

LAW WEEKLY[®]

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS
EXPRESS CONCERNS OVER
LAPD ROBOT DOG

JIM GAFFIGAN ON MAKING
US LAUGH AND CRY

VILLE VALO IS BACK WITH A
SOLO PROJECT

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DESERT X ASKS DESERT WHY?

The Land Art Biennial Opens a Reserved 4th Edition. By Shana Nys Dambrot



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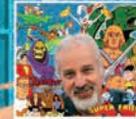
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GO EDITORS' PICKS

ARTS

THURSDAY, MARCH 16

LIFELIKE at Vellum LA. A new group exhibition in collaboration with EPOCH, curated by Katie Peyton Hofstadter, explores the work of ten artists logging biological, genetic, and behavioral information on a digital ledger, invoking a conversation about body sovereignty in Web3. These artists are interested in what it will mean, and how it will feel, to have a body in a future where wetware (living tissue) serves as a foundation for technology, where medical implants monitor our hearts and minds, and where decisions are made by programs none of us fully understand. 7673 Melrose Ave., West Hollywood; Opening reception: ~ *ursday, March 16, 7-9pm; On view through April 2; free; vellumla.com.*

Artist Film Series: Martine Syms at MOCA. A screening of *The African Desperate* followed by a conversation with artist Martine Syms and writer/curator Essence Harden. The electrifying feature debut from the renowned artist brings her razor-sharp satire and vivid aesthetic invention to a riotous coming-of-age comedy. The film tracks one very long day for Palace Bryant (an expertly deadpan Diamond Stingily), a newly minted MFA grad whose final 24 hours in art school become a real trip when she bails on the graduation party and hits the road in a madcap all-night journey home to Chicago. 250 S. Grand Ave., downtown; ~ *ursday, March 16, 6pm; free/rsvp; moca.org.*

FRIDAY, MARCH 17

Come Get Maggie at Rogue Machine Theatre. Maggie, a brilliant young woman stuck in 1950's suburbia, is out of sync with her times. She wonders if her real home might be somewhere else. When an alien answers her call to the stars for help, she begins an intergalactic romance that will change her, the world she lives in, and the whole universe. Obviously, this is a musical. 7657 Melrose Ave., West Hollywood; *Performances through March 26; \$60; roguemachinetheatre.org.*

SATURDAY, MARCH 18

Tap Fest: A Soulful Sound at Colburn School (Live



& Virtual). An evening of tap dance highlighting a curated cohort of world-renowned Los Angeles-based tap artists, who will be accompanied by an eclectic catalog of infectious joyful rhythmic soul and funk music. *Zipper Hall, 200 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Saturday, March 18, 7pm; \$25; colburnschool.edu.*

Hilary Pecis: Paths Crossed at David Kordansky Gallery. Pecis creates drawings and paintings inspired by the interior, exterior, and inter-spaces that surround her daily life. For her first exhibition with David Kordansky Gallery, the artist presents a selection of lush, saturated landscapes reflecting the mountainous, desert, and urban landscapes commonly associated with Southern California. 5130 W. Edgewood Pl., Mid-City; *Opening reception: Saturday, March 18, 6-8pm; On view through April 2; free; davidkordanskygallery.com.*

Nir Hod: 100 Years Is Not Enough at Kohn Gallery. Hod's artistic practice draws upon personal memory and traumatic historical events to elicit subtle tensions between the viewer's expectations and the material reality of the painted surface. These new works present a masterful play between the profoundly illusionistic depth of the chromed, mirror-like surface that reflects the viewer and their surroundings, and the physical substance of the painting evidenced by the oil painted brushstrokes surrounding the chrome—competing, yet completely compatible, shifts in perspective. 1227 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood; *Opening reception: Saturday, March 18, 6-8pm; On view through April 29; free;*

kohngallery.com.

SUNDAY, MARCH 19

Open Artist Studios at Santa Monica Airport. Art at the Airport's regular open-studio days feature professional artists working in the historic atelier complex, opening their studio doors and offering a rare glimpse into their practices. Visit over 20 working artists in an historic airplane hangar, as they open our doors for a peek into our studios and the opportunity to purchase works directly from the artists. *Refreshments, Music, Free parking. 3026 Airport Ave., Santa Monica; Sunday, March 19, 11am-3pm; free; artattheairport.org.*

TUESDAY, MARCH 21

Annika Rose at NeueHouse Bradbury. Annika Rose is an LA-based singer-songwriter and an early adopter of web3, utilizing blockchain technology as a tool to create greater extensions of her art and develop deeper connections with her fans. Since venturing into the web3 space, she has built an engaged following through a unique POAP campaign, sold out music and video NFT collections, and is now set to launch a first-of-its-kind music video game crafted in Unreal Engine 5 and inspired by the lyrics of Bruises. Presented in collaboration with Nvak Collective. 304 S. Broadway, downtown; *Tuesday, March 21, 7pm; free w/rsvp; rsvp.neuehouse.com/worldwideweb3annikarosebruises.*

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22

Seeing Sound: Hamza Walker and Micah Silver

in conversation at the ICA LA. On the occasion of the exhibition Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, curator Caroline Ellen Liou will moderate a discussion with Hamza Walker, Director of LAXART, and Micah Silver, artist, curator, and founder of Black Hole, to hear their experiences and ideas around the presentation of audio, sound, and music in the art space. The conversation will be followed by a walkthrough of the exhibition. 1717 E. 7th St., downtown; *Wednesday, March 22, 7pm; free w/rsvp; theicala.org.*

MUSIC

MARCH 17-23

Brujeria Alex's Bar

Brujeria is a death metal supergroup that may or may not also be Mexican gangsters. Probably not, but still, their albums are intense so expect an insane night in Long Beach and one in L.A. *Brujeria* have courted controversy ever since their classic 1993 debut album *Matando Güeros*, which featured a real severed head on the sleeve. Nice! *Dwarves* and *Art of Shock* also perform. 8 p.m. on Saturday, March 18 at Alex's Bar, \$34.25, alexsbar.com.

