

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

'Secrets' Exhibit Opens At Jewish Women's Theatre Gallery

Maury Ornest's Vibrant Paintings Reveal 'Hope, Beauty Of A Troubled Mind'

A new art exhibit proves the restorative power of painting.

"Secrets," described as "Maury Ornest's Hidden Art that Reveals the Hope and Beauty within a Troubled Mind," opens at 6:30 p.m. Saturday Jan. 19 at the Jewish Women's Theatre's (JWT) The Braid, 2912 Colorado Ave., #102, Santa Monica.

Born in 1960, Ornest grew up in Beverly Hills, attending Hawthorne, playing BH Little League at 9—"We spent a lot of time at La Cienega Park," said his sister Laura Ornest—and graduating from BHHS where he was drafted by the Oakland Athletics in the 15th round of the 1977 MLB June Amateur Draft.

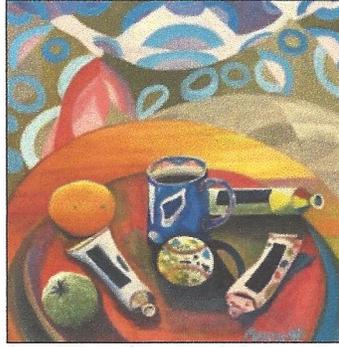
He went on to play for the Milwaukee Brewers and at one time was the youngest draft pick in professional baseball.

After suffering severe injuries while playing in the Arizona Fall League, Ornest went on to work for the St. Louis Blues NHL team in sales and management under his father, Harry Ornest.

"In his early 20s he seemed to break from reality," said Laura Ornest. "He would call me and talk about helicopters flying overhead and Nazis."

With the help of a therapist and lessons at the Otis School of Art and UCLA extension, Ornest created his own therapy plan. From his home on Elm Drive in Beverly Hills, he used his art to express his personal insights.

Maury Ornest started painting in



One of Maury Ornest's paintings; part of the new "Secrets" exhibition at The Braid.

1995 and found painting to be therapeutic. "Despite his inner turmoil and debilitating paranoia and suffering, he was always able to go back to the canvas and create a life-affirming piece in vivid color," says Laura Ornest "And that's what's so inspiring to people who've seen the paintings. They have silliness, whimsy and hope."

When Maury Ornest died of heart disease in July at 58, the family discovered that not only was his house filled with paintings, but also a secret storage unit in West L.A. containing hundreds of canvases, some of them up to 4' x 5', he had created over the 20-plus years he suffered from delusions and psychotic



Maury Ornest

breaks. "We knew he painted," said Laura Ornest, "but not to this extent, and we had no idea about his journals and his documenting his thoughts and feelings."

The Gallery@Jewish Women's Theatre will

present the world premiere of 12 of Ornest's oils, with an art talk with his sister Laura, a BHHS grad and former resident and radio reporter, at 6:30 p.m. on opening night. The exhibit will run through February, before and after the current salon show and by appointment.

The gallery show is free, but those wishing to stay for the debut of *Family Secrets* must purchase tickets, \$45 pre-sale, \$50 at the door, that include a dessert reception. Visit www.jewishwomens theatre.com to purchase and for more information.

In her talks, also set for 6:30 p.m., Monday, Jan. 28 and Tuesday, Jan 29, Laura Ornest plans to honor her brother. "The color in his paintings strikes me, and I see my brother," she says "He was silly and had a big personality and child-

like quality."

Common subjects for Ornest's paintings include flying "baseball fish" portraits, baseballs of course, pencils in vases and containers with art supplies. "These were things that kept him going," says Marilee Tolwin, the gallery director who curated the show. "He would paint a mini coffee cup and write in his journal, 'It's a gloomy day. An opportunity to change my mood with colors on a canvas.'"

With the exhibit, Laura Ornest wants to show people "that while Maury was suffering he was able to express joy and vibrancy. I wanted to do for him what he couldn't do for himself.

"Also, working with the paintings and working at his house helps us deal with our grief," said Laura. "He had sad last years with a failing heart and needing a transplant."

She would like the show to raise awareness and compassion for those with mental illness. "Often it's hard to see past the illness to the person. I hope Maury's work gives family members of those with mental illness hope; and those experiencing similar feelings hope and encouragement as well."

Tolwin first saw the paintings at Maury Ornest's home, with hundreds of canvases stacked in the bedroom, kitchen and bathroom. "I was shocked and blown away by their color and brightness," she says.

(see 'PAINTINGS' page 16)

Interactive *Love Actually Live* Sets Box Office Records At The Wallis

For The Record's latest production has set records at The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills.

