

MEDIA RELEASE



Vancouver Artist Tiko Kerr to unveil original painting “A Night Full of Stars (Maxine’s)” to raise funds for West End community

(Vancouver, July 21, 2010) Popular Vancouver artist Tiko Kerr and West End Neighbours will unveil an original acrylic painting titled “A Night Full of Stars (Maxine’s)” at noon Wednesday in front of Maxine’s. The painting will be sold at a charity art auction within several weeks to raise funds for Vancouver’s West End community to create its own vision. This is a mature neighbourhood of about 46,000 people under tremendous pressure for rapid change by major rezoning and development proposals.

WHAT: Unveiling of Tiko Kerr original painting “A Night Full of Stars (Maxine’s)” and announcement of charity art auction for West End community dialogue and vision
WHEN: 12 noon, Wednesday, July 20, 2010
WHERE: Sidewalk in front of Maxine’s, at 1215 Bidwell Street (near corner of Bidwell and Davie Streets, Vancouver)
WHO: Representative of West End Neighbours, and artist Tiko Kerr
VISUALS: Original painting will be displayed

The “A Night Full of Stars (Maxine’s)” will be auctioned (date and venue yet to be decided) to raise both awareness and funds for WEN and dialogue to support the community as it actively engages all stakeholders in the planning of the entire neighbourhood’s own future and discussions of its own needs, visions, and dreams (e.g., meetings, research, consultants, and publications.).

Many residents of the West End have been shocked to learn that the site of Maxine’s and neighbouring buildings has already been rezoned to permit the new construction of a controversial 21-storey tower of 49 small rental apartments and 98 luxury condominiums by Millennium Developments. July 31 is the last day for businesses to vacate their premises. Maxine’s and other buildings could soon thereafter be threatened by demolition.

Many citizens feel that the City did not engage in a fair and open process to make the rezoning decision on December 15, opposed by COPE and NPA Councillors and many members of the community. Notification of the rezoning application and the December public hearing had been limited. The Short Term Incentives for Rental Housing (STIR) program, which offers developers incentives to build market-priced rental units and was rammed through City Council in June 2009 without any public input, was used as a major justification to permit the rezoning. The 49 apartment units are to be “subsidized” by foregone development cost levy revenues for city coffers to the tune of over \$100,000 per unit. The majority of respondents to a recent WEN survey would still like Maxine’s to be saved for community use. Maxine’s is the first of several controversial tower projects in the West End. Nearly 8,000 residents have signed the West End “No Rezoning Without a Comprehensive Plan Petition.”

Maxine’s comes with an interesting history. Part of the building dates to 1905. An addition was built in 1929 in the Mission Style architecture that was popular in California. The building is named after Madame Maxine McGillvary who opened a beauty school for young women in 1905. During prohibition, the building was used as a rum running warehouse and reportedly has tunnels to English Bay and the Roger’s Sugar Mansion aka Gabriola Mansion, on Davie Street. At one point the building was allegedly used as a brothel and frequented by swashbuckler Hollywood actor Errol Flynn. There are many reports that the building is haunted by ghosts of Madame Maxine and a mysterious man with a knife. A brief history of Maxine’s and details of the rezoning can be viewed by online slide show (visit “Bidwell & Davie” tab at www.WestEndNeighbours.ca).

Visual artist Tiko Kerr has devoted his life and energies to painting and to his community for the past 30 years. He settled in Vancouver’s West End in the late 1970s and began a three decade-long series of paintings, vibrant wavering visions of urban landscape in Vancouver, a city that has never ceased to captivate him. Winning a struggle with HIV and the public health system inspired him to use his artistic talent to facilitate social change and serve the community of Vancouver, which had supported him when he needed it the most. Tiko Kerr hopes that his art will help to promote constructive dialogue among all the stakeholders who will determine the future of a neighbourhood he lives in and loves. www.tikokerr.com

West End Neighbours (WEN) is a network of residents that has grown to thousands of West End renters and owners, concerned about the impact of fast-tracked rezoning on liveability in the West End and the implications for all of Vancouver.

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