Nessa Barrett Fonda Theatre

Breakout pop artist Nessa Barrett released awesome track "Bang Bang" last month, a pulsing, punky, semi-industrial-influenced pop monster, and she's followed it up with a huge tour. There's a strong chance Barrett will explode this year, so catch her while you can. 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 21 at the Fonda Theatre, \$35 fondatheatre.com.

Possessed Whisky A Go Go

Part of the Bay Area thrash scene, *Possessed* actually played a big part in pioneering the death metal that was more associated with Florida (*Death*, *Deicide*, *Cannibal Corpse*, etc). Whatever, they remain brutally heavy and it's awesome that they're still around. Dark as *Death*, *GRAVEDANGER*, *Disciples of Death*, *Exitosus*, *Crolog*, and *Putrescence* also play. 6 p.m. on Tuesday, March 21 at the *Whisky A Go Go*, \$40, whiskyagogo.com.

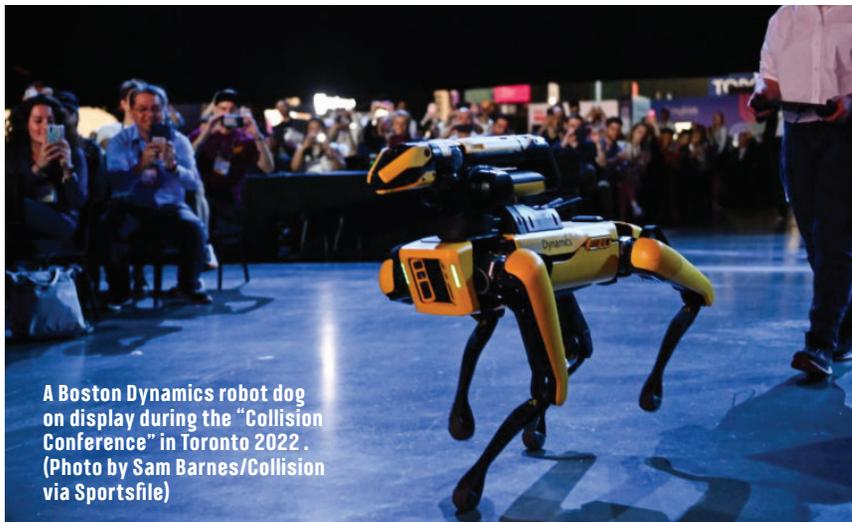
John Mellencamp Dolby Theatre

Classic rocker John Mellencamp makes a stop at the Dolby Theatre on his *Live and In Person 2023* tour, after putting out the *Strictly a One-Eyed Jack* album last year. That was his 24th, having put out his debut in 1976. Most would say that the early to mid '80s was his brightest spell (*American Fool*, *Uh-Huh*, *Scarecrow*), but he's never let the quality drop. 8 p.m. on Wednesday, March 22 at the *Dolby Theatre*, \$59+, dolbytheatre.com. [R]

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS EXPRESS CONCERNS OVER LAPD ROBOT DOG

While LAPD believes robotic dogs are the future of the force, city council members are not sure they are entirely safe, or necessary

BY ISAI ROCHA



A Boston Dynamics robot dog on display during the "Collision Conference" in Toronto 2022. (Photo by Sam Barnes/Collision via Sportsfile)

The Los Angeles City Council agreed to extend discussions on whether or not to deploy a robot police dog donated to LAPD by robotics company Boston Dynamics.

The vote was delayed by 60 days, as multiple council members expressed not only ethical concerns, but questions about the robot's necessity.

"Based on what I heard, I don't think it's necessary to have it. Sounds like we have a lot of other machines that can do the same thing," Councilman Hugo Soto-Martinez said at the March 7 council meeting. "At the heart of a lot of these questions is, does the community trust LAPD? And I think the answer is no."

The dog is a quadruped unmanned ground vehicle that Boston Dynamics has named "Spot" and is valued at nearly

\$278,000. LAPD said it has worked out a two-year warranty for the robot dog for about \$24,800, with the intention of extending the warranty long-term.

Deputy Chief David Kowalski said the robot dog would only be used in high-risk SWAT situations involving active shooters, hostages, barricaded suspects, hazardous materials or search-and-rescue operations during natural disasters.

Kowalski added that despite the robot dog having the capability of storing payloads, there are "no circumstances" where it will carry any weapons, use facial recognition software, nor be used for surveillance, with no intention of changing the written policy on the dog's prohibited actions.

"This is the future of policing in terms of technology and putting our officers in the best situations to save lives and pre-

vent them or anyone from being hurt," Deputy Chief Kowalski said. "This is a way to expand our abilities in a way that will make us even more efficient and effective in being safe."

A representative for Boston Dynamics answered council member questions during the city council meeting and gave a rundown of its company's ethical positions.

"We prohibit, in the very legal contract that all of our customers execute, including LAPD, they are prohibited from weaponizing the robot, or using the robot to harm or intimidate any person or animal," Vice President of Policy & Government Relations at Boston Dynamics Brendan Schulman said. "... we're very clear that we will not partner with, or support customers who violate civil rights, or privacy rights."

Council President Paul Krekorian proposed extending the conversation for the robot dog, as there was a lot of uncertainty about it from the council.

The item will be brought before the council again on Friday, May 5, with Krekorian asking that the currently written policies for the robot dog be shared with council members and an opportunity to have further questions answered.

SCHOOL WORKERS MOVE CLOSER TO A STRIKE, GIVE LAUSD 10-DAY NOTICE

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) received a 10-day notice from school workers, Wednesday, saying they intend to end their current contract and move toward a strike.

The notice comes after 96% of the nearly 30,000 school employees represented by Service Employees International Union, Local 99 (SEIU-99), voted to move forward with a strike if both sides could not reach a contract agreement.