Love Actually Live, the recent co-production of The Wallis and the company, is the highest-grossing, multiple week engagement in The Wallis' five-year history. The show also holds the record for The Wallis' highest single day of ticket sales, its opening night, Dec. 12.

"The incredible success of *Love Actually Live* was quite evident to me after experiencing the show for the first time on opening night," said Rachel Fine, The Wallis' executive director/CEO. "It's a unique production unlike anything we've ever produced on our stages. It energized our community with gusto during the holidays."

"I'm proud of what we accomplished in a short period of time, said Shane Scheel, For The Record creator. "It was something new for us and a new way of experiencing the film in a way that's not been done before."

"We got great reviews and people clicked in with this title and concept we came up with," said Scheel.

The show melded scenes from the film, *Love Actually*, with actors singing songs from its popular score, live.

"It was fun to see the snowball effect of how the City responded," said Scheel, "and how word-of-mouth spread. People brought their families and that was flattering during this busy time of year."

The appeal of the show, Scheel says is that the film has "a story that anyone can identify with whatever stage of love they're in, whether it's a father and child



Rex Smith was featured as Billy Mack in The Wallis' *Love Actually Live*. Photo by Lawrence K. Ho

or husband and wife going through something difficult. There's something for everyone to connect with and it's become a holiday classic that people watch time and time again. It gave people the right feelings you want to have at Christmas."

Scheel developed the theatrical series For The Record eight years ago "in a tiny bar in Los Feliz. I wanted to provide a home for musical theater talent moving from New York to L.A. to sing showtunes."

The format evolved into "our own commodity mixing music and film,"

(see 'LOVE' page 16)

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OUTLOOK BEVERLY HILLS

The weekly update
of local and SoCal events.

Broadway star **James Barbour** stars as Edward Rutledge in **McCoy Rigby Entertainment's** production of **1776**, at 8 p.m. today through **Sunday, Feb. 3** at the **La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts**, 14900 La Mirada Blvd., La Mirada.

With music and lyrics by **Sherman Edwards** and a book by **Peter Stone**, the show tells how the founding fathers, including **John Adams**, **Benjamin Franklin** and **Thomas Jefferson**, were all miles apart on agreement, but managed to harness their shared determination to sign the Declaration of Independence and create a fledgling nation. Performances are 7:30 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday, 8 p.m., Fridays; 2 and 8 p.m., Saturday and 2 p.m., Sunday.



James Barbour

Talkbacks with the cast and creative team will be Wednesday, Jan. 16 and 30. Tickets, ranging from \$20-\$84, are available online at www.lamiradatheatre.com or by calling 562-944-9801 or 714-994-6310.

The Brentwood Art Center (BAC) will hold a reception and silent auction of 80 wood

'LOVE'
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Scheel says, creating works celebrating the soundtracks of specific directors like **Martin Scorsese**, **Quentin Tarantino**, **John Hughes**, **Baz Luhrmann**, **Joel and Ethan Coen**, and **Paul Thomas Anderson**.

"This is the first time we did a single-narrative film, combining film and live action," says Scheel. "It's new territory for us, but we were able to stay true to our mission to be soundtrack forward."

The production featured **Rumer Willis**, **Steve Kazee**, **Rex Smith**, **Justin Sargent** and **Sean Yves Lessard**.

blocks turned into art works, from 4-6 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 12 at the center, 13031 Montana Ave., L.A.

The inaugural event will support BAC's scholarship program to ensure equitable access to the arts by awarding more than \$50,000 in financial aid each year to adults and children in need.



One of 80 wood blocks; part of Brentwood Art Center's auction.

The event also benefits BAC's veterans art program which last year funded three teaching artists who provided 176 hours of free art instruction at the Westwood and Long Beach VA campuses.

For more information on the free event, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/blockparty-art-reception-and-silent-auction-tickets-54364030278>.

Rabbi Zack Shapiro of **Temple Akiva of Culver City** will be the speaker at the 9 a.m., Wednesday, Jan. 16 meeting of the **Brandeis Men's Group (BMG)** at the **Veterans Memorial Complex**, 4117 Overland Ave., Culver City.

BMG is a group of senior men who meet monthly for social and cultural education

For **The Record** was approached by **Universal Pictures/Working Title** to produce **Love Actually Live** and "hopefully other studios will see the potential," says Scheel.

"Ultimately the show's success was a testament of our partnership," Scheel adds. When **For The Record** was without an L.A. home, Scheel met with **Wallis Artistic Director Paul Crewes**—"I think I was one of the first meetings he had when he was hired," says Scheel—and the center has been the company's home for two-and-a-half years.

