

LAW WEEKLY

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LAPD CHIEF MICHEL MOORE ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

A FRESH TAKE ON DRY JANUARY AND VEGANUARY

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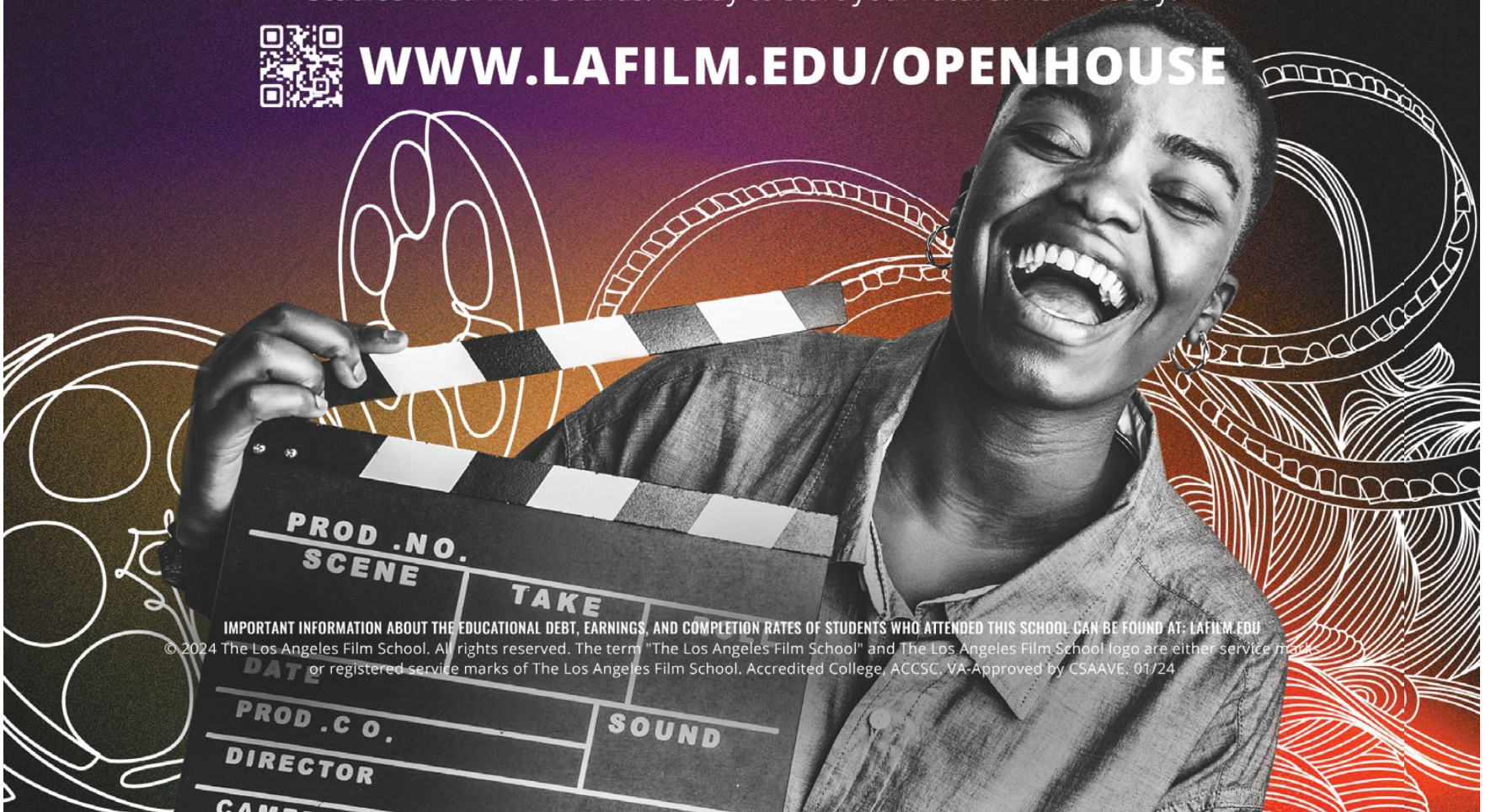
CHRISTIAN RUIZ BERMAN'S COGNATE SYMBOLISM BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

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GO EDITORS' PICKS

ARTS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18

Linda Ravenswood presents *A Poem is a House* at Skylight Books. Los Feliz native and Oxford Prize-winning poet and performance artist Linda Ravenswood presents the launch of a new collection of poems, with special guests Senator Anthony Portantino, Kendalle Getty, Sola Saar, Arthur Kayzakian, West Hollywood City Poet Laureate Brian Sonia Wallace, and more. Wallace writes that Ravenswood's book serves to, "remind you that you are history, embodied, a living tapestry of everyone who ever was and all they said and forgot and cherished. And wonder how the severed goat's head in the tree still sings—a reminder of what cannot be explained—even with all that history, cruelty, and beauty." *1818 N. Vermont Ave., Los Feliz; Thursday, January 18, 7pm; free; skylightbooks.com.*

