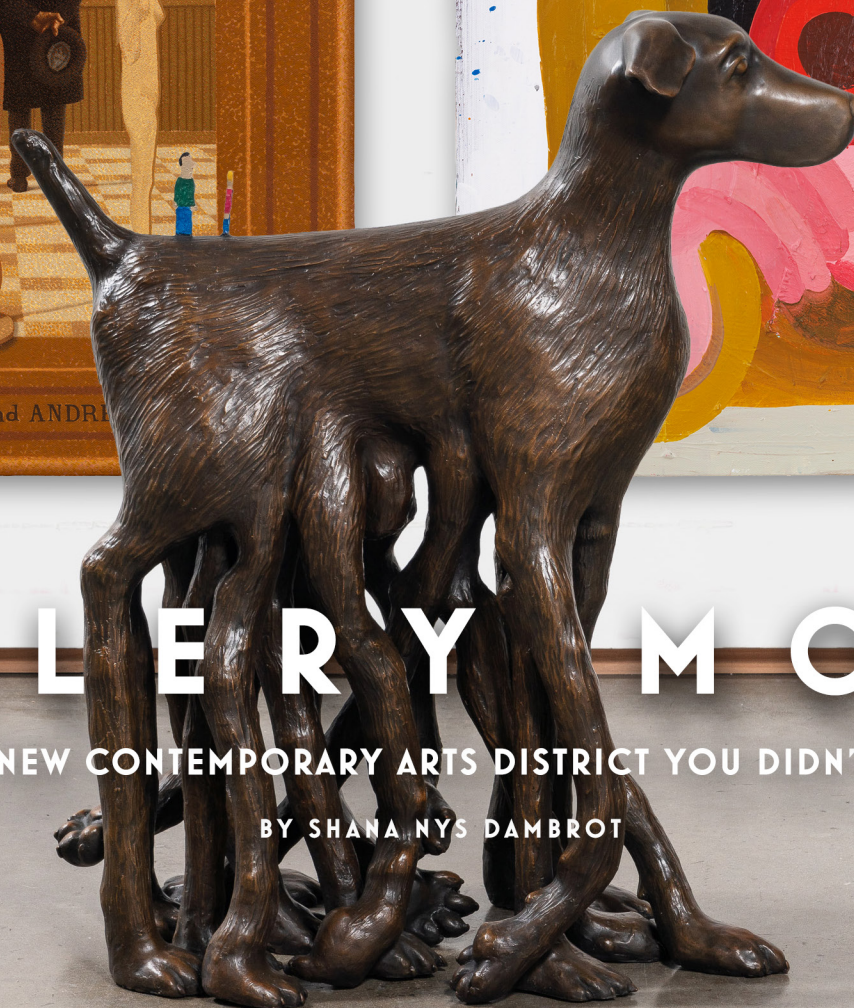


LAWEEKLY[®]

BARBENHEIMER'S
BIG ADVENTURE
SINGER AND MODEL
ANNA AYA PLOTS
J-POP RISE

AUGUST
11-17, 2023
VOL. 45
NO. 40
LAWEEKLY.
COM



GALLERY MOVES

MELROSE HILL, THE NEW CONTEMPORARY ARTS DISTRICT YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

CALENDAR

GO EDITORS'
PICKS

ARTS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 10

Muses & Self: Photographs by Allen Ginsberg at Fahey/Klein Gallery. Ginsberg's personal photographs balance our understanding of the outspoken Beat poet. At his core, Ginsberg was a witness and chronicler of the world; his profound admiration for the beauty of the vernacular, intense observation, and celebration of the present moment guided his photography and poetry. In conjunction with the selections, the gallery hosts a preview of *A Picture of My Mind: Poems Written by Allen Ginsberg's Photographs*—a collection of ekphrastic poems generated by an AI-powered version of Ginsberg's own body of text in response to specific photographs, developed in collaboration with poetry collective the-VERSEverse. *148 N. La Brea, Hollywood; Opening reception: Thursday, August 10, 6-8pm; On view through September 23; free; faheykleingallery.com.*

FRIDAY, AUGUST 11

Imprinting in Time: Chinese Printmaking at the Beginning of a New Era at USC Pacific Asia Museum. Surveying printmaking by Chinese artists from the 1980s to the present and examining the unique narrative of the medium within the contexts of cultural, academic, sociopolitical, and economic changes. Since the 1930s, the woodblock has been given singular priority for articulating social commentary and nationalistic sentiments. The emergence of etching, lithograph, silkscreen, and digital devices in the 1980s added new energy to the medium. On Saturday, August 19, join guest curator Danielle Shang for an in-depth look at the extraordinary prints featured in the exhibition. *46 N. Los Robles Ave., Pasadena; On view August 11 - November 12; \$10; pacificasiamuseum.usc.edu.*

SATURDAY, AUGUST 12

The 36th Parallel at Track 16 Gallery. Exploring the cross-sections of conscious and unconscious landscapes navigated through historic, domestic, and economic compasses. Featuring works by seven interdisciplin-



ary artists, curator Beth Davila Waldman opens the conversation with various entry points of our social and cultural geography through material, image and assemblages. As a global platform of geographic and cultural connective tissues, the metaphor of the Parallel speaks to the roots of Waldman's own artistic practice as well as those of her fellow artists from San Francisco to Los Angeles, Brooklyn to Berlin, India to Iran. *Bendix Building, 1206 Maple, downtown; Opening reception: Saturday, August 12, 7-9pm; Panel discussion prior, 5:30pm; On view through September 9; free; track16.com.*

Mania Akbari: The Night at Hamzianpour & Kia.

The acclaimed Iranian artist and filmmaker's first solo exhibition in the United States is an intensely personal presentation of 14 allegorical and documentary photographic images that center on the relationship between trauma, threat, the self, and the body. The works on show exemplify a consistent focus of much of Akbari's creative work and are a powerful, raw, and demotically beautiful manifestation of art as a reflective and protean space in which the self can shape and express itself in the face of adversity and change. *5225 Wilshire Blvd., Miracle Mile; Opening reception: Saturday, August 12, 4-8pm; On view through August 26; free; hamzianpourandkia.com.*

River Session #8: Mile 21: The 6th Street Viaduct with Self-Help Graphics. An immersive exploration of the vibrant Sixth Street Bridge, an iconic span that connects the downtown arts district with the historic

bungalows of East Los Angeles. Completed in 2022 as a replacement for an 83-year-old Art Deco bridge, it boasts 10 sets of stunning white, illuminated arches. While its popularity has soared, there are growing concerns due to frequent closures caused by reckless behavior. Have the actions of graffiti artists, skateboarders, climbers, and exhibitionist drivers claimed the bridge as a new kind of territory or does their activity enhance its cultural significance? Guided by East LA public artist and author, Arturo Romo (ELADATL) and printmaker Danny Gonzalez of Boyle Heights, explore their insights on connection and disconnection. Additionally, this session offers hands-on art-making with talented artists from beloved local art organization, Self-Help Graphics. *600 S. Santa Fe, downtown; Saturday, August 12, 6-8pm; \$29-\$35; lariverpublicartproject.org.*

