

# Debut of Downtown City Dog Party

By Cathy Tyson



"I'm ready for it."

Lafayette is going to the dogs. In what promises to be a howling-good Saturday to remember, for the first time ever, Lafayette is holding a party celebrating canines – from mutts to purebreds at Dogtown Downtown. The tail wagging and festive events for well-behaved furry friends and, of course, their owners, happen this Saturday, April 12 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The canine-centric fun kicks off at 10 a.m. with a Grand Parade starting at Lafayette Plaza Park and continues down Gold Gate Way to the Lafayette Library. Well behaved dogs on leash and under control by their owners are cordially invited to attend. There will also be dog competitions, outdoor demonstrations along with animal group representatives and adoptions.

Fun competitions include best dog-owner team trick, hound and owner couples that bare a 'paws-itive' resemblance, 'waggiest' tail – whip-pet good, and best dog costume. What are you waiting for? 'Schnauzer' chance to compete.

Pooch parents will have an opportunity to learn the latest in canine care from veterinary specialists from the renowned UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, along with the Bay Area's SAGE Centers for Veterinary Specialty and Emergency Care. Lots

of learning will be going on with topics ranging from pet first aid, toxins, environmental hazards, even how to become a veterinarian or vet technician and so much more. Dogs will be allowed inside the library and its classrooms during veterinary presentations.

Professional dogs will be doing demonstrations throughout the event – service dogs, police dogs, dancing dogs, and even agility performances, which might make an overweight basset hound a little jealous.

It's a team effort to bring this all together – sponsors include the City of Lafayette, the Chamber of Commerce, the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation and the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine along with many others.

"The Chamber had wanted to do this for some time," said Barbara Gilmore of the Chamber of Commerce. When dedicated dog lover Mayor Don Tatzin outlined his agenda for 2014 it was the perfect connection. "Bring all my four legged friends down to the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. Dogs unite! My name is REX and I approve of this message," joked Jay Lifson, executive director of the Chamber. Your key to enjoyment is to simply show up. For more details, go to [www.LLLCF.org/dogtown/](http://www.LLLCF.org/dogtown/).



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## The Intricacies of Art and Poetry

*PBS NewsHour's Jeffrey Brown facilitates panel discussion at SMC about published poetry and related art*

By Lou Fancher



Jeffrey Brown Image provided

"Trading Secrets: Art-Poetry-Practice," was the public end-cap on a week-long visit to Saint Mary's College by Jeffrey Brown, PBS NewsHour Chief Arts Correspondent and his wife, internationally acclaimed artist, educator and author, Paula Crawford. As Visiting Woodrow Wilson Fellows, Brown and Crawford led classes, workshops, panels and presentations aimed at addressing the relevancy of a liberal arts education. In the digital age and amid rapidly-changing cultural concerns, discussions encompassed consumerism, the role of an artist in promoting and marketing his or her work, arts criticism, freedom of expression and how television's inherently visual medium influences broadcast journalism.

Brown opened himself to a "Turning the Tables: Your Chance to Interview Jeffrey Brown," session on April 1 and participated as moderator in the poetry panel the following evening.

A poetry reading began the program, with opportunities for poets to explain the artwork adorning their books' covers. The interplay between visuals – including images, and the graphic design of title treatments – and a collection's content, was the primary subject of discussion.

Jai Arun Ravine introduced herself, saying she preferred to be referred to as "Jai," or in the third person as "they, their, them." Intensely involved in every aspect of how and where the work is presented, Jai's poems introduced stark images, like "Naked body through a frozen window," and asked questions, like "What would you do, in a box by yourself?" It's a thinking person's poetry: demanding attention and denying easy answers. And thought has gone into the construction, not just of the poems, but of the paper they are printed upon. Using found objects, compiling rice paper, folding tiny treasures into miniature self-made books – or publishing in more traditional paperbound editions – Jai proved literary art's preciousness is partly the tangible product, the precise packaging, constructed to compliment and carry the language.