"Los Angeles Unified is disappointed that SEIU is walking away from negotiations with so much on the table," LAUSD said in a statement. "We want to do right by our employees, which is why Superintendent (Albert) Carvalho made one of the strongest offers ever proposed by a Los Angeles Unified superintendent, offering historic compensation increases and benefits aligned with SEIU's requests."

The district said the proposed contract included a more than 15% ongoing wage increase, a 9% retention bonus, equity adjustments for those earning fewer than \$30 per hour, health benefits for part-time employees and a \$20 minimum wage, which would be higher than both the county and state's minimum.

SEIU called the proposed contract a "step forward," but continued to ask for a 30% raise plus a \$2 per hour equity wage increase.

"Workers are fed up with the short

staffing at LAUSD and being harassed for speaking up," Max Arias, SEIU Local 99 executive director said in a statement. "Canceling our contract is not a decision we make lightly, but it's clear that LAUSD does not respect or value the work of essential workers in our schools."

LAUSD said it is preparing for the "unavoidable impact" a strike would bring to this district.

RESIDENTS PETITION AGAINST REMOVAL OF ECHO PARK FENCE

Residents have started an online petition to stop the removal of the chain-link fence surrounding Echo Park.

Los Angeles City Councilmember Hugo Soto-Martinez has planned the fence's removal after being up nearly two years after the city began repairs on the park.

"During the occupation of Echo Park by the unhoused who were allowed to languish there, the park was rendered unsafe and inaccessible to the general population, and the surrounding community had to put up with perpetual crime, fires, open-air drug use, and other dangerous activity right at their doorstep," the petition on Change.org said. "After the park was cleaned out and the fencing was erected, these conditions largely disappeared from the area, and the park was restored to its former beauty."

The fence was put up in 2021 and homeless advocates accused then-councilmember Mitchell O'Farrell of using park renovations as an excuse to remove the homeless population residing in the park. Altercations between protesters and LAPD later ensued, as construction workers made their way to the park at late-night hours, in what activists called an attempt to put up the fencing discreetly.

Several hundreds of homeless Angelenos were removed from the park and directed to move into designated housing facilities, with then-Mayor Eric Garcetti saying "100% of the people there have a room to sleep in."

Newly elected Councilman Soto-Martinez relayed an arbitrary goal to remove the fence before the two-year anniversary on March 25, however a concrete date was not established.

"As we said during the campaign last year, we plan to take down the fence and ensure the park is safe and welcoming for all residents," Soto Martinez said in a Feb. 2 statement. "In addition to the fence, we've been working on a motion to improve even more access to the park."

A community meeting is scheduled for Saturday, March 18, at 3 p.m., at Echo Park United Methodist Church, when the fence's future will be discussed.

As of this writing, the petition has received 957 signatures with a goal of 1,000. [E]

ENTERTAINMENT

JIM GAFFIGAN ON MAKING US LAUGH AND CRY (Q&A)

BY LINA LECARO

With everyone focused on the Oscars and catching up on the nominated films and winning films — not to mention seeing current box office hits about coked-out bears or microscopic superheroes — a wonderful little film like *Linoleum* might get lost in the buzz and blitz. But don't let it! This indie from writer/director Colin West is one of the most thought-provoking and fun movies of the year. Starring Jim Gaffigan in dual roles as Cameron Edwin, the host of a children's science TV show called "Above & Beyond," and as Kent Armstrong, his new neighbor who also happens to be his better-looking, more successful doppelgänger, this is a film that you can watch and enjoy a good 2/3 of the way through before you actually understand what it's trying to do.

We recommend going with the flow and letting it unfold as it will. It really is an experience, and to this writer anyway, it all makes sense in the end. The car falling from the sky, the spaceship, the teenage boy, the charismatic daughter, the distant wife, the science — everything pieces together, and not in a perfect way that answers every question, but like daily life and memories do: patchy, happy, sad, romantic, regretful, grateful, all bleeding into each other for better or worse.

The film — which got its big premiere at South By Southwest this week — is now in theaters and hopefully coming to streaming soon. It's a serious turn for the successful funnyman, one of our favorites in the giggles game. Gaffigan's contemplative yet simplistic stand-up concerning family life, food, and the absurdity of day-to-day existence has a subtle wit and innocence that's garnered him a diverse fanbase. His Netflix specials are guaranteed to put a smile on your face — live, even more so. He just performed his latest show, called *Dark Pale*, at L.A.'s Yaamava Casino, which also will be on Netflix soon.

LA WEEKLY: So I just saw *Linoleum* and I'm still processing... I cried, like full on tears down the face, cried. Was it supposed to be so emotional?

JIM GAFFIGAN: Yes, it's a weeper. It's one of those movies that catches people off guard. It's really interesting because there is something cathartic about it. It brings up questions that we should be asking ourselves. That's what I love about the movie. And that's why I think Colin and the producers are so obsessed with people seeing it in a theater. You know, you have experience watching things on screen, you have to consume a lot of stuff, but like, I think people can get distracted. And so the theater experience with people sitting in the dark, there's usually a silence. When we would go to festivals, it was interesting because there would



be people that'd applaud afterwards. But there's also a little bit of like, people are recovering. Most importantly, I think it presents questions. And I love art that presents questions that you can have a conversation about. I've seen the movie so many times, it's like, if you watch it again, you'd have a different set of questions.

I want to watch it again now knowing what I know. I'm sure you can notice little things, sort of hints about what's coming. What do you feel are the questions it asks and the message behind it? I think it's about aging, about reality and our perceptions of reality, especially as we get older and our cognitive minds change. But it's also about love, isn't it?

I should preface this by saying that, you know, everyone's gonna have their own takeaway, but I think it's really about a beautiful love story. You know, you can sit there and say, it's dreams, it's the influence of our parents, ambition versus kind of quality of life. But I think it's revealed that it's about this incredible woman, and the incredible story of this couple that almost threw it all away.

