

Shaw Streets

BY RALPH BRABHAM

First Gay Couple to Book Long View Gallery for Wedding

As soon as it reopened in its new location last October, Long View Gallery (1234 Ninth St. NW) quickly became a highly sought-after wedding venue. Since gay marriage officially became legal in Washington early this year, therefore, it should come as no surprise that the hip, beautiful and unique 5,000-square-foot space is now in great demand for same sex couples getting hitched.

The gallery's first gay couple to reserve a date for their wedding is Michael Cole and Steve Schwartz, whose nuptials will take place this November. A few other gay weddings will occur at the gallery before then, but Cole and Schwartz were the first on the gallery's books.

They recently provided some insight into who they are and what their wedding will be like. Cole was a Shaw resident living on 10th Street when he met Schwartz in 2006. As a result, the two have a lot of fond memories of time spent together in the neighborhood. "Weekend mornings we definitely headed over to Azi's or Café Cozy Corner for a breakfast sandwich and some coffee. Occasionally you could find us out for a cocktail at Be-Bar," says Schwartz.

They now reside together in Columbia Heights with their dog, Gary Busey. Schwartz proposed to Cole last summer on their balcony overlooking the Columbia Heights Civic Plaza. Cole says, "Marriage for us is about family and about affirming our commitment to and love for one another. The wedding is about sharing and celebrating that with our friends and families. ... As our

family changes and grows, our marriage means that we will weather all the ups and downs of that together from here forward."

When asked why the gallery was the perfect venue for their reception, Cole explained, "We wanted a space that was modern and urban and would also allow for a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere for a celebration. The gallery's melding of finished and unfinished elements as well as the welcoming sense of space and light really spoke to both of us."

They plan a small afternoon ceremony and a cocktail reception, all at the gallery. "We'll start Saturday just after noon with a short ceremony followed by a few hours of mixing and mingling. We're both food lovers, so we'll be treating our guests to hors d'oeuvres that reflect our eclectic tastes and some of our travels," says Cole.

As for the décor, it will be minimal. Schwartz noted "The space really speaks for itself. It has great energy. If we strike it lucky, we'll have one of those totally perfect fall days we can get in November. We can't imagine cluttering up the place with much more than guests, food, marriage, cake and Mama Cass. Oh, and bubbly. Lots and lots of bubbly."

Art Enlivens Convention Center Streetscapes

Last September, the Walter E. Washington Convention Center celebrated the opening of "Windows Into DC," a community arts project in collaboration with the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (DCCA). The venture notably brought life and interest to



Michael Cole and Steve Schwartz were the first gay couple to book Long View Gallery for their wedding. Photo Credit: Jenny Sarabia, Photography by Sarabia

yet-to-be-leased retail spaces on the perimeter of the building.

The convention center recently received a new series of works for "Windows Into DC," that will be in place through March 2011. Work of Shaw resident and neon artist Craig Kraft buzzes with energy and light at the corner of Ninth and N streets NW. On M Street between Seventh and Ninth streets NW, display windows have been transformed by six Washington, DC, artists curated by the Washington Project for the Arts. Along N Street are 51 larger than life, winning photographs from DCCA's "Portraits of DC," a city-wide photo competition that drew hundreds of diverse submissions, attracting all skill levels.

A new addition to the program is the arts incubator space and festival office on N Street which will be headquarters for a series of upcoming sidewalk arts and crafts festivals known as "Arts on N." Six artists and arts organizations will also co-locate

in the incubator and host special arts community events.

Dirt Finally Flying on Long Awaited Shaw Projects

After years of anticipation, several high profile development projects are finally breaking ground in Shaw, and neighborhood residents could not be more pleased. Soon, new residents, offices, entertainment and retail options will bring added vitality to the area.

Last month, a ceremonial groundbreaking occurred at Ninth and P streets NW, for a mixed-use development that will house famed Silver Spring restaurant Mandalay Bay on the first two floors and a condominium residence above. The project should be complete by next summer.

A few blocks away at the Seventh Street entrance to the Shaw-Howard Metro station, Ellis Development is ready to break ground on two major projects. Both the Howard Theatre and the Renaissance Project (formerly Broadcast Center One) will break ground in late August and will collectively deliver office space (including the headquarters for the United Negro College Fund), ground floor retail space, underground parking, 204 mixed-income for-sale condominium housing units, a live entertainment venue and education space.

CityMarket at O, the massive Roadside Development project bringing a new Giant grocery store, a hotel, condominiums, apartments, senior housing and retail to the blocks bounded by O, P, Seventh and Ninth streets, is now set to break ground on Sept. 7. ♦