



The New Year Sees Brilliant, Blinding Lights

by Makayla Hoppe

For over 20 years, artist Ben Guerrette has been lighting up the Southern California art scene with spectacular visual and audio installations. This winter, his newest installation is “City Lights,” a “reimagined reality where light, sound, and urban culture converge.”

Described as a walkable journey, “City Lights” is a 50-minute experience that moves through six different zones. Using lasers, projection, LED sculpture and reactive video, the experience is a blend of sights and sounds representing city life.

“We have this story that we’re working around that’s kind of an homage to the underground rave scene of the 90s,” Ben said. “You’re trying to find your friends and go out at night, and you’re

looking for the party. When you enter, you walk into what we’re calling the park. You walk through all the different experiences, and you’ll eventually end up at the final area, which is a big stage experience, and you’ve found the party and your friends.”

Held at Quartyard in the East Village, the installation is a joint development between Ben and Quartyard Managing Partner Justin Navalle. The space serves as an eatery, beer garden, music venue and coffee shop, and this winter, it will be transformed with Ben’s art.

“Justin and Nico and the rest of the team at Quartyard are very focused on supporting artists and creating a platform for artists to create something unique and interesting, which speaks to me as an artist,” Ben said. “And as

someone who’s also trying to support other artists in whatever way I can, their vision—our vision—is very much aligned. I think it’s one of the coolest venues.”

Ben and Justin met after one of Ben’s showcases, and the two hit it off. Over several weeks, the two worked together to develop a new and innovative piece.

“After an hour’s conversation, we literally just came up with an immersive event in Quartyard, one that’s never been done before,” Ben said. “It doesn’t feel like something that has been done or explored, at least in the realm that we’re going for in San Diego. So, we just wanted to do something crazy and create something unique.”

“City Lights” is also being used as an opportunity to elevate other artists around the region.

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PHOTO: Erica Joan Thornberry





“A big part of this is supporting local artists that maybe haven’t had this kind of opportunity and giving them a canvas to showcase some of their work,” Ben said. “Kyle Stewart is a friend of mine; he’s going to be doing a motion-reactive or interactive projection piece. My friend Tim Gmeiner is a musician working on a couple of different audio pieces. Robert Blume, who actually has a shop in OB called Connect, has some cool sculptures that have sort of a city vibe to them. And then an artist, Brian Goodwin, who is a content and projecting artist, will be doing visuals for the stage piece.”

Ben got his start in this art form after working at live music events near where he grew up in Connecticut.

“This specific journey, as it relates to immersive art, stems from doing

projection work for festivals and electronic music events going back to the late 90s and early 2000s,” he said. “I spent a lot of time playing a role in live music events, from helping to organize them, to doing projections, to performing, to DJing, and kind of just a very broad spectrum there. I took some of the projection experience to some smaller events in New York and eventually moved to Los Angeles in 2004.”

Since 2012, Ben has called San Diego home and has loved discovering and helping develop the art scene here.

“It was hard not to trip over [everyone] in LA, and I think it took me a little more time to find different artist communities in San Diego,” he said. “It feels like over the last three years

or so, there’s an explosion happening in San Diego; a lot of creative people from the music space, the fine art space and the performance space who are just creating, and it seems to be this renaissance, perhaps just a lot of people with a lot of energy wanting to produce and get together. And there are just so many cool events now; it’s hard not to want to go out all the time.”

“City Lights” runs from Dec. 6, 2024 through Jan. 19, 2025. If you’re looking for something engaging and awe-inspiring, check out Quartyard and see what these skilled artists have to offer. ☘

Visit quartyardsd.com to purchase tickets.