

# Returning From The 21 Club After Attending The Opera

BY ED BOWERS

I am a mute marching alone on the streets of the Tenderloin after returning from The 21 Club after attending The Opera.

The history of crime lurks behind shadows and doors, Barbary Coast ghosts toast the bloody future where politics and romance play practically no part in history, time and place.



In the Opera lobby at a performance of The Magic Flute.

They are watching my back for signs of weakness, these anonymous demons.

They are death and demolition and pink times ended inside black plastic bags force-marched in and out of containers of waste.

I love to walk at night in dangerous neighborhoods. They wake me up. I love to tease the man with the horns. He's the only opera in town.

I am history in the making. And so is everyone who is nothing special.

I have just returned from the bars after viewing The Magic Flute at the Opera House and know now that nothing is real in a world where I am alive enough to suffer.

This old man has temporarily transcended illusion. It is the after party of Halloween this morning at 3:00 a.m., my every move monitored by werewolves and ghouls. We here now are hungry ghosts. The vampires are satiated, asleep or getting ready for work. Even crack dealers have to pass out sometime.

Look at that old man. He's a bum. If Buddha or Christ slept here now, they'd never become best sellers. But they would become one, sharing the same name that is nothing. A kind cop might clue them to when the Mayor drives by so they could scam. That's at least something.

The womb of blue sky rising up the legs of this Man in the Moon will cause him to fade in the dawn.

But if you look hard enough, in the light of day, around you, inside you, you will see him everywhere.

He is the opera nobody takes seriously. He is a classic and will live forever, a repetition of form and failure.

He is a Magic Flute.



Old man on the street.

## QUESTION

# What do these two very different women have in common?

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These two photographs each contain a woman; one woman is visible, the other is not.

In the photograph on the right the view of the woman is blocked by two police officers standing over her on Market Street in the Tenderloin.

Before I could shoot her with my camera she disappeared. But I saw her. She was old and sick and ugly and trashed and the sun was out and people were moving purposefully down the street and the police wanted her to go away because she was sleeping on the sidewalk and didn't want to wake up.

She wanted to go away too, but not in the way that the police wanted by



moving her somewhere no one will see her and she will die alone.

In the second photograph, taken in a garbage room in a North Point condominium, the woman in the picture is easy to see. She is young and healthy and beautiful and vivacious and appears awake. However, she is an illusion, only a photograph of a photograph of someone who is not a photograph. She is not alive.

But the woman in the photograph is about to have her photograph thrown in the garbage where it will be forgotten.

However, I don't think she wants to be thrown away, even if she is dead. I think she likes to be seen.

What do these two very different women have in common?

PHOTOS BY ED BOWERS