Brenda Hillman, the Olivia C. Filippi Professor of Poetry at Saint Mary's, said she had written several volumes categorized under natural elements, like wind and fire. Reading

from one, she said, "The word edge has wings made of 'E.'" The line demonstrated her acute visual sense – applied to both the individual word and aspects of the natural world. Holding up the collection of poems on fire, she exposed the jacket, front and back, and said, "This piece was too subtle, so we put it on the back. The artist who made this (front cover) image took a picture of a fire. Then he burned the picture and took a picture of the picture burning."

During the panel discussion, the focus veered toward an analysis of images, often placing them in opposition to words. Brown asked the poets, Hillman, Jai, Kevin Simmonds and Alexandra Matraw, along with visual artist Nori Hara and Crawford, at what point in the process they first thought about cover art.

"I don't think about it until the manuscript has been submitted. It has to rhyme with my idea of the book," Hillman said.

Simmonds said image ideas follow titles and the title is "a little magic, a little confusion." He works with Hara, who said he can see Simmonds' ideas in his head and doesn't always read the poems themselves.

Matraw mentioned not having input: occasions when an editor will choose the art for her book and she is left only to hope it connects with the work she has cherished and nurtured into existence.

Naturally, Brown asked the writers how it felt to give up control of their work. Simmonds admitted, he "went nuts," when he once asked to have input on the jacket art and a publisher told him, "We have people who do that."

Crawford broadened the discussion by delving into the complexity of combining – and separating – words and images. "I got a solid humanities education, so when I came to arts school I was full of words. I worked

hard to separate the two worlds," she said. Today, having co-authored, with sculptor Kendall Buster, "The Critique Handbook, The Art Student's Sourcebook and Survival Guide," and widely recognized for her spacious, suggestive abstract paintings, Crawford spends most of her time outside of language. "It's like a retreat," she said, of her studio. "But the language of poetry is closest to painting: you're getting words, standing in isolation, very chosen."

Matraw called the trance-like state she enters, while composing a poem, "a slippery space." For her, an image in a film or a conversation can trigger a life experience that projects itself as words in a poem.

The layering of different art forms, like music and dance, as well as images and fonts for book covers, finds its way into the composition or texture of the panel's work, regardless of their resistance. "It's a parallel universe," Crawford claimed. Then, speaking about a poem that was highly influential in work she is preparing for an upcoming exhibit, she warned, "But I don't want a poem to be a caption for a painting. I like them to be near each other."

An English teacher in the audience asked how to answer his students' most frequent question, especially about poetry: "Why do we have to read this?" they've asked.

Matraw, with 15 years of teaching under her belt, tells her students: "Art, poetry and fiction are a reflection of life. Go with the flow. Be open to weirdness."

And Hillman said she answers the question with a question: "I ask students, which of you thinks in complete sentences all day long?" she said. "Modernist fragmentation wasn't invented by James Joyce, it was invented by the human mind. Poetry is reality."

## Student Art and Poetry Exhibition Opens

An exhibition, "Through Young Eyes: Art & Poetry from the River of Words Collection," which features works by K-12 students from across the world will be on view Saturdays from 2 to 5 p.m. April 12-26 at the Garage Gallery, a satellite of Berkeley Outlet (3110 Wheeler Street, Berkeley). River of Words is a project of the Center for Environmental Literacy at Saint Mary's College of California. According to the SMC website, the artwork presented in this show is the product of students of the River of Words K-12 curriculum that reaches out to young people all over world, engaging them in an exploration of their watersheds through inter-disciplinary (poetry, drawing, painting, science) place-based education. Through teacher training, publications, exhibitions, and advocacy, River of Words strives to inspire and empower future generations of informed and compassionate earth stewards through hands-on, investigative and fun experiences of the world around them. It was founded in 1995 by writer Pamela Michael and then-US Poet Laureate Robert Hass. An opening reception will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday, April 11 at the Garage Gallery. Winners' work will be displayed at the Saint Mary's College Library beginning April 30. For information, visit <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/through-young-eyes-art-poetry-from-the-river-of-words-collection>.

## Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 250 words) to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com), and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.