SUNDAY, AUGUST 13

Truth Matters: Poetry at Matter Studio Gallery. Nailah Porter, S. Pearl Sharp, V.Kali, Stella the Poet, and Yellowwoman will present their writings inside the current Chukes exhibition, Truth Matters. With the intention to embrace and expand the community and provide a platform for diverse cultures, experiences, perspectives, and creative mediums, in order to recognize how art connects us, how art can heal us, and how art unites us. *5080 W. Pico Blvd., Mid-City; Sunday, August 13, 2-4pm; free; matterstudiogallery.com.*

MONDAY, AUGUST 14

Umberto Eco: A Library of the World at Laem-

me Theaters. Part of the Culture Vulture film series, experience a documentary immersion into all things Eco, as Davide Ferrario's film takes us on a tour of the iconic writer's private library, guided by the author himself. Combining new footage with material shot with Eco in 2015 for a video installation for the Venice Biennale, Ferrario documents this incredible collection and the man who amassed it. As Eco leads us among the more than 50,000 volumes, we also gain insight into the library of the mind of this vastly prolific and original thinker. *Monday, August 14, 7pm; Claremont 5, Glendale, and Monica Film Center locations; \$16; laemml.com.*

TUESDAY, AUGUST 15

In Medias Res: FEMMEBIT x Feral File at NFTuesday. An exhibition of on-chain artworks by feminist, and post-cyberfeminist artists who reimagine celluloid-based media for the decentralized realm of Life 3.0. The Hollywood-adjacent aesthetic is debunked and reinvigorated through works of art that take inspiration from the natural landscape of Southern California, questioning how cities are defined, who owns the land, and in what ways multiple perspectives can exist to cultivate a sense of belonging within urban environments of the imagination as much as in real life. The curated NFT exhibition drops August 17th on Feral File, but an in-person preview happens at this week's NFTuesday LA, with an artist talk with Kate Parsons, Casey Kauffmann, and Huntrezz Janos. *El Cid, 4212 Sunset Blvd., Echo Park; Tuesday, August 15, 7pm; free; femmebit.art.*

MUSIC

AUGUST 11-17 Strawberry Fuzz Echoplex

L.A. indie punks Strawberry Fuzz surprise-released a new album, *Strongs Dr.*, back in January of this year. The album is, they say, “a continuation of their previous releases’ documentation of the dirty underside of L.A. life, exhibiting a strong, infectious breed of fuzzy Cali surf-punk with an unapologetic bite.” The Mainliners and Frankie + the Studs also perform on this awesome Echoplex bill. *7 p.m. on Friday, August 11 at the Echoplex, \$44, theecho.com.*

Carly Rae Jepsen The Bellwether

Pop star Jepsen is performing for three nights in a row at new venue the Bellwether, on a bill with Harvey Sutherland. That follows her recent triumphant performance at WeHo Pride. “It’s gonna be a wild time,” she said in June. “I mean, I don’t get to play L.A. a lot, which is crazy. I’m a Canadian girl who got picked up by the L.A. buzz and was introduced to a world beyond Canada. I think I just remember every couple of weekends calling my parents like, ‘Can you send more clothes?’ Ten

years later, I’m like, ‘I think this is where I live now.’” *8 p.m. on Friday, August 11, Saturday, August 12, and Sunday, August 13 at the Bellwether, thebellwetherla.com.*

Handsome Dick Manitoba Alex’s Bar

The current lineup of punk pioneers the Dictators were recently in town, putting in a great shift opening for the Damned. Now it’s the ex singer’s turn. Handsome Dick Manitoba has put together a superb band, and this bill in Long Beach with the Infamous Stiff, Thee Toe Tags, and Isaac “The Phantom” Rother will be a riot. *8 p.m. on Saturday, August 12 at Alex’s Bar, \$19.32, alexsbar.com.*

Los Lonely Boys Greek Theatre

June saw the Grammy winning *Los Lonely Boys* release their first original single in a decade, “Send More Love.” “The upbeat single, which happens to be the trios first newly written original song in ten years, shines a light on the world’s struggles and significant need for something we could all use a little more of – love,” reads the press release. Can’t ask for more than that. Thee Sinseers, the Altons, Sunny Azuna, and Little Joe y la Familia also perform. *6:15 p.m. on Sunday, August 13 at the Greek Theatre, \$39+, lagreektheatre.com.* [L]

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RETURN TO GLAMOUR

Inside The Hidden And Historic Georgian Room

BY MICHELE STUEVEN



More than 60 years ago, it was known as the Red Griffin, a smoky hideaway in the basement of Santa Monica's grand dame hotel, The Georgian. It has been painstakingly restored as the Georgian Room, sustaining all the same mystique, minus the smoke.

The hotel was built in 1931 and the underground restaurant first opened its doors in 1933 during the prohibition era and Hollywood's Golden Age, attracting the likes of Carole Lombard, Clark Gable, Bugsy Siegel and Marilyn Monroe.

The entrance is hidden away on the side of the legendary hotel, which has seen good and bad times, once serving as the home of Kennedy matriarch Rose during the '60s. Upon arrival, you make your way to the side of the hotel's south end, where you will find non-descript double doors with brass mermaid handles. You press the brass bell button and state the name of your party's reservation. When answered by the host, you will be admitted into the first anteroom — a Disney-esque closet-sized station with matching custom carpet and wallpaper.



There's a strict no picture, no video and no phone call policy. Your phone will be fitted with The Georgian Room privacy sticker upon arrival, which needs to remain on during the duration of your visit. Once that's all sorted out, a second set of doors opens to a staircase that leads to an opulent scene downstairs of oversized green booths and burgundy walls, seeped in the soft sounds of a Frank Sinatra playlist.

Developers Jon Blanchard and Nicolo Rusconi of BLVD worked off vintage photos to restore the space, which features a secluded L-shaped layout. Tom Parker, co-founder at design firm Fettle, resurrected the vibe of a classic era with meticulously curated seating arrangements and a 1918 ebony polished Steinway & Sons piano built into the rose marble-topped bar. Prints of The Georgian Rooms' original menus from its initial opening dot the walls and the custom-designed carpet with a mermaid sipping a martini leads to a small live music performance nook in the intimate 65-seat den.

