

# Tech gallery plans to open on Eddy

Coming to a storefront near you  
— art and wine, by the glass

by Marjorie Beggs

A stylin' new art gallery is coming to the Tenderloin in late fall — Realspace, at 132 Eddy — but don't look for traditional paintings in wooden frames.

The works on exhibit will incorporate digital technology and electronics, "a new kind of art that you won't see anywhere else," says Monika Bernstein. She and business partner William Linn came calling at the Collaborative's July 10 meeting to tout their new venture and drum up support for their plan to sell beer and wine on site.

The first riposte came from Ed Evans, member of the Mayor's Disability Council: "I'm very concerned that people are opening places and using them as an excuse to sell alcohol."

No, no, parried Bernstein pleasantly. Realspace, with its 1,300-sq.-ft. space on the ground floor of the residential Crystal Hotel, will not be a drinking destination. "We want people to come for the art," she said. "We're not trying to be a bar."

St. Anthony's community liaison Roscoe Hawkins wasn't convinced. "There are 237 places that sell alcohol now in the Tenderloin," he lunged. "We're trying to clean up the neighborhood. Selling more alcohol doesn't fit with what we're trying to do."

Bernstein tried again: "The gallery will attract a mature crowd who are looking at art." And, added Linn, what happens in the space is "driven by the programming and the activities, not by alcohol. The crowd is different. It's not going to be a party space."

The storefront, empty for years and formerly a Tae Kwan Do studio, will have a "positive impact" on the Tenderloin, the partners said, bringing in a kind of "foot traffic" that usually avoids the area — "artists, writ-

ers, designers, curators and theorists."

What about the 36 residents who live above the gallery? Will they be bothered by the goings-on? The gallery, capacity 49, will be open Wednesday through Saturday from noon on, with the alcohol served only after 5 p.m., but it could stay open as late as 2 a.m.

Bernstein explained that she used to manage the Phoenix Hotel at 601 Eddy, site of the annual pool-toss fund-raiser always replete with political and neighborhood VIPs. "We're very sensitive to the needs of residents. There'll be small speakers at ear level and we're soundproofing the entire space."

Asked how they'll integrate their gallery into the neighborhood, Bernstein and Linn said they plan to make presentations about their exhibits in the schools, and offer lecture series and children's programs.

"And you should work with Hospitality House, to show your support for the art that's already happening in the community," Hawkins said.

Collaborative members began to drop their guard. "Art crowds are more responsible," TSIP's Shawn Collins said, in support. "It's natural to have beer and wine at openings, and it's rare to have trouble."

The gallery will be a couple of doors down from EXIT Theatre, which is open mostly Thursday through Saturday and offers its audiences beer and wine as well as coffee, water and soft drinks before the plays and during intermission without complaints.

Evans thrust again: "There are alternatives to beer and wine, like exotic or fresh juices. I don't see why you need alcohol."

Realspace probably won't open until at least late fall. The building is being retrofitted, the gallery space will have to be brought up to code, and the beer and wine license application must wend its way through the bureaucracy, including a Board of Supes hearing on the license, as yet unscheduled.

The "ABC letter" — from the Department of Alcohol and Beverage Control — was mailed last month to neighbors, and so far three people plus the Tenderloin police force have formally opposed it. [Linn told *The Extra* later that for lack of a more

appropriate category, the ABC letter had termed the new space a "tavern" — a guaranteed hot button for residents.]

"But we shouldn't lump all liquor licenses in one," said St. Anthony's Foundation board member Robin Polastri. "We're trying to keep out the '40 ounce-out-the-door' kind of liquor."

Collaborative chair, S.F. Ministries' Glenda Hope, called time on the gallery presentation, but asked a final question: "How much for a glass of wine?"

Told it would cost \$5-\$8 a glass, she quipped, "I don't think we need to worry about street people getting drunk there — not when they can go next door and get a whole bottle for \$2."

## More on wheels

In other matters, Eric Tao of the AGI Capital Group presented plans for a parking garage with ground-floor retail at 67 Turk at Taylor. Garage-shy Collaborative members listened patiently to his show-and-tell, especially his history of how AGI's earlier, grander schemes for the seven parcels it owned on the triangular block died with the dot-com bust.

Gone were visions of a master plan that included a

major hotel. AGI now owns only three parcels, and its only viable plan, said Tao, is for the garage.

