

IRVINE WEEKLY

MAY 1, 2019 • NO. 14



PUESTO:
FROM MEXICO CITY,
TO IRVINE, TO YOU

BY: RYAN NAJJAR AND BRET KAVANAUGH

IRVINE WEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS



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ON COVER: Puesto • Photo Courtesy of Puesto
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SELECTION OF TACOS - PHOTO COURTESY OF PUESTO

PUESTO: FROM MEXICO CITY, TO IRVINE, TO YOU

UPSCALE, INNOVATIVE TACOS PAIRED WITH EXOTIC, CREATIVE COCKTAILS.

BY: RYAN NAJJAR AND BRET KAVANAUGH

Puesto is a casual and upscale establishment that promises gourmet Mexican cuisine, excellent service and a lively atmosphere. The Mexico City-inspired restaurant has six locations across California, including two in Irvine.

Different locations can offer different experiences, and we wanted to give you the full scoop on what they have to offer. To make it happen, Ryan met up with Bret in Los Olivos, and Bret and her boyfriend visited their spot at Park

Place.

Los Olivos

From the instant the doors swing open, the first thing that comes to mind is warmth.

The warmth of the food being cooked in the back, the warmth of the atmosphere provided to patrons and the warmth of the wait staff offering their services, all wrapping around your soul like a soft blanket that's actually a giant tortilla.

If you come on a nice, clear day like

Bret and I did, you'll definitely want to grab a seat outside. That being said, the indoor seating is abundant and beautiful, and the windows, lighting, decoration and layout make it feel like you're soaking in the sun like we were.

I scanned the menu while taking in some rays, and my eyes were captured by the array of tacos offered to the good people of Irvine.

You want some duck confit in there? You've got it. Filet mignon? Coming right up! Potato soyrizo? Sure! Who said

vegetarians can't have fun with the rest of us?

As a matter of fact, vegetarians can enjoy Puesto's tacos in two mouth-watering ways. There's the potato soyrizo, which comes with mushrooms, tofu, tempeh, Yukon Golds, hibiscus and chipotle tinga, avocado and cilantro.

Then, there's one that especially caught my eye: the spring pea.

Coming with a combination of sweet green peas and snap peas, along with

FOOD

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lima beans, roasted carrot habanero salsa and micro watercress joining the party, this was a fascinating offer to say the least. "But wait," I thought, "How is this all going to stay together in the taco?"

I had the same questions about the potato soyrizo option as well, but it turns out I'd been ignoring the very first ingredient listed on both. What is it, you ask? Fried cheese.

This worked like a charm. I ended up with the chicken verde and chicken al pastor, which Bret recommended, along with the intriguing spring pea. Both deeply impressed me in different yet equally wonderful ways.

The chicken verde offered refreshing, nuanced flavors throughout, and the chicken al pastor shows how the little things, like their piña habanero pico, can take things to a whole new level. It's no wonder the latter was named "Best Taco" at the annual Tacolandia festival.

Lastly, the spring pea caught me entirely by surprise. Every one of the elements danced with each other in perfect motion, like they were performing at a Britney Spears concert

The salsa combined with the cheese was emotionally overwhelming, and my tastebuds are better for having experienced their song. The peas were fresh in all their forms, and the lima beans stole a bit of the show for themselves as well. It was a balanced and refreshing taco that I would recommend to anyone, vegetarian and carnivore alike.

Park Place

After a long, grinding semester, my boyfriend needed a break.

It was my turn to sponsor a day out, and considering how dark the circles under his eyes were, I knew I needed to pick something especially diverting. Tacos certainly were going to be necessary, and unusual cocktails with exotic flavors would also be in order. I'm not of an income bracket that would really allow me to refer to myself as a sugar momma, but at \$6 a pop, the tacos at Puesto Park Place at least qualify me for some sort of title – perhaps "agave auntie"?

When the two of us showed up, we were sat on a sunlit patio with a high hedge bordered by light-colored wood benches. Service was quick and friendly, and I had to ask for time extensions when they inquired about our order.

In truth, I had decided, but I needed



more time to enjoy the chips and fire-roasted salsa. Our waitress happily obliged when asked for a refill and brought back not one, but two, extra ramekins of salsa with a wink.

The menu was packed on both sides, with one side listing a dizzying array of alcoholic options.

As for the other side, there were plenty of exotic options on the taco menu alone, and it was difficult to decide between the monthly special – the bright, tomatillo-infused chicken verde taco – and the more unusual duck confit taco. It was tempting, but we ultimately went for the chicken verde.