"For the custom carpet and wallpaper that we designed in partnership with Fettle, we wanted to showcase both the magic and history of The Georgian," Blanchard tells L.A. Weekly of the entry room. "You'll find secret mermaid designs inspired by the tales of sirens off the end of the Santa Monica Pier as well as silhou-

A LA CARTE SERVICE

APPETIZERS

ICED CELERY EN BRANCH . . . . .	.50
CHILLED TOMATO JUICE . . . . .	.30
CHOPPED CHICKEN LIVER . . . . .	.50
MARINATED HERRING IN SOUR CREAM . . . . .	.75
BOILED GRAPEFRUIT WITH SHERRY . . . . .	.60
SMOKED NOVA SCOTIA SALMON . . . . .	.75
COLOSSAL GREEN AND BLACK OLIVES . . . . .	.60
FRUITS SUPREME VARIETY . . . . .	.60
FRESH LOBSTER COCKTAIL	1.25
ROYAL RED DEEP SEA SHRIMP DES GOURMETS	1.10
CRAB OR SHRIMP COCKTAIL SUPREME	1.25

SOUPS

CONSOMME AMONTILLADO EN TASSE . . . . .	.40
JELLIED MADRILENE IN AVOCADO HALVES . . . . .	.60
SOUPIERE OR PARISIAN ONION SOUP AU GRATIN . . . . .	.50
AU GRATIN 50	EN TASSE35
PETITE MARMITE, HENRY IV . . . . .	.50

ettes of the old Southern Pacific Railroad train that would run up and down the California coastline, which was later replaced by the Pacific Coast Highway."

The menu is standard steakhouse fare, elevated to perfection by chef David Almany. All of the meat including a selection of prime dry aged porterhouse, ribeye and New York strip steaks is sourced from the Pat Lafrieda meat company in New Jersey.

"I think the ingredients and the simplicity of preparation make these dishes authentic," the former head chef at nearby Shutters at the Beach tells L.A. Weekly. "My job as a chef is to find the best ingredients possible and let them shine on their own. I think a beef tartar needs to be made with the best quality beef just as the Caesar salad is made with the best quality anchovies and eggs I could find."

So will the jellied madrilene in avocado halves from the original 30's menu make a comeback?

"There's always a high possibility of that," says Almany. "I would bring back some of the iconic pasta dishes. I'm a very nostalgic chef with an old soul and do cherish the ways of the past."

Cocktails are an homage to Santa Monica's history, like the SS Rex margarita, named after the notorious mafioso-run offshore gambling ship anchored off Santa Monica in the late '30s. There's also a Bye, Bye Birdie whiskey sour in honor of the film's star and current regular, Dick Van Dyke. The legendary actor and comedian actually performed in the restaurant, and has told staff that the space is just as he remembers it from the '50s. And for purists, the martinis with blue cheese stuffed olives make the mark.

The iconic turquoise art deco hotel on Ocean Avenue reopened this year after extensive renovation by the London and Los Angeles-based boutique design firm, Fettle, with 84 guest rooms, including 28 suites. The property also has a cozy oceanview terrace restaurant and lobby bar, as well as a gym, gallery space and library. [E]

CANNABIS

PSYCHMD ROLLS OUT KETAMINE TELEHEALTH NETWORK IN 44 STATES

The new treatments will be backboned by the nations leading provider of telehealth services.

BY JIMI DEVINE



The nation's largest telehealth network PsychMD is starting ketamine treatments this week.

We sat down with PsychMD founder Bryan Henry to talk about his transition into the burgeoning psychedelic therapy space after watching the telehealth network he built to support hormone therapy explode into the biggest telehealth network in the US. Henry will use that same network of family doc-

tors to provide referrals for the new ketamine therapy services he'll be offering in 44 states.

After finishing up in the military, Henry obtained his Family Nurse Practitioner license from the University of Oklahoma before securing a Ph.D. in Endocrinology and Reproductive Physiology from the University of Wisconsin. After securing his degrees, he would spend the first half of the 2010s in working in hospitals.

"I don't know, I got pretty burnout of being in the hospital setting, a lot of non-doctors administration telling you how to do your job, which is quite frustrating for providers clinicians. so I decided to start my own practice so I started my own practice in Tulsa, Oklahoma 2015," Henry told L.A. Weekly.

While things were going great for the business, his health began to suffer.

"So around 2019, I started getting severe depression. I couldn't get out of bed in the morning, so it became really bad for me and I chalked it up PTSD," Henry said noting he questioned going on disability, "my patient outcomes are suffer-

It ended up being an extremely effective tool in treating hit PTSD. He remains a patient to this day.

"It really was the turning point for me to change my life as well to get out of bed, get back to work, and really grow this as big as we could. And obviously, we've grown it to be the largest in the US now," Henry said, "That's why I'm damn thankful that ketamine was introduced to me."

The appeal of helping his fellow veterans is massive for Henry. But Ketamine is a bug jump for those people that have never used drugs like Henry. We asked Henry how does he convince his peers that might not even be willing to try a joint to help with their PTSD to experiment with Ketamine?

He replied he was that guy. But as he went through the research on both safety and efficacy he was willing to cross the bridge. He believed with a little fact finding others would come to similar conclusions.

Some of PsychMD's big competition has gone under or doesn't look prepared for a forthcoming tightening of regulations that were originally loosened to simplify life for people during the pandemic. Once that hits, PsychMD will be the only company legally able to provide telehealth ketamine services.

We asked Henry if PsychMD was now the most accessible ketamine therapy for vets with PTSD.

"100%," Henry replied. He continued it wasn't just the most accessible for vets, but everybody.

Henry went on to describe the development of the program they'll be launching. That group was about 60 patients.

"When Ketamine Wellness Center, shut down, we went in to buy the company because obviously with our board being Highly composed to military veterans. We saw all the articles all the publications, of these veterans, getting left behind, and that's why we wanted to buy the company," Henry said noting due to some issues on the other side they were unable to get the deal done. "But what we did get out of it was all the patients that they have left behind, just closed the door on them. So we're working with those patients right now, making sure that they're getting back on therapy and majority of those patients are better. And so, that's kind of what we've been focused on was our veterans right now at this point starting next week, we're really gonna push it through the public, but roughly about 60 patients in terms of treatments roughly, probably 300 treatments"

Despite the massive void left by Ketamine Wellness Center, PsychMD doesn't plan to rush scaling up and risk jeopardizing the quality of the treatment they are providing.

For at least a decade, K-Pop has seen impressive growth in the United States to the point that BTS and BLACKPINK are two of the biggest pop acts in this country, the latter headlining Coachella earlier this year. That has led to American pop fans exploring K-pop further (whether it's a genre or simply pop music from a geographical location is open to debate). There is undeniably an audience here for pop music from Asia.

Los Angeles-based model and singer Anna Aya hopes that the door is open, therefore, for a rise in the popularity of J-pop in the States. There are reports that the explosion of K-pop even led to a decline in the popularity of J-pop in Japan, but those sorts of trends tend to be cyclical. There's really no reason why American K-pop fans wouldn't be open to J-pop (or any other Asian pop music), should the right artist come around. It's early days, but Anna might just be that artist.

Half Japanese and half Armenian (her mom is Japanese), Aya speaks both of those languages, as well as English.

