

LAWEEKLY

METRO ART BUILDS
REGIONAL CONNECTIONS
COMIC-CON GOES ON

JULY 21 - 27, 2023 / VOL. 45 / NO. 37
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Tegan and Sara
Are All About
the Music

A Life Less Ordinary

By Brett Callwood





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GO EDITORS' PICKS

ARTS

THURSDAY, JULY 20

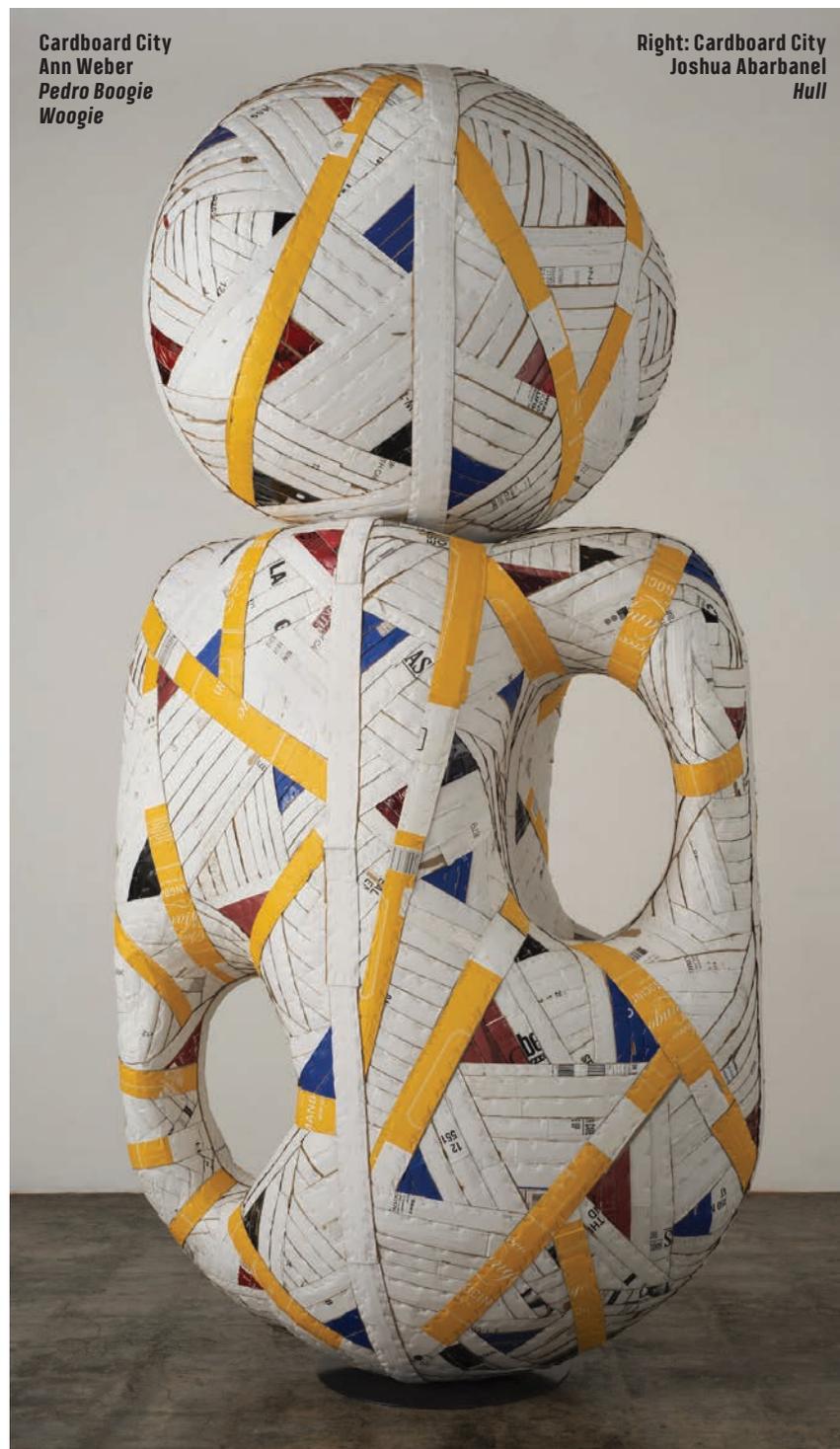
Bijou Karman: Style Legends, Rebels, and Visionaries Book Launch at MOCA. Style Legends, Rebels, and Visionaries (Chronicle Books) is an inclusive and eclectic collection of 50 illustrated portraits by artist Bijou Karman. Karman's colorful and detailed style evokes the distinct sensibility of each influential cultural figure—Harry Styles, Tilda Swinton, Timothée Chalamet, Rihanna, Iris Apfel, David Bowie, Yayoi Kusama—celebrating the distinct fashion sensibility of each of these unique and beloved icons from the realms of music, fashion, art, and cinema. Karman is joined in conversation by Women's Wear Daily's Booth Moore. 250 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Thursday, July 20, 6pm; free w/rsvp; moca.org.

Womxn in Windows presents Joyland screening and conversation at Oxy Arts.

An Urdu and Punjabi-language Pakistani drama film written and directed by Saim Sadiq in his feature film directorial debut, *Joyland* (2022) explores the many sides of love and desire in a patriarchal society. Following a long spell of unemployment, the film's protagonist lands a job at a Bollywood-style burlesque, telling his family he is a theater manager, when in actuality, he is a backup dancer. The unusual position shakes up the steadfast traditional dynamics of his household and enables Haider to break out of his shell. 4757 York Blvd., Eagle Rock; Thursday, July 20, 6pm; free; oxyarts.oxy.edu.