Though it was small (average street taco size), it was vibrant and juicy. My boyfriend declared it to be hands-down the best taco he had ever eaten, worth every penny of the \$6 I had paid for it.

I felt the same way about the other tacos we had ordered. Our second pick, the chicken al pastor, was cushioned by a tortilla blanketed with a thick interior sheet of fried cheese and given additional flavor with a tangy sauce of hibiscus and chipotle.

Our final taco, the fully vegetarian potato soyrizo taco, was similarly

wrapped in cheese. Despite its visual similarity, they were both different, though both delicious. The potatoes went well with the hearty cheese, and the medium-spicy soyrizo was a great addition.

Around that point, our waitress came by again to ask us if we were enjoying our food. We offered an enthusiastic yes, and she suggested we try her favorite cocktail, which isn't on the menu but does have its own name – the Mezcalito.

We were glad we took her up on that. It smoothed out the lingering stresses of deadlines and papers from my boyfriend's head, and the bright, citrusy and smoky flavors made for a unique and delicious experience.

The Mezcalito, from what I gathered, is made from tamarind and some sort of special mezcal. That's a liquor that I normally don't touch, but it was paired well, and even I could appreciate it in this context.

We considered following it up with the waitress's other suggestion, the Fruit Cart Margarita, but as good as it sounded – aged tequila spiced with tajin and chamoy, covered in tropical fruit – I had to pass. That mezcal was



already getting to my head.

I would implore all of you to save up some scratch and give one of Puesto's locations a try. If you ask us, Puesto is yet another jewel in the culinary crown of our town.

SELECTION OF TACOS - PHOTO COURTESY OF PUESTO

MEZCALITO - PHOTO BY BRET KAVANAUGH



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The new season at the Irvine Barclay Theatre will have a diverse selection of performances that all residents of Orange County are bound to appreciate. Performances include the Community Youth Orchestra of Southern California, the Mozart Classical Orchestra and the National Geographic Live Speaker Series. Fans can also enjoy a performance by Boy Bandz, who will sing a number of popular hits by different boy bands including New Kids on the Block, the Backstreet Boys, One Direction and more.

Karen Hanlon, the director of communications for the theatre, said these performances will not only differ in genre, but each one will have its own special story to share.

"We're really focusing on presenting the best of these different styles of performing arts and showing a range of what these types of artists can do," Hanlon said. "Jazz isn't just one thing, contemporary dance isn't just one thing, our Hawaiian music series isn't one thing. So we really try to present a range."

As a member of the theater for the past 24 years, Hanlon also said there has been a lot of expansion just within the last few years. There is still so much more art to share in the community and audiences have plenty more to see.

"We've gone from having one series to having seven or eight series, so we're really trying to expand the types of things we do, which opens us up to new audiences," she said.

Aside from the performances that continuously blossom at the theater, Hanlon also noticed the expansion of art throughout the entire community.

"The options are many times more than they used to be," she said. "When I first moved here, it was kind of the big organizations and there weren't many smaller organizations. It's become a much more layered atmosphere with many more opportunities to seek different kinds of art."

Jerry Mandel, who became president of Barclay in 2015, said that he's looking forward to a number of upcoming series – one in particular being the Broadway Series, which will include a performance by Tony Award-winning actress Sutton Foster.



IRVINE BARCLAY THEATRE

DIVERSE RANGE OF PERFORMANCES GRACE THE LOCAL STAGE THIS SEASON.

BY: SAM MACHADO

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: IRVINE BARCLAY THEATRE

"We are taking our Broadway Cabaret series in a new direction," Mandel said. "Instead of showcasing single artists, we are presenting shows with larger casts that center around the music of beloved Broadway composers."

Foster became an icon in theater with her starring roles in Anything Goes, Thoroughly Modern Millie and Violet. She will sing some of her favorite selections as well as a number of well-known songs in the world of Broadway. Mandel said that Foster is one of the brightest stars to grace the stage and she has a lot more big plans in her career.

"We were fortunate to book Sutton Foster when we did," Mandel said. "She's booked up between her TV series Younger and her New York City performances. It was just announced that she will be starring in The Music Man opposite Huah

Jackman, opening in October 2020, so our Southern California audiences will get to enjoy her cabaret show here in Irvine before she starts this next venture."

One of the most unique artists who will appear at the theater for the new season is illusionist Ivan Amodei. As a performer in Los Angeles County, Amodei is set to bring some memorable acts to Orange County.

