

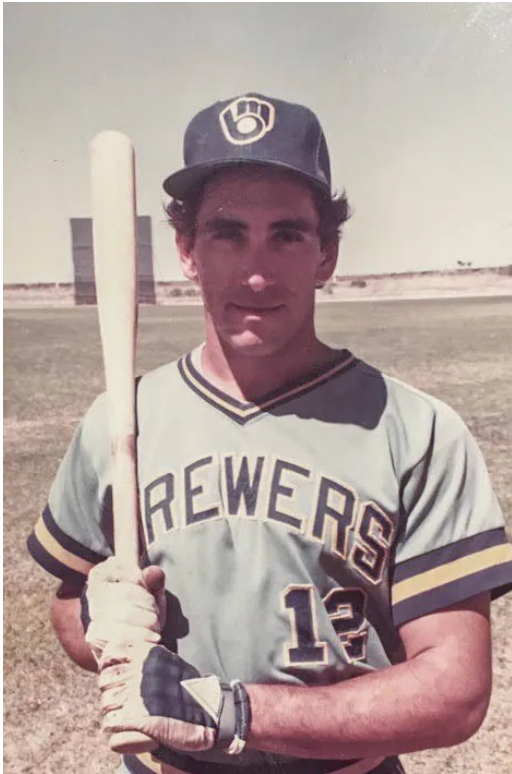
Late UCSB Baseball Player Maury Ornest Struck a Chord Using Art to Express Mental Illness

Documentary Film 'Outsider' Chronicles a Gaucho Athlete's Journey



By [John Zant](#)

Wed Nov 06, 2024 | 4:09pm



Maury Ornest | Photo: Courtesy

Maury Ornest had several things in common with Freddie Freeman, the World Series hero of the Los Angeles Dodgers. Both were born of Canadian parents, and both grew up in Southern California. Their fathers groomed them to play baseball, tossing balls to them and taking them to Dodgers and Angels games.

Ornest was a major league draft prospect out of Beverly Hills High in 1977, but he decided to pursue a college education and came to UCSB. As a switch-hitter, he compiled a .363 batting average for the Gauchos and was taken in the third round of the 1980 draft by the Milwaukee Brewers.

Injuries prevented Ornest from progressing out of the minor leagues, and then mental illness plunged him a dark place far from the bright lights of the ballpark. But it was discovered after his death in 2018 that he had achieved a colorful legacy of his own. As productively as Freeman strokes base hits, Ornest's brushstrokes filled hundreds of canvases.

Laura Ornest remembers the day in 1983 her youngest brother broached bizarre visions that were clouding his mind. "It was a psychotic break from reality," she said. Termed a schizoaffective disorder, it affected Maury the rest of his life. "There was medication, therapy, good times, rough times," Laura said. "He became reclusive. A therapist suggested painting to express himself."

After her brother suffered a fatal heart attack, she said, "When we went to his house, we were overwhelmed and surprised by the amount of paintings. We could hardly move around all the canvases. We found journals too. He left so much, telling us of his sadness, torment, and joy."

The paintings, many of them baseball-themed, portray a vivid imagination. "What struck us most of all was the vibrancy, the joy, the love, the humor, the silliness, and whimsy in the paintings," Laura said. "He transferred his inner darkness into vivid, life-affirming colors with passion and energy."



"Baseball Fish" by Maury Ornest | Photo: Courtesy

Her brother's output made Laura think about his dedication as a baseball player. "What inspired me about Maury was that he never gave up, in spite of his illness," she said. "In baseball, even the best hitters fail two-thirds of the time. They know tomorrow is another day."

Maury's story is told in a documentary film, *Outsider*, which is being screened at UCSB's intercollegiate athletics building on Sunday (Nov. 10). Laura Ornest, herself a graduate of the university, will be on a panel that includes Athletic Director Kelly Barsky, psychology professor Dr. Steve Smith, and art professor Jane Callister.



Dodgers art by Maury Ornest | Photo: Courtesy



Barsky described the film as “incredibly raw and graceful at the same time. It is an honor to highlight this Gaucho’s story and use that as an inspiration to remove the stigma around mental illness and support mental health.”

An art sale — which Maury Ornest never had the wherewithal to arrange — will follow Sunday’s screening and discussion. Invitations have been filled for the event, but queries can be addressed to Leslie Gray at leslie.gray@ucsb.edu.

Related Posts



Full-Team Renovation for Vaqueros

By [Victor Bryant](#) | Tue Aug 26, 2025



Upcoming Fights Under Friday Night Lights

By [Victor Bryant](#) | Thu Aug 21, 2025



Hockey for Life

By [Tiana Molony](#) | Wed Aug 20, 2025



**Santa Barbara Boy Scouts
Rescue Former
Scoutmaster Lost in the
Sierra Nevada**

By [Ella Heydenfeldt](#) | Sun Aug 24, 2025



**Public Invited
to Comment
on Paving Los
Padres
National Forest**

By [Callie Fausey](#) | Fri Aug 29, 2025



**ICE Arrests
Three People in
Santa Barbara's
Eastside
Neighborhood**

By [Ryan P. Cruz](#) | Fri Aug 29, 2025



**Santa Barbara
Homeless
Shelter to
Close?**

By [Nick Welsh](#) | Wed Aug 27, 2025



**Authorities
Arrest Two
Armed Men at
Santa Barbara
Amtrak Bus
Station and
Seize Multiple
Guns**

By [Jean Yamamura](#) | Wed Aug 27, 2025

Premier Events



**The Muralist at Sullivan
Goss**

**1st Thursday Art
Reception: Beatris
Burgoin “Entre Mundos”**

**Lloyd Kahn of Shelter
Books, joined by Bill
Steen**

[See Full Event Calendar](#)