



Brian Marki says the local reception to art "speaks well about the soul of Portland."

MARTY DAVIS

## BRIAN MARKI FINE ART AND FRAMING

**Owner:** Brian Marki  
**Years in Business:** 15  
**Address:** 2236 NE Broadway St.  
**Web:** [www.brianmarki.com](http://www.brianmarki.com)

At Brian Marki Fine Art and Framing, art aficionados can still catch the monotypes of lesbian artist Annie Meyer and the fused materials of gay artist Chuck Sites, part of August's *Gallery Artists Celebrate Summer* show.

As owner Brian Marki describes Sites' process of applying encaustic to glass and mounting it on metal, he adds, "A lot of macho stuff was involved in this, so the gay stereotype of being light and fluffy just doesn't exist. That's one thing I love about Portland—over and over the gay stereotype is blown out of the water."

In Marki's opinion, Portland's art scene is like a pyramid, the base layer a "frothy alternative space" teeming with amateur artists. He says his gallery fits "just below the blue chip and above the alternative space." This approach translates into a variety of art from GLBT and straight professional artists based locally, nationally and internationally.

"Being gay, of course I love representing gay artists; there's a fair amount of very accomplished ones in town, but I can't say that I actually go out seeking gay artists," Marki says.

He's noticed a shift among young GLBT professional artists. "It's not the same; they don't identify as closely as they did before," he observes. "They identify professionally first and then sexually: 'I'm a writer, an artist, a musician and I'm gay.'"

Marki considers his gallery—situated on NE Broadway among pubs and cafes—an inviting, neighborhood space with a down-to-earth, European flavor.

Part of the shop is dedicated to framing. Framing helped put Marki through art college, and it's also helped get his business through the recession, as art sales have suffered. But July brought an uptick in business that keeps him hopeful. Portland's love of art is one of the reasons Marki and his partner moved north from the San Francisco Bay area.

"When we came to Portland, we couldn't believe it," he says. "Everybody had an original piece of art. It speaks well about the soul of Portland."  
 — JENNY FURNISS

## CAFÉ NELL

**Owners:** Van and Darren Creely  
**Years in Business:** 1  
**Address:** 1987 NW Kearney St.  
**Web:** [www.cafenell.com](http://www.cafenell.com)

Nestled in the bustling, college-town hustle of Northwest Portland, where buses dare to roam, and everybody knows your name, Café Nell hums with an afternoon lunch rush as owner Darren Creely darts in and out of the kitchen and dining area. Creely tends to customers, opens doors for patrons and appears confident and collected.

Creely has good reason to be chipper. He, along with his husband Van (the couple wed in Canada), opened Café Nell in August 2008, and together have generated a healthy modicum of business in less than a year.

The theme of the café is definitely freshness. Creely explains that the ambiance of an American version of a French brasserie has helped cultivate a customer base that expects fresh foods at any time of day.

"Nothing is frozen," says Creely. "Everything is fresh. We have a freezer that holds ice cream, and it only holds a couple gallons of ice cream. Even our French Fries are done fresh two or three times a day."

While Creely doesn't admit to a signature dish for

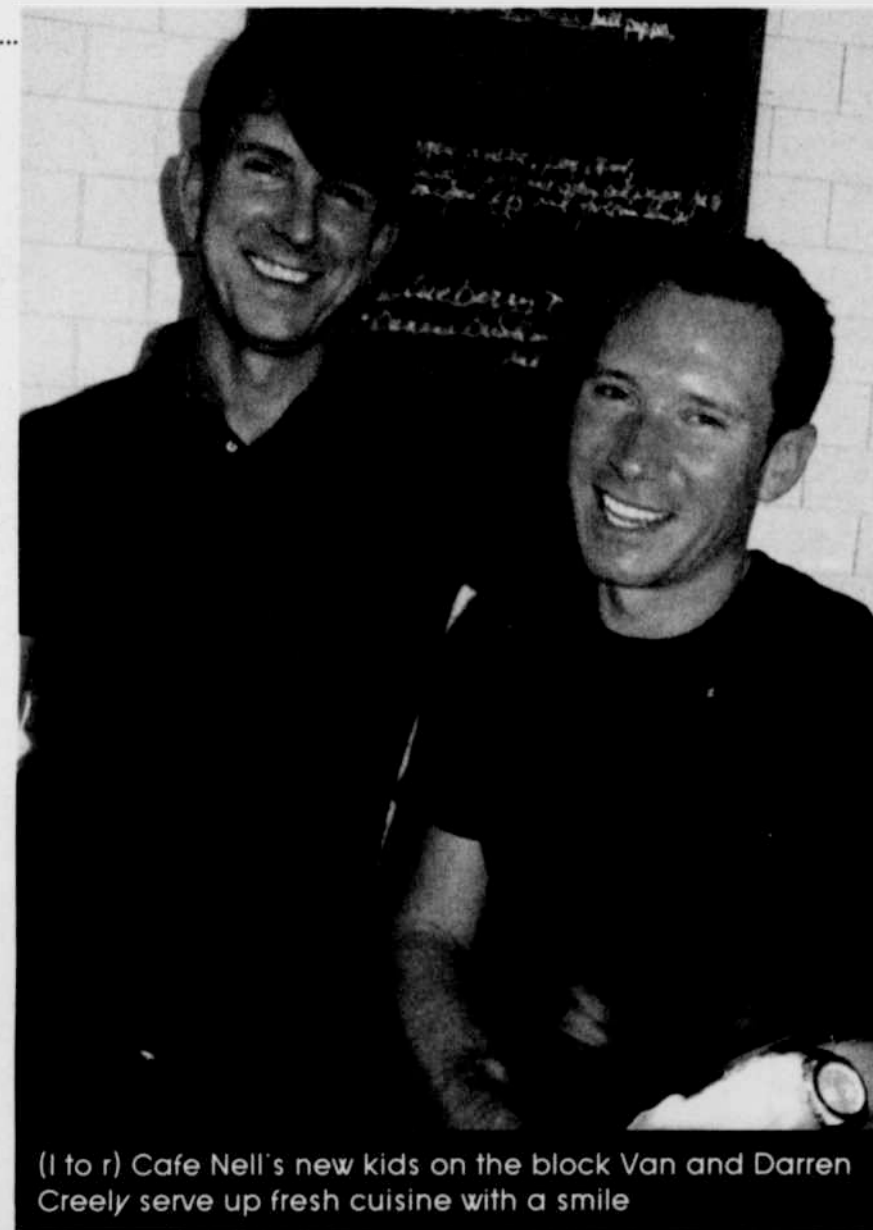
the café just yet, the pommes frites must be high on the side-dish scale, as bowls overflow with the stringy starch goodies on almost every table. However, the fare focuses on fresh Northwestern cuisine, presented in a laid-back French atmosphere. Want eggs any time of the day? You got it.

"Our menu's very price-conscious as well," says Creely. "We have a \$10 entrée along with a \$29 entrée. We have a little something for everybody... That way you can still have this experience at any price point."

Café Nell also produces a savory, fresh ground turkey burger, and the café holds the distinction of grinding all of their meats in-house—an impressive feat given the size of the operation.

"With restaurants this small, usually 50 percent of the food would be frozen coming out of here, but it's not," says Creely. "We work closely with all our purveyors to make sure we're always getting fresh product delivered daily. That way we can really produce a fresh menu. The bad side is that sometimes we do run out of things."

One bad side in a sea of good sides? Pass me the pommes frites!  
 — RYAN J. PRADO



MARTY DAVIS

(l to r) Cafe Nell's new kids on the block Van and Darren Creely serve up fresh cuisine with a smile

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