FRIDAY, JULY 21

Cardboard City Pop-Up Art Center at Westfield Century City. Now in its third year, Cardboard City is an annual pop-up art center produced by reDiscover and featuring 12-foot sculptures, massive collaborative art installations, cardboard costuming, skills building classes, and community connections. Local artists-in-residence create new works each week throughout the summer, alongside creativity and skills workshops for all ages. 10250 Santa



Cardboard City
Ann Weber
Pedro Boogie
Woogie

Right: Cardboard City
Joshua Abarbanel
Hull

Monica Blvd., Century City; July 21 - September 3; free; rediscovercenter.org.

SATURDAY, JULY 22

Liz Flores: Remedios, Francisco Diaz Scotto: Where Dreams Touch Ground at Hashimoto Contemporary. Chicago-based Liz Flores amplifies a personal experience to the macro level, finding how seemingly individual experiences create webs through which people connect. Reminiscent of the Cubist interest in moving bodies but with

a feminist twist, her new works emphasize the dynamism of the human body and how we relate through movement. Argentinian artist Francisco Díaz Scotto merges worlds real and imagined in a series of chromatically pungent works highlighting his talent for imbuing still life and formal paintings with passion and tenderness. 2754 S. La Cienega Blvd., Culver City; Opening reception: Saturday, July 22, 6-8pm; On view through August 12; free; hashimotocontemporary.com.



Brian Cooper: Things Thinking at Rory Devine Fine Art.

Cooper's work generally focuses on the relationship between consciousness and the material world. He has always been fascinated with the ethereal effects of highly illusionistic painting like his favorites, the Flemish Primitives, and strangeness of Surrealism, the Chicago Imagists, West Coast psychedelia, and underground comics. These interests form an oscillating rhythm between a quiet place of "grace" and a louder frenzy of humor and imagination. Cooper's equally robust musical practice (see: *Earth Like Planets*) is also on display, as several music events in the gallery are scheduled throughout the length of the show. 3209 W. Washington Blvd., West Adams; On view through August 24; Performances: Saturdays, July 22 & 29, August 5, 6-9pm; free; rorydevinefineart.com.

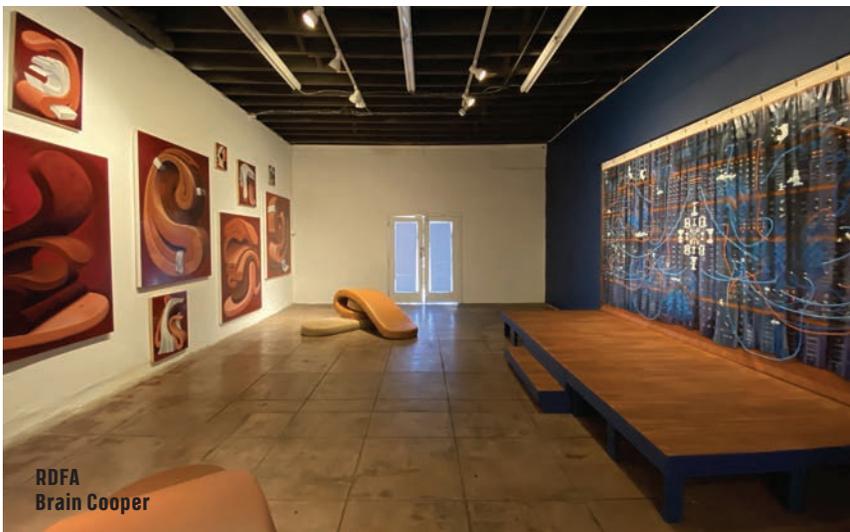
SUNDAY, JULY 23

Plein Air at the Armory Center for the Arts.

A group exhibition exploring shifting ideas of western landscape, painting, and fieldwork. Traditional plein air painting, which typically involves painting outdoors in a single sitting to capture a vista in a certain quality of light, is taken as a point of departure to consider the ways in which humans use, observe, record, and commune with the land. In this exhibition, the practice of plein air painting is considered in the context of land surveying and settling, public and private space, multidisciplinary onsite research, art history, and the embodied experience of being there. Outdoor painting from observation is approached as ground truth, as bearing witness. 145 N. Raymond Ave., Pasadena; Opening reception: July 23, 1-3pm; On view through December 10; free; armory-arts.org.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26

Normal Gossip Live at the Theater at the Ace Hotel. Got a secret you've been dying to share? Divulge and indulge in Normal Gossip Live, an evening of juicy, strange, funny, and utterly banal gossip about people you'll never know and never meet, coming to the stage straight from the stream of the hit podcast. This entertain-



RDFA
 Brain Cooper

ing evening with host Kelsey McKinney, producer Alex Sujong Laughlin, and special surprise guests dives into the lives and decisions of complete strangers. Bring your secrets and your mess. 929 S. Broadway, downtown; Wednesday, July 26; 7:30pm; \$39-\$50; acehotel.com.

JULY 21-27

**Agent Orange
 Whisky A Go Go**

Agent Orange are a perfect band to watch at the Whisky. Beloved, storied SoCal punk rock from a band that play a glorious blend of old school snotty punk, hardcore and ska. “Inevitably, if you know what you’re doing, [the sound] becomes more reyned and it becomes more of a focused version of what it was,” frontman Mike Palm told us back in 2017. “I have to say, it’s kinda working like that for me.” Yup!

MUSIC

THE BELLWETHER
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| | |
|--------|------------------------|
| AUG 02 | POOLSIDE |
| AUG 08 | SANTIGOLD |
| AUG 13 | CARLY RAE JEPSEN |
| AUG 14 | TEGAN AND SARA |
| AUG 17 | ISAIAH RASHAD |
| AUG 24 | FLIPTURN |
| AUG 25 | SUDAN ARCHIVES |
| AUG 31 | THE HEAD AND THE HEART |

TICKETS AT THEBELLWETHERLA.COM



Air 02
 Paula Wilson

6 p.m. on Friday, July 21 at the Whisky A Go-Go, \$20, whiskyagogo.com.

