisite role in my concept. I find abstract work a much more direct expression of intimate emotions and sensations, as well as a better conduit to convey them to others. Visual context and feelings aroused are left to the interpretation of the viewer.

I really enjoyed both John's and Barbara's art pieces, but I actually got a real kick out of meeting them and seeing how they are able to work together on all of their advertisement projects like two perfect pieces of a puzzle. It's nice to go to a little cottage on the Canals and feel completely content with the creativity and harmony of the place, inside and out.

John: The only yelling that goes on in this house is me yelling at the computer.

Their artwork is now displayed on the patio at Hama Sushi until the end of February. The art gallery in the Cadillac hotel is currently being renovated, but some of their paintings that were exhibited there in a previous show are still hanging in the lobby of the hotel. For more about John and Barbara see , www.johnransomla.com, www.barbaraofvenice.com, www.oddmanout.biz.



"Your Town" - "Nature of Things" series
By John Ransom



"Matt Frost, Peacekeeper" - "Vestiges of My Venice" series
By Barbara Mastej

Must-See Art at the Rose Cafe

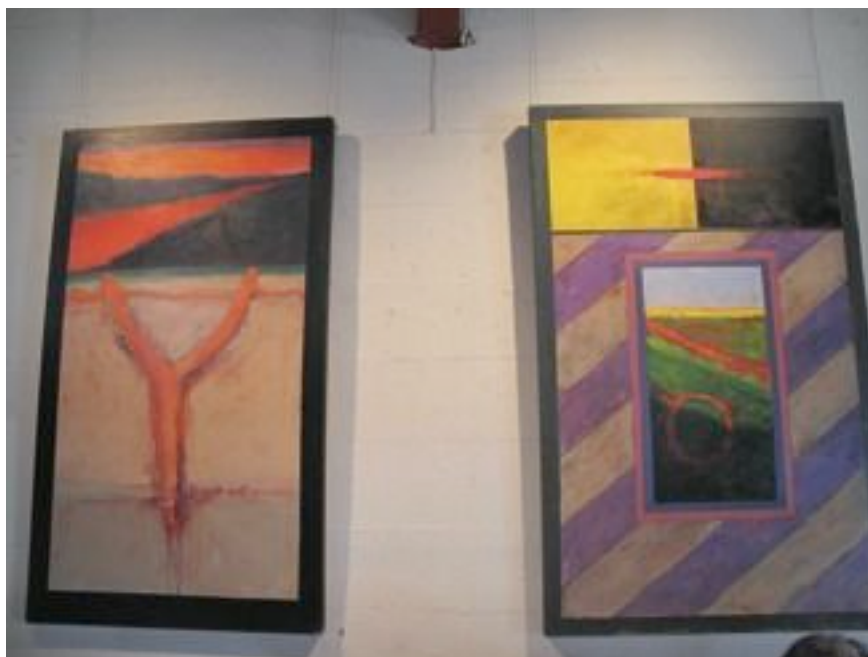
By Nike Wind

There is a must-see exhibit Exploring Adam and Eve - Venice Paintings from 1990-2012 at The Rose Cafe now through March 3rd, posthumously exploring the work of Venice Artist, Michael Ayars.

I was more than lucky in that not only did I personally know Mike, but he was a true friend. I met him in 1980 at his Venice studio at a party with a capital P, where such phenomena occurred regularly and were considered meltdowns of creative critical mass. The circle of people I embraced there became my family of friends, and remain the lifeblood of Los Angeles' artistic heart. Musicians, poets, actors, writers, painters, sculptors, and crafts people all came together to kick it and throw down with like minded people in real communion.

Mike was a certified genius. He refused membership in Mensa because he did not have an elitist bone in his body. He could speak with the authority of deep understanding on any subject, from history and politics to nature and sports.

This deep intelligence informed his work with stirring commentary from our times to ancient times. His work is iconic and the themes deal with the most pervasive aspects of human behavior using elementary



symbols in the richest palette of color. It can be argued that Michael Ayars was an abstract expressionist but he would likely argue that himself. His form and style defy labeling. A master of color, his landscapes are nothing like you've ever seen before.

