

Muralist shows TL as it was, is and could someday be

\$63,000 neighborhood portrait on ex-porn theater was 18 months in the making

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

“WINDOWS into the Tenderloin,” muralist Mona Caron’s opus at Golden Gate and Jones, barely scratches the surface of the neighborhood’s story, she says, though her palette is two full sides of the building.

“I could only tell the story by peeking into different moments,” she said. “Like peeking into windows.” Ten panels make up the mural on the two-story, 1918 building, painted a color Caron calls a redder version of Golden Gate Bridge international orange.

Parting curtains on the northernmost panel announce the theme: change. Ten-foot-high flowers blossom in see-through soil and, below ground, seeds push up into the air, their heads made of small tiles painted by artists from Hospitality House Community Art Center and children from the Tenderloin Boys & Girls Clubhouse, right across Jones Street.

“The seeds are symbolic, seeds of change in the neighborhood,” said Caron, whose 18-month, \$63,000 project was funded through grants to the Tenderloin Community Benefit District from the Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development and the Community Challenge Grant Program, formerly the city administrator’s Neighborhood Beautification Fund.

The next two windows are side-by-side versions of the lot directly across Golden Gate Avenue: One shows the parking lot, as it is today, with people idling along the chain link fence; the other is an idealized park with green everywhere, even on the rooftops, with all manner of pleasant activities going on, many suggested to Caron by passers-by as she painted the details.

“Someone said to me, ‘Put a skating rink on the top of the building,’ and I did,” she said. “Another person suggested I put in a vegetable garden and an open-air art gallery — those went in, too.”

Under a louvered air duct painted to look like a window with drawn blinds is a scene at dusk: A saxophonist stands in an empty parking lot at Hyde and Turk, playing to the deep blue skies and surrounding buildings. His music, like smoke, floats upward and turns into a hawk, an homage, Caron says, to the world-famous Blackhawk nightclub, the hottest jazz joint in the 1950s and ’60s at 200 Hyde St.

Also anchored in the same window, but floating out to the left, are ghostly film reels and phonograph records, swirling above the Art Deco buildings on Hyde Street, where film reels were stored and Wally Heider and other recording studios once produced the best of San Francisco rock.



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

The middle panels are renderings of structures now standing at that corner. Hovering in space above them are five beautiful neighborhood buildings that are no more — the Paramount Theater, whose entrance was on Market Street with seating where the parking lot now stands; the Empress Theater; Murphy’s Department Store, which burned in the ’06 fire; the Central Presbyterian Tabernacle; and the round Panorama Building that anchored Eddy and Mason.

“The Panorama was one of several in the city,” Caron said. “People went inside and saw a 360-degree mural of famous places, complete with sound effects.” Caron credits Tenderloin historian Peter Field and photographer Mark Ellinger for helping her work some esoteric history into the mural.

A view from Market up Jones shows the mosque on the east side. Caron dubbed the panel at the far right of the building “Asian Curtains,” her attempt, she said, to represent the many Southeast Asians who settled in the Tenderloin in the 1970s and ’80s with a design that incorporates their culture’s textiles.

The building the mural graces has its own history. The ground floor, now for rent, most recently was a sewing factory. Before that it was the Mini-Adult Theater, where guys could hook up for nooner or nighttime quickies while hard-core loops played ceaselessly.

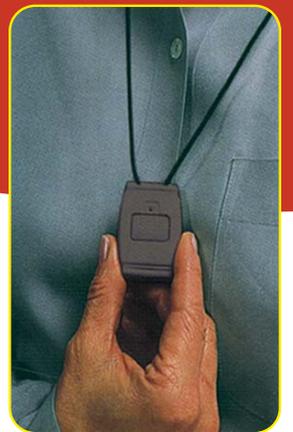
Today, the mural says, Tenderloin windows are open to change. The March 5 unveiling of the completed mural was a community celebration that drew a crowd of 150 people, some depicted in the panels. ■

Mona Caron incorporated suggestions from passers-by to create the mural that decorates a former sewing factory and porn theater at Golden Gate and Jones.

Medical Alert for Seniors

Medical Alert Monitoring
24/7

ONLY
\$29.95
month



HELP AT THE PUSH OF A BUTTON!

- Free Equipment
- Free Shipping
- Easy Setup
- Nationwide Service

Medical Guardian

Recommended by:
Good Housekeeping
As Top-Rated Medical Alarm
November 2005

Call:
1-888-551-2097

CENTRAL CITY
EXTRA!
SAN FRANCISCO

NEWS IS A COMMUNITY SERVICE

CENTRAL CITY EXTRA is published monthly by San Francisco Study Center Inc., a private nonprofit serving the community since 1972. The Extra was initiated through grants from the S.F. Hotel Tax Fund and the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund. The contents are copyrighted by the San Francisco Study Center, 1095 Market Street, Suite 601, San Francisco, CA 94103.

PHONE: (415) 626-1650

FAX: (415) 626-7276

EMAIL: centralcityextra@studycenter.org

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: Geoffrey Link

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Heidi Swillinger

SENIOR WRITER/EDITOR: Marjorie Beggs

COMMUNITY REPORTER: Tom Carter

REPORTERS: Ed Bowers, Jonathan Newman, Mark Hedin, Anne Marie Jordan

DESIGNER: Lenny Limjoco

PHOTOGRAPHER: Lenny Limjoco

CONTRIBUTORS: John Burks, Diamond Dave

DESIGN CONSULTANT: Don McCartney

DISTRIBUTION: Mark Hedin

EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE: David Baker, Michael Nulty, Debbie Larkin, Nicholas Rosenberg, Brad Paul, Tariq Alazraie

Central City Extra is a member of the
SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

ERRATUM In March, The Extra reported that Gene Friend Rec Center was closed to teenagers 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. It is closed to adults then, not to ages 13-18.