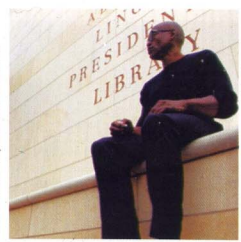


RUSSELL JENKINS, COURTESY OF FAVINIA



6 Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company presents *Fondly Do We Hope... Fervently Do We Pray*, a new work about Lincoln's legacy and unrealized vision; at YBCA October 1-3.



10 Cuban Buena Vista legend Omara Portuondo performs at the Palace of Fine Arts Theater on October 20 as part of the 27th Annual San Francisco Jazz Festival.



10 Artist Favianna Rodriguez's designs for *Ghosts of the River*, a new play by Octavio Solis playing in San Francisco and San Jose this month.



14 The San Francisco Arts Commission presents *Pamela Wilson-Ryckman—Taking In*, a series of watercolors exploring how people find refuge within the urban landscape of San Francisco. Opens October 5. Left, "Lafayette Park."

October 2009 Volume 19 Number 2

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Opera's New Music Director Shares Vision for *Salome*

German soprano Nadja Michael performs the title role in the San Francisco Opera production of *Salome*.

by Jean Schiffman

Even in these days of anything-goes reality TV, Richard Strauss' opera *Salome*, based on the play by Oscar Wilde, still has the power to shock. In its most lurid scene, the teenage Princess of Judea indulges in an erotic frenzy with the bloody, severed head of John the Baptist (called Jokanaan here) before her appalled stepfather, King Herod, and her mother, Herodias.

"Reality TV!" snorts San Francisco Opera's new music director, Nicola Luisotti, who recently succeeded Donald Runnicles in the post. "Reality TV is not the truth! It is the most false because there is a distinction between truth and reality." The reality is what we are living moment by moment; the truth is what is recorded, what endures. The truth can be found, declares Luisotti, on stage.

Luisotti is taking a break in his new office at the Opera House in between rehearsals for season opener *Il Trovatore* and an audition session. Dark-haired, jovial and expressive, the 47-year-old conductor seems quintessentially Italian. "We invented the opera in 1602 in Firenze, in my Tuscany!" he says proudly. But he's quick to add that it doesn't matter whether opera is Italian, German, French, English or anything else—what matters is the story, the characters, the music.

The maestro has had what has been called a meteoric rise in his field in the past 20 years, in demand at the world's major opera houses and concert halls. He debuted in San Francisco in 2005, returning again last November to conduct *La Bohème*. In this, his inaugural season at the helm, he will follow *Salome* (a coproduction with Opera Theater of St. Louis) with two other turns at the podium: *Otello* **CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**

Site-Specific *Wonderland* Art Event Enlivens Tenderloin

by Jean Schiffman

"Traditionally, the way the art world works, the more you spend, the better it is," says New York-based, internationally known curator Lance Fung. "But there are other ways of presenting contemporary art." His latest project is a labor of love not only for Fung but also for the 40-plus artists and local nonprofit service organizations involved, all of whom, like Fung, are volunteers.

Fung, born and raised in San Francisco, is the visionary behind this free, neighborhood-wide, site-specific and interactive art event in the Tenderloin, whimsically titled *Wonderland*. On a tiny operating budget that precludes artist fees or expenses, Fung invited seasoned professionals and emerging talents from San Francisco's three main art schools to create a total of 10 installations and conceptual art exhibits throughout one of the city's most run-down neighborhoods. Partnering organizations and businesses within the Tenderloin include the Boys & Girls Club, the Ever Gold Gallery and TNDC, which offers housing and other services, with the Community Benefit District as overall sponsor and (at press time) some funding from the Office of



Above: "Stake," a proposal rendering created for *Wonderland* by artists Lars Chellberg, Thomas Kosbau and Layman Lee

Economic and Workforce Development. "Everyone's excited," says Fung, and he means from the mayor's office on down.

The goal of *Wonderland*—a name that evokes everything from *Alice in...* to Coney Island's Wonder Wheel—is to create art for and with the area's residents, a mix of Southeast Asian immigrants, assorted underworld characters, the disabled, the transgender community and the economically disadvantaged. The Tenderloin is also home to 4,000 children. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

Disney Museum Opens in Presidio

by Sura Wood

This month, Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Snow White and the rest of Walt Disney's creative progeny take up full-time residence in San Francisco. After years of planning and construction, the Walt Disney Family Museum, which is devoted to Disney's myriad achievements and technological innovations, opens its doors in a newly renovated complex on the Presidio's historic Main Post.

Organized chronologically, the Museum's 10 main exhibition galleries and 113-seat theater, housed in a former barracks with a million-dollar view of the Golden Gate Bridge, detail Disney's remarkable life story and his influential role in the histo-

ry of animation, from an illustration he did for his high school yearbook and the launch of his cartoon company in Kansas City to the development of the animation studio bearing his name.

Disney, a visionary working with a core team of animators whom he called "the nine old men" (though most were in their 30s and 40s), transformed pop culture and changed the face of the then-fledgling animation industry with classic full-length features like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Bambi*, *Dumbo*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Fantasia*.