He supported his art by house painting. He was commissioned to paint trompe l'oeil wine cellars, rain forests, Moroccan oases, and so much more in the homes of wealthy patrons and friends. Michael also had a genius for living beings. He had a preternatural, almost mystical relationship with children and animals who received and returned the love he gave so freely.

Yes, Mike was one of the best friends I ever had. His manners were impeccable, concern for others genuine; he really knew how to love. He also really knew how to paint. His oeuvre is available to see on his website: www.michaelayars.com.

Give yourself the gift of seeing the work of Michael Ayars, a Venice treasure, up close and in person, while it is still available.

VNC Monthly Meeting: The Great Storage Bin Debate

– Continued from page 1

A main reason that homeless people do not access the program, is because they have to abandon their personal property (should it be more than can fit on their lap), when they take the bus to the Winter Shelter. That personal property would almost certainly be lost as a result. The City, along with some people from the community, is implementing a *pilot* storage locker program (modeled after others in existence) to help fill those empty beds and collect data concerning its future and those of similar programs.

Most of the community present seemed to be for the program, which would provide temporary storage space for the personal property of about 22 homeless people.

Since the bins were to be placed near the beach, the issue was raised of needing a Coastal Permit. From what I understand, an injunction is to be filed by the Stakeholders. Another argument against the storage bins was that they would enable homeless people to live on the beach. You know, because if I had a locker by the ocean where I could put some of my crap, I would stop paying rent and just live there.

A few people took issue that the personal property was not going to be searched before storage. *What if they put a gun in or a bomb in there?* Really folks? An open and free beach where 16 million people from all over the world and their backpacks, purses and luggage mingle in heavily populated shops and restaurants every year, and we think, because no one is going

to search the stuff of some homeless folks, that it will cause a major security issue? Ok.

As the debate moved to the Council, we quickly learned that the VNC itself was very dissatisfied that it could not properly vet the Winter Storage Locker Motion before it was brought before them. Though the point had been made numerous times, many council members felt the need to repeat their frustration again and again. To some, it even seemed their primary reason to oppose the motion, not its actual merits.

All in all, citing compassion and a willingness to try something new, the VNC, approved the Motion by a vote of 8 to 5. Nearing 10pm, when they closed the matter, well over half of Official Agenda had not been covered.



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Above: Container placed by the Pacific sub-station to provide storage for the house-less using the West LA shelter, for the month of February.

Photo: Daryl Barnett

Left: Twenty-two trash bins available for 22 people to store stuff. Available only to those going to the West LA Shelter. Accessible from 3 to 5pm, until March 1.

Photo: Greta Cobar



Right: Barbara Lashever and other volunteers try to provide the little help available to those who are house-less.

Photo: Greta Cobar

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Political cartoon by Khalil Bendib

CONGRESS' ALLEGIANCE TO THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS?

↓

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CONGRESS' ALLEGIANCE TO OUR KIDS' RIGHT TO LIFE AND SAFETY?

↓

SEMI-AUTOMATIC

NRA

NRA

3/13

I Sing To My Wild Biology

(For Walt Whitman)
by krista schwimmer

i sing to my wild biology –
to the beautiful DNA strands
turning & twirling in
their perfect double helixes –
to the wild mitochondria
powerhouses of my cells –
to the robust ribosomes
with their messengers
binding, binding.
i sing to them all
in their hidden stations
as they work their ways
& give me life.

i sing to my wild biology –
to my unique DNA
with its perfect symmetry & templates
that allow copies of my ancestors
to pass into & through me.
i sing to these ancestors, too –
whose genes whisper their unsung desires
through me, while still my own DNA
turns in its perfect double helix.

i sing to these few emissaries
of the total sum of my wild biology –
and to their smaller parts, too –
the neutrons & protons & electrons
created by the dance of the 6 quarks –
those charmed & strange gods
who remind me that even scientists
when naming their discoveries
bow down to the imaginative soul.

i sing to them all –
my tiny, sufi masters
swirling & burning inside me
so that i can make my way out
into the Kingdom of Animalia
where – startled – i find
i do belong.