"Ivan Amodei's 'Secrets and Illusions' will be a thrilling evening, full of intrigue and breathtaking magic with a mission," Mandel said. "Amodei is a great example of an artist who approached the Barclay, and wanted to produce his show at our venue. We look forward to welcoming him to our stage."

Aside from the performing arts, the season also includes a Fresh Take Speaker Series that will premiere

in the fall. Audiences will have the chance to see writers talk about their work as well as ocean and wildlife experts discuss life on the outside. Mandel also mentioned that audiences are in for a good time since there is so much to be offered.

"Our Barclay audiences will enjoy world-class entertainment in an intimate setting," he said. "A visit to the Barclay is an opportunity to see amazing artists at close proximity, as there is not a bad seat in our house. For select performances, we offer VIP upgrades that include post-show receptions, which are unique and exciting occasions to meet the artists."

For a full list of upcoming shows at the Irvine Barclay Theater or for further information, visit thebarclay.org.



ANTEATERS REFLECT ON MARCH MADNESS BREAKTHROUGH

THE MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM LOOKS BACK ON THE ROAD TO HISTORIC FIRST NCAA TOURNAMENT WIN.

BY: SUSAN HORNIK

PHOTO COURTESY OF: UCI ATHLETICS

It's been an absolutely amazing season for the UC Irvine Anteaters, who were the only Southern California-based men's basketball team to make the 2019 NCAA Tournament, en route to picking up their first March Madness win in school history. While they did not ultimately clinch the title, the lessons and experiences each member gained will be remembered for life.

"I love working with the players and

showing the positive impact this team can have on a community," enthused head coach Russell Turner, who just completed his ninth season at UCI.

"They are competitive, unselfish and are willing to sacrifice. They have learned that playing at a high level of competition is fun and demanding."

After the UC Irvine men's basketball team wrapped up its most successful season in program history, the Anteaters are now back at the university. Irvine

Weekly caught up with the team as they reflected on their journey.

Q. What do you love about your team and UC Irvine?

Robert Cartwright (Graduate student, Guard)

I loved the resiliency of this team. On multiple occasions in both the regular and post-season, our team fought back from significant deficits in some of our biggest games and found ways to stay together and win. This was a testament

to our mental toughness.

Jonathan Galloway (Graduate student, Forward)

The competitive energy on the team was contagious. We would grind every day in practice with one another. More importantly, I believe our team played together as a unit. As coach Turner would say, our team "bought in" and that made our relationship special. Whether it was the student-trainers, our strength coach or our managers,



NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL FIRST ROUND

everyone played their role.

Tommy Rutherford (Junior, Forward)

I love how together our team is because we don't just see each other as teammates and coaches, but we are family. Our coaches demand heart and success at all levels (basketball, school, and being a young man). UCI is a great community and really houses a variety of students, which makes our campus so accepting of people from all backgrounds.

Collin Welp, (Freshman, Redshirt Forward)

I think my favorite part about the team is the connection and camaraderie that we have both on and off the court. We spend a lot of time on the court together, but off the court we hang out together a lot as well. I believe that bond we have has helped us be successful on the court and build relationships off the court.

Q. How has being on the team changed your life?

Cartwright: I have dreamt of playing in the NCAA tournament since he was a child. The opportunity to live out that dream was the most fun I've ever had playing the game of basketball.

Galloway: I've been able to make progress as a young man throughout the past five years and I give much of the credit to being a part of this team. Every person on this team has some sort of positive impact on me. Our program has continued to improve the family atmosphere. I will cherish many of the

relationships within our team for the rest of my life.

Rutherford: Being on the UCI team has changed my life by helping me shape into the person that I want to be. The demands, but also the support, will better me in the future as I feel that I will be successful in whatever I do since I have the coaches and people in athletics helping me be successful in all aspects of life.

Welp: It has given me a family of teammates that I can count on being my friends for life. I know that they can always count on me for anything they need and vice versa.

Q. What do you like about living in Irvine?

Cartwright: Irvine is a beautiful city with great weather and in close proximity to beautiful beaches. It has also a blessing to be so close to home and my family as well.

Galloway: Over the years, I've come to love and appreciate the city of Irvine. It has so many different attractions. It isn't too far from other popular cities in the area and the beaches are right down the street. And let's not forget the weather – that's probably the most popular thing that people mention when I tell them where I go to school.

Rutherford: Irvine is an amazing place to live as it is so similar to my home in San Diego. Irvine has all of things needed for entertainment: beach, movies and great food.