It really touched me. I'm a fan of yours and your stand-up like many. You're known for your comedy, but what attracts you to doing more dramatic roles like this?

I think because I get to write and create my own stand-up and comedic films — comedic roles are fun, but they're not as rewarding as the complexity of a dramatic role. So I know that stand-up comedy and doing a dramatic role are completely different, but there is a complexity and a thoroughness. You have to nerd out in both scenarios. If you want to continue to create interesting stand-up material, you have to do the research and do the work. For developing a complex, multi-layered dramatic performance, you have to do the work and do the math behind it, too, you know, figuring out how this happened, then that. And I love that stuff.

With this role, you're playing two characters. Was that challenging?

It was so fun because there are two different sides, right? I mean, there are two different people in there. But I do feel like as individuals, we all encounter these moments where we are like Kent who is confident and drives a Corvette. And then there's moments where we feel like Cameron who rides a bike and feels like the world is just constantly taking advantage of him. And so it was fun to kind of construct those characters and like, how they might be different, you know, vocally and the levels of vulnerability, which is dramatically different. But I think that both versions exist in me.

I was wondering who the real Jim was more like in real life? ~ e more confident, even-keeled guy or the emotional, self-doubter guy?

It's also interesting, because like, I remember thinking: Is he more like my dad? Or is Kent more like how my kids see me? Every acting role, you don't want to act, you just want to find that character within yourself. But I think that everyone feels sometimes like Kent and sometimes like Cameron. And unfortunately, it's like, within the same hour, right?

Yeah, it shows that duality. Did you ever have an interest in space? At the be-

ginning of the film, I thought it was going to be a Bill Nye-type thing. Did you observe people like that for the role?

I was never into science. I never watched Bill Nye the Science Guy. So I definitely studied some Bill Nye. That was one of the challenges. When I read the script, I was like, well, I know nothing about science. And then I'm supposed to not only have an enthusiasm for it, but then become an advocate for it. So I liked that challenge. My youngest son is very into science. So I know that I kind of stole a little bit of that from him. And I saw that there were different versions of understanding science. Kent was kind of factually based and Cameron had more of a passion for it. Cameron on the TV show had an enthusiasm for science, so I had to understand the science and then I had to bring an enthusiasm and then an advocacy. And that was a fun challenge. But I don't remember any of it now.

Well, it did come through and it seemed real and organic. I want to ask you about your stand-up comedy. Are you still enjoying it? You have a ton of movies coming out, too, including the new Disney Peter Pan project. You are very, very busy. Critically, you're in a great place right now, too. How are you balancing it?

I mean, I've been doing this long enough to know that I have no control over the timing. But you know, being married and having five kids, it is a difficult balancing act. And it is one of those things where it's a re-calibration every couple of months of kind of going, 'all right, no, I can't do that,' because in the end, I don't want to look back with regret on some of these life decisions. But the fact that my wife is a creative person, and she can appreciate, 'okay, you're going to be in Vancouver for months working on Peter Pan— you got to go do that,' is cool. It's also readjusting because stand-up can gobble things up. And it's also, 'how I can afford to have five children.' You know what I mean?

Yes I do. It seems like you still really enjoy it. Your shows are so joyful. Can you give us any hints about some new themes and the new material of your latest stand-up before the interview ends?

I would say "Dark Pale" is a little bit darker. You know, I think that having gone through the pandemic, I think that there's a cynicism that exists culturally that wasn't there before. And some of it is about the consequences of the virus, you know, the political climate. We love our friends, and we have a familiar conversation, but we don't have the same conversation. So I had that challenge to talk about some new darker stuff. It's also my 10th show, and so I want to evolve.

More at jimgaffigan.com and linoleum-movie.com. [E]



Desert X 2023 installation view, Rana Begum, No.1225 Chainlink, photo by Lance Gerber, courtesy the artist and Desert X

ART

DESERT X ASKS DESERT WHY?

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

Desert X, the Coachella Valley land art biennial, has opened its fourth edition in a curious position — the project's media profile has grown, even as its physical scope has contracted. Its inaugural edition in 2017 was festooned in mystery,

novelty and a cheerfully brazen spirit of experiment and adventure; the 2019 return saw massive expansion in territory and social ambitions. Centering on large-scale sculptures and other temporary interventions in the desert landscape, the ethos was a journey-based take on the classic American

western road trip with all the self-reflection and grounded attention that entails. Along the way, issues of land use, resource allocation, Indigenous stewardship, development, climate, spiritual and cinematic mythography, colonialism, labor, language, and the sometimes contentious discourse between

international and regional culture were inevitably raised.

In 2021, the size was scaled back for pandemic reasons, but the edition still produced many poignant moments and prompted a revised perspective on our relationship to ideas like being outdoors, the influence of capital, and environmental justice. Now it's 2023, and the new Desert X, which opened March 4 and will (mostly) remain on view through May 7, has so far been received as underwhelming — but in its lack of Instagram-breaking wow factors, it succeeds in raising a new set of interrelated questions like: Who is this really for? Why the desert? Why this desert? What is the difference between land art and public art? Whose



Desert X 2023 installation view, Mario Garcia Torres, *Searching for the Sky (While Maintaining Equilibrium)*
Photo by Lance Gerber, courtesy the artist and Desert X



Desert X 2023 installation view, Rana Begum, *No.1225 Chainlink*, photo by Lance Gerber, courtesy the artist and Desert X



Desert X 2023 installation view, Torkwase Dyson, *Liquid A Place*, photo by Lance Gerber, courtesy the artist and Desert X

vision is, or ought to be, prioritized — the outsider with a fresh unfettered perspective, or the local with a narrower but deeper experience of the place? Answers are not easy to come by, but just like the organizers remind us that with land art the journey is part and parcel of the holistic experience of the work, maybe for now it's enough to ask.