**Tori Amos
 Greek Theatre**

You have to hand it to Tori — she recently broke her leg on this tour but has soldiered on wearing a cast. For an artist who spends a lot of time hitting those piano pedals, that’s not a small feat for her feet. We spoke to her last year as she was about to play some L.A. shows and she said that, “I lived there for seven and a half years, when big hair was the thing. I lived in L.A. at a speciyc time. I was in my twenties – I moved there when I was 21. I was all over the Canyons, in the Valley, and driving my little wannabe Mustang – a baby blue Capri – all over the place. Playing piano bars anywhere I could.” God love her. 8 p.m. on Friday, July 21 at the Greek Theatre, \$34-\$97, lagreektheatre.com

**The Sloppy Boys
 El Cid**

The Sloppy Boys spawned out of comedy troupe the Birthday Boys—that name

might be familiar to comedy fans who recall their TV sketch show which saw them get a leg up from Better Call Saul / Mr. Showman Bob Odenkirk. So, they have pedigree, and a few great tunes too. Many of them are about partying, rocking and drinking, and they sound like a blend of early Beastie Boys and Andrew WK. Which isn’t a bad thing. Dutts also has a listening party on the same afternoon. 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 22 at El Cid, \$12.36, elcidsunset.com.

**Reggae Night XXI
 Hollywood Bowl**

Jamaican headliner Beres Hammond is known for his “lover’s rock” brand of reggae — that is to say that he was influenced by the likes of Sam Cooke and Otis Redding as a teen and he knows how to woo the ladies. The bill also features the magnificent sounds of Birmingham, England, band Steel Pulse. There are few better reggae bands from outside of Jamaica. Bird World also performs. 7 p.m. on Sunday, July 23 at the Hollywood Bowl, \$47-\$187, hollywoodbowl.com. 📺



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A LIFE LESS ORDINARY

Tegan And Sara Are All About The Music

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



PHOTO BY ELUVIER ACOSTA

Canadian indie-pop duo *Tegan and Sara* are proudly, unashamedly un-tabloid. They refer to themselves as “average,” in non-self-effacing terms, due to their proclivity to avoid the celebrity lifestyle (we know what they mean, but there’s nothing average about these amazing women).

When we think of Tegan and Sara, we think of their music. Who the twins are dating, hanging out with, wearing – nobody gives a shit and that’s to their immense credit.

“It’s hugely flattering,” says Sara Keirsten Quin. “It would be difficult to maintain a tabloid-esque career when you’re not. Some people are so naturally good at being a headline, and I don’t think Tegan

and I have that.”

“It’s also choices,” adds Tegan Rain Quin. “I lived in L.A. for 12 years. Sara lived in New York for a handful of years and then L.A. for a handful of years. We said no to everything ‘red carpet.’ We were not that band. We’ve been lucky enough to make lifelong friends in this industry – musicians and actors – you don’t see them on our feed. We never used anything except music to sell ourselves. We curated this fence around us. No one really knows our private life, but you feel like you do. You don’t notice the absence of drama or celebrity. It’s meant at times that we’re really average. It doesn’t mean that someone couldn’t make drama if they wanted to. But as artists, we remained focused on our art.”

They surely do! Tegan and Sara have released 10 albums since 1999, starting with the *Under Feet Like Ours* debut and building up to the most recent full-lengther – last year’s *Crybaby*.

“Our goal with *Crybaby* was just to make something we would want to listen to,” Tegan says. “We produced it alongside John Congleton, and it was like a combination of songs that we had written during the pandemic, and then once we got into the studio, we were really inspired and wrote some more songs. The fan response has been great. We were laughing, when we first started touring and we’d play songs like ‘Smoking Weed Alone’ and ‘Fucking Up What Matters,’ people were jumping up and down – not moshing but pushing a little bit. My mom was on tour

with us and she was like, ‘There’s so many men in your audience all of a sudden.’ I have lots of theories about that, but ultimately people don’t seem bummed when we play new songs.”

Crybaby may have been largely written during the pandemic, but it doesn’t sound like a ‘pandemic album’ at all. Not, at least, when it comes to the subject matter.

“Tegan and I are notoriously prolific” says Sara. “We’re always working and always busy. We’re two very high-functioning people, so we’re only doing half as much work as people think we are. I do feel like the pandemic was a brutal stoppage of all of that work, but it allowed us to prioritize in a way that we wouldn’t have. I don’t think the music is about the



Tegan And Sara

pandemic, but it did provide this opportunity to reflect and also start thinking about the future in this uncluttered way. I was very acutely going through trying to start a family. I was reflecting on the years that we'd been out on the road and touring, and then this sudden pivot into thinking about something else really profound. It may not be the thing that people think of when they first hear the album or the songs, but I think there is this layer of the 'calm before the storm' feeling."

The pandemic isn't the biggest event to have occurred in Sara's life in recent years; she became a parent for the first time last year and just a couple of weeks celebrated baby Sid's first birthday.

"I keep thinking about how I have a lot of friends that had kids in 2020/21, and I definitely don't envy them," Sara says. "On the other hand, you really do turn inward. I'm sure it's a survival mechanism, but when you have this new precious cargo in your life and you don't want to injure it or drop it, the thought of having it during a quiet, isolated time – I wonder if that would have been easier. We had Sid right when Tegan and I were about to launch an album, a TV show, a book, touring again, so I know for myself it's been quite a lot of juggling. Sid won't remember any of it, but we'll have stories to tell from his first year."

Ahh yes, the TV show. *High School* came out last October, based on Tegan

and Sara's memoir of the same name. Shot in their hometown of Calgary, where it was set, the show has received almost universal praise.

