

## What's On the Menu?

Special Pull-Out Section

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### **KJELL HAGEN, 33**

**Gallery Owner Goes Grassroots**

**The Story So Far:** Greenwich Village-born, Norwegian named Kjell (pronounced "shell") Hagen was one of the three nightlife Svengalis who created Chocolate Bar in 1997. The roving dance club often unfolded Downtown and the *Los Angeles Times* called it one of the top 10 clubs of the 1990s. Hagen hung up his dancing shoes five years ago and opened the Inshallah Gallery on Main Street. Two weeks ago he was elected to the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC).

**Big Deal:** Along with fellow DLANC member Nic Cha Kim, Hagen last year spearheaded a proposal to designate Spring and Main streets between Second and Ninth "Gallery Row." City Council approved the effort, and last month Gallery Row was officially launched with dozens of events and shows. Thousands of curious art hounds attended.

**Next Up:** Hagen wants to start a weekly jazz night at Inshallah, and he and Kim are exploring the purchase or lease of the historic Linda Lea Theatre across the street. Additionally, Hagen and a small group have branched out from



Photo by Gary Leonard

DLANC and started the non-profit Gallery Row Organization, headquartered in the Spring Arts Tower. They plan to work on building relationships between property owners, artists and gallerists.

**The Big Challenge:** Hagen's most important work in the Gallery Row project lies ahead. Persuading property owners to open their spaces for art installations and events during a launch party is one thing. Now Hagen must push the landlords to let the art types stay permanently, and perhaps at reduced rents, with the hope that they'll attract other tenants.

—Kristin Friedrich