"I only spoke Japanese and Armenian until preschool, and then I started learning English too, so now I speak all three," she says. "I was born and raised in L.A., but I've been going back and forth between L.A. and Tokyo ever since I was a kid. When I was in elementary, middle and high school, I was going for summer break, spring break and winter break. But for the past couple of years, I've been going every month basically, for work."

Aya has been acting and modeling since she was 6 years old; she did Target and American Girl Doll commercials and then helped Steve Harvey host Little Big Shots.

"For the past four or five years, I've been doing high fashion modeling in Japan, but I've only been singing for a year," she says. "I started my singing career technically in October of last year, because that was the first time I was in the recording studio in my life."

Her music career was given a boost when she connected with producer Michael Africk through a mutual friend in the modeling industry in Japan.

"They asked me if I wanted to sing on a Michael Africk song, and I was like, 'Yes, of course,' even though I never knew that I could be a singer professionally," Aya says. "But, I've always been into music, been into singing, and I've taken vocal lessons as well. I wanted to do it, especially because it was such an interesting project of like J-pop and everything like that. It really resonated with me."

That song turned into her debut single, "Someone Else," a mildly melancholy but relatable relationship anthem. The lyrics are sung half in English, half in

Japanese, which makes the whole thing highly intriguing. Aya is determined to add her own unique twist to J-pop.

"It's not the basic J-pop, which is only in Japanese," she says. "My song is mixed with English and Japanese, so not only is

it a fusion of the languages, it's a fusion of the sound as well because it's more of a western beat that you would technically hear in America more maybe. But the lyrics and the melody are more Japanese-inspired in that it's soft and more

MUSIC

THE L.A.-TOKYO CONNECTION

Singer And Model Anna Aya Plots J-Pop Rise

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



emotional. So yeah, I think it's not the most generic way of describing J-pop, but it's something I define as my kind of J-pop."

She's far from done; Anna wants to see how far she can push boundaries while exploring J-pop from within.

"It hasn't been explored much in America, so I want to see what I can do with my knowledge of my culture and being a girl that's been living in L.A. for her whole life," she says. "I've always listened to every type of music – I listened to American music and Japanese music – so I'm excited to explore different types of sounds. Like, this one is more emotional, but I want to do more pop, upbeat stuff, too."

"Someone Else" was produced by Louis Bell (Post Malone, Taylor Swift, Miley Cyrus, Camila Cabello, Halsey) and Africk (Mai Kuraki, Zard, Jordan Knight), and recorded in Boston.

"I live in L.A., but the studio that they use is in Boston," Aya says. "So I've gone three times already and I've recorded other songs as well, but that was the first song we recorded and decided to release. It was actually an all-English song, but then we decided we wanted to do an all-Japanese version as well, so I wrote the all-Japanese version and then we were like, we should mix this and make it a whole new thing. That happened, and that was the start of it all."

Having been in the public eye basically since she was 6, Aya learned early how to balance a professional and "normal" life.

"I think it's more about learning when to be on and off," she says. "When I'm doing my job or when I'm doing interviews, I'll be my professional self. Then when I'm with my friends, or with my family, I'll just be myself. I'll know when to turn that switch on and off I guess."

With the single out, Aya is planning to release an album at some point, but she and her team are taking it step by step.

"(More singles) probably for the next couple of months, until up to next year when I'm hoping to have my album out," she says. "I just came back from Boston two days ago, and I was recording my second single. I can't say much about it yet, but it is J-pop. It'll be similar to 'Someone Else,' with it being half Japanese, half English. But that one is more anthem-y. It's a fun, upbeat song in my opinion. I'm excited for that one to come out, hopefully by the end of this year."

Aya is hoping to get some shows booked soon, too, and she's going to keep traveling a lot as she stays busy with all of the different sides of her career. If her work ethic is any indicator, there's no stopping her rise.

Anna Aya's single "Someone Else" is out now.

BARBENHEIMER'S BIG ADVENTURE

Barbie and *Oppenheimer* mark a significant moment for movie theaters as they get back to business post-COVID. But do the films actually live up to expectations cinematically? *LA Weekly/Village Voice* critics weigh in on two of the biggest blockbusters of the year.

LA WEEKLY



Barbie's Existential Crisis Makes For Uneven Comedy

In terms of hype, we can't remember anything nearly as relentless and rampant as pop culture's pink plunge leading up to the Barbie movie's release this past weekend. For the past several months, the Barbonanza made the world acutely aware of the film, its stars, and its intent to challenge the stereotypes that critics of Mattel and its iconic blonde doll have been accused of promoting (namely, unrealistic beauty standards) for decades.

Now that the numbers are in, the oversaturation clearly paid off at the box of-

fice, and it's a historic triumph for female directors. But the girly, glam, giggly glut of promo, pop-ups and product tie-ins ultimately muddle the message the film's going for. Barbie tries to have its pastel cupcakes and eat them too, as a vehicle for colorful escape, as a cultural commentary and as a meta-spin on product placement. It nearly succeeds with moments of empowerment shining as bright as the pearly white smiles of stars Margot Robbie (as "stereotypical" Barbie) and Ryan Gosling (as her not so beloved "boyfriend" Ken). Nearly.

It's a movie about dolls... it's not that

deep. If only this statement were true, we might have been able to enjoy the film for its fantasy feel, production value and attention to Barbie brand history. But while there are shades of Toy Story-like nostalgia and childhood memory-fueled warmth, writer/director Greta Gerwig and co-writer husband Noah Baumbach (White Noise) have bigger mermaids to fry. By the way, the Sea Barbies are played by Dua Lipa and John Cena in cute cameos.

Barbie is a focused and fierce skewering of the patriarchal world we all live in, and it's one that any woman will understand and relate to. Women cannot have it all and when we come close, it's because of sweat and sacrifice and subjecting ourselves to sub-par treatment, on the streets, in the workplace and even at home. Nothing new, and we must note here that the anti-woke backlash to the film is as ridicu-

and worse, cellulite – onto her. Now she can't go back to blissful ignorance, even if she wants to. She must take the Blue Pill, aka "the Birkenstock," and face reality with a trip to the human realm. But it's not really clear what she thinks will happen when she gets here.

Ken joins against her wishes and the pair head to – where else? – L.A., where everybody is rude, judge-y and shallow. The portrayal of Los Angeles, Venice Beach and Century City is pretty shameful for a film that seeks to poke at stereotypes – not to mention a big-budget Hollywood film, SAG and WGA strikes notwithstanding. Mattel and its CEO (Will Farrell) are the villains here, and viewers will surely wonder about early conversations concerning tone and narrative, and what led to settling on this storyline. Obviously, Mattel was OK with a little self-critique in exchange for the aforementioned branding opportunities.