Welp: My favorite part about living in Irvine is the weather. Being from Seattle, where it's rainy most of the year, the sunshine is always nice.

Q. How was the experience of being a part of March Madness?

Cartwright: When the buzzer sounded at the end of the Kansas State game, there was such a sense of pride and joy of the history the team had made for UC Irvine. We knew from the outset of the season that we believed we could win both the conference championship and conference tournament, and advance in the NCAA tournament, all of which we accomplished. I have played in many high level games in my basketball career, but the bright lights of March Madness created an intensity that was unlike any other.

Galloway: The experience of being in March Madness was priceless. Especially being on a team that made history in so many different ways. Our team was truly grateful for all of the love and support we received from the beginning to the end of the season.

Rutherford: Being a part of March Madness was an experience I will never forget and has made me appreciate all the work and sacrifice that I have given to the game of basketball. My love of the game could not be any higher than it is right now and I appreciate every moment I get to play basketball.

Welp: It was my favorite basketball experience so far in my career, no

doubt. Obviously, I grew up watching the tournament every year and filling out brackets, but there is nothing like actually being part of it. From Selection Sunday to being on the court, to playing in front of thousands of people, it really was a great experience to be able to play in the tournament so early in my career. I hope I have the opportunity to go back and do it all over again.

Q. What's the biggest challenge you have dealt with as a player?

Cartwright: I have had to overcome many obstacles during my collegiate career. The most significant likely was when I suffered a severe arm injury that required 3 separate surgeries on my right arm and elbow – and cost me my sophomore year at Stanford. However, this one year at UC Irvine is one I will be forever grateful for and always cherish.

Galloway: One of the biggest challenges I faced as a player was being patient and waiting for my time to come. When I first arrived on campus, the idea of redshirting was something I had no intention of doing. I refused the opportunity to redshirt numerous times. As the 2014-15 season approached, I trusted my coaching staff and made the decision to redshirt. I used the opportunity to get better for my first season of play.

However, I expected more success during my freshman year. Coming off the bench and receiving limited minutes was something I did not envision. So, I just kept working on and off the court to put myself in the best position possible. Now looking back on my career at Irvine, I've been able to leave my mark on the program just as I planned years ago.

Rutherford: The biggest challenge of being a player is putting the game in perspective. Knowing that when mistakes are made, the next play is there to make up for it. Also, understanding that the practice that is put in will make you improve even if you don't always see it right away.

Welp: One of the biggest challenges for me coming to college as an athlete was learning all the things that really go into every day. Getting proper treatment in the training room, eating right or getting good rest are all things I knew were important as an athlete, but they are magnified as a collegiate athlete. However, I have learned to manage it over time and my teammates and coaches have been great in helping me as well.

Welcome to 2018 IRVINE KOREAN CULTURAL FESTIVAL



IRVINE KOREAN CULTURAL FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY

ATTENDEES TO EXPERIENCE A WIDE RANGE OF TRADITIONS, GAMES AND ENTERTAINMENT.

BY: SCOTT FEINBLATT

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: IRVINE KOREAN CULTURAL FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

Cultural festivals are a core ingredient of this nation's identity. For those who embrace the reality that the United States is comprised of a melting pot of varying cultural traditions and

people of all ethnicities, these festivals provide opportunities to understand the distinctions and similarities between people from different backgrounds. Naturally, cultural celebrations also allow people to embrace their own

traditions by reminding them of the experiences that make their own heritage unique. On Saturday, May 11, the Irvine Korean Cultural Festival will celebrate its 10-year anniversary.

The festival will be held at the Irvine Civic Center; there is no charge for admittance, and the event promises to be an enchanting experience for attendees of all ages. In advance of this festival, *Irvine Weekly* reached out to the Irvine Korean Cultural Festival Committee to learn about the festival's history, how it has grown in its 10 years, and what guests can expect to see there. As the event did not have an organizational spokesperson on hand, event promoter Bo Ram Lee forwarded our questions to the festival committee, which was good enough to collectively enlighten us.

The Irvine Korean Cultural Festival was founded in 2010 as a way to educate the public about Korean culture and to commemorate a historical event. "On January 13, 1903, 102 pioneer immigrants arrived in Hawaii from Korea to work in the sugar cane plantations," the committee pointed out. "In 2003, the United States House of Representatives and the Senate declared that landmark day 'Korean American Day.' Following suit, the city of Irvine, permanently recognized January 13 as 'Korean American Day.'" Though the festival is not held on January 13, that date of recognition is a principal impetus for this occasion.

