

SOMA Pilipinas is in the Heart

2020 Public Art Plan



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cover image: artwork by Mel Vera Cruz, courtesy of SOMCAN

An opening note...

In late October, Alleluia Panis and Kularts enacted Lakbai Diwa, a highly anticipated public performance project that envisioned ceremony and decolonial tools for cultural survival in the context of Filipinx diasporic life—formed by indigenous tradition, but firmly rooted in an American immigrant cultural context. The multidisciplinary project involved dance, sculpture, music, and painting in a cluster of streets in the South of Market named after Filipinx heroes (Lapu Lapu, Bonifacio, Rizal, Tandang Sora, and Mabini) in the heart of SOMA Pilipinas. At a moment of COVID related physical distancing, the project had to be adapted, reenvisioned, and carried out without the large participatory audiences initially hoped for. But the process was well documented and held its power. Part of the project, Streets of Diwata, involved several visual artists painting temporary mini-murals on the street in chalk paint. In the midst of this process, an elderly white neighbor, for no discernable reason, took a hose from the adjacent community garden and began spraying water on the artwork, production staff, and one of the artists as they painted their piece. While there was ultimately no damage to the artwork and the team was physically unscathed, turning the hose on people of color just trying to live their lives invoked histories of racist violence and harassment that was deeply troubling and dehumanizing. The moment, amidst an otherwise triumphant process, was and continues to be a reminder of the stakes of this work as Filipinx community members, as artists, as a multiracial neighborhood, and as a people-centered cultural district. We continue this work moving forward because there continue to be people who would prefer to erase and hose down our presence and our sense of belonging, whether through policy, economic and cultural marginalization, or a direct, interpersonal act like this. Public art is only one of the many tools utilized by SOMA Pilipinas, but will always be crucial in reaffirming our culture, presence, and histories no matter what attempts there are to push us aside or wash us away.



Artist Cece Carpio working on her Streets of Diwata piece, courtesy of Kularts, photo by Erina Alejo

Overview

SOMA Pilipinas Filipino Cultural Heritage District serves a multi-sector network of organizations, residents, workers, artists, and activists in San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood and the broader web of people still connected to the area, its resources, and the communal space it maintains for relationship building, exchange, and building of cultural bonds. SOMA Pilipinas is a people-centered cultural district, formed to protect and elevate a community that has weathered generational violence and disenfranchisement: colonization and militarization of the Philippines, exploitation of migrant laborers, the razing of Manilatown and the fall of the I-Hotel, and the uprooting of residents during Redevelopment with Yerba Buena, Metreon, and Westfield. SOMA Pilipinas emerged in the wake of many lost communities and disrupted networks of support. Because of this, the district, its goals, and programs look to build resilient and agile artistic and cultural strategies that actively combat the continuing erosion of our institutions and build toward a stronger future.

SOMA Pilipinas's mission centers on three intertwined strategies—artistic & cultural visibility, community-led development that stabilizes existing assets and builds for an affordable future, and economic and social justice. The public art program for the district most naturally falls under the first strategy, but must advance all three. The SOMA Pilipinas public art program carves out a space for the South of Market and regional Filipino community by making our creative presence visible to others and ourselves; strengthens the professional development of the Filipino arts community through a variety of public art programming and opportunities; operates in alignment with housing advocates and community organizers to combat 'artwashing' and other potentially gentrifying impacts of public art and 'placemaking' efforts; and advances social justice within and for the community, whether through specific artistic themes or equity in the processes that enact the work.

For example, public art opportunities cannot come through the advancement of a predatory development that exacerbates the affordability crisis in the neighborhood through a lack of affordable housing or that impinges on the environmental quality of valuable green and open space. Projects must be executed in a way that provides equitable and fairly paid opportunities for artists. And projects that actively resist commercial co-optation—particularly in real estate-oriented marketing—should be considered along with projects with a greater focus on cultural celebration and aesthetics.

Current Context: Environment

As a built environment, the South of Market is a high traffic urban neighborhood with light industrial and commercial fronting most of its major streets and most older residential buildings tucked on smaller side streets and alleyways. The overall legislated footprint of the cultural district spans approximately 78 blocks; a daunting expanse of city that overlaps with two other cultural districts—the LGBT Leather District and the Compton’s Transgender Cultural District—the Yerba Buena Community Benefit District (the defacto arts museum district), the SOMA West Community Benefit District, a Youth and Family zone (advocated for by neighborhood activists), and countless other cultural communities and pockets of economic activity. Major streets crossing the neighborhood are multi-lane, many coming off of, or leading to, the freeway or other cross-town arteries. The freeway itself cuts off the southern end of the neighborhood from the core community and presents a major barrier and dead zone across the length of the district. The resultant heavy stream of vehicular traffic passing through the neighborhood poses a safety concern for residents and pedestrians. The core section of the district between Market and the freeway is a recent target for density bonuses due to the proximity to public transportation arteries, which has already spurred increased building height and the overall presence of new developments. This combination of density and sprawl, along with wide streetscapes, present a formidable visual landscape for public art to contend with and the ability for the Filipinx community to communicate their presence both to one another and other neighbors and visitors to the area.