My Great Religion

by Daniel J. Kaufman

I have a great religion
Based on beauty.
Somnambulant colors
Of the aurora borealis,
Curvaceous youth, dappled
Sunlight on a summer lawn,
The flower's abstract bliss.

Beauty of line and curve
Beauty of shape and form
Beauty of bird songs
Laughter of babies
Celestial music of the spheres.

My mystical religion
Unveils itself in shooting stars
Sprayed against the black sky,
In luminescent surf,
In fractal patterns
Through crystal prism
Raindrops and oil slicks
On wet asphalt roads.

I have a great religion
Based on beauty,
Indigo buds, lilies of the alley
The horizon’s hardly perceptible
curve at the oceans edge,
the seagulls plaintive caw,
the post-storm morning air
awash with angels.

The evanescent morning star
Submerged in powder blue,
Slipping glimpses
Of the eternal.

I have a great religion
Based on beauty.

---Daniel J Kaufman

02:22 Monday, January 28th, 2013, Adullam A silent moon wept beams up in the sky, Imprisoned in her exile, flying by. Held in a gravitational malaise, With endless stays, occasional delays Afforded her,could not acquittal bring. On chill nights such as this, I hear her sing A song of longing, never to know love. She has no children, giving all they have To her design. Her barren craters ring. A severe case of acne, forbearing, To make her hide one side, avoid always, So Earth cannot stare at her sad, dark rays. No veil of nitrogen to shield her eye. She hasn't breath to even heave a sigh Yours in lunacy,

- Roger Houston

Sleep

For the Beachhead Collective Staff

Disentangle the obstinate mind
from the grindstone of time
and place it on the portal
where the winds of awareness
disperse the remains of memory.

Empty your eyes of fear
and burn the sense of self
like a ship of red cellophane
on the waves of white light
filtering through your body.

Sleep without your head
in the emptiness of dreaming.
Awake when you understand
that your being is a soluble idea
in the chemistry of galaxies.

—Humberto Gómez Sequeira-HuGóS
Los Angeles, 18 January 2013

Rattle Moan

By Aryn Youngless

I need to stop
To stop the noises in my head
The thoughts that rattle
Shake & moan, pulling me
From the tasks at hand
From the writing & the chores
& the hugs & the kisses
& the words & the music
& the laughs & the love
& the life

I need to stop
Stop the over analyzing
How I look & what I say
& the people near me
& those in my life
& the subtext, underlining
& the subtitles never pop up
until it’s too late

Stop ignoring the feelings in my gut
& my heart
how I hate them, just to spite me

I need to stop
Stop absorbing others thoughts
Out of fear & isolation
As if they create some impervious curtain
& behind, I am naked, naked, naked
I need, I need, I need
I need to stop – being so needy

Yes, I need to stop
Stop myself - & let go
Of the past, of the future
In this moment, in my words
In everything, everything, everything
In my wants, & my needs, & duties
I need to stop – I need to enjoy

For the whole world has gone crazy
& instead of embracing the madness
I sit here, yelling at myself
And I don’t f----g care
But I do, so much
And it’s sinking me
& I can’t stop, I can’t, I can’t, I can’t

& the thoughts rattle, & shake,
& moan, & consume me so much
that I forget what I was doing
in the first place

False Hopes

She: talks too much, endlessly,
a verbal salad - lots of stuff thrown in
none of it really meaning anything
just keeps going, on and on and on

He: sits quietly, calmly, waiting it out

She: got her car towed away
the car they were living in
now they are literally on the streets
they are desperate, they look hunted

He: tells you of articles he's read in the library
is calm, beautiful, with huge brown eyes
is polite, waits, endlessly waits

She: talks more and more
trying to talk her way out of it
tries to talk her way into your life
hoping you will rescue her, and him

He: is waiting, to one day fly away
will give up the role of caretaker
give up the role of parent
role reversal: he's had to parent her
instead of the other way around

She: wears you out, wears you down
leaves you empty, drained of all compassion

He: is quiet, polite, grateful
accepts the gifts you give with dignity and thanks

You: wish you could do more
get them off the streets, give them a home
feel guilty, but know you have to take
care of yourself

It's a train wreck waiting to happen,
and it's getting closer all the time.