"A place is a story that is told many times," says Artistic Director Neville Wakefield; and when this year's guest curator Diana Campbell speaks of selected works in terms of "what is generated at the meeting of extremes," it seems clear that the story of this desert is the surreal juxtapositions it holds, from weather to wealth. The Coachella Valley generally,

and Palm Springs/Palm Desert in particular, is the kind of place where the most ostentatiously luxurious and water-intensive developments are snug up against vast tracts of unused, sandy expanse. If land art is about being prompted to leave your normal routine, leave your city or your suburb and go off, out there, to a remote place, where after a long drive and some kind of hike, you encounter a work that exists in response to its location with a mix of site-specificity, phenomenology, and broader context, then what happens when you already live in a place that is half-remote, where the out-there already makes itself felt on every corner?

Public art by contrast comes and finds you. It appears in the middle of your rou-

tine, it's stumbled upon in the ordinary course of life; it requires no special plans, nor even an interest in art. You look up and there it is, in your day, in your way. No journey required. In a place like Coachella Valley, where the beautiful but sometimes abrasive landscape already makes itself felt, there is no shortage of roadside instances of the out-there, great wide patches of undeveloped land just across the street. In Desert X 2023, the wide sweep of the horizon may not be calling, but the proximity of large-scale works to where people live serves to highlight the precariousness of the desert city. So while this fairly diminutive edition does not inspire as a land art biennial in the epic sense, it impresses as a public art

festival in the attention-activation sense. For a festival known for having international aspirations, this year audiences who flock from all over on the promise of spectacle may leave nonplussed, but for the people who already make the region their home, there's an exciting chance to see their familiar surroundings with new eyes — and the most successful pieces are those that underscore that dynamic.

Rana Begum's *No.1225 Chainlink* rests more or less on the side of a neighborhood road — set back but visible, a building-sized confection of buttercup yellow chain link fencing rising in straight planar walls like a chunky maze-like building. Translucent but forbidding, those outside look immediately for a way in;



Desert X 2023 installation view, *Hylozoic Desires* (Himali Singh Soin and David Soin Tappeser), Namak Nazar, photo by Lance Gerber, courtesy the artist and Desert X



Desert X 2023 installation view, Paloma Contreras Lomas, *Amar a Dios en Tierra de Indios, Es Oficio Maternal*, photo by Lance Gerber, courtesy the artist and Desert X



Desert X 2023 installation view, Gerald Clarke, *Immersion*, photo by Lance Gerber, courtesy the artist and Desert X



Desert X 2023 installation view, Lauren Bon + Metabolic Studio, *The Smallest Sea with the Largest Heart*, photo by Lance Gerber



Desert X 2023 film still from Marina Tabassum, Khudi Bari, courtesy the artist and Desert X

once inside, an unexpectedly charming world of dappled shadows and framed, distant mountains creates a simultaneous sense of cage and shelter. It would be a lot scarier were it not for the bright and cheerful color beaming amid considerations of what and who is out and in, and the absurdity of asserting ownership over the eternal land. Should we make all our construction fencing beautiful colors to make the view seem less carceral? Should we beware of how easy it is to literally candy-coat a prison trap and thus ignore our society's violent dysfunction? Yes.

Nearby, at monied political contemplation center Sunnylands, Paloma Contreras Lomas' *Amar a Dios en Tierra de Indios, Es Oficio Maternal* (Loving God in the Land of the Indians is a Maternal Job) is a riot of mixed-media soft sculpture of human limbs and bizarre creatures and quoted bits of pop culture and violence, all piled atop and emerging from within

a wrecked car. It's grotesque and cheeky, and the best thing about it is how utterly out of place it is in this vaunted, hallowed, extremely fancy place. For as fancy as it is, Sunnylands also is free and open to the public, its dry-scaped greenspace a true oasis. People love it there. The perverse pleasure of encountering such an unavoidably subversive work of anti-patriarchal art occupying a site of serene, expensive, privileged beauty was nothing short of delicious.

Héctor Zamora's performance series *Chimera*, which happened during opening weekend and now exists only in documentation, took the idea of intervening in local routines literally. Roadside vendors were set up with huge bunches of silver balloons spelling out words like home, gun, rescue, soon, source, and sun; anyone could buy them, they cost \$25. Where one might expect and fail to truly see the hardworking folks who

sell their wares at intersections, instead of rugs, flowers, food, and the like, men at four locations walked back and forth with big shiny objects. There were no visible comforts like food, water, shade or bathrooms, no support staff; they were out there on their own. Were they safe? Were they being paid fairly? How much did they understand or even care what was going on? What in the world did they make of carloads of white people driving up, taking their pictures, and driving off all afternoon? Is this the most time anyone in those cars has spent considering the well-being of roadside vendors? A commentary on the absurd idea of value when it comes to art? A gorgeous moment of Fellini-esque surrealism available to anyone and everyone who happened to be heading home that way, that day only? Yes.

Hylozoic/Desires (Himali Singh Soin and David Soin Tappeser) installed Na-

mak Nazar up Desert Hot Springs way. A telephone pole with a series of blossom-like speakers in a broadcast array that shares spoken word and sound on the topic of salt — a substance that both sustains and snuffs life, preserves and destroys, evokes vacation and parable, and is busy creeping up the pole from the ground in a threat to subsume it. The act of sitting and listening, absorbing with a strangely activated attention not only the sound and the poem, but the view and the air. There's a subtly ritualistic energy to the way the piece is experienced, a quality of hallucination enhanced by the lilting disembodied voice, as the art offers an excuse to linger on location, breathe more slowly, be more present, and think about common things differently — about 100 feet from the road. Perfect.

For more information visit desertx.org. [A]

MUSIC

HIM AGAIN!