Due to the successive waves of displacement and disinvestment that have destabilized the City’s Filipino community and the interrelated inflation of property values in the area, there is very little property ownership and long term community site control within the neighborhood. However, there are a few important assets like the historic Gran Oriente and the Filipino-American Development Foundation’s Bayanihan Community Center, as well as partnerships with community developers and affordable housing that have carved out relatively stable homes for organizations like Bindlestiff Studio and South of Market Community Action Network.



image: SOMA Pilipinas asset map designed by Al Perez

Current Context: Art Assets

SOMA Pilipinas hosts a few long term public art pieces in the neighborhood of note: Joanna Pothig's Lipi Ni Lapu Lapu mural on the San Lorenzo Ruis Center (commissioned by the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development) and Cece Carpio's Tuloy Po Kayo mural at the Filipino Education Center & Bessie Carmichael School (commissioned by Kularts). More recent projects include Sami See & Monica Magoto's Kapwa Rising mural on the former Mestiza restaurant rooftop, and Mel Vera Cruz & England Hidalgo's Heroes in Our Windows on the Bayanihan Community Center facade. Other than this growing collection of murals, there have been no significant opportunities for permanent public art prior to the mobilization of the district.



image: Mel Vera Cruz and England Hidalgo's Heroes in Our Windows mural, photo by Anthony Bongco

However, one of the local Filipino community's greatest strengths continues to be in the performing arts—especially as represented in presenting organizations—and groups have organized temporary, event-based public projects that have played key roles in establishing a Filipino artistic presence in the neighborhood, including the Ma'artes Festival (organized by Kularts), AutoSOMAtic site specific performance series and bus tour (organized by Kearny Street Workshop and curated by Allan S. Manalo), and the annual Parol Lantern Festival and Parade (co-organized by Kularts and FADF). In their recent work, Alleluia Panis and Kularts have strategically shifted their focus in this direction and have received major commissions for two large scale, outdoor public performance projects in the neighborhood: the recently completed Lakbai Diwa (funded by the Rainin Foundation's Open Spaces) and the upcoming Nursing these Wounds (funded by the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions program).

Amongst visual artists, the spirit of temporary and performatively engaged public projects has also manifested in Mike Arcega's current Tricycle project—a motorcycle and sidecar sculptural work and social project based on the sometimes elaborately decorated and customized tricycle taxis of the Philippines. And curator Lian Ladia and SOMCAN commissioned Mel Vera Cruz to create We Live Here, a series of vinyl wrap installed works for utility boxes in the neighborhood that explore the Filipino alphabet through flash card-inspired pieces that will live in the neighborhood as long as they can be maintained.

Notably, most of these temporary and semi-permanent projects, make use of the street and sidewalks (whether closed or active) as site of engagement, viewership, and performance. If a wide swath of the neighborhood landscape is made up of these transportation arteries, they need to be considered as integral to any programming strategy as walls, buildings, and plazas.

Definitions

Public Art vs. Design

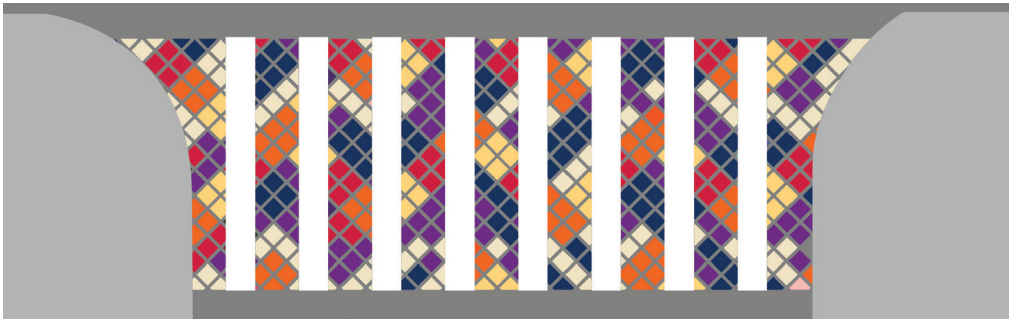


image: a banig crosswalk design that will be implemented by DPW, designed by CAMO Design Studio

Design elements (versus art) tend to be integral to the architecture and function of a building, including commercial identification, and are created by architecture or design teams.