- Mary Getlein

*There are 51,000 men, women and children living on
the streets of L.A.

Moonlight Porch

By Majid Naficy

For Kelly Edwards

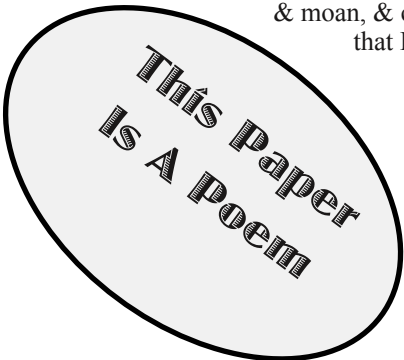
Should I call it “veranda” or “spring terrace”?
But “moonlight porch” is more beautiful:
This newly-budding breast
Which has leaned back charmingly
To the stone chest of each house,
This open, inviting hand
Which has stretched out near each window
Longing for something lost.

In the evening in Kelar Abad
I sit in the veranda
And share my tea
With tea bushes,
And at night, in Isfahanak
I go to the spring terrace
To find my intimate cricket.
But now in Venice Beach
Let me sit in this moonlight porch
And smoke a cigarette with you.

Old in Venice

Grey hair,
Wrinkled skin,
Knobby joints,
Wobbling gait,
You’ve passed your prime,
A testament of advancing age,
You’ve exchanged your tiny grocery - your brainchild
for the government hand-out,
For the social security check that was stolen
as you boarded a noonday bus,
You’ve chosen Fear,
Golden padlocks glisten on your front door,
Sunlight streams diffused through grated windows,
Your cane became the beating stick
for muggers possessing twice your sinews
for burglars with pistols,
You’ve become the prisoner,
Forsaking your youth,
Growing old in Venice.

– Lynette



El Bordello Alexandra — *continued from page 1*

a spirit, and a pulse, and began to decorate accordingly.

The house was entirely transformed in about three months, and Stevenson put up a couple little stone gargoyles on the roof for protection (ala Italy Venice), as the area was still a little iffy. Wells is not a guy to do things on a small scale, however, and decided that if they were having gargoyles, they were REALLY having gargoyles. Driving back from a trip in Baja, Wells saw a big metal statue on the side of the road near Ensenada. Intrigued, he stopped and met the metal worker (who he knows only as Perfidio) and inquired about his doing some commission work for him. Perfidio's first gargoyle so impressed Wells, that they've created a lasting collaboration. Over recent years, Wells keeps getting ideas, and Perfidio keeps bringing them to life.

The big, scary, devil looking gargoyles have been joined by a St. Michael angel, and a Poseidon driving dolphins, and it doesn't look like they're going to stop adding them anytime soon. It's a whole process of guys yanking the statues up over the side of the house via ropes and brute strength, and they're stuck in solid, with interior metal poles and things. They're not going anywhere.

As Wells likes things to be over the top, and both he and Stevenson are very creative types, they had to keep adding things. As they did, the photos started happening. People started lining up out front, asking "What the heck is this place?!" and slowly, a landmark was born. "If this was anyplace else, I'd have a church group out front picketing, but this is VENICE. It works. Just please give us this ONE place in the world to be unique!", said Wells, creating a forever friend in me and everyone else who feels that exact way about our Venice.

The seven individual apartments inside soon filled up, all with artists and creative types, all of whom are now friends. Some have started businesses together (a family crest Iphone app - Crestmaster.com - inspired by the art and crests on the building, where you can create your own crest), they take ski trips and things together, and all speak of what a great time it is living there, and what great landlords Wells and Stevenson are.

Especially Brian Mylius, the resident painter. He had been homeless, and Wells hired him to do some commission paintings on the house. Mylius now lives in El Bordello Alexandra, and adds to its splendor in some way every day. His paintings (mostly of "badass

women to protect the place, because men would fuck it up" - T. Wells) are all over the house, inside and out. The still-wet one in progress in the back stairway features Madame Alexandra, how they think she might have looked, with her Mona Lisa smile keeping her secrets intact.