Gosling's Ken is not very bright so he takes everything he sees of gender dynamics on earth at face value: men rule in the real world, and somehow it involves horses, too. He brings what he learns back to Barbieland and makes some changes, while Barbie finds the source of her woes in a mother and daughter duo (America Ferrera and Ariana Greeblatt) grappling with varied stages of womanhood, boredom, growing up/old and their own relationship. The pair deliver the two most dramatic sermons of the film, and Ferrera's in particular (which concerns the pressures women deal with daily) has reportedly been getting applause in theaters. We found it kind of cringey – not because it wasn't true, but because the speech was told to "toy women" and was used as a device to "un-brainwash" them from living subservient lives to the male-gendered dolls who took over the land. And the plan to get the female dolls back their rightful power? Pit the Kens against each other by making them jealous. Is this misguided takedown of toxic masculinity and competitiveness really the best plot pivot the writers could come up with?

Barbie is an ambitious film and it has a lot going for it. Its use of mixed media, set design, costume and a diverse, top-notch cast (in particular Issa Rae, Hari Nef, Simu Liu, and Helen Mirren as the narrator stand out) make it feel fresh, even if the familiar shticks of Farrell and Michael Cera (as an awkward - of course - discontinued doll named Alan) don't. The writing is clever, if self-consciously so, but by the last act, it feels like all the accessories have been played with.

Things end with an attempt to bring Barbie's origin story full circle, but the transition is clunky, and it suggests this was just supposed to be a Legally Blonde-style take on the Pinocchio tale all along. The smart satirical statements about wom-

en and society are ultimately diminished for comedy and closure's sake, and what's left is a marketing vehicle for the company who aren't really the bad guys after all. But as with the likelihood of the movie's all-Barbie Supreme Court or Barbie astronaut rocking pink stilettos on the moon, it was probably unrealistic to expect more. (LINA LECARO)

Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* Is No Bomb

The primary visual stroke in Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* isn't, as you might expect, a wow 8K CGI rendering of atomic-fission heat-death, but super close-ups of Cillian Murphy's bony, glassy-eyed visage in the throes of one neurotic seizure or another. From his post grad days at Cambridge to his last persecuted post-Los Alamos guilt trips, Murphy's J. Robert Oppenheimer, "the father of the atomic bomb," seems in a more or less constant state of tremulous dysphoria. Nolan means to get under this enigmatic figure's sweaty skin, and to do it in peripheral IMAX and tympanic-cavity-sundering Dolby 5.1. So he gets close, often. It might be the longest and most expensive Hollywood movie dedicated to a real man's neurotic anxiety.

If only monster close-ups were by nature revelatory. Well, at least Nolan's not out concocting yet another scientifically preposterous and incomprehensible "mind-bender," but, rather, returning to the WWII era, where he so fabulously upended the brain-free summer movie paradigm with *Dunkirk* (2017). But *Oppenheimer's* siring of the atom bomb is only half of the story Nolan wants to tell. The real intention of the film is to disinter a forgotten 20th-century episode of all-American skullduggery and write it back into history. David O. Russell attempted something similar with the 1933 Wall Street Putsch in last year's *Amsterdam*; for Nolan, it is the Cold War-era ideological lynching of the leftist Oppenheimer, which effectively transformed him from a war hero and global figurehead into a pensioned nobody. Not, you'd think, the hot raw stuff of blockbusterousness.

At first, I wondered how wonky the capriciously wonky Nolan would get with all that cutting-edge science, as opposed to the other Hollywood treatment of Oppenheimer and the Manhattan Project, Roland Joffé's prosaic *Fat Man and Little Boy* (1989). Joffé focused on supervising officer Col. Leslie Groves (played by Paul Newman; Nolan nabbed Matt Damon), and added in a fictional radiation poisoning on the site (suffered by young scientist John Cusack) in order to illustrate the lethality of what was happening. Nolan has no patience for such embroidery, nor for actual quantum mechanics and nuclear physics, which as always is relegated to math on a blackboard. The trajectory of



Oppenheimer's life is tracked in retrospect via two official interrogations: first, the closed-door investigation into Oppenheimer by a hand-picked Atomic Energy Commission board in 1953-54, essentially accusing him of Communist leanings and espionage, and then AEC bigwig Lewis Strauss' hearing in front of the Senate, trying to get his secretary of commerce nomination confirmed, five years later. (Strauss' affiliation with Oppy made him suspect, at first. It's a Wikimovie, no question.) In each case, the McCarthy-era hardliners dig through the minutest lefty aspects of Oppenheimer's messy history, much of it draining down to what they keep calling "the Chevalier incident," which was no more than a fellow Berkeley prof divulging to Oppy, during the war, that he knows a man who'd be willing to pass atomic secrets to the allied Soviets.

There's a lot more detailed history than that to keep straight, and Nolan manages to get the whole mess into a lather. Still, relative to the later Red Scare intrigue, the middle hour, once Damon's no-BS military ramrod shows up to get the atomic ball rolling, is a concise and exciting procedural about how to build a town in the desert (could the proximate release date of *Asteroid City* be a coincidence?) intended solely for the creation of a city-flattening weapon. Maybe Nolan's primary achievement here is how little he explains — dozens of characters come and go in a torrential swirl, some famous but unidentified, and the director handles the sprawling company with verve. At three hours, the film has the elbow room to let actors

find their prickly moments, in particular the redoubtable Florence Pugh (as an unstable Communist lover of Oppy's), Casey Affleck (as a scarily quiet intelligence officer famous for torture), Benny Safdie (an inspired choice for Edward Teller, eventual father of the even more destructive hydrogen bomb), Gary Oldman (as a pandering President Truman), and, most of all Robert Downey Jr. as the duplicitous Strauss, handling the bulk of the film's political exposition with a restless, imperious intelligence.

In interviews, Nolan has called Oppenheimer "ambiguous," and he is: You don't know what to make of the guy, except as a brilliant somebody who allowed himself to be used and suckered and abused by history. He's a mystery, and yet so much of the film — seemingly a full hour of its running time, added up — is devoted to cinematizing his inner turmoil, often with booming cosmic cutaways. Nolan's thunderous Sturm und Drang never lets up, even after you realize that, for a postwar Oppy, the nerve-shredding stakes on hand are merely his security clearance and his role in the U.S. government's atomic age development. (He was wealthy, and eventually retired to the Virgin Islands.) Oppenheimer never committed treason, of course, so you can be forgiven for wondering if the story warrants all this muscly filmmaking energy. You can practically smell the friction between Nolan's Wagnerian ambition and the familiar biopic rulebook: the life boiled down to illustrative vignettes, the timeline hopscotch, the parachuting in of terrific actors impersonating real people

for two or three scenes, and, most of all, the stubborn fact that most lives are not shaped like stories at all.