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

Cat Art Show 10th Anniversary at Wallis Anenberg PetSpace. Cat Art Show, the world's most popular art exhibition dedicated to the feline form, returns. Presented by CatCon, Cat Art Show features more than 50 established and emerging artists, including Annie Montgomerie, Britt Ehringer, Cleon Peterson, Eric Haze, Natalia Fabia, and Yusuke Hanai, and more, working in diverse, eclectic, and innovative mediums including painting, digital, sculpture, jewelry, and mixed media. *2005 Bluff Creek Dr, Playa Vista; Friday-Sunday, January 19-21, 11am-5pm; free w/ rsvp; catartshow.com.*

L.A. Dance Project presents: LAUNCH:LA 2024 featuring JA Collective and Jamal Kamau White. LADP's residency program supports Los Angeles-based emerging artists in the creation and presentation of original work, and the latest residents were chosen for their bold interdisciplinary approach to movement and collaboration. Dance artists JA Collective (Jordan Johnson and Aidan Carberry) and Jamal Kamau White will be creating new work at LADP's studio space for the month of January, before premiering the results this weekend. *2245 E. Washing-*



Britt Ehringer
Kobe Entering the Kingdom of Kittens, 2024

ton Blvd., downtown; Friday-Sunday, January 19-21; \$15-\$20; ladanceproject.org.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20

Shepard Fairey: *Peace is Radical* at ReflectSpace Gallery. A timely exhibition features works addressing a range of topics, including the importance of democracy, race and gender equality, environmental justice, and most of all, peace and harmony. Screen-printing is a versatile graphic medium that can be used to produce high-end art, or multitudes of prints that can be disseminated liberally. Fairey uses screen printing in both ways and finds it to be an incredibly empowering and democratic medium; and a special section in the exhibition will display selected screens he has used to print his art. *Glendale Central Library, 222 E. Harvard St., Glendale; Opening reception: Saturday, 6:30-8:30pm; On view through April 14; free; reflectspace.org.*

Jose Dávila: *Photographic Memory* at Sean Kelly Gallery.

In a series of Dávila's signature cut-out works, which reference Richard Prince's infamous solo exhibition at LACMA in 2018, the exhibition features large-scale photographic works in which Dávila has removed the main figure of Prince's influential *Untitled* (cowboy) series. Challenging conventional connotations and limitations of photography in today's image driven society, Dávila's cut-outs interrogate originality, appropriation, and the truth behind an image. *1357 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood; Opening reception: Saturday,*

January 20, 5-7pm; On view through March 9; free; skny.com.

Dancing in A-Yard at MOCA Grand Ave. In male prisons ruled by toxic masculinity, dancing is not a consideration. Yet, in the A-Yard at Lancaster State Prison, ten young men are trying to break this taboo by inviting French choreographer Dimitri Chamblas, to lead a contemporary dance class. Manuela Dalle's film *Dancing in A-Yard* draws attention to this progressive initiative, deconstructing preconceived ideas surrounding prison and incarceration by exploring the spectrum of the participants' masculinity and their collective desire for transformation both individually and as a community. A conversation with Dalle, Chamblas, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, director of Cal State LA's Prison Graduation Initiative, and Dimitri De'Von, a formerly incarcerated man and one of the film's participants follows the screening. *250 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Saturday, January 20, 3pm; free w/ rsvp; moca.org.*

A Mexican Trilogy: *An American Story* at Latino Theater Company. Written by Evelina Fernández and directed by José Luis Valenzuela, this three-part play follows the Morales family through decades of the Mexican-American experience. Faith is the first play. After the Mexican Revolution, the family is faced with the challenge of retaining ancient traditions and cultural memory in the midst of social and political upheaval. (January 18-21 at East L.A. College.) Hope,

part two, takes place in the 60's as a new young president and a national crisis grip the family and the nation. (January 18-28 at L.A. Valley College.) Charity, the third and final installment, sees the world mourn the death of Pope John Paul II and the centenarian matriarch of the family visited by the ghost of her great-grandson slain in Iraq, as a newly arrived relative from Mexico takes up the story. (January 18-28 at L.A. City College.) But for this weekend only, you can attend all three plays in a single marathon afternoon. *514 S. Spring St., downtown; Saturday-Sunday, January 20-21, 2pm; \$10-\$50; latinotheaterco.org.*

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21

Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra presents *CURRENT: [inti]mate* at the Los Angeles LGBT Center. Curated by renowned composer inti figgis-vizueta, *CURRENT: [inti]mate* features a chamber program presented in collaboration with the Los Angeles LGBT Center and the Museum of Latin American Art. *[inti]mate* aims to create an inclusive and welcoming environment, where diverse communities come together in harmony, celebrating both queer and Latine musical cultures. The program features boundary-pushing music from the Latin-American diaspora, and first performs on Saturday, January 20 at MOLAA. *1125 N. McCadden Pl., Hollywood; Sunday, January 21, 7:30pm; \$35-\$50; laco.org.*

MONDAY, JANUARY 22

Above & Below: *Views from AltaSea's Blue Hour* at CalPoly Pomona. Curated by acclaimed artist Kim Abeles, and first debuted at the Port of Los Angeles as part of AltaSea's culture-driven public education and engagement initiatives, this exhibition addresses the connection between our community and the sea; referencing the land and sky as well as the sea's surface and below. Human interaction is visible in all those locations, and each affects the other. *Kellogg Art Gallery, 801 W. Temple Ave., Pomona; On view January 22 - March 21; free; cpp.edu.*