Her secrets still attempt to get out though, as when I asked if it might be haunted (it feels like it could be), the answer given by Mylius was a firm "Yes". Even after burning "pounds of sage", weird electrical things happen, shapes have been seen walking, and odd sounds are occasionally heard when they shouldn't be. The gargoyles might be slacking, but it doesn't stop the tour buses from unloading out front, or the constant questions to residents from passersby as to its real deal. The residents aren't above messing with people, and may tell you it's a ship, or a whorehouse, or a recovery center ... but really it's just a super dope place to live. As tenant Anton Pereiaslvtsev told me, "I liked circuses when I was little, but now I live in one ... What could be bad about that?"

The interiors are painted all brothel purple, red and gold. It's all very bordello chic. Gothic furniture, stained glass windows, painted guitars, paintings of women who look like they probably worked there back in the day, and a sly sense of humor permeates it all. A bathroom overlooking the beach features a sign reading, "The Confessional". A Captain Jack-like passed out pirate mannequin watches over the rooftop deck, and a comfy couch/fire pit area make it a perfect scenario from which to watch the sunset, as the statues cast their fairytale shadows all around you. Trippy. Venice.

After living in a colorful place like this, you can't

really go and live somewhere vanilla and boring, so the residents tend to stay a long time. When someone does leave, the residents have to approve a new tenant, co-op style, to make sure that the harmony, crea-

Mylius with Alexandra painting
Photo: CJ Gronner



tive flow, and friendships made within can continue seamlessly. Everyone seems to be having a good time, and to Wells, that's the whole point.

"Venice needs color. Venice needs creativity. Venice needs attractions. If you live here, it's your duty to step it up. Be colorful, show people a good time. Let's bring it back. And let's start now."

Obviously I whole-heartedly agree. I was so happy to discover that this house's story was indeed a true love story. Pure love for Venice is lived out in these walls and on the sidewalks around it, every single day. A Valentine to the town that inspired the fun and creativity and Why Not?! attitude that literally leaps out at you as you pass.

We were standing out front talking, wrapping it up, when Wells said, "Do good things ... it comes around." Just then a car drove up, stopped to take pictures, the people inside smiling and happily asking questions. Community, color, fun, conversation with strangers All good things, all coming around, at the end of the street, at the end of the country, in the gargoyle-protected, X on the treasure map ... Venice, California.

Gargoyle picture by Ray Rae



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Community Events – day by day

Calendar compiled by Charles Dunn and Anne Alvarez

Friday, February 1
• 10-5:30pm - **Jonathan Warteridge. L&M Arts Gallery.** 660 South Venice Blvd. Free.
• 6pm - **First Friday.** Food trucks. Abbot Kinney Blvd. **Crowds.**
• 7pm-12am - **Dane Drewis, Young Beautiful in a Hurry, Brian Fuente, Nate Currin, Justin Hopkins.** Singer/Songwriter. **Witzend.** 1717 Lincoln Blvd.\$10

Saturday, February 2
• 2-6pm - **Open Mic.** Anything. **Trip.** 2101 Lincoln Blvd. Free.
• 4-7pm - **Third Annual Poetry of Venice Photography Fest.** **Beyond Baroque.** Free.

Sunday, February 3
• 12:30-3:30pm - **Body Weather Laboratory.** Dance. **Electric Lodge.** \$18.
• 4:45pm - **First Sunday Open Reading.** Hosted by Billy Burgos. **Beyond Baroque.** Free.
• 7pm - **Celebration of Harold Pinter.** Directed by John Malkovich. **Pacific Theatre.** \$30 and Up.

Monday, February 4
• 12pm - **Brand Spanking New Artist Series.** Altered State, Presents brand new Artist series. Show casing new Artists and Designers. **Altered State.** 1221 Abbot Kinney Blvd. Free.