"When we finished writing our memoir, we sent the manuscript to our friend Clea DuVall and she said that it could be developed into a TV show," says Sara. "We had talked about it, internally certainly. The pandemic gave us a lot of time to work on it, so we started pitching the big networks during the early months of the pandemic. We were really shocked how quickly the deal came together and the writing happened. There was a taste for it. Here is a story about queer girls, queer musicians, queer Canadians, in an era that is interesting for the culture right now – the 1990s. So it was the right place, right time. It wasn't a huge endeavor. We made it in Calgary, and are so delighted with the way the show came out."

A show about queer teens going through high school in Canada, written by strong gay woman who were teens going through high school in Canada – this was always going to be an important show and so it proved to be. At the time of writing, it's been just a couple of weeks since the end of Pride month, but for Tegan and Sara (and the *LA Weekly*), every month is Pride Month.

"Holy shit, am I ever glad I'm gay," says Tegan. "But we also toured through Pride

month, so every night felt like a Pride event. Sara and I are also fixated on the protest part, and there's still so much to be done. We do a lot of fundraising for our Tegan and Sara Foundation. Vans have been an amazing partner of ours and they just agreed to pay for our entire LGBTQ summer camp program. Pride for us is about work. Create safe spaces. Be out there and be queer. Raise money for the foundation, and extend it into every place."

You only have to look at states such as Florida and the swath of anti-LGBTQ+ laws that are being introduced under the heinous guise of being "anti-woke" to see that there's a lot of work still to be done. It's horribly frustrating to feel like we as a society are taking huge strides forward, only to be pulled backwards by bookwoods bigots.

"I think we have an interesting perspective because we spend so much time traveling internationally," Sara says. "So while the gains in Canada and the U.S. have been so important, the work that we do as a band and a foundation, we're always aware of what is so out of reach for some people. I want to say that I'm shocked about the rollbacks of rights regarding trans kids right now, but I'm not. I think that also speaks to how important it is to stay engaged and to avoid apathy wherever possible. We really believe that our rights cannot be taken away in places

like the US and Canada, and that's just not true. It's about staying vigilant and educated, and celebrating our wins when we can. Especially when we're assimilating. We didn't get the right to marriage by saying 'Fuck you!' We got them by saying, 'We're just like you, straight people, don't be scared.' Well, there's a price that comes with assimilation. The more you don't blend in, the more those people say that they're uncomfortable and don't want to fall in line with what you care about."

On Monday, Aug. 14, Tegan and Sara play *The Bellweather*, a brand new venue in L.A. owned by the same people that run the Teragram Ballroom.

"We've been building a show that reflects every era of Tegan and Sara," says Tegan. "It's our Eras tour – watch out Taylor Swift. We're playing music from all of our records. I mean, my dad cried! He's the most proud he's ever been of us. What more reason do you need? It's a smaller venue, which feels really exciting. It's been nice to reconnect with the audience."

The same tour will keep Tegan and Sara on the road for the remainder of this year at least. Besides that, they're working on a new book and, when the writer's strike is resolved, hope to finish a second season of *High School*.

Two decades into their exceptional career, and these decidedly un-average women won't slow down. **LA**

CULTURE

COMIC-CON GOES ON

Even without big actor appearances, SDCC offers a lot of brand power

BY LINA LECARO



Superpowered (courtesy of MAX)

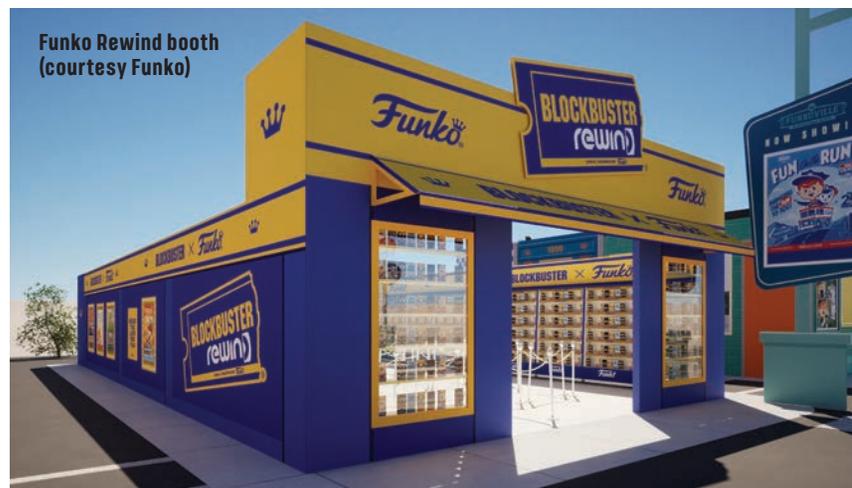
San Diego Comic-Con (SDCC) has reigned and raged for decades now, building in popularity to become as influential to entertainment promotion as traditional advertising and media. But in the last few years, it can't catch a break. After COVID forced its cancellation in 2020, an at-home event in 2021, and a smaller event in 2022, the 2023 convention has suffered a major blow, too, thanks to the Screen Actors Guild and Writers Guild of America strikes. What was hoped to be the full-fledged return for the convention in terms of scope and participants once again is getting downsized.

Guidelines for the strike make clear that members must not participate in public events including conventions like this one. At press time, several events have been canceled, including highly anticipated panels from ABC's *Abbott Elementary*, Amazon Freevee's *Jury Duty*, Amazon Prime Video's *The Wheel of Time* and Gen V, AMC's Season 2 of *Interview With the Vampire*, *The '70s Show* and *Dune-Part 2*. (Check SDCC's social media for updates about late cancellations).

Marvel announced they'd be mostly ab-

sent this year even before the strikes, but the convention still sold out months ago, and Hall H (where the biggest happenings take place) will still have some hot-ticket stuff from DC Comics despite the strike. DC is, in fact, taking the opportunity to make a bigger splash in Marvel's absence, promising a new convention floor or booth in PR materials sent to *LA Weekly*. A DC Shop with McFarlane Toys and Cartamundi collectables will offer limited edition merchandise, and they tout a Warner Bros. Television advance screening of episode one of the Max Original Documentary Series of *Superpowered: The DC Story*, plus the world premiere screening of *Justice League: Warworld*.