Design is a practice that seeks to find creative solutions to functional, architectural, and urban infrastructure problems. In the realm of public art, design elements (versus art) tend to be integral to the archi-

Public art is a manifestation of creative and aesthetic expression by an artist and/or collaborative artistic team installed (or enacted) within, and responsive to, a community accessible site and the people who live and work there (and their cultures and histories). Successful public art lives with its community, gaining meaning and resonance through its lifespan within that site. While permanent works of art may be integrated within the design of a building or site, those elements go beyond the functional architectural or landscape design features. Art generally holds expressive or abstract dimensions irreducible to practical or didactic needs.

Naturally, there is crossover at the edges of these practices. The purpose of these definitions is less about reifying disciplinary categories as it is in highlighting notable differences in process. In a design process, the designer works for a client and responsibility for final approvals for a work is held (or shared) with the commissioner, as facilitated by the designer. A public art commissioning process typically takes place in clearly defined phases of artist selection and artwork development, including room for community and commissioner feedback, but the ultimate artistic work and choices are determined by the artist. It is not unprecedented for commissioning bodies to decline to execute and site an artwork if there is disagreement, but the integrity and final design of the artwork itself is determined by the artist. In essence, in a design process, the client/commissioner plays a major role in participating and driving the outcome. In a public art process, the client/commissioner plays a major role in shaping the parameters and inputs for the work so that the artist has the room to create an appropriate work within that frame.

Clarifying these definitions and processes becomes particularly crucial in a multifaceted cultural district strategy where we are trying to advance a number of priorities—including both art and land use/housing—that potentially work across public art and design realms. For the purposes of this plan, we put forward these definitions because it helps to create clarity that protects and advances the work of artists and ensures that they have the space and resources to develop their work. As with other public art processes, we lay this out here to help ensure that potential funding and space for public art is not swallowed and supplanted by developer design processes.

Overview of Existing Research

MC Canlas Wildflowers Institute report

Prior to the formal recognition of SOMA Pilipinas as a legislated cultural district, there had been decades of organizing and planning within the community. Key within this process was the development of a Filipino cultural district concept paper by MC Canlas. Most notably for the purposes of this planning document, Canlas framed the South of Market neighborhood as a town square for the regional Filipino community—the center of community gathering, social service and educational resources, religious worship, and community replenishment. While displacement and migration may have spread community members in pockets (or islands) across the region, the neighborhood remains the anchorpoint for the community, particularly in reaffirming its artistic and cultural vitality. Implicit in this framework is the acknowledgement that modes of travel in and out of the district, place markers that identify entry and departure, and neighborhood assets as tools of learning and renewal are all critical. Each of these suggest potential frameworks and vehicles for the production and presentation of public art. Similarly, this lens also highlights a kind of gravitational pull that plays a key role in the relationship of the district to the broader Filipino community. This dynamic suggests the importance of permanent and temporary projects that generate, heighten, and play off of people entering into the neighborhood to connect with one another or cultural resources.

SOMA Pilipinas Brand Guidelines

Since the formation of SOMA Pilipinas, visioning and consensus building around the shared identity of the cultural district has been crucial. In 2017, Irene Faye Duller and Julie Munsayac at An Otherwise Co. facilitated a brand development process that lays out a conceptual pairing that exists in the district: “SOMA 1.0” as a nostalgic position that “tells of struggle and emphasizes determination” beginning with the migration of manong laborers; and “SOMA Pilipinas 2.0” as a people-centered position that is future oriented that creates a story about “culture as an expression of resilience.” The productive dialogue between these frames acknowledges and learns from the past, while centering the current life, work, and vision of the community as it moves forward. This pairing also undergirds a political position—that the Filipino community helped to create the neighborhood (and region) and is still here despite waves of displacement and disinvestment—and echoes some of the broad spectrum of artistic practices in the community—from reclamations of pre-colonial indigenous tradition and creative archival research, to futurist experimental music and digital comic narratives. Looking ahead in this report a bit, it is notable (and understandable) that many of the community responses about desired public art themes leaned toward elements and icons from cultural tradition and Filipino history. The community-developed brand guidelines remind us that it is also crucial for there to be room within those themes—and beyond—to embrace a range of approaches, visioning, and conceptualizations of those ideas. This need not be a competitive binary. Understanding the fullness of experiences, including histories and cultural identifiers, allows the district to be forward facing and innovative in its artistic vision.