"Disney created a unique mythology that was totally realized," says Russell Merritt, professor of Film Studies **CONTINUED ON PAGE 5**



Mary Blair's atmospheric concept art for *Peter Pan*, which depicts a midnight sky, full moon and Big Ben at full tilt as Peter and the Darling children fly around it; on display at the Walt Disney Family Museum.

Tenderloin

Continued from Page 1

A secondary goal is for the city's residents in general to view this teeming, fractured neighborhood from a new perspective, one informed by a deeper understanding of the individuals who live there.

Not least, local art students will meet the Bay Area art community and emerging local artists will gain greater exposure.

The idea for *Wonderland* occurred to Fung during an MFA class that he taught locally, when some students were working with kids in the Tenderloin on a drawing project. "The student projects were so good, and the Tenderloin was so interesting, so ready for this type of show, that I thought, let's turn it into a proper exhibition," says Fung.

"My curatorial premise has always been about collaboration," he continues—a concept not especially revered, historically, in the art world. For *Wonderland*, he organized teams from among the invited artists (several participants per team, and in one case, a nine-person team of California College of the Arts students and recent grads), matching those from elsewhere (specifically Los Angeles, New York, Sweden, Brazil and Barcelona) with locals, and students with pros. To formulate their projects, the groups of artists trolled the streets, alleys, parking lots and storefronts of the Tenderloin, looking for hidden stories, eloquent sites, ways of connecting with the people and places there. "It's been as exciting and challenging curatorially for me as it is for the artists to work in a group setting," Fung says.



DOUG CODY BAY AREA EVENTS PHOTOGRAPHY

The *Wonderland* team on the street in the Tenderloin, from left: Chris Burch; Lance Fung, the curator behind the interactive, neighborhood-wide art project; John Melvin and Elaine Zamore

One of the first invitees was John Roloff, professor of sculpture at the San Francisco Art Institute, known for his environmental and gallery installations. "This is almost a grassroots thing," says Roloff, of Fung's ambitious plans, "relying on a lot of nonprofits who recognize intrinsically the value of the Tenderloin and the people in it." He himself, an artist going in from the outside, now has a changed perspective of the Tenderloin neighborhood. "I think there have been a lot of artists who have worked in a socially engaged context in the history of Bay Area art," he adds, "but not to my recollection something as large as this."

Roloff was eager to be involved with this many-pronged event. "The idea was not to impose onto the Tenderloin but to find something that was there that we could then enlarge and make more visible," he says. He and longtime conceptual artist Doug Hall walked the streets, met with some of the service organizations that Fung had brought into the fold and through them were introduced to neighborhood resident Queen Amie Krubally, a Gambian-born batik artist. "She charmed us," says Roloff. "*Wonderland* became a point of revelation, to reveal Queen to this

larger body." Their contribution, called "*Tender at a Distance: The Queen Amie Project*," is to set up a storefront where Queen can work, teach her exceptional batik skills to others and display her textiles, whose designs illustrate personal stories and folk myths from Africa. Roloff and Hall are, in effect, participating as her promoters rather than as artists themselves.

Among the other projects are living tableaux of transient street life to be installed on the balcony of the Warfield Theater and two other sites; "*Home Away from Home*," the project originally conceived in Fung's college classroom, in which artists will construct a composite house from hundreds of drawings of moveable houses collected from Tenderloin kids; an audio exhibit capturing the everyday sounds of the Tenderloin; "*Stake*," in which residents will identify an "item of worth"—anything from sneakers dangling on an overhead wire to a manhole cover—and which the artists will then (permission pending) transform by painting a sparkling gold; the ScreenLab Collective's "*Tender Transmissions*," an "aural network" broadcast that links pedestrians and artists in various ways; a mural; and "*Down the Rabbit*

Hole," an installation, set in a hotel or massage parlor, realistically depicting the working and living environment of a young girl victimized by the sex slave trade.

The entire event kicks off with a giant, all-day block party on October 17, consisting of dozens of performances, a toy parade, a concert at noon, a found-object orchestra and more, culminating late at night with a lone fiddler playing "Round Midnight."

"The most important thing about *Wonderland*," says Fung, "is how it's evolved, how a sense of community has developed. Artists are having fun, bonding, exploring the Tenderloin, but most of all the Tenderloin itself is starting to be aware of *Wonderland*. We're not trying to exploit or oversimplify the complexity of the Tenderloin; we're trying to engage as many people who live and work here as possible." When *Wonderland* ends, art projects will be saved, recycled or moved, as the artists decide—but echoes and memories of the event will, it is hoped, linger.

Wonderland won't stop anybody from being a drug addict or prostitute, concedes Fung. But if it allows, for even a fleeting moment, a shift in perception of self and place, he will be satisfied. You never know what art can inspire, he says.

"In this economic downturn," he adds, "when all these institutions are crying poor...they're still thinking in traditional ways. This might be an alternative for them. Let's go grassroots, let's go local. Who is our talent that we can nurture and expose and present?"

"Great art is not going to die just because there's no money."

October 17-November 14, the Tenderloin, free. www.wonderlandshow.org ★

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