

LEAH GARCHIK

Unwrapped, but still Pier 24 is gift to the city



On the rainiest day of the year, last Thursday, I went to the Pier 24 Photography gallery to see "Secondhand," a photo exhibition that opened there in August and will be there until the end of May. The show features the work of artists who use appropriated images — already made by others — edited, cut and juxtaposed to "become a way of digesting and understanding the overabundance of visual information circulating daily," says its catalog.

Some of the artists are well known (**John Baldessari** and the late **Larry Sultan** among them), at least one local (**Matt Lipps**, about whom **Sam Whiting** has written in this paper), and others less familiar. Dutch artist **Erik Kesels**, whose works take up three rooms in the gallery, shares series of images taken periodically. His showstopper is a room containing a huge heap of images, prints of every public image placed on Flickr in a day.

All this was riveting, as was a peek inside the glass-enclosed room at the end of the pier, just under the Bay Bridge, where plops of rain created concentric circles disappearing in nanoseconds in the roiling waters of the bay. (Associate Director **Seth Curcio** had made it possible to have that glimpse. The room is spectacular under any weather conditions, and I couldn't resist asking to see it in the storm.)

Splashing my way back to the office after the visit, it occurred to me that this institution, run by the Pilara Foundation, is a fine-arts equivalent to **Warren Hellman's** Hardly Strictly Bluegrass. Admission to the gallery is free, and anyone can make an appointment to visit. The hardcover catalog for the show costs only \$15, the cost of its production. The Pilara Family Foundation is headed by Andrew and Mary Pilara, but their names are nowhere in the catalog. Christopher McCall, director of the gallery and curator of "Secondhand," is named only on the last page of the catalog.

This is a gift to the city — no Kickstarter campaign, no fundraising gala, no pleas for public support — and everyone is invited to share in its pleasures. So to the Pilaras, a big thank you. More information is at www.pier24.org.

* * *

Just in time for the holidays, the Mill Valley Patch provides a list of people to

whom one should give tips. Among those not to be forgotten by local residents: housekeeper, gardener, pet groomer, pool cleaner and doorman (doorman in Mill Valley?). But what about one's personal trainer, Pilates instructor, veterinarian, endocrinologist, foot masseuse, psychic and cheese vendor?

* * *

► **Conan O'Brien** and wife were at Fat Angel for a drink recently, before heading off to dinner at State Bird.

► The "largest interactive living nativity in California" is Bethlehem A.D., a free pop-up Nativity scene/petting zoo in Redwood City the nights of Sunday-Tuesday, Dec. 21-23. Organizers say

that in 2013, **Lloyd Pa-reira** and Oak Valley Dairy in Merced provided 41 animals to the pageant. Among them this year are KuneKune pigs. My Internet researches have uncovered quite a bit of argument whether it is kosher to bring pigs to a manger/delivery room for a Jewish family.

* * *

After 40 years in San Francisco, photographer

Dan Nicoletta, who was a close friend of **Harvey Milk** and an important figure played by **Lucas Grabeel** in the movie "Milk," has moved to Grants Pass, Ore., to live with his longtime partner, **Mike Pinatelli Jr.** In an e-mail to friends, he wrote that he wants to work on getting his photography published, and that the years in San Francisco, particularly after "Milk" came out, have been so hectic that finding time and focus was impossible. "I am finally catching my breath and definitely need an environmental change in order to hear myself think better."

* * *

Blue Shield, invited by **Steve Robert** to be an honored guest at the tree-of-despair-trimming party, suggests:

"The holidays can bring two unwelcome guests: stress and depression. ... Learn the difference between normal sadness and depression."

Open for business in San Francisco, (415) 777-8426. E-mail: lgarchik@sfchronicle.com Twitter: [@leahgarchik](https://twitter.com/leahgarchik)

PUBLIC EAVESDROPPING

"Just because your sister hit you in the head with a shopping cart doesn't mean you can hurt her."

Mother to son, overheard shopping at Raley's in Rohnert Park by Suzanne Grant