SOMCAN Public Realm Community Surveys

As part of their ongoing public realm advocacy and community organizing work, SOMCAN facilitated

online and in person surveys of community residents to assess their priorities in several areas related to urban design and public art, including urban greenery, district entryway markers, bus shelters, utility boxes, benches, and crosswalks. These areas of exploration are reflective of their organizing priorities around public space and transportation, pedestrian safety, and open accessibility of cultural resources. Identified priorities for these public realm elements included colorful banig (woven mat) patterns for crosswalk designs, plaques and markers highlighting Filipino s/heros, utility box designs incorporating cultural iconography such as jeepney and sampaguita flowers, bus shelter artwork, gateway to the district, and living walls and other pocket green spaces incorporating Filipino plants appropriate to the local ecosystem. It is notable that each of these forms has the potential to support both public design and public art solutions, depending on the processes involved. In SOMA Pilipinas's work to date, we have worked with community supporters from the design and architecture field to generate a variety of renderings and commissioned concept drawings from community artists [seen in the attached portfolio of selected works].

Plants Have Feelings

Artist Erina Alejo and curator Lian Ladia surveyed San Francisco's Filipino community to gather the stories of how plants have played a role in their lives. The resulting collection of contributions map a constellation of plants that have personal and cultural resonance, from medicinal use to associations with anti-displacement struggles in the I-Hotel. Along with the collection itself, the methodology and framework also offers a useful example of how storytelling and social practice might help to guide and frame future public art projects, even those with seemingly mundane physical elements, like a collection of plants.

The project is a living document that can be found here: <https://erinacalejo.com/plantshavefeelings>

External Case Studies

These three examples are outlined here to help give some context around potential strategies, best practices in the field, and community-led solutions to some of the sociopolitical concerns faced by public art programming in SOMA Pilipinas. The selections here were deliberately made to focus primarily on infrastructure and temporary program strategies that complement the existing work being done by artists in the district, rather than as a comprehensive study across all public art. This set is best read alongside the works demonstrated through the portfolio of commissioned concept plans [attachment] in order to look at a range of programmatic strategies.

Blights Out (New Orleans)



image: Blights Out's billboard, part of their Blights Out for Mayor project

Blights Out is a collective artistic project initiated to address the housing crisis in post-Katrina New Orleans through a variety of creative, research, and organizing strategies. After the devastation sparked by the hurricane, the community was wracked with rapid predatory reinvestment which targeted properties which had been designated as “blighted” leading to loss of housing for longtime residents and destabilization of the community’s fabric. Blights Out often used temporary public art interventions that drew on the language of political campaigns including lawn signs and billboards.

Wary of the ways art can soften the ground for further gentrification, the team championed an explicit strategy of creating work that would be unpalatable to developers by making the agitprop message clear, not aestheticizing the social crisis, and working largely in temporary forms that resist commodification.

Their strategies offer some useful lessons and context for SOMA Pilipinas in highlighting the possibilities of intervention in commercial visual space, demonstrating the versatility of temporary projects, and contending with the pitfalls of “artwashing.” While these strategies could not form the whole of the cultural district’s approaches, these avenues also point to potential platforms like storefront windows and the like that may be reflective of local site conditions.

41 Ross (SF Chinatown)

Similar to the SoMa, Chinatown is a dense neighborhood with very little open or green public space and a concentration of residential and social activity in its alleyways, off of crowded main streets. Chinese Culture Center (CCC) and Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC) built upon CCDC’s alleyway master plan and early pedestrian-centered streetscape improvements to embed an art infrastructure in Ross Alley, a key test-case location. Together they created 41 Ross, a storefront



image: Summer Lee's Liminal Space/Crossings for CCC

located in the alley that serves as a flexible project space for workshops, residencies, temporary public artwork, and neighborhood-centered exhibitions and projects.

The multi-stage and cross-sector work needed to establish 41 Ross--youth organizing by CCDC, artistic leadership by CCC, years of community engagement, and ongoing fundraising and city investment speak to the resources necessary not only to establish the program but keep it running as a platform for public art programming. However, it does highlight the possibilities of community arts infrastructure (vs. singular artistic works) as a means of continuously and flexibly creating space for arts engagement in the neighborhood. The storefront location also allows for temporary public art installations that might otherwise be cost or security prohibitive (like media projections).

Downtown Berkeley BART plaza (Berkeley)

The Berkeley Civic Arts Commission used the redevelopment of the Downtown BART station as an opportunity to allocate funding toward the installation of a speaker system in the renovated public plaza that acts as a flexible public programming platform for sound art installations and performances. The city partnered with Meyer Sound to design a series of waterproof, low profile speakers mounted on 21 ft. tall posts in an integrated sound system. The city also uses the newly established in-lieu public art fund to support the sound art commissions for the space.

It might be challenging for SOMA Pilipinas to directly adopt this strategy due to the challenges of site control and infrastructure, but as negotiations move forward with developers (particularly around possible Privately Owned Public Open Space), city owned property, or the district's long term goal of establishing a performing arts space, dedicating public art resources to platforms and infrastructure for future temporary, outdoor projects opens the possibilities for artistic forms already embedded in the local Filipino arts community like performance. This could also be executed in conjunction with other traditional space marking public art elements to visually demarcate and hold the site.