Wednesday, February 6
• 6:30pm - **Jazz Dance.** Dance classes, for all. **Electric Lodge.** Free.
• 7-10:30pm - **King’s Ball.** Celebration of the King and Queen for Mardi Gras. Funky Dress. **Danny’s Deli.**
• 9pm - **Comedy Night at the Townhouse.** **The Townhouse.** 52 Windward. No cover.

Thursday, February 7
• 8:30am - **Zip Line Venice Beach.** Coastal Commission Hearing. 415 Diamond Street Redondo Beach, Civic Center. Open to all. <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/mtgcurr.html>.
• 7:30pm - **7 Dudley Cinema.** Ross Lipman in person. Short Films. **Beyond Baroque.** Free.
• 9-12am - **Azar Lawrence Quartet.** Jazz/Blues music. **RG Club.** 2536 Lincoln Blvd. \$15, Venice Locals \$7.

Friday, February 8
• 11am - **Deluxe Safari Photos from Tanzania and the island of Zanzibar.** **G2 Gallery.** Free.
• 7-10pm - **Nette Radio Night.** Cause an Effect. **Talking Stick.** \$5.
• 8pm - **Soul n Funk!** Music.**Trip.** 2101 Lincoln Blvd. Free.

Saturday, February 9
• 11:30 - **12th Annual Venice Beach Madi Gras Parade.** Venice Beach. Meet at Rose parking lot.
• 2-5pm - **After Parade Party with The Gumbo Brothers.** Funk Band. **Venice Bistro.** 323 Ocean Front Walk. Free.
• 4pm - **Mess.** Interview with the Poet Francisco Letelier. **Unurban Cafe.** 3301 Pico Blvd. Santa Monica. Free.

Monday, February 11
• 7pm - **Tango Practica.** Dancing. **Electric Lodge.** \$10
• 8:30pm - **Yoga in Venice.** 122 Lincoln Blvd. Free.

Tuesday, February 12
• 6-10pm - **Jazz Fest.** Black Shoe Polish, Eric Ahlberg, Jazz Workshop. **Talking Stick.** Free.
• 9-11:30am - **Theatre Fare.** Reading for Seniors. **Pacific Resident Theatre.** Free.

Wednesday, February 13
• 4-5pm - **Kids Arts and Crafts for Valentine’s day.** **AK Public Library.** Free.
• 7-10pm - **Stormin Norman & Suzy Williams.** Music. **Danny’s.** Free.

Thursday, February 14
• 8pm - **Surf Rock Valentines’s Day.** Rock n Roll. **Trip.** 2101 Lincoln Blvd. Free.
• 9-12am - **Valentine’s Day Show.** The Shea Welsh Group Faet. Jazz. **RG Club.** 2536 Lincoln Blvd. \$15, Venice Locals \$7.

Friday, February 15.
• 7pm - **Priscilla Stuckey’s, Kissed by a Fox.** Stories of Nature. **Mystic Journey Bookstore.** 1319 Abbot Kinney Blvd. Free.
• 8pm - **Suzy and Friends.** Music. **Moose Lodge.** 1600 Ocean Park Blvd. \$10.

Saturday, February 16
• 5pm - **Behind Bars.** Art Exhibition. **SPARC.** Free.
• 9pm - **Ellyn Maybe’s Poetry Rodeo and Potluck party.** Poetry. **Beyond Baroque.** General Admission: \$10, Students & Seniors \$6, Members \$5.
• 7-10pm - **Alfred Johnson’s Annual Birthday Jam.** **Talking Stick.** Free.

Tuesday, February 19
• 7pm - **VNC Board Meeting.** Always Open to the Public. Westminster School Auditorium. Free.

Wednesday, February 20
• 11-5pm - Frederick Hammersley. Computer Dawings 1969. **LA Louver.** 45 North Venice Blvd Free.
• 7-10pm - **Mom.** Meditations On Media. Discussion. **Beyond Baroque.** Free.
• 8pm - **Astro Oscars** - Astrology Predicts the Academy Awards - With Ra Rishikavi Raghu-das. **Electric Lodge.** \$10.