The festival has expanded over the years as a result of increased attendance. "Every year the number of attendees and sponsors [has] increased," the committee told us, "so we [have been] able to elevate the quality of performances and cultural showcases. Physically, the event was held only in the piazza of Irvine Civic Center, but now [it] has extended to [the] parking lot and the front lawn."

Attendees can expect to experience a wide range of traditions, games and entertainment. As far as specific traditions that are rooted in Korean culture, the committee responded, "Families can immerse themselves in Korean culture by participating in hands-on activities with Korean folk art coloring, Korean gift wrapping using traditional *Bojagi*, fortune pouch sewing and Korean Calligraphy demonstrations, among others ... [including a] Korean ceramic art exhibition, [and] kimchi-making and traditional tea ceremony demonstrations." Other exhibitions that will be on

display at the festival include a *hanbok* (Korean traditional dress) fashion show.

Among the more kinetic aspects of the festival, there will be demonstrations of traditional drumming, taekwondo, a traditional string orchestra, a performance by a traditional fan dance team, a Korean traditional dance workshop (featuring the *sogo* [little drum] dance and the scarf dance), and – just to cover more modern traditions – there will also be K-pop dance performances.

The breakdown of the unique cultural demonstrations, according to the committee, is about 80 percent traditional Korean customs and 20 percent modern Korean customs. The committee added that additional fun activities include: "Human foosball and mini-truck (sponsored by Waste Management); inflated bounce houses, and other children's area activities, where guests can play Korean chess, Korean hacky sack, and more."

The event has yielded very solid attendance numbers in the past, and it is expected to continue along this trend for the 10-year anniversary. The committee pointed out that according to a census report, there are approximately 25,000 people of Korean descent who currently reside in Irvine. In terms of festival attendance, in general, they said, "About 10,000 visited the festival and enjoyed our various programs with friends and family last year even though it rained. We are expecting over 15,000 this year to celebrate and enjoy together our 10th year."

The guests and vendors who will have a presence at the festival come from both near and far. "Performers come from NorCal, out-of-state and from Korea," the committee informed us. They added, "[Guests come] from Southern California, [and vendors – which will include Korean food vendors – come from] all over the U.S."

Folks wishing to enrich their understanding and appreciation of another people's cultural traditions – traditions which are still honored and practiced by a significant percentage of Irvine's community members – are encouraged to treat themselves to this experience. Given the presence of Korean visual arts, music, entertainment, games and culinary delights, there will certainly be plenty on display to impress and engage guests.

For more information on the Irvine Korean Cultural Festival, visit their website: <http://irvinekoreanfestival.com>



"THRASHER" - PETER ALEXANDER

THE BEST OF CALIFORNIA ART

UCI DEAN DISCUSSES HIS LIFE AND THE FORMATION OF THE INSTITUTE AND MUSEUM FOR CALIFORNIA ART.

BY: LIZ GOLDNER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: UCI IRVINE

Stephen Barker's visual art tours are almost legendary. The dean of the UC Irvine Claire Trevor School of the Arts and executive director of its Institute and Museum for California Art (IMCA) seems to weave a spell when talking about the artworks in the Gerald Buck Art Collection. Moving through UCI's University Art Galleries with a dancer's grace and speaking with an actor's gravitas, Barker peppered his remarks with humor as he discussed selected Buck Collection pieces by Peter Alexander,

Richard Diebenkorn, Ed Kienholz and many others. The charismatic educator was describing the history, significance and aesthetic theories of the various displayed works, in styles from abstract and figurative to assemblage and light and space. Or, as he wrote in the catalog, "First Glimpse," elucidating the collection, "The artwork persists in arousing in us the fundamental questions of relevance, power and meaning – questions that are not in the artwork but in us."

The 3,200-piece Buck Collection

– bequeathed to UCI in 2014 – is considered by many art aficionados the finest private collection of 20th century California art ever assembled. Following the gifting of these artworks, amassed by the eponymous late Newport Beach developer, and the donation of the Irvine Museum's 1,200-piece collection, Barker expanded his UCI role to include responsibilities as IMCA's executive director. When this institution combining the two collections opens in five years, UCI will have "the best

collection of California art to be seen anywhere," says Barker.

Barker's new responsibilities at IMCA include fundraising, learning about the two collections and its artists and art pieces, and curating exhibitions. In 2017, he curated an exhibition of 80 of Buck's works at a private 3,000-square-foot art gallery in Laguna Beach. To the dismay of many art lovers, this show was open only to the press and selected others.