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24

The Industry: *Star Choir* at the Hammer Museum. In this cosmic opera by artists Malik Gaines and Alejandro Segade, a starship crew seeks refuge on the hostile planet 85K: Aurora. As the planet defends itself from the crew's invasive presence, the humans evolve to become a part of a queerly multi-species organism that covers the entire world. Produced by The Industry, an experimental company that expands the operatic form in Los Angeles, this film chronicles Star Choir's live premiere in fall 2023 at the historic Mt. Wilson Observatory, where an ensemble cast and orchestra performed inside the 100-inch telescope. *10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Wednesday, January 24, 7:30pm; free; hammer.ucla.edu. [📍]*

A FRESH TAKE ON DRY JANUARY AND VEGANUARY

BY MICHELE STUEVEN



The guilt of months of holiday overindulgence always brings us to reconciliation in January and resolutions to get healthy and trim down in time for summer, and every year there are more dedicated converts that have resulted in phenomena like Dry January and Veganuary. Here are some ideas on how to join the bandwagon.

Located in a historic building in Chinatown's Central Plaza, STAY, a new, first-of-its-kind zero-proof cocktail lounge has opened by co-founders Summer Phoenix and Stacey Mann. Staffed by zero-proof mixologists and overseen by beverage director Derek Brown, author of the best-selling book "Mindful Drinking," STAY features cold-pressed juices, fresh herbs, and premium zero-proof spirits. There also will be a curated menu of plant-based offerings from vegan chef Erica Daking of Kitchen Mouse LA.

The Pink Punjabi from Roots Indian Bistro is a floral and fizzy blend of milk, rosewater and Sprite. Traditionally known as Chabeel, it's been shared by the Sikh community for centuries, paying homage to the 5th Sikh guru, Guru Arjun Dev Ji, who is commemorated through the offering of Chabeel to the needy during hot summer afternoons.

Ube Coconut Kava Nectar from

Kavahana, the beverage pop-up that serves kava nectar, puts a new take on the 3,000-year-old kava root drink from the Pacific Islands, which has been an essential part of the islander culture for thousands of years, credited for its ability to promote relaxation and alleviate stress. Kavahana will make its debut at Smorgasburg on Sunday, Jan. 14, followed by a grand opening of its first brick-and-mortar kava nectar bar on Saturday, Feb. 10.

L.A.'s urban winery in Lincoln Heights, San Antonio Winery, is running a Drynuary Wine Flight that consists of a tasting of their Stella Rosa Naturals non-alcoholic wines for January inside the winery at Maddalena Restaurant and the indoor bistro counter near the gift shop.

There's a bucket load of great books on the market featuring mocktail recipes. *Mocktails, Cordials, Syrups, Infusions and More* puts a sweet take on iced Louisiana apricot tea and offers recipes for inventive simple syrups and drinks with flavor combinations like strawberry and black pepper, mango and ginger, lemon and thyme, coffee and cardamom, or blueberry and elderflower.

January 2024 is the 10th anniversary of Veganuary and *The Official Veganuary Cookbook* is out with 100 plant recipes for new and seasoned vegans alike, as well

as flexitarians and 'lessmeatarians.' It's designed for plant-based cooks who don't want 1970s-style macrobiotic ingredients, hard-to-find products, or want to spend hours in the kitchen.

Veganuary was established in 2014 and since then, the nonprofit organization has helped guide and support more than 2 million people through the annual Try Vegan for January pledge, with over half a million people officially taking part in 2022.

Martini & Rossi has created **Flo reale** and **Vibrante** specifically for non-alcoholic mindful sipping at happy hour. Their Rose Martini is an easy three-ingredient cocktail:

Rose Martini

3 oz. Martini & Rossi Vibrante

½ oz. Fresh Lemon Juice

¼ oz. Monin Rose

Method: Mix ingredients into a cocktail shaker and pour into a coupe glass, garnish with Maraschino cherries

Plant-based PLANTA, with locations in Marina del Rey and Brentwood, has partnered with Boisson for January specials and a non-alcoholic drink menu that includes:

- **Mango Crunch Roll:** mango, avocado, coconut, peanuts, masago
- **Baked Cauliflower:** tahini, pomegranate, dates, sumac, zaatar, mint
- **Thai Noodle Salad:** bok choy, kale, sweet chili, mango, avocado, crispy mushrooms, cashews
- **Coconut Cake:** mango, tapioca pearls, vanilla ice cream, toasted coconut
- **French 75:** pentire adrift, lemon, sage, leitz sparkling rosé, purslane
- **Old Fashioned:** three spirits adaptogenic "nightcap," the pathfinder hemp amaro, non-alc bitters

Vegans rejoice, Kusaki is back after a four-month hiatus, just in time for Veganuary. The first plant-based omakase bar and sushi restaurant in Los Angeles has been reimaged with a Kaiseki-influenced menu and additional days of operation.

Executive Chef Dillon Bolin and Head Chef Pearl Steffie have added new menu offerings like maitake wontons, watermelon granita nigiri and seared bell pepper nigiri, and spicy tuna rolls, along with original favorites of Kusaki fans like trumpet mushroom nigiri, rainbow roll, and non-sushi items like the shishito burger and portobello fries, all non-GMO.

The new dessert menu features house-made ice cream and sweet treats like

miso brownie brittle and The Pearlita, strawberry sorbet with coconut cream, blueberry compote and pistachios.