Thursday, February 21
• 11-5pm - **Jonathan Warteridge. L&M Arts Gallery.** 660 South Venice Blvd. Free.
• 7-10pm - **Various Artists.** Rejyna, Eric Binkly, and Veniceville Voices. **Talking Stick.** Free.

Friday, February 22
• 2:30 - **Dancexchange.** Contemporary Dance Class. **Electric Lodge.** \$15.
• 7pm - **Subversive Cinema.** Luis Bunuel’s Birthday with Surreal Films. **Buddy’s Mission.** 835 Lincoln Blvd. Free.

Saturday, February 23
• 2-6pm - **Venice Art. Buddy’s Mission.** 835 Lincoln Blvd. Free.
• 8:30pm - **Beyond Music.** Singer/Songwriter. **Beyond Baroque.** General Admission \$20, Students/Seniors \$10, Members \$5.

Sunday, February 24
8-2pm - **Feed the Homeless.** 101 Ocean Front Walk. Free.

Monday, February 25
• 6:30pm - **MoZic Open Mic.** Open to all. **Talking Stick.** Free.

Tuesday, February 26
• 6:30pm - **Book Club.** **AK Public Library.** Free.
• 7pm - **The People’s Mic.** Poetry Night. **Witzend.** 1717 Lincoln Blvd. \$10.

Wednesday, February 27
• 7pm - **Live Music at Danny’s. Deli.** Free.

Thursday, February 28
• 7:30-10pm - **Speakeasy Night with Mikal Sandoval and Dutch Newman.** Musical Band. **Talking Stick.** \$10.
• 8pm - **Comedy at the Canal Club.** **Canal Club.** 2025 Pacific Ave. Free.

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Location Guide

- Abbot Kinney Public Library, 501 S. Venice Blvd, 310-821-1769.
- Beyond Baroque, 681 Venice Blvd. 310-822-3006. beyondbaroque.org
- Burton Chace Park, 13650 Mindanao Way, marinadelrey.lacounty.gov
- Danny’s Deli, 23 Windward Ave.
- Electric Lodge, 1416 Electric Ave, 310-306-1854 - electriclodge.org
- G2 Gallery, 1503 Abbot Kinney Blvd 310-452-2842.
- Hal’s Bar and Grill, 1349 Abbot Kinney Blvd., 310-396-3105 - halsbarandgrill.com
- Oakwood Recreation Center, 757 California Ave.
- Pacific Resident Theatre, 703½ Venice Blvd. 822-8392 pacificresidenttheatre.com
- SPARC - Social and Public Art Resource Center, 685 Venice Blvd. 822-9560 x15.
- Talking Stick Coffee Lounge, 1411c Lincoln Blvd. 450-6052 - thetalkingstick.net
- Vera Davis Center, 610 California Ave. 310-305-1865.
- Westminster Elementary School, 1010 Abbot Kinney Blvd. (enter auditorium from Westminster Ave.) 310-606-2015.

Ongoing Events

COMPUTERS

- Vera Davis Center offers **Free Computer Use:** M-Th 10am-12pm and 1-3pm; Friday 1-3pm.

FOOD

- 12:30pm - **Free Food Distribution:** 2nd and 4th Thursdays. Vera Davis Center.
- **Sign up for Food Stamps (EBT Cards).** Call for date and time. 310-305-1865.
- 5-7pm - Mondays: **Hot Meals and Pre-packs.** 2-3:30pm - Saturdays: **Free Food Distribution.** 1st Baptist Church. Westminster & 7th.
- 8-10am - Sundays - **Food/Meals** at Ocean Front Walk near Rose Ave.

KIDS

- 6:30pm -Abbot Kinney Public Library **Children’s Pajama Storytime.** 2nd and 4th Tuesday evenings.

FILMS

- 5:30pm - Abbot Kinney Public Library **Thursday Movie Night.** Call 310-821-1769 for title.
- 7-10pm - **7 Dudley Cinema** - First Thursdays at Beyond Baroque. Free.