Oppenheimer's life had plenty of conflict — he seemed to have been tolerated by the powers that be despite his politics, his Jewishness, and his instability, until he wasn't. But is that the same as a narrative? The sometimes repetitive stretch of Nolan's film gives you plenty of time to think about it. (Incidentally, for those understandably maddened by Nolan's history with what-the-fuck sound mixes, the dialogue in *Oppenheimer* is perfectly clear.) All the same, Nolan dresses to impress, and deserves a handshake for dedicating the equivalent of a small nation's resources to reminding us, with so much detail and fidelity, how American power has so happily and so often eaten its own. Just as Nolan is a recalcitrant advocate for old-school celluloid and large-screen formats, we shouldn't overlook how he's tried to buck the summer-season teenage-wasteland devolution; for what it's worth, *Oppenheimer* is by many calculations the first "big" summer studio film targeted to adult interests and attention spans since *Dunkirk*. Before that, you'd have to go back to Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, in 1992.

Nolan has blown the clarion, so now we'll see if the Boomer-to-Millennial contingent will quit complaining, get off their sofas, and answer the call. I'd say step up, just so movies with this sort of deep-dish historical appetite have a chance of being made in America again. (MICHAEL ATKINSON)

ART

GALLERY MOVES: TRYING TO MAKE MELROSE HILL HAPPEN

The New Contemporary Arts District You Didn't Know You Needed

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT



On Western Ave., between Maplewood and Melrose, around the intersection of Western and Santa Monica Blvd., and with a quick dip over to Fountain Ave., a new, buzzed-about gallery district has sprouted—and you didn't even know you needed it. “Melrose Hill,” proclaims those precious, fancy-folksy, blue and white post signs; and it's on Google Maps now too, so it must be real, right? Media coverage about the block has ramped up in recent weeks, and both local and national art world people regard this Chelsea-fication process with a mix of surprise and curiosity about how it all happened, genuine excitement tinged with wariness as to the influx of east coast galleries to this neighborhood specifically and the city in general, and empathy for the area's working class residents.

But when it comes to the art actually on view in Melrose Hill, you can expect a fetching and fairly eclectic array of first-rate programs, distributed across now-open renovated spaces and a still-in-progress massive new build by international mega-gallery David Zwirner; the tucked away intimacy of long-standing area enterprise The Lodge; the gorgeously appointed airy white boxes of L.A.-based Morán Morán, Sebastian Gladstone, and Anat Ebgi and of easterly arrivals Harkawik, James Fuentes, Clearing, SHRINE, and Sargent's Daughters; and the lofty, long-established three-story HQ of unmissable independent art and elevated design emporium UNREPD.

Heads up before you visit, the East Coast contingent has largely brought along its rather appealing custom of go-



ing on summer break in August, so a few of these spaces are closed until their early/mid-September exhibitions—but most remain open, and there's plenty to see right now, from lively group shows to thoughtful solo presentations. Here's a quick breakdown of where to go and what's on—though with more galleries sure to pop up this year and next, it seems like it'll be a long time before we're over the Melrose Hill.

UNREPD 624 N. Western Ave.

UNREPD and its partner Pop Up Home have a unique approach to showing contemporary art and design, with new visual artists' works in painting, photography, ceramics, and mixed media rotating into the lofty space, as well as full-scale solo shows both there and at their downtown satellite at Frank Gehry's 100 Grand Ave. Across the intersecting home objects and fine art spheres, UNREPD proceeds with a deep commitment to, as Co-Founder Sarah Mantilla Griffin tells *L.A. Weekly*, “creating an artistic community and celebrating truly incredible, rarely-before-seen events. We are happy to serve as a platform for emerging artists doing museum-quality work.”

The curatorial rotations see new work arriving and vignettes with furniture and design objects being created week to week. For example recent collections from painter Leonard Maiden, printmaker Karen J. Revis, and painter Mozart Bautista have just taken their place among

perennially fresh work by UNREPD's best-selling artists, like Corey Pemberton, Edwin Marcelin, Bryce Batts, Kera Morgan, and Sachiko Bradley. “Next month we'll add work by sculptor Sandra Lapage to the showroom,” says Griffin.

“We first moved to Melrose Hill because we fell in love with the 1920s architecture of the buildings and felt that the juxtaposition with our contemporary art and postmodern furniture was perfect for the story we wanted to tell,” Griffin says. “Additionally, the neighborhood felt like New York, a city that [Co-Founder and owner of Pop Up Home] Tricia [Benitez Beanam] and I both love. When we first looked at the space,

they were playing around with the name and had just landed on Melrose Hill.” The only gallery on their block at that time was Morán Morán, with The Lodge a bit further up by Santa Monica Blvd.

“We had a huge opening party for Corey Pemberton's first West Coast solo show (Hollywood Reporter covered it) in August of 2021, which brought 800 tastemakers to the block and really set the tone for what was to come,” Griffin continues. “It was an incredibly diverse crowd, including celebrities, high-profile collectors, artists, designers, and other creatives and enthusiasts of all ages, genders, and ethnic backgrounds. We finished renovations on our flagship showroom and opened in May 2023 with another well-attended opening celebration. We're glad Melrose Hill has hit a lot more radars this year and are grateful to have been a core piece of the initial project.”

NEXT: two more solo exhibitions at their downtown space this year: Valincy-Jean Patelli in September, and Moncho 1929 in November. They are also planning three new solo shows for the Melrose Hill space in 2024. unrepd.com

Morán Morán 641 N. Western Ave.

NOW: *cameron clayborn: Private Property* is on view through August 25. Sculptural works with an expansive sense of materials and an evocation of renovation in their arrayment, come together across hard, soft, organic, and industrial in as-



semblage work excavating memories of a lost family home. A brick wall built by the artist's grandfather's hands becomes a physical motif and conceptual armature for works of sewn photography, symbolic reliquaries, and half-remembered family lore, augmented with dye, wax, and artifacts of identity and studio process.

NEXT: *This American Life* opens September 9 - October 28. A group exhibition featuring work by Calvin Marcus, Borna Sammak, Martine Syms, Ryan Trecartin, Robin F. Williams, and Dena Yago forms a mediation on stories, "how they are conjured, how they are communicated, and how they relate to lived experience. These accounts are freighted in race, in gender, and in sexuality. It is also about the relationship between contemporary art and its reframing of the imagery of American popular culture. While negotiating the skewed protocols of media, the loops and networks of distribution, this constellation of artworks insist upon the intimacy and proliferation of artistic experimentation." moranmorangallery.com.

David Zwirner
612 N. Western Ave.

NEXT: *Rose Wylie: CLOSE, not too close*, September 8 - October 14. A group of new large-scale paintings and related drawings by the venerable British artist, featuring her 17th-century home and be-

loved garden, and other elements drawn from her daily life and surroundings—forming an unconventional self-portrait. Known for her uniquely recognizable, colorful, and exuberant compositions that appear simplistic, but are full of wittily observed and subtly sophisticated meditations on the nature of visual representation itself. Working in both single- and multi-panel formats, she regularly juxtaposes apparently disparate imagery, creating visual rhymes and resonances that coalesce into a unified composition. davidzwner.com.