Ville Valo is back with a solo project and familiar sound

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

There was a period in the mid-naughts when Finnish gothic rock band HIM broke, and it felt like people basically melted. Every human being who was attracted to men, and a few who previously didn't know that they were, seemed to gush over impossibly charismatic frontman Ville Valo and the music that he and his band tagged "love metal."

The band was about more than a handsome goth frontman though, that "love metal" was really a contemporary take on poetic goth, with some crunchy riffs. It was sweeter than bands such as Paradise Lost or Type O Negative that were floating around at the time, but heavier than old vamp faves like Bauhaus and the Mission. When Kat Von D and Jackass' Bam Margera publicly professed their love for HIM, it all clicked.

Valo rode that wave with his bandmates for a while. 2013's *Tears on Tape* was HIM's eighth and final studio album, a full decade ago now. Valo has been keeping busy between that and *Neon Noir*, his new solo album (released under the moniker VV). But of course, the pandemic shat on his plans.

"All good things go round in 20-year cycles," he says. "I calculated that if we were strong with my previous band in the early naughts, then now is exactly the right time to come back. It's like flared trousers, bell-bottoms. They're in and out of fashion, and I guess it's the same thing with goth rock or whatever kind of racket it is that I make. HIM disbanded in 2017, and it took me a while to get my shit together and then also the pandemic was there to stop it all for a wee bit. I decided to use that time to record the first album under the VV moniker. I think it's also important to step out from the limelight, because there's overexposure on social media these days. I like the mystery. I always liked artists like that – that you don't know so much about them. They go ahead, turn into a bat and fly away for a couple of years, and then re-emerge from a coffin near you."

Due to the fact that Valo was the natural focal point and that he wrote all the songs, there was always a perception from the outside that HIM was a solo project. In fact, it was a group of like-minded school friends coming together. That's why it doesn't feel appropriate to Valo to release his new stuff under the HIM banner.

"At the end of the day, HIM had been around for such a long time that it's not necessarily a pro," he says. "There's a lot of cons to being in a band that have 'been there and done that.' So I felt that it's nicer to start semi-fresh. We're still playing a ton of HIM tracks as well, so I do consider this to be a transitional point musically speaking. Somewhere in between HIM



Ville Valo

and whatever the future might hold."

Ultimately, the VV music is gothic rock, with Valo's voice, so there are similarities with HIM. But there are differences, too.

"It's quite solitary working on the album by myself, because I ended up recording it by myself, too, and that was partly due to the pandemic and partly because of

me being a self-obsessed Prince fanatic," Valo says. "I played all the instruments, and I produced and recorded it as well. I put together a home studio. I think it's a bit more '80s, and new wave. It's a little less metal and a bit more alt-rock. That's how I see the overall big shapes and tonal differences. That's where my head is at,

and where my head has always been, but I wasn't necessarily able to put all that stuff out with HIM. So it's quite a roller-coaster ride of an album as well. There are a lot of moody bits and bobs. Not experimental in a proggy sense, but it's not your three-and-a-half minute pop-punk track, X 18."

Valo, who is still based in Helsinki, Finland, said that the themes on the album are very much related to feelings that emerged during the pandemic. Feelings of inadequacy and imposter syndrome. That might seem crazy when considering the aforementioned outpouring of international love that Valo has experienced. But our minds can be tricky beasts.

"They're feelings that I hadn't felt in many years," Valo said. "Do I belong here? Is this really what I want to do? What is the meaning of all this? Does it make sense or not? The overarching theme, if you want to really look for one, is a celebration of the fact that we're all broken in our own weird, wonderful and endearing ways, and there's nothing wrong with that. It's a celebration of being fucked up, I guess. It's something that we used to maybe sweep underneath the carpet, back in the day. I think that the more mistakes you make, the more you learn, hopefully, if you don't keep repeating the same mistakes. So in that sense, it's a celebration of those mistakes. And through that, it is a wee bit nostalgic, melancholy and dark. That's the Finn in me. You can't take it out of the equation."