MUSIC

- 8pm-12am - **Hal’s Bar and Grill** features **Live Jazz** Sunday and Monday nights. Free.
- 8:30pm - **TKO Comedy’s “Open Mic”** for comics, musicians. 212 Pier. Free. Thursday nights.
- 12-2pm - Saturday & Sunday: **Music at Uncle Darrow’s.** 2560 Lincoln Blvd. Free.
- 5-9pm – **Venice Street Legends.** Venice Bistro, OFW & Dudley. Thursday nights. Free.

MISCELLANEOUS

- 9-11:30am - Free theater reading series for senior citizens with PRT theater artists. Second tuesday of the month. Pacific Resident Theater.
- 9am-4pm - **Venice High School Flea Market.** Antiques, crafts, collectibles, toys, jewelry, cloths. 2nd Saturday of every month. 13000 Venice Blvd.
- 7-11am - **Venice Farmers Market.** Fruits, vegetables, flowers and coffee. Every friday. 500 North Venice Blvd.
- 7-10pm - MOM: **Meditations On Media.** 3rd Wednesdays. Beyond Baroque. Free.
- 11:30am-2:30pm – **The Venice Oceanarium** (a museum without walls). Venice Pier. Every Sunday, weather permitting. Free.
- 6-8pm - **McLuhan-Finnegans Wake Reading Club.** Lloyd Taber-Marina Del Rey Library, 4533 Admiralty Way. First Tuesday of the month. Free.
- 6-8:30pm - **Eco-Yoga.** 3rd Sunday of the Month. Church in Ocean Park, Hill & 2nd St. Bring a mat. Donation required.

POETRY

- 8pm-12am - **Antonieta Villamil’s La Poesía Festival ¡en español! and Potluck Party:** Bring original poesía, cuento, música, pintura. First Saturdays. Beyond Baroque Library. Free.

POLITICAL AWARENESS

- **Occupy Venice General Assembly** meets Mondays/Thursdays at 7pm. 1358 AKB. Free.

Get Your Local Event Listed
Email your time, date and a brief description to free@venicebeachhead.org by the 20th of the month. Please take out an advertisement if you charge admission.

NORMAL IS DEAD

By CJ Gronner

I am thrilled to report that my good friends at the Venice Beach Freak Show are getting their own reality show on AMC, called, appropriately, Freakshow, which starts airing this Valentine's Day, February 14th at 9:30 pm.

Todd Ray, his wife Danielle, kids Asia (now the youngest sword swallower in the world!) and Phoenix, and their extended family of performers invite you into their world, where "Normal is relative". I first got to know and write about the Ray family in 2010, and am so happy to see their message of fun and acceptance blowing up all over the world.

"Normal is an illusion, there is no such thing is normal ... some people have a problem with the word 'Freak', but we should have a problem with the word 'normal'," explains Todd, as everyone has a struggle to fit in and appear "normal," but no one really knows what that is. So the Freakshow cast decided to have a funeral for Normal, and held a parade carrying Normal's casket all the way down the Venice Boardwalk, celebrating its death, and our differences. Todd old-timey preached the funeral, asking for a moment of silence for Normal. When it was through, the entire Boardwalk erupted in two minutes of joyous shouting, proclaiming that we are ALL Freaks in our own way. That funeral will be in the show, along with supercool things like the Freak Show performing in a huge tent during Fashion Week in New York, and also just the every day happenings that make it all tick.

Venice is as much the star of the show as any of the performers, and beautifully portrayed. The Tallest Man in The World (8 feet!) joins Amazing Ali (the tiniest lady), Larry the Wolf Boy, Murrugun The Mystic and all their friends at the Freak Show, in a real behind the scenes portrait of Todd



Ray's childhood dream not only coming true, but growing and growing.

While you're learning the story of the Rays and Freakshow, you're also learning what Venice still means to so many people around the world. Todd is inspired by the place that another man with a dream thought up long ago. Abbot Kinney would appreciate the renaissance that the Rays

are trying to bring back to Venice, and as Todd says, "We NEED it here now. It's a piece of history, and a piece of Venice that is positive and creative. Everything we love about Venice is in this show."

That's all I needed to set the dvr for every single episode. Join us Freaks, starting February 14th on AMC.

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