Sargent's Daughters
538 N. Western Ave.

NOW: The group show *Lover's Eye* is on view through August 19. Historically, the *Lover's Eye* was just what it purports—a miniature painting of an eye, presented as a secret token of affection, in a gesture of high romance that was not at all as creepy as it sounds. For this group show, ten artists working in painting, textile, sculpture, and inventive mixed media all channel the energy of ornaments of whispered desire, from the overtly sexual and erotic to the more abstract and yearning, humorous and bold. Many works are replete with tiny details that require a close approach to perceive—turning the question around between artist and viewer as to who is the lover and whose is the eye that sees them.



NEXT: Lauren Dare opens on September 8. New work from a Creative Growth artist whose multi-layered abstract drawings are active and gestural. Filling the page to the edge with high viscosity ink, Dare layers dense, sweeping collections of lines that exercise a full range of wrist, elbow, and shoulder motion. Dare describes her frond-like forms as "trees," and sometimes interrupts them with clusters of circles, achieved in the same vibrational hand. Simultaneously organized and frenetic, her line work flows and crashes like waves, creating an energetic visual texture. Whether she's working in bright color or monochrome, Dare has a captivatingly sophisticated sense of depth and composition. sargentsdaughters.com.

SHRINE
538 N. Western Ave.

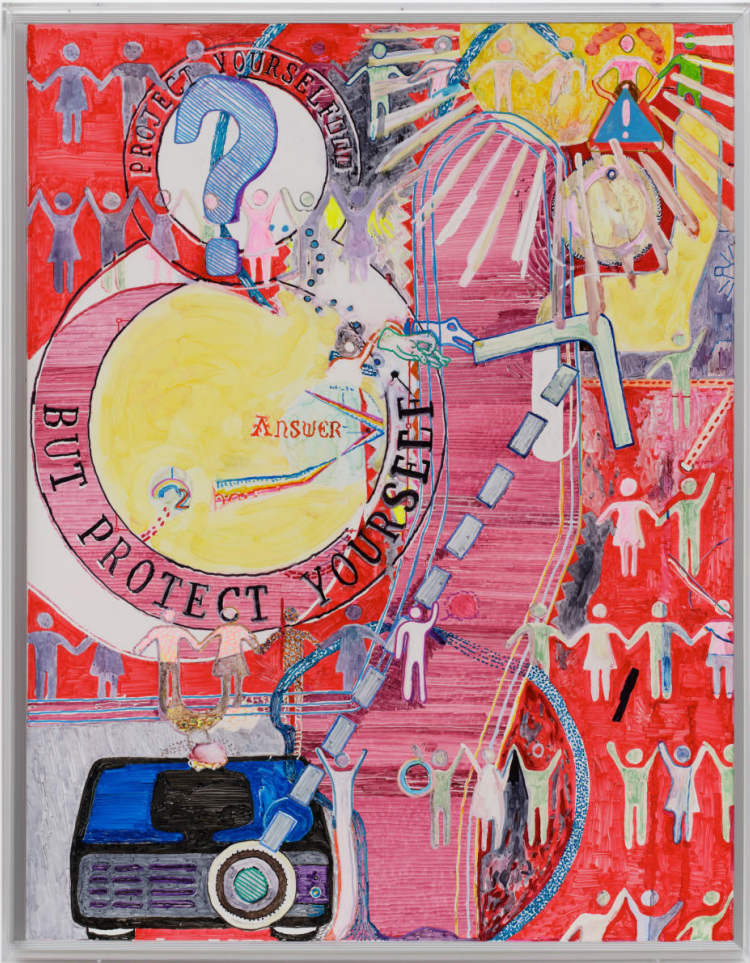
NOW: Ross Simonini: *Tales* is on view through August 19. Simonini creates a lively cognitive dissonance in large-scale paintings. While he depicts cartoonish characters and image/objects—spirits, trees, animals, water, people, phones, buildings, food—with a disarming and elusively guileless presence and an antimistic sense of soul, he does so with a painstaking and almost performative relationship to process and material. He uses milk paint, an ancient organic medium made with olive oil, sea shells, pine

resin, flax oil, beeswax, raw pigments, and salt to create his atmospheric post-modern quasi-frescos—with results that bend the arc of art history by injecting deep meaning into whimsical aesthetics.

NEXT: *Derek Aylward: Good Morning Sunshine* opens September 8 - October 2. Aylward's first show in Los Angeles features self-reflective and empathetic paintings in which his characters seem caught somewhere between worry and jubilation. Aylward's works are highly layered, so while the final images may look expressive and quickly rendered, they actually result from many rounds of painting, covering, and resurfacing. These complexified textures bear witness to a rich history of individual and creative battles against time and other constraints of living, in compositions juxtaposing multiple figures coming apart and reforming within the sadness and isolation of modern times. shrine.nyc.

Clearing
530 N. Western Ave.

NEXT: Shota Nakamura opens in September. The Japanese-born, Berlin-based artist is known for his radiant interiors and natural landscapes often inhabited by a single figure standing, resting or reading. Challenging assumptions about the male gaze as both an art historical and social construct, even as style brings to mind French modernist masters, Na-



kamura's enriched palette and fraught brushwork convey emotion as well as critique. c-l-e-a-r-i-n-g.com.

James Fuentes
5015 Melrose Ave.

NEXT: Juanita McNeely: Moving Through opens September 8 - October 14. The exhibition will present three major multi-panel pieces by McNeely from the mid '70s. The monumental multi-panel piece *Moving Through* (1975) will span the full length of the gallery's longest wall, enjoying the regal presence that this pioneer of feminist art and thought deserves. With exuberant palettes and fleshy, stylized figures, her unflinchingly candid and visceral juxtapositional compositions fought hard to center the female (nude) body beyond objecthood, exploring it as a site of pain, trauma, nature, and power in a way many were unprepared to accept early in her career—which did not stop her from being a huge historical influence and an acclaimed voice who remains more than ready to meet the current moment head-on. jamesfuentes.com.

The Lodge
1024 N. Western Ave.

NOW: Joey Cocciardi: It's Getting Dark is open now through August 12. In topographically textured and unexpectedly radiant abstract paintings, Cocciardi marries traditional fresco with casting and printmaking techniques to examine the residue of effort that trails the act of creation. Resembling fireworks or exploding stars, the intimately-scaled mixed media works capture and give form to bursts of inspiration—ideas emerging like light from out of the murky darkness, acting as both metaphor for and proof of the artist's labor.

NEXT: Brittany Fanning: Getting Away With Murder opens September 16 - October 14. Feeling frustrated and overwhelmed by American society, Fanning has removed human figures from her paintings and begun focusing on contrived garden scenes, chock filled remnants of human life like half-eaten cakes, wines, luxury goods, and excavated (robbed?) graves. Amongst the opulence of the gardens and the litter of nefarious human activities, exotic creatures roam

and reclaim the depopulated places. Fanning is essentially creating 21st-century vanitas paintings through a lush, decadent, and playful subject matter and palette examining mortality and morality. Recently Fanning began to render her studies for new paintings with India ink on Arches paper, creating drawings that are more free with their fanciful fictions and emotional in a poetic way by contrast with the emotional power punches of her canvases. thelodge.la.