At the June Collaborative meeting, Brad Paul had recommended that the Mid-Market Plan PAC ban all free-standing garages such as the one AGI is proposing — "Once they're built, they're gone for housing," Paul had said. The Collaborative did endorse a garage ban. Tao was asked to comment on Paul's warning.

"Well, we've talked to TNDC and to TODCO about the idea of mixed-use for this site, with air rights for [affordable] housing above the garage," Tao said. "All of them have told us that it's just not feasible."

Tao also said that the surrounding streets are too noisy and rundown for AGI, a private company, to even think about market-rate housing. "Then we'd have to include the 12% affordable units — it just wouldn't work. Besides, no one's funding apartments now," he said. "But we're not ruling out housing in the future."

Can Collaborative members see a copy of the EIR for the garage? Tao was asked.

"We got a neg dec," he said, "so we don't need an EIR." (See page 8.)

Tao offered to return in a few months to update Collaborative members about the AGI project.

And whither Hastings' garage? TNDC's Katie Mullin told the group that the Hastings' directors' June 26 approval of a five-member blue-ribbon committee to guide further discussion of the proposed 885-car structure was stuck in neutral. No one had been appointed yet, though TNDC Director Kelly Cullen has been asked to serve, Mullin said.

"Let's keep up the pressure on [Hastings]," said Hawkins. "We have to do this before Sen. Burton moves on — Hastings could delay and delay."

Hear, hear, the group agreed. ■

## Hastings stacks committee with neighborhood leaders

On July 31, Hastings announced that the blue-ribbon committee members had been chosen by the board's executive committee. Two of the five are from the neighborhood and another leads a well-respected nonprofit housing developer. Here's the lineup:

- **Chair, attorney Joe Cotchett**, former Hastings board member and current chair of the state Parks and Recreation Commission
- **Kelly Cullen**, executive director of TNDC, the TL's best-known nonprofit developer
- **Leo McCarthy**, former lt. governor, speaker of the Assembly and

S.F. supervisor

• **Brad Paul**, program officer at Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund and Tenderloin organizer and planner for 28 years

• **Carol Galante**, president and CEO of the San Francisco-based nonprofit BRIDGE Housing Corp., the largest affordable housing developer in California.

Hastings' Public Affairs Director Fran Marsh says the committee will recommend what to do with the beleaguered garage project at the Hastings board's December meeting.

— Marjorie Beggs

## Letters to the Editor

### Every picture tells a story

Dear Editor:

Thank you for putting "cardboard jungle" on the front page of the Central City Extra. You provided fair reporting, great pictures and a nice layout that highlights my new work in social art. I am using the piece to promote an expanded show at City Hall.

"Encampment" reminds us of the need for a voice that distinguishes the humanity in our homeless culture. It hints that the crisis cannot be solved with ignoble billboard campaigns, punishing propositions and op-ed arguments. Every eye brings a disparate view.

Dianne E. Platner

### So noted

Dear Editor:

Let me begin by thanking you, writer Karen Oberdorfer and photographer Michael Nulty for your fantastic article entitled "Winning the Battle of Hastings - blow by blow" in the July 2002 edition of Central City Extra. You and your staff are serving the neighborhood well with your in-depth coverage of this important issue.

Please note that Joseph Halaiko and myself, Michelle Roder (printed "Roger"), are not representatives of the St. Anthony Foundation as printed on page 8 under "DA Drops Charges." Both Joseph and I are employees of the St. Boniface Neighborhood Center. Although the St. Boniface Neighborhood Center works in collaboration with St. Anthony Foundation, we are an independent nonprofit agency. In the interest of maintaining a good working relationship with St. Anthony Foundation, a note of correction in a future edition would be appreciated.

Michelle (Shelly) Roder, executive director  
St. Boniface Neighborhood Center, Inc.



Central City Extra is published monthly by San Francisco Study Center

Inc., a private nonprofit serving the community since 1972. The Extra is published through grants from the S.F. Hotel Tax Fund and the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund. The contents are copyrighted by the San Francisco Study Center, 1095 Market Street, Suite 602, San Francisco, CA 94103. Phone: 626-1650 Fax: 626-7276 E-mail: centralcityextra@studycenter.org

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Central City Extra is a member of the San Francisco Neighborhood Newspaper Association