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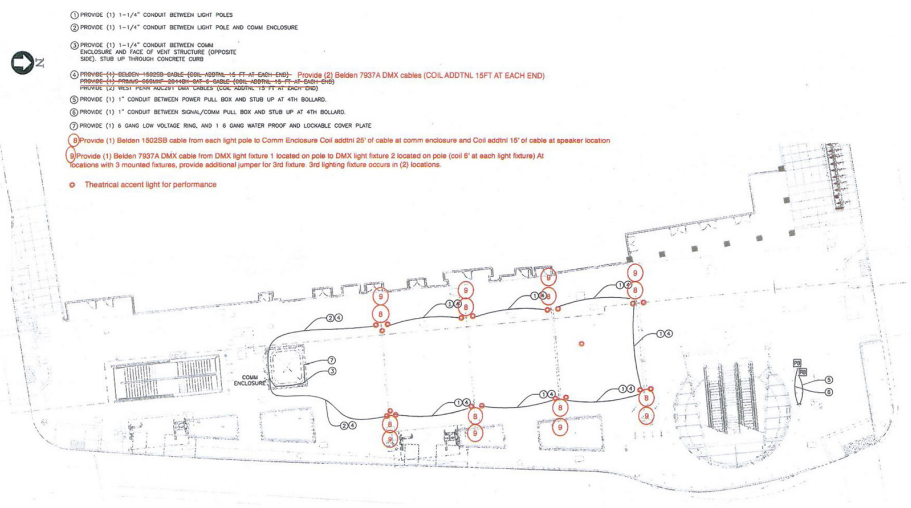


image: technical diagram of Berkeley's sound platform in the downtown BART plaza

Strategies & Sites

The following is a list of potential sites and formats for public art in the district as suggested through community generated ideas, possible opportunities through negotiations with the city and developers, artist-initiated projects, and ideas from case studies. They include both temporary and permanent/long term projects, direct artwork opportunities and platforms for ongoing work, and a range of scale, from small to large budgets.

Temporary

Mobile Projects Activating Streets

Along with Arcega's aforementioned Tricycle project, SOMA Pilipinas has done some initial exploration of sourcing a jeepney that could be utilized in programming (as with the jeepney tours of Historic Filipinotown in Los Angeles) or other services (transporting seniors).

Locations: Arcega has brought the Tricycle to major public events like UNDSVCVRD marketplaces and Pistahan. There has been discussion about work like this being able to shuttle people to or from anchors like Bayanihan Community Center, along major corridors like Mission or Folsom. However it also has the advantage of being able to cover ground and bridge further flung locations in the district (and affiliated with the district) like Manilatown Heritage Foundation/I-Hotel or the Gran Oriente.

Public Performance Projects

Kularts's two outdoor projects have been, and will be, a critical testing ground and capacity building process for themselves and the artistic community for this scale of self-produced project. They have already demonstrated the availability and interest from major local funders for this kind of engaged public project/temporary public art.

Locations: These projects are sited in public spaces with major significance in the community, including the cluster of streets named after Filipino heroes (Lapu Lapu, Rizal, Tandang Sora, Bonifacio, and Mabini) around the San Lorenzo Ruiz Center; and Jessie Square, immediately adjacent to St. Patrick Church and across from Yerba Buena Gardens. A similar area might be in or adjacent to Victoria Manalo Draves Park, named after the Filipina American Olympic medalist, right next to the Filipino Education Center at Bessie Carmichael School.

Window/Storefront Installations

The windows of Bayanihan Community Center have long been sites for temporary display of artworks, particularly those organized by Kularts, the resident artistic company. This also has the potential to be expanded into partnerships with district small businesses or other locations via vinyl installations or other material interventions—with the added benefit of potentially linking together a series of district assets.

Locations: This would benefit from a high density of active storefronts and pedestrian traffic, which makes the Mission St. corridor between Bayanihan and the Yerba Buena area the most likely target zone.

commercial ad space (billboards and bus stop kiosks)

The city has seen a variety of approaches to this format, from short term billboard commissioning series across different locales, year long rentals of billboards for rotating commissions (Premiere Jr. in the Sunset curated by Zoe Taleporos and Sarah Hotchkiss), and Galeria de la Raza's billboard for rotating commissions on the side of their former venue that lasted for decades. The SF Arts Commission partners with SFMTA for the Art on Market Street poster series installed in bus stop kiosks along SOMA Pilipinas's north border. (Clear Channel, who operates the kiosk ad space, assists with printing of the posters and donates the space as part of their public benefit.)

Locations: while securing locations may be difficult, most billboards in the neighborhood are in closer proximity to the freeway and major arteries and offramps, which would activate zones that might be difficult for other public projects. Bus shelter kiosks are centered on major corridors like Mission, Folsom, and Howard.

