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**BEST OF 2021 UPTOWN SAN DIEGO**

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**BEST OF 2021 DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO**

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**Contact us**

**Editorial/Letters**  
858-270-3101 x136  
kendra@sdnews.com

**Advertising**  
619-961-1958  
miker@sdnews.com

**sdnews.com**  
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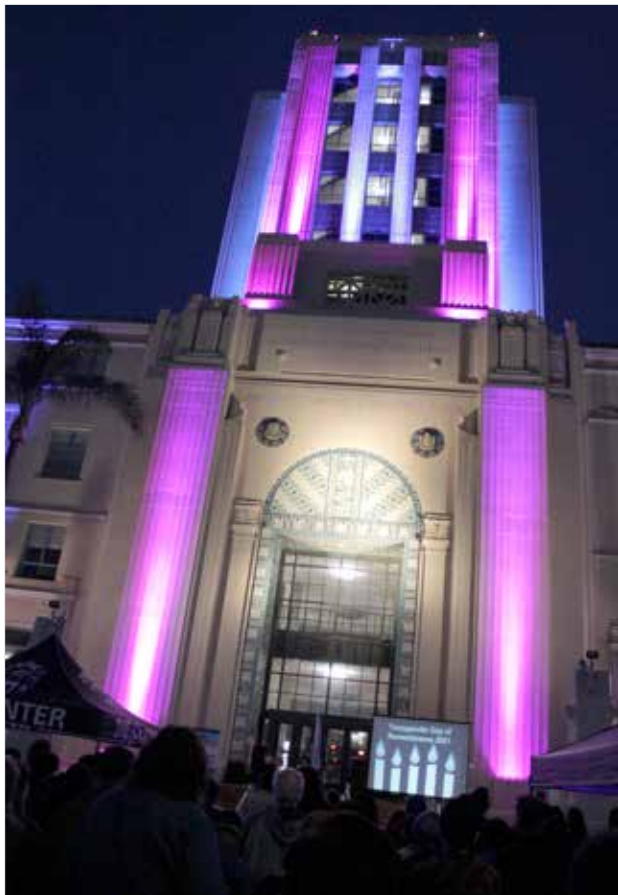
# San Diego holds vigil for transgender people murdered nationally

Event highlighted local discrimination despite efforts of LGBT+ public officials

By Kendra Sitton

The County Administration Building lit up in blue and pink for the transgender flag during a vigil held on Saturday, Nov. 20 in honor of the at least 47 transgender people murdered in the past year. The number has risen to at least 48 trans people since then, according to

SEE **TDOR VIGIL**, Page 22



The County Administration Building in blue and pink for the transgender flag. (Photo by Kendra Sitton)

# New establishment in Normal Heights brings absinthe to the forefront

By Frank Sabatini Jr.

It has been touted as a cure for everything from flatulence and crushing headaches to anemia and convulsions. Created in the late 1700s by a French doctor, the emerald-green spirit known as absinthe has been both

celebrated and condemned over the centuries.

Local restaurateur Amar Harrag is dispelling the negative myths about absinthe with his newly launched Wormwood, a bar and restaurant he named after one of the spirit's primary botanical extracts.

Wormwood replaces Jayne's Gastropub, which served elevated British-pub fare for nearly 15 years. Harrag has given the space a French flair, drawing inspiration from an absinthe bar he discovered while visiting

SEE **ABSINTHE**, Page 23

# 2021 holiday local gift guide

By Vince Meehan

It's always a good idea to buy local but this year that credo holds true more than ever. With our current supply chain fiasco, holiday shopping will not be as easy as years past. But if the products are made here in San Diego, you will not need to be concerned about the armada of container ships anchored off San Pedro ruining your shopping experience. Besides, our local businesses are still catching up from the Covid shutdowns, so the extra business will help them out immensely. Here is a list of thoughtful gifts that are easy to obtain at local spots.

## EMBRACE THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT!

A bottle of wine or spirits has always been a go-to gift that brings a smile to your family or friends.

Nick Apostolopoulos is the founder of **619 Spirits North Park**, a star player in a new wave of local distillers that have taken root in San Diego due to new state laws that made the craft viable in 2017.