Also new to Kusaki's sleek minimalist interior is an expanded bar with sake, wine, beer and cocktails including "Chuhi," made with Amakusa sake, ginger ale, lime juice and aromatic bitters, and "Spicy Caipirinha," made with Amakusa Sake, jalapenos, simple syrup and lemon juice.

Oxnard-based **Zachari Dunes on Mandalay Beach** is offering a new **Resolution: Rejuvenation Dinner** activation on Saturday, Jan. 20 at the resort's signature restaurant Ox & Ocean. The ticketed event will offer five custom nonalcoholic beverages to pair with a four-course menu creation that features ingredients sourced from local Oxnard growers. Highlights include shrimp aguja chile, crispy duck breast, dark chocolate semifreddo and more paired with a Pomegranate Spritzer and the "Liar" Martini among other mocktails. Tickets are \$100 per person and are available on OpenTable.

For the ultimate desert wellness in 2024, take in the Good Vibes floating sound bath at the Azure Palm Hot Springsspa and resort. Perched on Miracle Hill overlooking Mt San Jacinto and the Coachella Valley, the evening includes floating on the water under a full moon and star-studded desert skies. Upon arrival, you're greeted with soothing music, whisper-tone voices, aromatherapy and a chilled lavender-infused towel before you embark on your self-compassion journey.

The event features The Quantum Sound Experience with multiple sound practitioners and amplified vibration accompanied by more than 200 candlelights and aromatherapy for an immersive experience. It's a fully clothed affair, no swimwear required, as you embark on the floating vessel with a plush blanket, eye mask, and pillow. Tickets are available by calling 760-251-2000.

The resort also offers other wellness retreats, like a five-night, six-day yoga and juice fasting program by the popular Yesenia's Vida Cleanse and various spa packages. The resort's mineral water wells are the hottest in the region and the sprawling 100' x 40' pool is the largest mineral water pool in Southern California. The cafe offers a healthy and delicious menu of salads, wraps, a fresh juice bar as well as beer and wine. Try the Thai tuna and rice bowl with sesame-seared tuna served atop organic brown rice, green beans, fresh daikon sprouts and a spicy Thai almond sauce, or the Goddess Salad which is just that, a healthy dose of green in all shades and textures that include baby spinach, sweet cucumbers, avocado, green beans and sprouts served with a house-made green goddess dressing. 🌱

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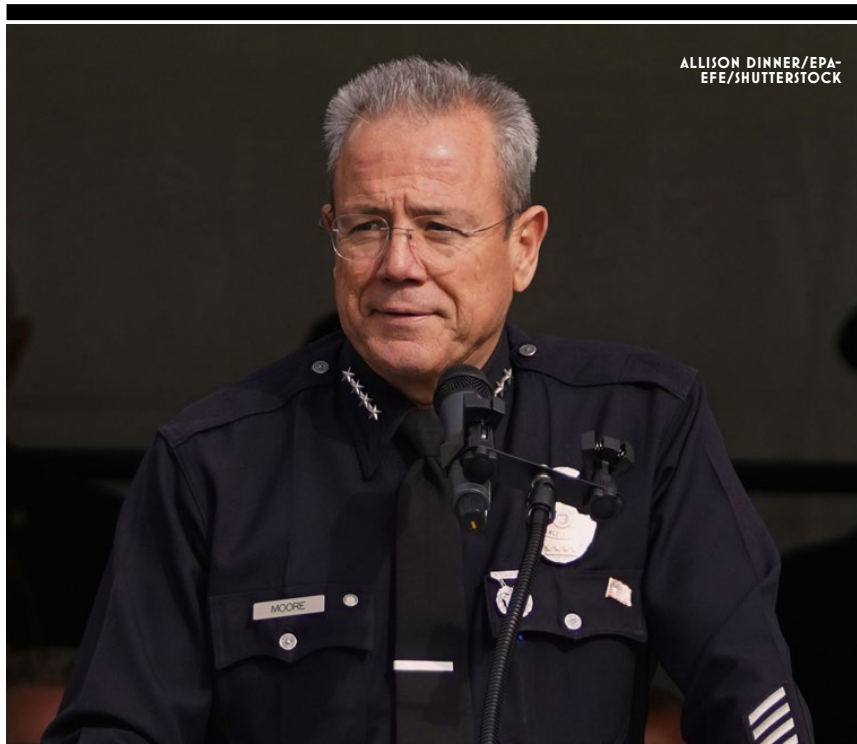
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NEWS

LAPD CHIEF MICHEL MOORE ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

Nearly A Year Into His Second Term As LAPD Chief Of Police, Michel Moore Has Announced His Plans To Retire After 30 Years On The Force.

BY ISAI ROCHA



Los Angeles Police Chief Michel Moore announced he would retire from the department at the end of February.

The announcement was made at a Jan. 12 press conference with Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass at Moore's side.

"I want to thank Chief Michel Moore for his more than 40 years of service to the people of Los Angeles, and for his partnership in bringing homicides and violent crime down over the last year," Mayor Bass said. "Amidst a national police recruiting crisis, LAPD also saw more than 1,000 applicants to its academy in a single month, which is the highest number in years. I have directed

the immediate launch of a nationwide search for LAPD's next chief, which will include significant community input and consultation with law enforcement officers and experts. The appointment of an interim chief will be made by the Board of Police Commissioners."