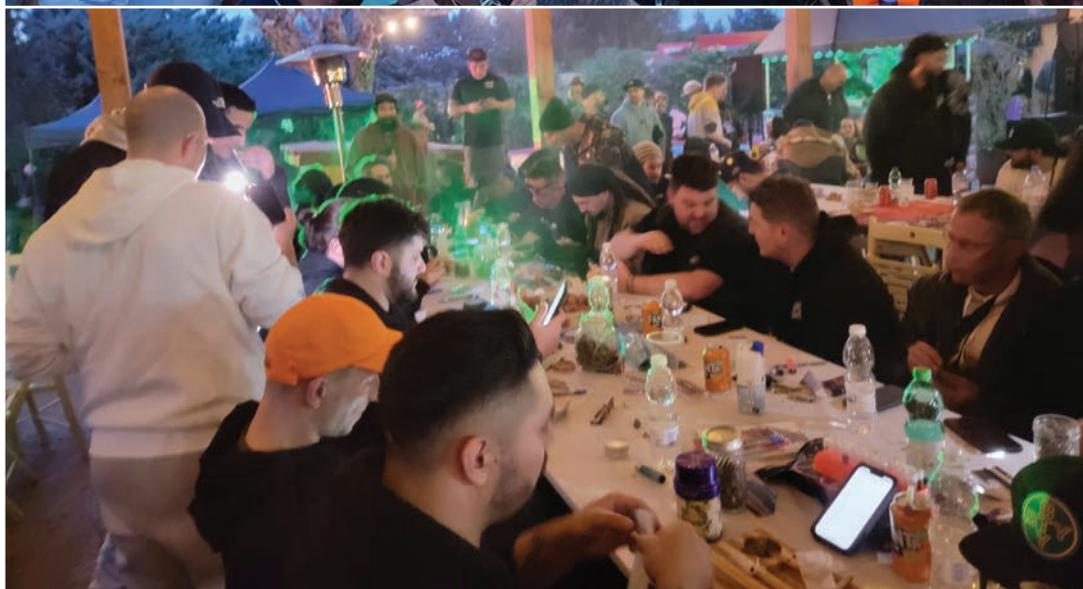
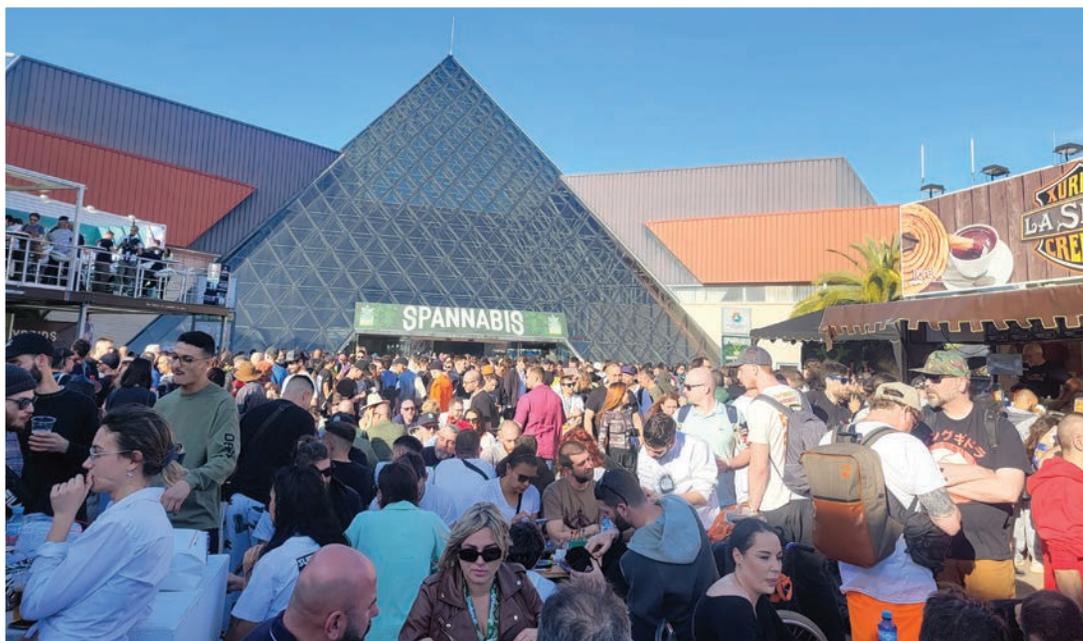
Valo, as VV, will be at the Belasco on April 18 and April 19, and the man is excited to be back. He's spent a lot of time here in the past.

"We mixed, recorded and produced several albums there," he says. "I've spent a lot of time in Los Angeles. It's such a vast area with so many different scenes and areas, with totally different vibes. We started from the Strip, so we played the Viper, the Whisky, the Roxy, and the House of Blues. Most of the time it's been that or the Valley, because the Valley used to have quite a lot of studios. So I know Los Angeles from a musical perspective, and a touring perspective. But I still haven't been to the Hollywood sign, or the Observatory, and I still don't know Downtown at all."

He'll get to know Downtown a bit when he plays the Belasco. After this U.S. run, VV will be touring all over Europe and hopefully the world.

"There's going to be a lot of gigging," Valo says in conclusion. "It's good after the break to show the people that I'm still alive and semi-kicking. The kicks might not be as high as they used to be, but I'm still going for it."

VV's album *Neon Noir* is out now. He plays the Belasco on April 18 and April 19. [📍]



CANNABIS

THE SPANNABIS 2023 TRAVEL DIARY

We headed back to Spain for the biggest week in European cannabis

BY JIMI DEVINE

Spannabis once again proved to be a can't-miss international event, as cannabis access levels continue to rise around the world.

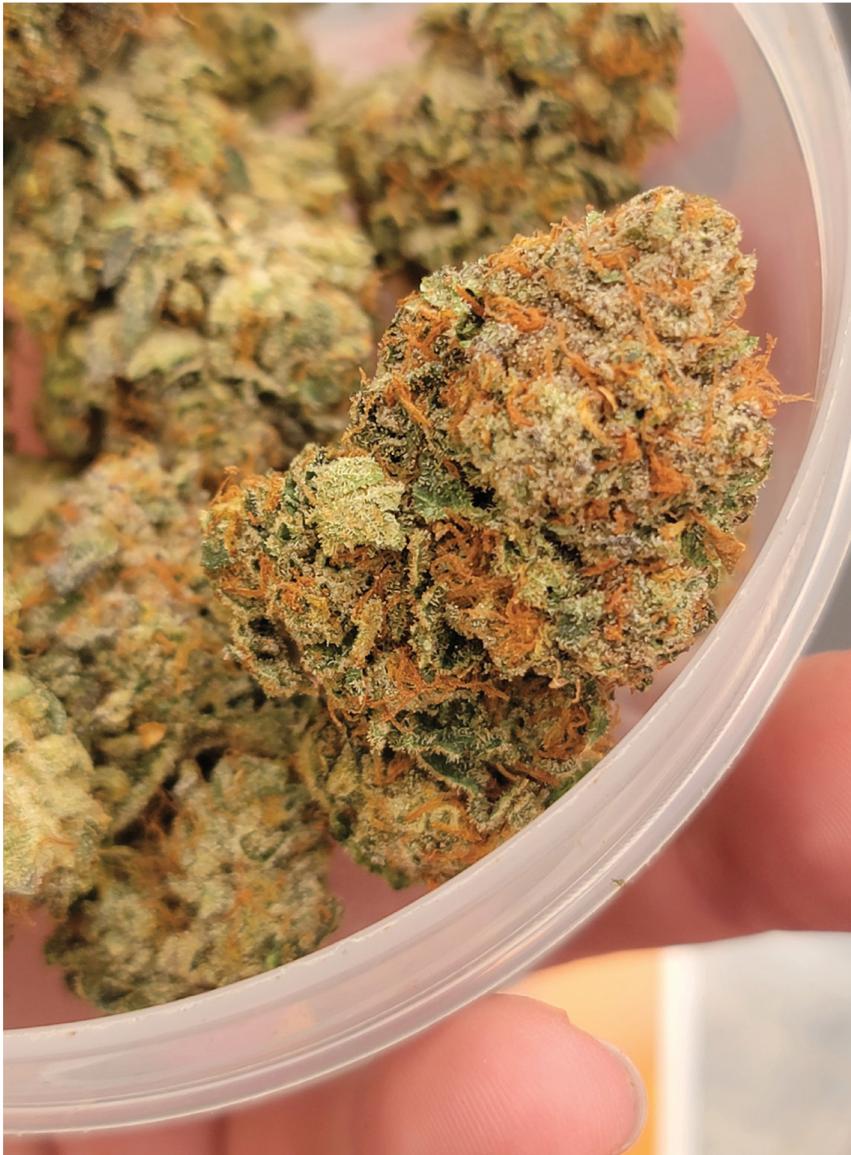
It was fair to say, this year proved Spannabis had exited the pandemic slump in its 19th edition. It certainly felt a lot more crowded than last year, as visitors interacted with the 280