Another H hall hot ticket should be the Collider panel, which puts the spotlight on directors, with big names scheduled to participate including David Leitch (*Deadpool 2*, *Bullet Train* and *The Fall Guy*), Gareth Edwards (director *The Creator*, *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, and *Godzilla*), and Justin Simien (director of *Dear White People*, *Bad Hair* and *Haunted Mansion*). An appearance by Todd McFarlane (see last week's cover story online for an inter-



Funko Rewind booth (courtesy Funko)



Red Sonja (courtesy Dynamite Entertainment)

view) is still on, as well.

Animated shows continue to have a big presence, too. Paramount Animation's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem* is a big one, and others include Max's *Harley Quinn*, Netflix's *Masters of the Universe: Revolution*, Apple TV+'s *Snoopy*, and classics such as *Rick and Morty*, *Bob's Burgers*, *Futurama*, *American Dad* and *Family Guy* will be there. Other properties also represented at SDCC as of now, include *Jurassic Park*, *Ghosts*, *Good Burger 2*, *PlayStation 5's Spider-Man 2* game, A24's *Talk to Me*, FX's *Archer* and *What We Do in the Shadows* (screenings), *Chasing Chasing Amy* (which just debuted at Outfest), *Tiny Toons "Looniversity"*, *Good Omens*, *Walking Dead*, *Red Sonja*, and *Transformers (Robosen* is unveiling a new robot and Hasbro will preview its new video game).

Beyond show-specific panels, big SDCC draws are, as always, the vending booths where new pop culture collectables are "dropped" daily, attracting long lines to buy; and activations with giveaways promoting various entertainment companies and products, both inside the con and at

outside parties and surrounding places. Mattel, which is everywhere right now thanks to *The Barbie Movie*, is putting the spotlight on other faves such as *Hot Wheels*, *WWE*, *Minecraft*, and *Monster High*, with signings and special releases under the banner "12 Days of Fandom," while Funko's "Funkoville" environment marks the company's 25th anniversary and a new partnership with Blockbuster via a Rewind video store set-up (a nostalgic experience featuring new collectibles based on iconic retro VHS titles).

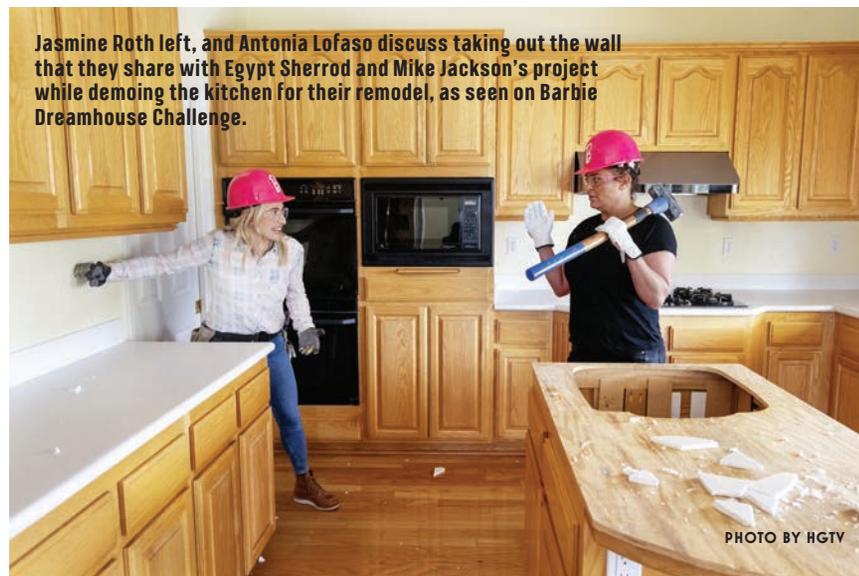
There's also an art show featuring drawings, paintings, sculptures, jewelry, and more created by professional and amateur artists, all available via Silent Auction or Quick-Sale. And let's not forget the cosplay! Dressing up as your favorite superhero, cartoon, monster and comic character (or simply admiring and taking pics with people who do) is what made Comic-Con capture attention - particularly online - beyond comics "nerds" in the first place.

Comic-Con at the San Diego Convention Center, 111 Harbor Drive, San Diego; runs Thursday, July 20-Sunday, July 23. Info at comic-con.org. [A]

FOOD

FIRST LOOK: CHEF ANTONIA LOFASO TAKES US INSIDE HER BARBIE DREAMHOUSE KITCHEN

BY MICHELE STUEVEN



Jasmine Roth left, and Antonia Lofaso discuss taking out the wall that they share with Egypt Sherrod and Mike Jackson's project while demoing the kitchen for their remodel, as seen on *Barbie Dreamhouse Challenge*.

PHOTO BY HGTV

Food Network star chef Antonia Lofaso is part of 15 HGTV home design and renovation experts that have taken over a mundane Santa Clarita home and transformed it into the ultimate Barbie Dreamhouse, in a meticulously detailed project that premieres on the network Sunday, July 16.

In *Barbie Dreamhouse Challenge*, eight teams overhaul areas of the home with an era-specific style, like an early 1960s atomic-age kitchen designed by Lofaso and Jasmine Roth from *Help! I Wrecked My House*, a '70s disco vibe for Ken's Den and a main bedroom decked out in '80s glam.

The rest of the lineup includes Egypt Sherron and Mike Jackson from *Married to Real Estate*, Ty Pennington (Rock

the Block), Alison Victoria (*Windy City Rehab*); Jonathan Knight and Kristina Crestin (*Farmhouse Fixer*); Christina Hall and James Bender (*Christina on the Coast*); Keith Bynum and Evan Thomas (*Bargain Block*); Brian and Mike Kleinschmidt (*100 Day Dream Home*); and Michel Smith Boyd and Anthony Elle Williams from *Luxe for Less*. The show is hosted by supermodel Ashley Graham.