"It's been a consistent place to develop bigger shows, and we're now in talks for the next one." —**Steve Simmons**

and to raise funds for research at **Brandeis University** in **Waltham, Mass.**

For more information, call 310-351-5018.

Japan House Los Angeles and **Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia** will present the **Short Shorts Film Festival**, Thursday, Jan. 17 at **TCL Chinese 6 Theatres**, Hollywood & Highland, 6801 Hollywood Blvd., Level 3.

The festival opens at 1 p.m. with "Master Class with **Naomi Kawase: The Possibilities of Film.**" Kawase will give insight on the future of film and explores the short-film format. Her presentation will be followed by a discussion with **Akira Mizuta Lippit**, vice dean and professor in USC's school of cinematic arts and division of cinema and media studies.

Screenings will follow from 6:30-8 p.m. with the U.S. premiere of **Daishi Matsunaga's Canari** (2018); **Benjamin's Last Day At Katong Swimming Complex** (2017) by **Yee Wei Chai**; Kawase's **Lies** (2015) and **The Human Face** (2017) by **Aline Pimentel**.

To reserve tickets for the free event, visit www.japan-housela.com.

Patrick Kilpatrick, with more than 170 credits as an actor, producer, screenwriter, director and teacher, will sign copies of his new book **Dying For Living: Sins & Confessions Of A Hollywood Villain & Libertine Patriot**, (Boulevard Books) at 7 p.m., Friday, Jan. 18 at **Book Soup**, 8818 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood.

Kilpatrick's book details his volatile, yet privileged upbringing and discusses his three decades working with such stars as **Tom Cruise**, **Arnold Schwarzenegger**, **Bruce Willis**, **Pam Grier**, **Naomi Watts** and more.

For more information, visit

<https://www.booksoup.com>.

Forever Brooklyn! A Koshier Musical Comedy, the story of the rise of a young comedian from the Borscht Belt to national prominence, and his ties to his titular hometown, plays at 7:30 p.m. Saturdays, Jan. 19-Feb. 9 at the **Whitefire Theatre**, 13500 Ventura Blvd., Sherman Oaks.

Author **Mark W. Curran** uses song dialogue and comedy to recount the life of **Melvin Kaplofkin (Danny DiTorrice)**, who longs for a career in show business.

When he finally gets his big break he discovers his family and friends are not as happy as he is, especially the members of the local mob, who want to keep him as the bag-man for the neighborhood.

How will Melvin realize his dream in the face of impossible odds?

Tickets are \$30. visit <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3613939> for more information.

The Petersen Automotive Museum, 6060 Wilshire Blvd. (at Fairfax), L.A., will offer free admission to LAUSD students through Feb. 2.

Students will enjoy special programming in the **Rob and Melani Walton Discovery Center** and throughout the museum.

They will also have access to the museum's latest exhibits, galleries and interactive experiences ranging from the **CARS Mechanical Institute** featuring crafts and games based on the popular **Pixar** movie franchise for younger visitors, to the **Forza Motorsports Experience** and the "Cars of Film and Television" exhibit in the **Hollywood Gallery**.

Interactive exhibits include "The Porsche Effect" and "Legends of Los Angeles."

For more information, visit www.Petersen.org.

PAINTINGS

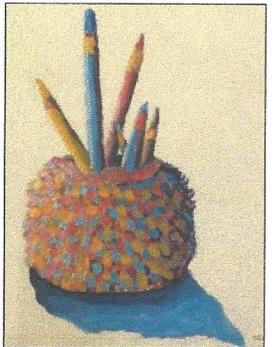
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"He was a talented artist," says **Tolwin**. Adds, **Laura**: "He was mostly self-taught and considered himself an outsider."

Maury used art to "negate his darkness," says **Tolwin**, and each painting has a story about how he was thinking and how he would articulate his thoughts and ideas through art.

Works in the show will be hung with entries from **Maury Ernest's** journals like "...from every part of me and my soul I have no choice but to paint..." and "Sometimes, like now, I think of why am I an artist, art chose me and I accepted."

Since **JWT's** goal is to connect what's on the walls with what's on stage, "Secrets" will show in conjunction with **Family Secrets**, a show about youthful indiscretions, missteps, dishon-



One of **Maury Ernest's** paintings of pencils in a vase.

est acts and outright naughty activities (www.jewishwomenstheatre.com).

Says **Tolwin**, "While **Maury's** paintings weren't a secret from the family, they were a secret from the world."

—**Steve Simmons**

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