Permanent/Semi-Permanent

Utility Boxes

SOMCAN and Lian Ladia have just installed the work of Mel Vera Cruz on utility boxes in the neighborhood. Many similar commissioned projects have successfully been able to continue on an ongoing, semi-permanent basis as long as there is investment in maintenance and replacement of damaged vinyl. As with Vera Cruz's work, these projects--popular in many local municipalities--tend to work best as a recognizable thematic series across an area rather than as one-off's.

A useful counterpoint to this success might be the example of the Yerba Buena Community Benefit District's use of another series from Vera Cruz highlighting Filipino heroes to anoint the solar powered compacting trash bins in the area. While well intentioned, the message of placing valued figures in the community on waste receptacles was not well considered and after our feedback, will be deinstalled with the hope of applying the work on a more appropriate public space.

Locations: Vera Cruz's project is installed on key pedestrian streets on the southwest side of Yerba Buena, into the core of the district. Similar to the storefronts, sites with heavy pedestrian traffic are best, though they are not bound to commercial corridors so offer more flexibility.



image: Mel Vera Cruz's artwork installed on a YBCBD trash can

Murals

Murals have been one of the most consistent public art tools in cultural districts, with high visual impact, existing base for teaching best practices, and a range of access points, from more straight-



image: Sami See & Monica Magoto's Kapwa Rising mural

forward community projects to complex, multi-story projects requiring scaffolding and a high level of technical expertise.

Locations: Sites are flexible, although as seen in the Kapwa Rising mural example, there is value in leveraging space that takes advantage of different viewership positions. That mural, on the rooftop of the former Mestiza restaurant just South of the freeway, is in an area of the district with far less of a cultural presence but highly visible by drivers sitting in traffic to cross the Bay Bridge.

Public Performance Infrastructure

Options for this may range, but would likely include integrated sound infrastructure. This works best as part of a regularly activated public/public-private space with an entity (governmental or non-profit) dedicated to programming on an ongoing basis and with corresponding resources. This can range from low profile commissions (similar to Berkeley's sound art pieces), performance seasons like Yerba Buena Gardens, or something between.

Locations: The Central SOMA Park on 598 Brannan, a Privately-owned Public Open Space (POPO) has already been identified as one such location. There are a few other POPO's and Mid-block alleys that can be designed for this purpose including 725 Harrison and Kapwa Gardens. There are also under-utilized POPO's such as Mint Plaza that are at the heart of the cultural district.

Embedded & Stamped Artworks On Sidewalks

This may include plaques or other embedded markers (as well as possible temporary adhesive interventions). Similar to the activation of streets through mobile projects, this has the benefit of engaging a major but oft overlooked site, but one that is particularly pedestrian oriented. Local examples of this include excerpts of the work of local poets rendered in bronze and embedded in the sidewalk in Downtown Berkeley.

Locations: On a more contained scale, this might be a suitable project for a new development that includes rebuilding sidewalk frontage. For a longer path, this would likely have to be integrated with major streetscape work and proposed to SFMTA and DPW.

Pocket Greenscapes

There has been community interest in green space and plants as public art, which reflects expertise in the cultural community around native plants and traditional medicine, the findings of Alejo and Ladia's Plants Have Feelings oral history project, and the limited green space within the neighborhood. Execution of greenscape projects would likely have to be in conjunction with a resident group who can partner on maintenance of the space and its plants, somewhat like a community garden.

As the example of Alejo and Ladia’s project implies, this most clearly crosses over from landscape design to public art when enabled through a social practice or community-centered framework. Locations: The scope of this kind of project could range from small, temporary installations attached to parklet projects to permanent selections integrated within landscape designs of upcoming POPOS or long term park plans such as the Gene Friend Recreation Center rebuild.

Crosswalks



image: concept designs for bike racks by Mike Arcega

The city has clarified restrictions on visibility and legibility of crosswalk boundaries and markers that have narrowed the parameters on possible designs. While this format became popular in cities nationwide, restrictions on the form arose from 2011 federal guidance on pedestrian and driver safety. Relatedly, while this has been utilized by some municipalities as a tactic to slow drivers, there is also concern that it may cause distraction and increase dangerous situations. All the same, crosswalk designs have been a popular form for interest by the district’s artists.

Locations: Potential key corridors and intersections along 6th Street, Folsom and Howard Streets.

Streetscape Furniture (Bike racks, Benches)

Because these features are typically the responsibility of owners of the fronting property, this has been a popular opportunity offered by developers and is of a manageable scale to allow for access to the opportunity by a variety of artists. The portfolio reflects commissioned designs by district artists.