Harkawik
5538 Santa Monica Blvd.

NOW: Daydreaming pressed against a fence is on view now through September 11. The inaugural show at the new location is a group exhibition focused on "translation, reconstitution, and reimagination as it relates to the creative process. Artists frequently re-make works, beginning in one medium and moving to another, creating process-oriented constructions and responding to their peculiarly handmade qualities, or taking already-made artworks and using them as baseline, found object or raw material—adding, removing, rebuilding them in different ways." Within this metaphorical and practical framework, the gallery and its cohort of artists and their extended creative family have engineered a sprawling, looping cartography of what it means to transplant, to reinvent, and to be exceedingly conscious of occupying the threshold of a new era.

NEXT: Stephanie H. Shih: American Gothic opens September 15. Shih's artistic practice explores objects that blur the line between foreign and domestic, emphasizing the layered identities of immigrants and their children. By depicting extremely ordinary, even ephemeral objects from both mainstream American and traditional Chinese habits—food, household products, restaurants, and ceremonial events—with an attentive, inescapable, and materially affirmative solidity—Shih reminds us that cross-cultural influence is a central aspect of the diasporic experience. Confronted with the realities of colonialism, displacement, assimilation, and heritage, the artist rejects the flattened identity politics that often dominate these conversations. Instead, Shih advocates for a more nuanced perspective, proposing how this discourse can be pursued in the realm of popular culture. harkawik.com.

Sebastian Gladstone

NOW: David Roesing: Do Now or Do Later is on view through August 25. If you are looking for paintings that counteract the eye- and brain-adding effects of scrolling through the internet, these are not going to help. In fact, the mad-cap nonstop simultaneity of informa-

tion layering is the artist's inspiration. Flickering between and among scenarios of futurism and atavistic instincts, science and emotion, work and play, food and sex, drugs and possibly aliens, all playing out within the cognitive state of constantly being advertised upon, these psychotically intricate fields of information address the modern condition head on with expert mimicry and dark humor that both makes it feel both more dire and more like a party.

NEXT: Timo Fahler and GV. Rodriguez exhibitions open September 16. A solo exhibition by gallery artist Timo Fahler will present never before seen stained-glass works built within found materials from around the Los Angeles area. In the project room will be the first solo exhibition by the L.A.-based artist G.V. Rodriguez—a self-taught artist who developed a practice of cutting and sewing mono-prints together to create tableaux of his dreams and memories. These exhibitions are evidence of what the gallery tells us is, "a focus for the fall programming on artists with dynamic material practices from around the Los Angeles area." sebastian-gladstone.com

Anat Ebgi
4859 Fountain Ave.

NOW: Cosmo Whyte: Hush Now, Don't Explain is on view through September 9. Build a life, construct a memory, erect a monument. An archive is both a place and its contents, and to archive means to engage deeply, meticulously with the past—a slippery, shadowy thing built of fallible memories and hidden agendas—in ways that hold deep sway over the present. As an artist, Whyte's interests in the energy, legacy, and conceptual framework, but also the literal actions of "the archive" have inspired him to explore myriad facets that intersect across his personal history and geopolitical circumstances. In this exhibition he gives that dynamic form, imbuing wall and sculptural works with aesthetic and material manifestations of all the physical and psychological revelation and erosion of a never-ending search for truth and clarity.

NEXT: Ming Ying opens September 23 - October 4. The U.S. debut of the Chinese-born, London-based painter will explore her evolving techniques with heavy impasto oil paint, to create romantic and psychedelic scenes of desire. Her vivid compositions of small groups or individual portraits veer into the realm of the abstract, psychological, and emotional. The anonymity of her subjects contrasts with their theatrical dress and dream-like environments, expressing a tension between feelings of enjoyment, longing, and detachment. anatebgi.com. [E]

LA WEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS

EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

Product Growth Analyst needed by Disqo, Inc in Glendale, CA (Telecommuting is optional benefit of employ't & employee may live anywhere in U.S. Occasional work at HQ maybe required) to use data to understand trends in user behavior & product usage to influence strategy. Req: Master's in Leadership for Creative Enterprises, Advtg., or rel., 2 yrs. exp. in job offered, or as Mkt. Analyst, or rel. Exp./knowledge must include: 2 yrs. exp. as Mkt. Analyst in a direct to consumer envirt; exp. as a data analyst focused on engage't & retention at brands with a high vol. of complex data; advanced exp. querying data warehouses (SQ), analyzing data, & arriving at insights using qualitative tech. (i.e. window functions, CTEs,

etc.; proficiency in Tableau or other data visualization tools; Exp. with experiment design, & A/B test analysis across multiple KPIs. Salary \$70K to \$105K. Send resume to Disqo at anthony.fabiano@disqo.com

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Margarian Law Firm seeks a Paralegal to work out of its Glendale, CA office to summarize and draft legal documents for attorney review. Salary \$80,891/yr. Qualified applicants should MAIL (no calls/emails/walk-ins) resume to Hovanes Margarian, 462 W Colorado St, Glendale, CA 91204

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Student Services Coordinator. 2 pos. Serves as point person for in-person & online students; handles advising, testing, & proctoring queries from in-person & online students. Dvlp., deliver, eval., & maint. interactive student orientation exp. Dvlp. & maint. student spt. guide, managing mat'ls., & doc. Assists w/ Formulation, dvlpment., & implem. of admissions-rttd. policies & procedrs. Ensures int'l. students applicant complete req'd. paperwork & meet applicable regs. Req. Bach. from accredited 4-yr. college/university & 24 mos. exp. in student svcs., coord., or in rtd. field. Salary: \$49,000/yr. Send resume to: California Language Academy Group Inc., 8632 Sepulveda Blvd #203, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

ThinkAnalytics, Inc. seeks **Technical Lead(s)** in El Segundo, CA to plan, initiate, & manage info. tech. projts for content recommdatn search engine co. May telecomm. up to 50%

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LA WEEKLY Bulletin

Injured at work? Workers Comp Law Firm READY TO HELP!

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Making a false or fraudulent claim is a felony subject up to 5 years in prison or a fine up to \$50,000 or double the value of the fraud whichever is greater, or by both imprisonment or fine.

Thank you Saint Jude, Saint of the Impossible, &c

SECURITY GUARDS NEEDED

Rio Gentlemen's Club - 13124 S Figueroa St, Los Angeles, CA 90061 \$18 to \$20 an hour. Outside security needed for patdowns, ID checks and monitoring parking lot of the club. Please contact Dave Carlson at Rmckinney@jjmfirm.com

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