Moore said his decision was made after speaking with and spending time with his family over the holidays and intended to make his intentions clear to Mayor Bass.

"I am proud of my leadership and service over the course of my tenure as the Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department," Moore said. "Our people rose to each occasion and demonstrated professionalism, grace, and grit. I am confi-

dent there is ample leadership within the organization to continue the world class public service provided each and every day to the City of Los Angeles."

His announcement was foreshadowed from the moment he accepted his reappointment a year ago. Bass reappointed Moore on January 31, 2023 after which Moore said he would not likely finish out his term, but stay long enough to aid the mayor as she began her own term that year.

The chief also acknowledged his announcement would be "relief" to some, a reference to local organizations who have scrutinized him over the years, such as Black Lives Matter Los Angeles (BLMLA).

"LAPD Chief Michel Moore was fired by the people!" BLMLA wrote in an online statement. "Since 2020, BLMLA and allies have been calling for the removal of LAPD Chief Michel Moore...first petitioning former mayor Garcetti to fire him, then calling on Mayor Bass to refuse his reappointment. Just 6 months into his second term, Michel Moore has announced that he'll retire at the end of next month. We call this a people's victory!"

The campaign to have Moore removed was headed by BLMLA cofounder Melina Abdullah who often pointed out multiple deadly LAPD shootings that occurred during Moore's tenure.

Moore said there were mistakes made on his part in his time as chief, but also rattled off several accomplishments he was proud of, such as technological upgrades within the force, community engagement efforts and reforms in de-escalation of force.

The Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners will now be tasked with finding a replacement chief, but Moore will be retained on contract up to that point.

L.A. Sheriff's Deputy Convicted For 2019 Shooting

For the first time in 20 years, a police officer in Los Angeles was convicted for charges in a deadly shooting.

The Los Angeles District Attorney's Office announced the conviction of former L.A. County Sheriff's deputy Andrew Lyons, who is expected to be sentenced to 30 days in county jail and up to two-years' formal probation; the maximum term allowed by law. The former deputy will also voluntarily give up his certification as a peace officer.

Lyons, 37, pleaded no contest to one felony count of assault with a semiautomatic firearm, and one count of assault under the color of authority, in the shooting death of Willowbrook native Ryan Twyman.

"Today, justice has been served for Mr. Twyman's family who have spent

years mourning the loss of their loved one," District Attorney George Gascón said. "This verdict reflects my office's unwavering commitment to ensuring that every individual, regardless of their profession, is held accountable for their actions."

District Attorney Gascón said this conviction would "send a message" of accountability from law enforcement.

"I would like to commend the dedicated efforts of my office's Justice System Integrity Division who worked tirelessly to prosecute this case," Gascón said. "This conviction sends a strong message that no one is above the law. Our aim is not to undermine the sacrifices made by law enforcement officers who serve our communities. However, accountability is paramount to maintaining public trust and ensuring that the principles of justice are upheld."

The shooting took place in June 2019, after officers responded to a call in the Willowbrook neighborhood and approached Twyman in his car. Twyman allegedly backed up his car toward the officers, with Lyons shooting into the vehicle with a semiautomatic rifle.

Multiple Homeless Encampments Cleared To Start New Year

Homeless encampments at Poinsettia Park in the Fairfax neighborhood were cleared, with dozens of people being housed.

Part of Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass' Inside Safe program, this was the 35th cluster of encampments that have been removed within the city.

"Yesterday's Inside Safe operation will greatly improve the quality of life for those formerly unhoused individuals who moved inside," Los Angeles City Councilwoman Katy Yaroslavsky said. "It also restores a sense of security and well-being for the larger Poinsettia Park community, who have been impacted for several years. I am deeply grateful to Mayor Bass, Councilmember [Hugo] Soto-Martinez, and Supervisor [Lindsey] Horvath for their continued partnership as we tackle the humanitarian crisis of homelessness head on."

There were 35 Angelenos housed during the operation, for encampments that had existed in the area for more than a decade.

In a little over a year, the Inside Safe program has helped bring housing options to more than 2,000 unhoused Angelenos.

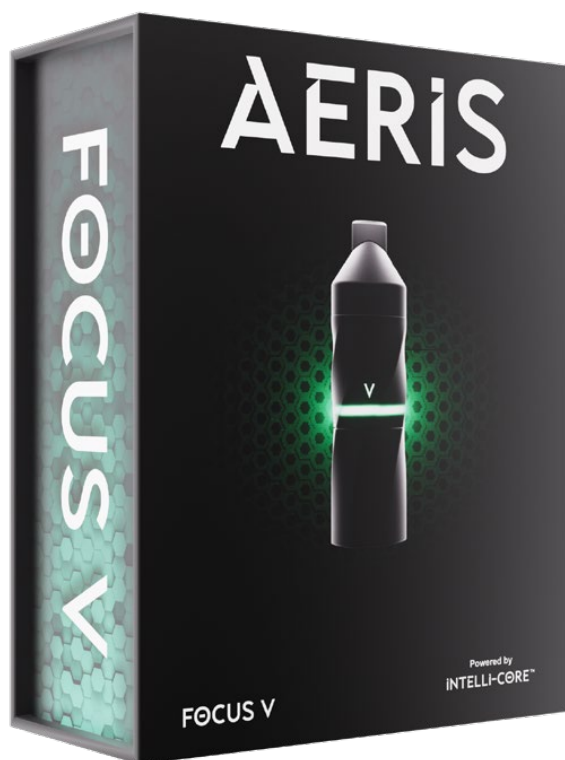
"We must continue to operate with urgency and help bring unhoused Angelenos inside as quickly as possible," said Mayor Karen Bass. "Thousands of Angelenos have been helped so far. This is a matter of life and death. Being inside is better than being outside." [L]

CANNABIS

FOCUS V'S AERIS IS ITS MOST PORTABLE OFFERING YET

The Dabbing Power Of *Focus V Atomizers* Is Now Pocketable.