Locations: Fronting upcoming developments in conversation with SOMA Pilipinas

Gateway

A gateway has been identified as the most popular idea amongst stakeholders and is the largest, most complicated and expensive project currently in the planning process. Several options for scaling exist, from a full arch bridging the street, to posts that imply a crossing. The portfolio reflects some commissioned designs by district artists.

Audiences & Themes

The following are a list of intersecting audiences and thematic strategies that have been suggested through the groundwork laid by SOMA Pilipinas's work to date.

Audiences

Intracommunity projects deepen the cultural and shared historical knowledge of the Filipino community. Along with the potential for education, these works spark a sense of familiarity, identification, and belonging for audiences—seeing a part of themselves reflected in the public realm fosters an attachment to the neighborhood; a reassurance that they do indeed have a place here. These projects are particularly appropriate for locations attached to or adjacent to community assets, gathering spaces or along common pedestrian corridors, and high traffic pedestrian routes in and around the Youth & Family Zone and near senior housing.

Externally focused projects raise the visibility of the Filipino community. This is an assertion of presence—"we are here, have been here, and helped build this neighborhood." It also presents the opportunity for bridge building. The South of Market is a layered and intersectional neighborhood. Many cultural communities here have lived alongside one another and blend and merge together. This is a chance to simultaneously stand up, welcome, and honor connections. Depending on the focus, these projects are particularly appropriate for high traffic zones near commercial and cultural centers such as near the Yerba Buena district or entry points to the neighborhood such as off freeway exits or other major arteries—or zones of community overlap such as the southwest edge of the district where SOMA Pilipinas and the LGBT Leather district intersect or the 6th Street corridor near Market Street where the district intersects with the Compton's Transgender district.

Themes

1.0: Historic/Traditional

The following two themes draw upon some of the language and framework for the district's brand guidelines. This theme is integral to the district's role as a cultural heritage entity and reflects the work of the history committee and the neighborhood's long time cultural historians like MC Canlas. This is also the theme that also reflects the strong thread of work in the Filipino diaspora in reclaiming indigenous roots and practices as a decolonizing process of cultural survival as led by culture bearers like Alleluia Panis, Kristian Kabuay, and others. Notably, most of the specific concepts identified in the SOMCAN community surveys, including cultural iconography, textiles, plants, and historic figures fall within this category. This work would likely be considered the most 'legibly' Filipino both within the community and to visitors.

2.0: Experimental/Cultural Innovation

An emphasis is placed on this cultural position within the branding strategy, though this has been somewhat less prominent in public art proposals and community interest to date, likely because of the aforementioned challenge in ensuring that the work still resonates amongst residents and other district audiences. By its very nature, work in this area pushes the boundaries of what is currently

understood and comfortable. More commonly is work that uses this ethos to delve into content that might be associated with 1.0: historic/traditional themes. Many of the contemporary artists in the district utilize that approach, including the work of Panis and Arcega. Because of some of these challenges, temporary public art formats are a particularly useful mode to experiment with these kinds of projects.

Activist

Filipinos in San Francisco have had a distinct contribution to social justice movements in the City and the larger Filipino diaspora with struggles around anti-displacement, housing rights, anti-dictatorship, Filipino WWII Veterans equity, and racial equity. Works in this vein have a role to play in a variety of formats, especially temporary work. Given the long history of organizing within the district and the ongoing role of SOMA Pilipinas in fighting for affordable space, it will be critical to maintain space for these themes even as the district evolves over time.

Conceptual & Ethical Guidelines

SOMA Pilipinas’s public art programming advances all of the district’s strategies, and as such, needs to hold itself to a level of ethical rigor. Implicit (and explicit) in all the district’s work is the question, “how do we improve conditions for our community and our neighbors while making the community affordable and accessible?” How do we use art to strengthen a sense of belonging and visible cultural presence without spurring further gentrification? Perhaps to channel our colleague in Oakland, Roberto Bedoya: what is placekeeping versus placemaking?

Parameters For Developer Negotiations

Concern about these dynamics is less urgent in many of the current projects driven by artists and organizations embedded in the district, but challenges potentially arise as more projects with an external audience focus are created, the district negotiates with developers to carve out community benefit agreements, we facilitate conversations with companies who may want artwork on their buildings that recognizes their presence in the district, or projects arise with a variety of artists who may not have familiarity with, or a relationship to, the community. Some of this should be managed through general public art best practice principles around neighborhood buy-in and engagement early in any public art process (this also applies to intra-neighborhood projects—SOMA Pilipinas is

not a monocultural enclave). While the depth of this process may vary—not all public art is a deeply engaged social practice—there should be opportunities for neighbors to understand what is being created and to give meaningful feedback that is heard and accounted for.