"It was amazing working with Jasmine because she has her own style just like chefs do," Lofaso tells *L.A. Weekly* of the three-month kitchen makeover. "HGTV design folks and chefs are exactly the same people. One designs, the other cooks — that's the only difference. Jasmine was all about having hidden some things all over the kitchen. Our



Team Jasmine Roth and Antonia Lofaso's finished Family Room, with Astronaut Barbie

PHOTO BY HGTV

pantry looked like bookshelves, so I was obsessed with finding Barbie cookbooks or designing some so they would be in the front of this bookshelf. What really makes a home a home is seeing the books of whoever lives there. You open this bookshelf to an even more amazing pantry. Barbie or no Barbie, I could live in this kitchen."

Other hidden things include a pink blender and a toaster that pops out of the kitchen's counter, something that you would actually find in a 1960s kitchen, arguably the best Barbie era. With extensive help from Mattel and their archives, Lofaso combined her experience with designing home and restaurant kitchens with her love for the iconic doll, to create a sleek modern version of a kitchen that Barbie herself would actually want to cook in. And yes, she would have wanted a microwave.

"It was more about research and exploring the era," says Lofaso, owner of Scopa Italian Roots restaurant in Venice and Dama in DTLA. "We were putting ourselves in the shoes of an actual Barbie living in this house. Having all those conversations with Mattel and reading so much about this particular Barbie era was enlightening. Yes, those were dolls we played with, yes, these were dream houses we played with, and yes, we loved all those little shoes. But there was a large progressive undertone to all these toys young girls played with."

To help illustrate that, there's a framed photo of an Astronaut Barbie in the family room adjacent to the kitchen.

"That was one of the most popular Barbies during that time," she says. "It really sat with Jasmine and me as women, because it was the '60s before anybody had actually been on the moon yet. So before there was even a person

on the moon, Mattel designed Astronaut Barbie. With those ideas in mind, the kitchen represents the futuristic ideas that Mattel was hinting towards. So when we were designing the coming up out of the countertop toaster and blender, it was a reflection of that race-to-space time."

As Barbie fever continues to heat up in anticipation of Warner Brothers' release of the Barbie movie starring Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling on Friday, July 21, the Food Network chef shared some of her own childhood memories.

"I had so many Barbies growing up and would play in my room for hours by myself. I'd connect all of my Barbie dreamhouses and make them into mansions that would go from under my bed up into the closet onto a side table and pretty much just take over the whole room. I loved all the small little intricacies of things, like a little plate you could put a sticker on with the food, and forks. I remember being so very careful never to lose my little pieces.

Barbie Dreamhouse kitchen (HGTV)

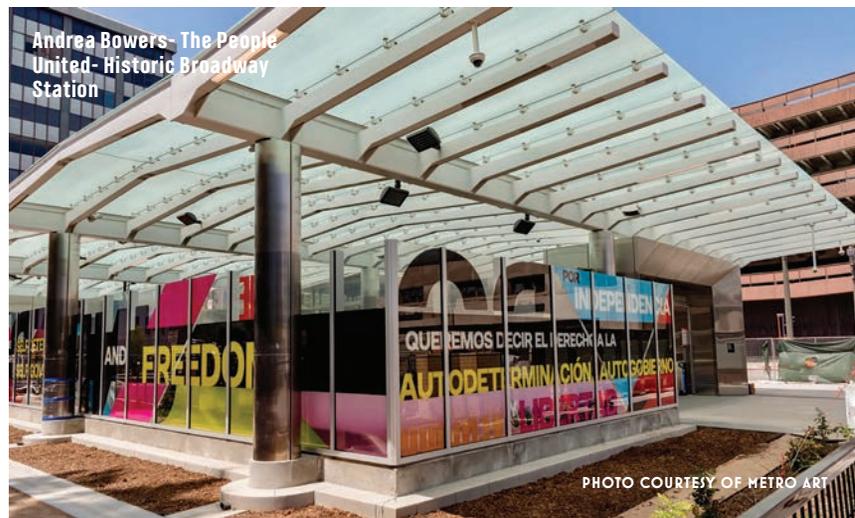
"I had a brother who was 15 months younger than me and he would take my Barbies and throw them into his swimming sharks. I told Jasmine the story in one of the interviews on the show and she freaked out, she said I couldn't share Barbie mutilation stories. And the haircuts. I actually heard there's a Barbie in the new movie with mismatched hair because everybody had a brother or cousin that would chop her hair off. Every little girl out there cries about some other kid coming in and cutting Barbie's hair trying to be funny."

Go inside our photo gallery above for before and after pictures of the entire Barbie Dreamhouse Challenge project, all courtesy of HGTV. [R]

ART

THE JOURNEY IS THE EXHIBITION: METRO ART BUILDS REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT



The addition of more public transportation infrastructure is worth celebrating in itself, but when it comes to the three stations of the newly opened downtown Regional Connector system, the journey is not just the destination—it's an exhibition. Across the street levels, entrances, passageways, and platforms of the shiny new depots, eight artists were commissioned by Metro Art to create permanent, site-specific installations, along with a further pair of artists whose work inaugurates two of those stations' rotating lightbox exhibition panels.