BY JIMI DEVINE



After years with a seat at the table when it comes to the biggest names in digital dabs thanks to the cult following of the Carta and the tank atomizer it brought to the market at a time of need, Focus V's new Aeris makes dabbing on the go even easier.

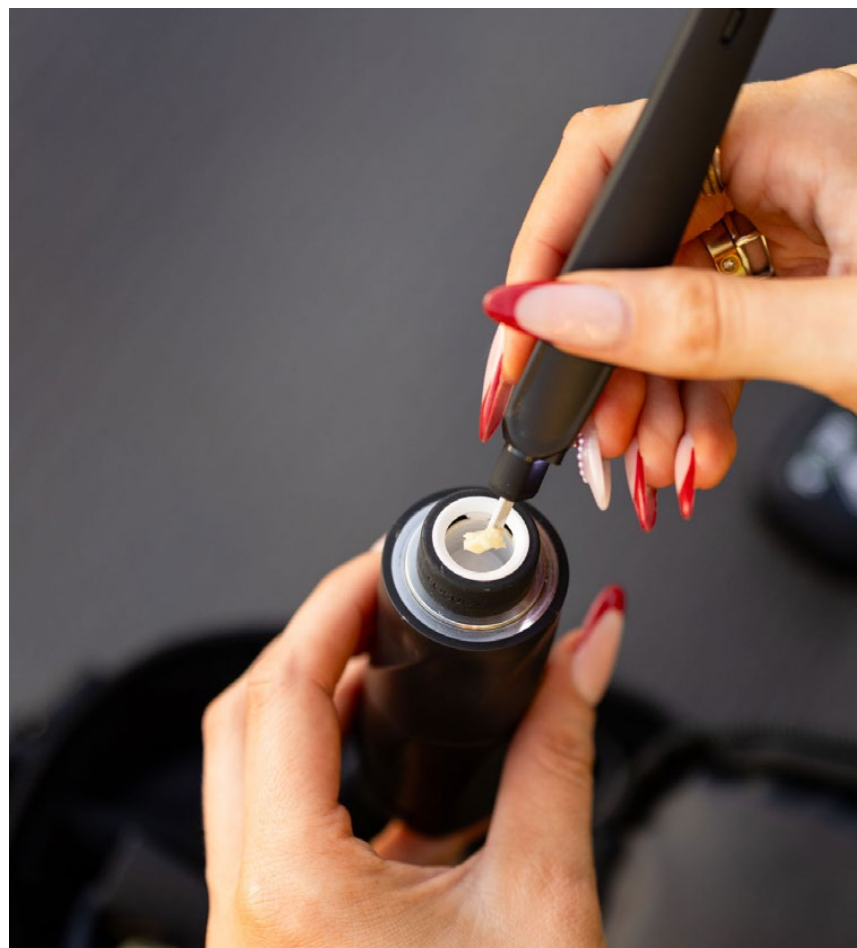
The portable smart Vaporizer was released last week in limited quantities available online at FocusV.com.

Focus V hopes the new Aeris will mimic its sister vaporizer the Carta on the impact it's had on the marketplace over the last 7 years. The company is putting the same push behind their new vape. They are already speaking on

it as one of their core offerings despite the limited quantities out the gate.

The smaller handheld Aeris brings the same hardware to the table as the Carta, particularly the sturdy atomizers that put Focus V on the map in the first place. They noted they are using the same IntelliCore™ atomizer technology. A big part of the whole ethos of the Aeris is moving the Carta quality rips into a pocketable device.

One of the more impressive offerings of the new device are the replaceable batteries. Most devices worth your time do not offer this feature for users. You either have more than one device in your travel kit for when the bat-



tery runs out or wait for your e-rig to charge back up. The Aeris solves this problem with a smooth transition to a new battery when needed, expect this to start being normalized more and more across the space. A system of easy twists and magnets holds the whole unit together.

Low temp dabbers feat not, the Aeris bottoms out at a very low 365 degrees. But those who like to get a bit more cloudy with it don't need to worry as the max temperature is a reputable 600 degrees. I find myself at about 510 degrees when using quartz or an electronic rig. That's just my happy medium for flavor and vapor production but many people have different tastes when it comes to temperature.

"We've been working very hard on the Aeris all of last year," SHO Products CEO Sam Jurist said when announcing the Aeris, "We went through many renditions to engineer a small device capable of big smoke that will resonate with our core consumers. Like the Carta 2, the Aeris rips."

The Focus V development put a lot of effort into the things they bring to market. Hence the consumer excitement when they have new gear drop. But it's always a big milestone for them to get

the products to the point where they are able to enter that top shelf stable alongside the things they already have available in the marketplace.