619 Spirits North Park is in the heart of North Park at 30th and Lincoln (3015 Lincoln Ave.). Flavored vodka is his spirit specialty. The line includes 619's Original Vodka, as well as five infusions — Scorpion Pepper, Coffee, Rose

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**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**  
FROM YOUR DUI DEFENSE FIRM!  
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There may be defenses in your case that can lead to reduced charges or even a dismissal!

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# Fashion-inspired exhibits

## Fashion Files

By DIANA CAVAGNARO



What do social security and feathers have in common? The Oceanside Museum of Art (OMA) has two new innovative exhibits called *Saki: Birds of a Different Feather* and *MartyO: Social Security*. Saki and MartyO both won the grand prize last year for the fashion fundraiser gala. This virtual art fashion event in 2020 was called Night of the Living Art: An Art After Dark Extravaganza. Winning the grand prize gave them both the opportunity to share a space for this new installation. The first fashion-inspired exhibit, *Saki: Birds of a Different Feather*, examines cultural themes of gender roles.

In the animal realm, male birds stand out to grab the attention of their mate. It is the

opposite in the human world. Women are the ones to steal the show with their fashion. As an educated professional, the modern woman is not just an attractive dresser. This exhibit inspires the onlookers to see beyond traditional gender roles. The modern man can now go beyond wearing a three-piece suit. Each one of Saki's creations show different birds of a feather and how the male roles in society range from the sugar daddy to rockstar.

The second outstanding exhibit is *MartyO: Social Security*. She analyzes women's roles and cultural mores in the 20th century which have ushered in women's suffrage in 1919, the Social Security Act in 1935, and "the pill" in 1961. Each piece in the show is about a feminine issue. The exhibition is dedicated to Francis Perkin who



3 Generations

was a fierce labor advocate. She worked toward abolishing child labor and was a role model for women getting an education and joining the work force. One of MartyO's creations named "No No No" is about the need for consent. Another called "You Turn Me On" is about the way women have been objectified. "Still Life with Doves Quilt" is about how thin we must be and "Love Honor & Obey" is about how women are taught domestic skills.

Some of the pieces are really fun such as "Give her what she really wants for Christmas" which is a richly-embellished vacuum and a Dust Pan with



Dressing Shame (Photos courtesy of OMA)

a mink collar. One piece that is meaningful to MartyO is the piece called "3 Generations." Her mom and grandma helped her on the piece that helps her remember her family. The title Social Security refers also to our rights as women to be secure with no fear of sexual assault, free to have contraceptives and the right to be seen as an individual, not as an object for others gratification.

OMA showcases artists' works, presenting innovative and dynamic exhibitions of significant local and regional art. This exhibit runs through Jan. 23, 2022.

Museum hours are Thursday-Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information visit: oma-online.org.

—Diana Cavagnaro is an internationally renowned Couture Milliner based in Alpine, California. Learn more about our Hat Designer, Teacher & Blogger at [DianaCavagnaro.com](http://DianaCavagnaro.com).



You Turn Me On

Security. She analyzes women's roles and cultural mores in the 20th century which have ushered in women's suffrage in 1919, the Social Security Act in 1935, and "the pill" in 1961. Each piece in the show is about a feminine issue. The exhibition is dedicated to Francis Perkin who



Powerbird



Cuckoo



Peacock

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**The Gaslamp Pet Parade**  
Dress your dog or animal in their best holiday gear. Registration is \$20 at [jotform.com/213076127867158](http://jotform.com/213076127867158). Sunday, Dec. 19.

# "to the yellow house" rambles through van Gogh's life

## Theater Review

By JEAN LOWERISON



Art is a harsh mistress. So is public opinion. And a negative reaction – or being ignored – can do huge psychological damage to an artist who's "not like all the others."

Playwright Kimber Lee's "to the yellow house" – La Jolla Playhouse's latest offering – explores this problem. It was inspired by a voluminous biography of 19th-century artist Vincent van Gogh that details the (many) failures, hardships and psychological problems the artist had as an iconoclast trying to get viewers (and buyers) to appreciate his most unusual way of portraying the world on canvas.