exhibitors, 500 companies and nearly 5,000 cannabis industry professionals at the show. Prior to the pandemic, attendance numbers had been as high as 35,000.

It's important to note all the things that happen in the orbit of Spannabis. While the main show over the weekend is massive, there are a lot of big annual

events taking place throughout the week also drawing tons of attention. A lot of that attention goes to hash. The week of Spannabis is essentially home to the biggest flower and hash contests in the world outside of America. The week also features Spain's largest business conference, the Barcelona edition of The International Cannabis Business Conference.

As for the contests, they offer a few different formats. The weekend of Spannabis is dotted with awards shows starting on Wednesday with Ego Clash, all the way through to The Secret Session's Sunday contest announcement. Other contests throughout the week included Masters of Rosin and the Spanish Champions Cup hosted by Spannabis. A win



in any of those contests is one of the biggest things you can do in cannabis.

The Ego Clash originally was founded in California and made its way to Spain in the late 2010s. After its original founding by Brandon Parker of 3rd Gen Family, one of the most award-winning farms in cannabis, The Ego Clash quickly vaulted itself to the top of the mountain in a world flooded with cannabis events.

This year's Barcelona Ego Clash may be the most surprising yet. While many big-name Americans would make the trip, Bask Family Farms took home the top prize in flower. BTY Terplandia was the highest-scoring American flower in second, and the stacked trophy shelf over at Growers with Attitude would round out the podium.

But many consider the hash the star of the show at The Ego Clash. Top honors in the hash category went to Ogre Farms. A Half-American team placed second in this category, too, with The

Emerald Cup's personal-use winner Wooksauce Winery. Dochazed came in third place.

The top prize in rosin went to Have Hash. This was their second time winning The Ego Clash and they would place third later in the week at Masters of Rosin.

Things started to feel a lot more European after The Ego Clash ended on Wednesday. Partly because a lot of Europeans get there on Thursday for Spannabis setup while Americans making the trip tend to spend closer to a week.

Friday would prove to be mobbed. One of the things about events like Spannabis that feature seed companies is the best gear goes early. People will take the day off work to get there early in hopes of buying a pack of seeds that holds their Golden Ticket.

This year felt like it featured more American seed drops than ever. Many of them were people we traditionally think



of for their quality of production and not breeding. The list of American seed drops includes Los Angeles top-shelf regulars like Wizard Trees, Cali-X, and Doja, on top of the traditional breeders you would expect to see in Spain.

Friday also would feel like the most business-heavy day. Many people were searching out those conversations they needed to have with their industry peers before the weekend was in full gear.

Among the craziest business things we saw was Athena's mobile tissue culture system. Farmers will be able to do in the

middle of a field what they once needed a lab for. It won't clean your genetics like meristem work in a lab will, but it will certainly make preserving genetics that much more accessible.

Saturday and Sunday felt very similar. They were both packed-to-the-wall celebrations of cannabis. Saturday certainly seemed the most crowded of the three days.

It's a safe bet as more and more countries continue to reform their marijuana laws, the 20th edition of Spannabis next year will be simply massive. [E]

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Business Development Analyst sought by Absolute Security International Inc. to analyze & forecast sales trends, and devise business development strategies, etc. Salary: \$60,715 per year. Job site: El Monte, CA. Resume to 4255 Tyler Ave., El Monte, CA 91731. Attn: Martin Shih.

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LEGAL

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME Case No. 23CHCP00033

Superior Court of California County of Los Angeles located at: 9425 Penfield Avenue, Department F51, Chatsworth, CA 91311. Filed On January 27, 2023 - In the matter of petitioner **JULIA NAVAREZ GARCIA**. It is hereby ordered that all persons interested in the above-entitled matter of change of name appear before the above-entitled court as follows to show cause why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Court Date: APRIL 3, 2023, time: 8:30 a.m., Located at Chatsworth Courthouse 9425 Penfield Avenue, Department F51, Chatsworth, CA 91311. And a petition for change of name having been duly filed with the clerk of this Court, and it appearing from said petition

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that said petitioner(s) desire(s) to have her name changed from: **JULIA NAVAREZ GARCIA** to **JULIA GARCIA NEVAREZ**. Now therefore, it is hereby ordered that all persons interested in the said matter of change of name appear as indicated herein above then and there to show cause why the petition for change of name should not be granted. It is further

ordered that a copy of this order be published in the LA Weekly, a newspaper of general circulation for the County of Los Angeles, once a week for four (4) successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing of said petition. Set to publish 2.23.23, 3.2.23, 3.9.23, 3.16.23. Dated: February 15, 2023.