"As cannabis consumption evolves, and as hardware, software and other available technologies improve, so does Focus V," Focus V Director of Product Development J.R. Quion said, "Aeris represents the first truly portable real dab & will make consuming hash even easier for hash lovers."

As with all dope vaporizers in this day and age, the Aeris utilizes bluetooth to allow people to get their vaporizer connected to the new Focus V app. It's available for both Android and Apple in their app stores. The App will allow you to select one of the five different sesh modes preconfigured into the device, change the way the leds work when you are using the device, and, most importantly, compete to be the one Aeris champion to rule them all on the app's leaderboards.

Now that they have the Aeris on the streets, we're excited to see what Focus V is up to next. They noted they would be putting a lot of effort in 2024 into getting the word out outside of the US about their products. 📱



ART

CHRISTIAN RUIZ BERMAN'S COGNATE SYMBOLISM

New Paintings At Nicodim Gallery Explore The Recurring Psyche

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

In Christian Ruiz Berman's singular painting *God giving god to god (mápaches)*, a pair of agile racoons offer a bouquet of unctuous, shimmering space lilies to an impassive stone statue, as another totemic figure looks on across interdimensional time and space. This atavistic anthropomorphic depiction of paying tribute to the loved, feared and worshiped is set among a topsy-turvy pattern-based world of richly hued green and fuchsia veined agate, and a bit of warm wood grain, amid sprays of delicate flowers and hearty leaves that seem both tropical and medicinal. A many-spiked star motif looks like the universal symbol for symbols.

What sounds like an unruly surrealist tumult of bricolaged visual samples, in the hands of multidextrous painter Ruiz Berman, such compositions are carefully engineered and even more attentively rendered to bring out a unified field of dream logic across the disparate elements—or at least the poetic sensation of one. In order to full off these feats, Ruiz Berman has not only to be a careful choreographer of his chosen lexicons, but also an expert channeler of an array of visual tropes and styles—from photorealism and *trompe l'oeil* to hard-edge abstraction, loosely gestural pure pigmentation, and illustrationist contemporary attitude.

The witty *Two hearts* sends up a playing card motif as its pair of white parrots (cockatiels, maybe?) are visually linked across two iterations

Wave Particle
Tondo 1, 2023



(Audubon and cyborg) by a string of pearls that probably represents wisdom and also perhaps a family thread like DNA. Pink flowers (dogwood? Japanese cherry blossoms?) rough-textured stone hearts and heart-shaped

frame insets for the birds hover across a spliced background built like a mar- quetry of sliced-up abstract patterns; the pearls and branches connect all the planar shards like the board of Chutes & Ladders.

Wave Particle
Tondo 7, 2023



Besides the racoons and previous works involving primates, snakes, and other animals, in this series it's all about the birds. Mockingbirds and ravens recur along with finessed bo- tanicals, mottled stones, and increas-

ingly assertive passages of technicolor geometry, as clearly cited mid-century American abstraction takes up more and more of the language. In *Grackles of grace*, a delicately ornate decorated porcelain urn that exudes “valuable



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and significant and very old object” is both interrupted by and exudes the petal-like striations of pure contemporary color that radiate from it.

In both *Charmed, I’m sure* and *Many*

suns, the abstraction passages are the most prominent, taking up equal space and holding it, not as background bits but as main elements of the story and the optical experience. While the

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Charmed I'm Sure, 2023

latter enacts the interdimensional and ancestral bridging with pre-Columbian statuary, the former returns to the ancient and futuristic aviary, and introduces a new archetypal symbol—a jeweled hand that is evocative of holiness but elusive as to origin. A dozen accompanying porthole-size tondos—the breezy but chromatical saturated *Wave/particle* paintings—expand on this slippery specificity as yet another framework for human perception. Per the Heisenberg Principle and the idea that we alter something by the mere act of observation, and how science can't measure mass, location, and velocity at the same time, it has to do with how perception and cognition really work, and how it's operatic and messy but still possible to locate meaning within its layers.

The press release included a piece of verse by Ruiz Berman (he likes to

include poetry with his exhibition information, offering his audiences yet another way into the interdimensional psychic space where the work exists), and it reads in part, “*My homeland is a hologram / projected from an onyx eye / and my heart lives on the open palm / of philosophers and pharaohs...*” Aside from a linguistic companion to the paintings, these stanzas contain within them the whole heady mix of personal and family history, geopolitical events, ancestral cultures, Western art history, migration and technology. It's a lot, but since as the title implies there's no shortcut to the territories of the past or the mind, it's lucky he likes taking the long way.

“No Shortcuts to Aztlan” is on view at 1700 S. Santa Fe, 4th floor; downtown, through February 17; nicodimgallery.com. [R]

THE B IS BACK

Married Couple Tairrie B And Mick Murphy Combine Talents As *SWTEVL*

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



Los Angeles artist Tairrie B has released music under a variety of different names over the years, achieving some international acclaim and cementing her status as an intriguing artist who will rarely disappoint. She released the *Power of a Woman* rap album under her own name in 1990, before forming the rap-metal band Manhole a few years later. That band would change its name to *Tura Satana*, and then she formed the alt-metal band *My Ruin* in '99. *My Ruin* is currently on hiatus.