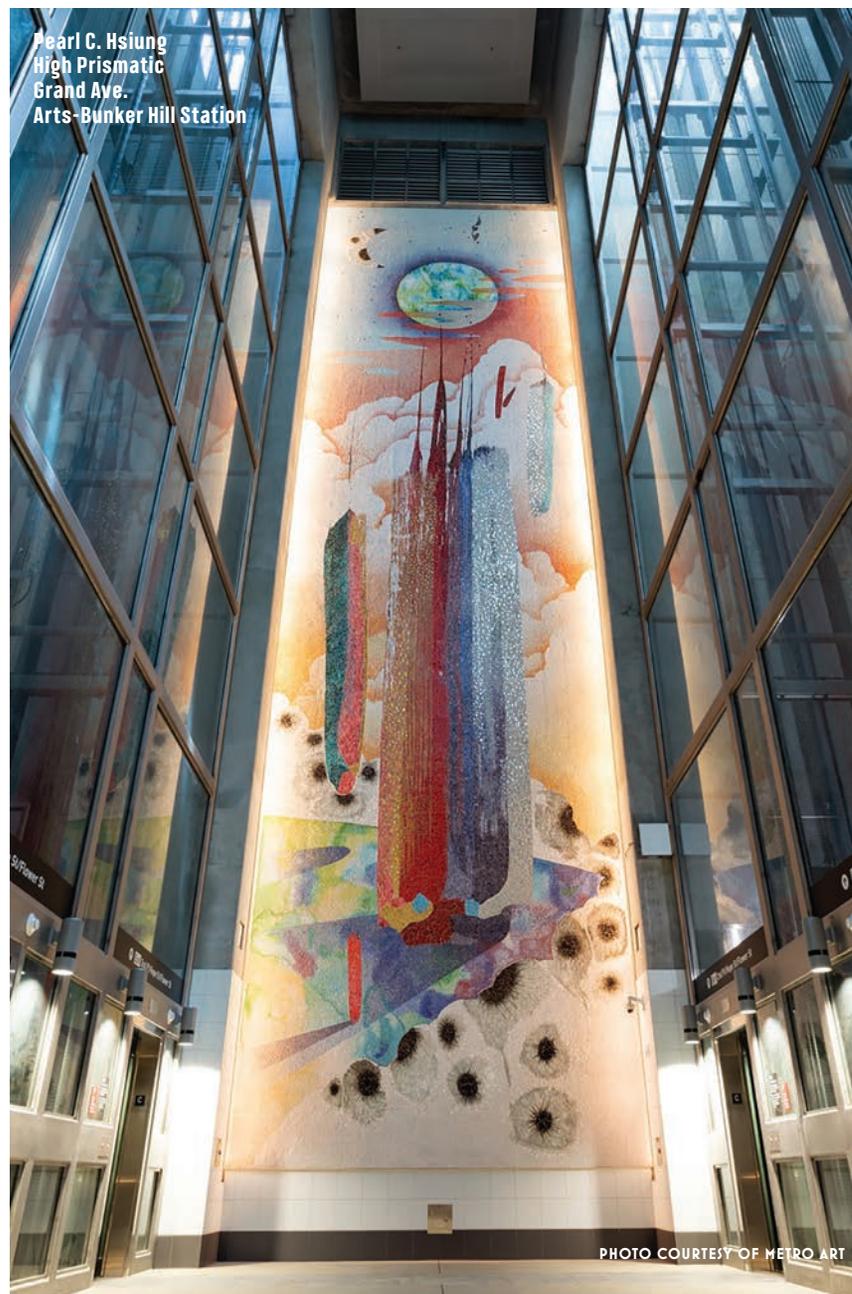
The artists were chosen through an open competition in which some 1,200 people applied to a panel of institutional and independent arts professionals. In a gentle twist, the process did not call for over-specific proposals, but rather for a more general presentation of each artist's aesthetic and core practice principles. Essentially, artists were chosen first, and only then were the projects developed with them—over a period of seven years—rather than the typical other way around. The extra time and care for which this allowed absolutely manifests in the works, all of which result from thoughtful direct conversation with the places they occupy.

Extremely eclectic in visual styles ranging from the photojournalistic to

the cosmic, geological, ethereal, meditative, folksy, poetic, prismatic, and political, nevertheless the cohort all share one directive—local storytelling. Each in their way and often with intentional community engagement, intensive research, and material collaborations, the artists found elements of the area's and specific station sites' lengthy and dynamic histories and created their work to explore, enshrine, and honor it—all within the context of the new architecture and the way current visitors and residents use the neighborhoods. Traveling between and among the Regional Connector's sites, one finds it's the art that's forging deeper regional connections.

Little Tokyo/Arts District Station

Clare Rojas' Harmony announces the entrance plaza with a street-level installation of translucent glass panels holding iridescent, saturated color schemes that flicker between abstraction and the natural landscape. Its projections of light, hue, and shape change with the time of day as it both activates the surrounding sidewalk for all passersby and beckons from above for any passers leaving the station. Rojas' delicate synthesis of urban architecture and the pace of city life with a more bucolic language of water, weather, and the turning



of the earth itself creates a gently glowing atmospheric nod to the energy that flows through public spaces.

Audrey Chan's 168-foot long porcelain, enamel, and steel mural Will Power Allegory lines the tracks on both sides of the station's central platform with a far more specific illustrated narrative, literally holding space for relational aspects and real figures from the area's history. The work is divided into 14 individual panels, each with a dedicated story to tell, but linked visually and narratively by a motif of civic marches and demonstrations along the bottom edge of them all. In addition to more canonical cultural and political milestones, Chan's less conventional pantheon includes once and future landmarks like

the punk rock artists' hangout Atomic Cafe, the storied music and art mecca of the American Hotel, and the unique local nonprofit gallery and housing outpost Art Share L.A. With echoes of WPA-era didactic murals and an unflinching presentation of Japanese American incarceration, erasure of the Gabrielino-Tongva Tribe, and the displacement and disastrous neglect facing residents of Skid Row, Chan does a good job of balancing celebration with education and critique in a special nod to generations of activists who have fought to make, preserve, and improve these unique city enclaves.