Last fall, he co-curated (with Kevin Appel, UCI professor and chair,

Department of Art, and Cécile Whiting, UCI chair, Department of Art History) a show of 49 of Buck's art pieces for the University Art Galleries. The "First Glimpse" exhibition ran from last fall to January 5, attracting 8,500 visitors. Among the other artists represented were Larry Bell, Joan Brown, Tony

"OUR MISSION IS TO BRING THE UNIQUE GENIUS, HISTORY AND ENERGY OF CALIFORNIA ART TO THE LARGER WORLD, WHICH CONTINUES TO UNDERVALUE IT."

-STEPHEN BARKER

DeLap, Lorser Feitelson, Roger Kuntz, Gilbert Luhan, Helen Lundeberg, David Park, Agnes Pelton, Wayne Thiebaud and Peter Voulkos.

On the day that "First Glimpse" closed, hundreds of people showed up to view the works, while several docents guided the visitors. Barker, who joined the throngs in attendance, was eager to talk about the artworks on display. He was clearly a man with deep insights about and passion for the artists and their artwork. Yet as he explains, he has no formal training in the visual arts and taught himself – through reading, looking and listening – about the artists, their lives and techniques, and about the natures and intentions of their modern and contemporary art pieces. "I'm an autodidact and a sponge for information," he said in a recent interview. He added that as a "ridiculous Francophile," he taught himself French and has translated writings from French to English, explaining, "I get away with murder." In spite of Barker's modesty, he has a profoundly accomplished résumé. In our interview, he was happy to talk about the arc of his life:

"I was born in a small town in southeast Iowa on the Mississippi River. My mother's family had a venerable history of civic, business and academic activity, while my father taught his father to write his name in order to sign Navy discharge papers. My younger brother is a naturalist/watercolorist of amazing talent. My younger sister



"GROWING THING" - FREDERICK HAMMERSLEY

makes beautiful jewelry. I started acting in community theater in middle school and continued into high school."

"On a lark, I applied to Amherst College, my sole application, and miraculously got in. I acted and directed and even started my own theater there. I also had my first interactions with great art of all kinds, from seeing James Brown at the Apollo Theater to attending the Yale Repertory Theater. I also started painting and found that I had some talent. I graduated in June 1968 and was on a plane for London five days later, spending eight years in the United Kingdom.

"I met the love of my life, Michelle, during our college freshman year in 1964. We dated off and on for two years before our lives took different directions. I pined away, and then while living in Cardiff, Wales, I looked her up and we later met in Canada. It's a very long, very romantic story. We were married 43 years ago. Lucky me." (Michelle became a clinical psychologist, and the couple has two successful sons.)

"In London I taught, acted and directed. I also started taking dance classes at the London School of

Contemporary Dance to learn fundamental body gestures. Then I joined dance companies and toured the world as a modern dancer and choreographer. After I found Michelle and moved back to the U.S., I entered the MFA Writing Program at the University of Arizona. I discovered literary theory there, a mix of philosophy and literature, and learned about how language creates meaning. I received a Ph.D. in English/comparative literature."

"I came to UCI's School of Fine Arts in 1987, teaching drama and instructing deconstructionist literary theory. Later, I became the chair of the Drama Department and created a doctoral program in Performance Studies with UC San Diego. I also became associate dean of the School of Fine Arts and director of the Education Abroad Program in Lyon/Grenoble, France. I became the interim dean of the Claire Trevor School of the Arts in 2014 and the real dean in 2016."

When asked about learning of the donations of the Buck and Irvine Museum collections, Barker said, "In my first week as interim dean, James Irvine Swinden, Irvine Museum's president, told me of the donations of

the museum's collection of 19th and 20th century paintings, sculptures and works on paper. That same week, lawyers handling the estate of Gerald Buck informed me that UCI had received the Buck Collection. UCI Chancellor Howard Gillman asked me to suggest what we should do with 5,200 works of California art. Voilà, the Institute and Museum for California Art."

"While I was shocked and delighted by this development, with UCI suddenly on the art map, none of us knew what would be involved in forming a great institute and museum. But we've been learning about and developing IMCA ever since. I continue as Dean of the Claire Trevor School, along with Executive Coordinator of IMCA."

"Our mission is to bring the unique genius, history and energy of California art to the larger world, which continues to undervalue it. The sense of innovation here produced numerous genres of art, wide-ranging in both style and influence on the artistic movements of the U.S. and beyond. IMCA will be the world center for research into and exhibition of California art, past, present and future."

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