So that's the brief backstory for the uninitiated, and it's only interesting because it lays out how Tairrie B Murphy (her married name) has made it her business to keep moving forward, to avoid stagnation and, as a result, her output has been remarkably consistent.

SWTEVL is where she's at now, alongside her husband and musical partner Mick Murphy. A producer and multi-instrumentalist of note, Murphy has worked with the likes of *Neanderthal*, *Heavy 70's*, *Chevy Metal*, the *Birds of Satan*, and *Teenage Time Killers*. He's no slouch.

"A few years ago, Mick and I made the life-changing move from my hometown of Los Angeles where we had been living to his hometown of Knoxville, Tennessee," B says. "After nine studio albums and years of touring, we decided it was time to put *My Ruin* on a permanent hiatus. It wasn't an easy decision, but reflecting on the past two decades, we also realized that we were not the same people we were when we lived in L.A. Like artists do, we changed and grew. I wasn't sure I wanted to record another rock album, however, after 2022 came to a fitful end with two years of living through the chaos of a worldwide pandemic and the politics which accompanied it, like most of America, we were mentally exhausted. Not wanting to revamp the past musically or relive those songs emotionally, we felt it was time to cut loose, kick off the dust and recharge our creative batteries, which led us back into the studio and *SWTEVL* was born. With our new album, we are equally about reinvigorating ourselves as artists, while redefining our art for a new era and beyond. I guess you can say that was our mission."

SWTEVL is very much a two-piece, just the two of them in glorious creative matrimony.

"Once we decided it was time to do some new music, we slowly started conceptualizing, writing and recording songs," Murphy says. "It served as a positive outlet that helped us get through those unprecedented times. We ended up enjoying being together in the studio so much that we got hyper focused and didn't rush the process. This turned into a creative explosion of new material."

This is a lively rock 'n' roll band with a dark lean, perhaps more swing than B's previous bands, with some wild industrial vibes that recall the likes of *Zodiac Mindwarp*, and *My Life With the Thrill Kill Kult*. Frankly, it's a joy.

"The evolution thus far was mainly in the very beginning while we were defining the parameters and deciding what kind of music we intended to make with our new project," says M Murphy. "We consciously wanted it to be different from *My Ruin*, so we drew from our collective eclectic non-metal, non-extreme influences like vintage and garage rock, post punk, new wave and alternative music. Once we found the vibe and it clicked as more

songs were completed, we felt *SWTEVL* begin to take shape and it was exciting."

B and Murphy have been a couple for 24 years, and recently celebrated their 15th wedding anniversary.

"Although we come from two very different backgrounds with different individual tastes and influences, we share a common passion for good quality music of all genres from vintage rock and metal to funk and old school hip-hop," B says. "We're very open-minded to what the other brings into the studio when we collaborate on our various projects and have a unique chemistry which we've developed over years. This has made working together come naturally in regards to our art. We don't always agree but that's healthy and the beauty of our partnership. We share a mutual respect for each other as artists as well as husband/wife, we speak our minds but also listen and have learned to trust each other explicitly so it's never really been an issue for us creatively speaking. Much like marriage, making music has been an exciting endeavor to embark on together."

SWTEVL is named after a 1977 Der-

ringer album (it's pronounced *Sweet Evil*), and their debut album is *Very Truly Yours*. It was recorded, engineered, mixed and mastered by Murphy at their home studio, The Magick Room, in Knoxville. The themes, they say, address who they are now as GenXers, as opposed to who they were when they met.

"In the past, I've always written such dark and confrontational lyrics, which I spent my career screaming over super heavy/doom influenced metal," B says. "It was therapeutic to deliver it in a brutal language but it became hard on me emotionally and physically on tour, to the point it just wasn't enjoyable anymore. While the new album is feisty and ferocious, it's also filled with attitude-infused vocal swagger and a tongue-in-cheek playfulness to the lyrics, along with a bit of subtle mystery, which offers some escapism from the heaviness we've been so accustomed to. We've grown as artists and with age comes wisdom but also new topics of interest."

That said, there are some of B's classic protest anthems on there, too.

"There are certain songs such as 'Call To Action' and 'Solidarity' that continue a theme I first spoke about in the early '90s with my band Manhole, which is a lyrically pointed, deeply personal yet universal call and response protest anthem of resistance," she says. "A much-needed war cry to rise up against the intrusive radical right-wing legislation, which has set women back 50 years in our country thanks to a twice impeached, toxic as fuck, quadruple-indicted, civilly liable sexual assaulting, insurrectionist ex-president appointing three anti-abortion radical religious extremists to the Supreme Court. With what happened to Roe v Wade and Trump as the preferred GOP nominee once again, this is a stark reminder that the fight for women's rights and reproductive freedom is not over in 2024, so it's important to continue to speak up, show up and not sit this next election out. Our democracy depends on it."

Looking ahead, *SWTEVL* is focusing on introducing this new project to fans of the musicians involved, old and new. Build a fanbase, release content and hopefully, eventually, play some shows.

"We have a few new videos that we've filmed, which we are currently busy editing and plan to release to accompany upcoming singles," B says. "We have also recorded a kick-ass cover album, which we're excited for people to hear and will be dropping later this year, and I am working on another solo hip-hop album that I plan to release before Nov. 5 to coincide with the most important election of our lifetime. VOTE BLUE!"

Hear hear!

SWTEVL's *Very Truly Yours* is out now.

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