Here's a little history: van Gogh never achieved fame during his lifetime, surviving mostly with the help of his brother Theo. He worked briefly as an art dealer. He took up religion and spent time as a Protestant missionary in Belgium before moving to Paris in 1886. Here he tried painting and took art classes, in which the teachers told him how and what to paint: "Draw only what you see." During this time, he befriended avant-garde artists like Paul Gauguin, who were reacting against the popular Impressionist movement in art.

He and brother Theo exchanged many letters, and this is the source of information we have about the artist. But all this time his psyche suffered. In 1888 he moved south to Arles, where he began to broaden his subjects to the olive trees, wheat fields and sunflowers we all know today. He also drank too much and fell in love with the wrong woman, triggering more depression. He eventually moved back to the Paris area (Auvers-sur-Oise) to be closer to the stability offered by Theo. This is where he would die by his own hand.

The play gives an unsettling portrait of an unstable personality who stubbornly painted what and how he wanted to, and would never know the fame he eventually would achieve. It's almost as difficult to watch this story as it must have been to live it, because no matter what Vincent does, it doesn't work out. The set design by Takeshi Kata gives viewers the idea of Van Gogh's unstable life by use of black-and-white projections that change and float back and forth behind the action.

Neel Keller directs a diverse and uniformly excellent cast. Six of the actors are students in UCSD's MFA program.

Paco Tolson, of Manhattan Theatre Club's "Vietgone" production, must be exhausted each



(L-R) Alton Alburo as Henri, DeLeon Dallas as Bernard and Paco Tolson as Vincent in the world premiere of "to the yellow house."

night after playing Vincent, but he is definitely convincing.

Frankie J. Alvarez's Theo is an excellent if frustrated brother, trying to help van Gogh and have a life of his own.

Vincent spends a lot of time in a local café. Brooke Ishibashi (as waitress and wannabe baker Sophie) and Deidrie Henry (as cafe owner Agostina) add much-needed humor and occasional exasperation.

Alton Alburo, as Henri, Marco Barricelli in three roles, and DeLeon Dallas as Bernard are all very fine as well.

And let's hear it for the design team: David Israel Reynoso's costumes, Alberto "Albee" Alvarado's wigs, Masha Tsimring's lighting, Palmer Hefferan's sound design, Nicholas Hussong's stunning projections and Justin Ellington's music.

I would like to see the play shortened by at least 30 minutes



Tolson gives a rousing performance of the troubled artist. (Photos courtesy La Jolla Playhouse)

(it clocks in at two hours, 45 minutes), if only because seeing the same thing happening over and over (failure) gets monotonous.

But "to the yellow house," named after the house in Arles where Vincent rented four rooms, is certainly a play like no other.

'to the yellow house' plays through Dec. 12 at La Jolla Playhouse's Weiss Theatre.

Shows Thursday and Friday at 8 p.m. and Saturday at 2 and 8 p.m. Shows Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.; Wednesday at 2 and 7:30 p.m.; Thursday and Friday at 8 p.m. and Saturday at 2 and 8 p.m.; Sunday at 2 and 7 p.m.

Tickets: [lajollaplayhouse.org](http://lajollaplayhouse.org)  
Proof of vaccination and masks mandatory.

—Jean Lowerison is a long-standing member of the San Diego Theatre Critics Circle and can be reached at [infodame@cox.net](mailto:infodame@cox.net).

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1621 Grand Ave. Suite C  
San Diego, CA 92109  
858-270-3103  
[sdnews.com](http://sdnews.com)

Facebook.com/sandiegodowntownnews  
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## EDITOR

Kendra Sittton  
[kendra@sdnews.com](mailto:kendra@sdnews.com)

## ADVERTISING

**CONSULTANTS**  
Mike Rosensteel  
(619) 961-1958

## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Jeff Clemetson x130  
Tom Melville x131  
Dave Schwab x132

miker@sdnews.com  
Lauren Vernon  
(571) 259-1530  
lauren@sdnews.com

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Diana Cavagnaro  
Chris Gomez  
Jane Lowerison  
Neal Putnam  
Vince Meehan  
Frank Sabatini Jr.

## BUSINESS

**CONSULTANT**  
David Mannis  
(619) 961-1951  
david@sdenn.com

## WEB / SOCIAL MEDIA

Kendra Sittton

**ACCOUNTING**  
Heather Humble x120  
accounting@sdnews.com

## PUBLISHER

Julie Main x106  
julie@sdnews.com

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