Historic Broadway Station

Andrea Bowers' The People United

“El pueblo unido jamás será vencido,” Sergio Ortega and Quilapayun; “Brown Beret 13 Point Political Program,” La Causa) also honors the neighborhood’s traditions of policy and protest, playing off the fact that with City Hall, LAPD HQ, the Hall of Justice, the U.S. Courthouse, and other seats of local, state, and federal power are all within a few blocks of the station. A rectilinear glass entrance enclosure holds a stylized array of fonts and colors exploring texts that read in English and Spanish the phrases, “The people united will never be divided,” and, “By independence we mean the right to self-determination, self-government, and freedom.” Though some magic trick of engineering and craft, the text is legible from both sides of the glass, so that there is no “wrong way” to encounter its message, and thus as public art it reminds locals of the significance of where they live, and as a public concourse it welcomes the arrival of those with some truth to speak to power.

Downstairs, a pensive suite of black and white images by photographer Clarence Williams, collaboratively paired with haikus by poet Ursula Rucker, lines both sides of the platform. Migrations is a moving account of the kinds of events that precipitate population migration—natural, political, social, and economic disasters that prompt all kinds of people to go in search of a better life “elsewhere.” As the piece chronicles, so often that “elsewhere” is a place like Los Angeles, both welcoming and daunting, full of opportunity, promise, and its own pernicious obstacles. “The artwork will speak to downtown L.A.’s role as an entry point for so many types of people,” Williams wrote in a statement. “The quintessential place for new beginnings.”

Upstairs on the landing, the 148 feet of Mark Steven Greenfield’s glass tile mosaic Red Car Requiem has a stretch of otherwise dead space all to itself; but its dynamic procession of spiked wheels, motion lines, and satellites is the only thing the room needs. In a fiery palette of red, orange, and yellow hues, made of light-catching glass bits that glisten as the viewer moves by, Greenfield devised a pattern motif based on the ticket stubs from the old Pacific Electric Railway Company’s electric streetcars—commonly called the “red cars.” In use from 1901-61, they were central to the city’s sprawling development, but were discontinued with the advent of car culture, to the environmental, social, and aesthetic detriment of all. The work’s combination of nostalgia and optimism, with the spirit of Red Grooms at Grand Central on its shoulder, recalls the romance of what was lost, but fêtes



its resurrection in a newly re-expanding train system.

Nearby, on a wide upper stairway landing with natural light streaming from its top, Ralph Gilbert’s Performance on the Streets of LA fills five large lightboxes—part of a rotating exhibition scheme on such illuminated panels which is already in place in many existing stations, which now includes two of the three new stations as well. His images come from original paintings of street performers around Hollywood Boulevard, Olvera Street, Union Station, Echo Park Lake, Pershing Square, and the Venice Boardwalk. The compositions depict these familiar scenes with thick, warm texture and their light-saturated colors are emotional, appealing, and awash in a relatable love for the entire city.

Grand Ave. Arts/Bunker Hill Station

With its topmost egress at street level with the Broad, MOCA, Colburn School, Disney Hall and its Bridge with a view north toward the rest of the Grand Avenue institutions, it’s no wonder this would be the artsiest of the three new stations. All three permanent pieces as well as the inaugural lightbox installation are nuanced paradoxes marrying the most ethereal of energies with the most massive of physicalities, and all speak directly to the fact of motion and time’s passage within the site.

Mungo Thomson placed two large porcelain, enamel, and steel square murals against pillars above the platform. Though visible from below, they are best viewed from the upper walkway, which suits their ethereal, lofty quality. With their conceptual linkage of tunneling and telescoping, the images evoke the night sky and penumbrous meteorol-

ogy of their source images—the almost 7,400 exposures from NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope fused in Negative Space (STSci-2015-02) create windows to a second sky, farther below the earth than any other Metro station.

Samira Yamin All Is Flux is also a disembodied meditation on forces of nature, using the fractal movements of water and air as an analogy for people moving through time and space. Her series of five lightboxes present black and white currents which evoke both drawing and photography in their quest to express chaos in form and freeze motion in place. The slightly consternating subtlety of this station’s pieces continues with Ann Hamilton’s over-under-over—a two-story, hand-drawn pattern field coating the glass of the vertical entrance and its glass elevators. It is visible as an oceanic blur as one rises and descends, resolving into an almost fabric-like texture when one is still—so quiet that one more senses than sees it.

Easily the most compelling of the in-

stallations is the breathtaking textured glass mosaic by Pearl C. Hsiung in the extremely vertical elevator lobby. The nuanced and monumental High Prismatic touches on the millennia, centuries, and decades of the site’s geological, anthropological, and social histories. As its “geyser” rises more than 60 feet from its grounded, textured landing up towards its moonlit soulful canopy, the work is almost cathedral-like in effect, encouraging extended contemplation even among busy commuters, and pointed in its reminder that Bunker Hill was a lot of things before it was a subway station. Natural resource, indigenous land, locus of invasion and colonization, valuable real estate, forum of modern culture and creativity—and now a whole new kind of hub with a whole new history being written every day.

Union Station Passageway Lightboxes

Part of the long-standing citywide lightbox exhibition scheme, Journeys Continued: LA Communities Through the Eyes of Artists was recently unveiled at Union Station in its wide Passageway corridor. Featuring eclectic artwork by 12 Los Angeles-based artists, each depicting their neighborhoods. Since 2001, the Metro Art Lightbox Exhibition Program has produced a series of rotating illuminated presentations at 7th St/Metro Center, Hollywood/Highland, Universal/Studio City, Vermont/Beverly, Wilshire/Normandie—and now Historic Broadway and Grand Ave Arts/Bunker Hill. In 2003, the Though the Eyes of Artists series began; in 2017-18 the exhibition Journeys: LA Communities Through the Eyes of Artists commemorated its progress. Now, Journeys Continued celebrates the anniversaries with the new iteration—and 12 of the project’s 63 artworks now light up the Union Station Passageway.

For more information about these and other Metro Art initiatives, visit: art.metro.net.

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