SOMA Pilipinas staff and key stakeholders have already crafted community development standards around affordable housing and other community-serving elements for development in the neighborhood. These guidelines include: local workforce development goals, appropriateness of uses and neighborhood livability, below-market-rate space for community serving uses including small businesses, arts, and services for residents. Currently there is a plan to develop advisory committees for various constituencies like residents, artists, youth, seniors, etc. These bodies will provide crucial input and feedback on public art proposals and initiatives. It is also notable that when engaging a wider community of artists and partners in this work, SOMA Pilipinas has often leaned on the Ethnotours of the district as a critical resource in orienting people to the history and nuances of the community. Thus staffing this key cultural asset remains crucial.

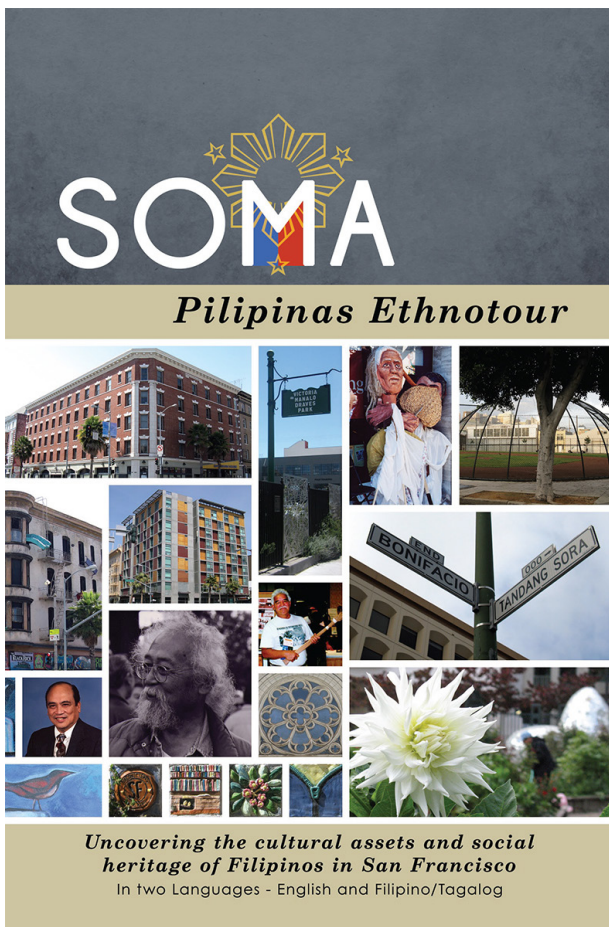


image: cover of the Ethnotour print guide

Use of Indigenous & Traditional Cultural Iconography

It should be noted that in Filipino artist-led intracommunity projects, there are still considerations around the use of traditional (especially indigenous) iconography and practices. For instance, when forms (patterns, textiles, ritual movements, etc.) are deployed in new contexts detached from their intended use, hybridized, installed on a wall as an exhibited document, used as an accent on an artesian commodity, or on the floor where it can be stepped on, this can be read as disrespectful, or at the very least, ignorant to the roots and proper use of the form. While there is no easy answer to the line between appropriate and appropriation here, there are a few baseline steps that can be taken. First, the district can require proper citing of references and research, ensuring that artists acknowledge and make public the cultural lineage and works being referenced. Secondly, it will be crucial to maintain advisory oversight from well versed cultural practitioners and leaders in regards to use of traditional iconography who can serve as an advisory body to check this documentation. To date this has often been a role often played by Alleluia Panis of Kularts, Edwin Lozada of the Hinabi Project, and in some cases, practitioners like Kristian Kabuay, but should potentially be articulated further, with pathways for other advisors to be identified and brought in.



image: Hinabi patterns as part of a crosswalk design by Mel Vera Cruz, including regional annotation

Implementation

Portfolio

To date, SOMA Pilipinas has developed a portfolio of public art concepts through one round of selections and commissions (and another soon to be completed). This has served the dual role of raising the experience and capacity of the district and its artists and building out examples of work that can be used for future negotiations.

City Agencies

The Arts Commission is currently playing an advisory role in clarifying city policies and jurisdiction, particularly in regards to the upcoming slate of private developments that have some public funding. One key area for ongoing conversation with the SFAC will be connecting around any future public art in the district under their purview to ensure that SOMA Pilipinas is represented in panel selections, artist outreach, and targeted technical assistance for artists. SOMA Pilipinas is also in discussion with the Arts Commission's Public Art Program Director to discuss possibilities of incorporating and approving future public art assets in the city's art collection—which will help with long term maintenance—and how to maximize the city's 1% for public art requirement in targeted zones. The MTA and DPW have also been in regular conversations with the District and we will need to leverage those connections to advance public art opportunities as they implement major projects like streetscaping redesign and rebuild. DPW in particular has a dedicated arts staff person who should be incorporated into future planning.

In-Lieu Fund

The district has successfully established MOUs with several upcoming private and non-profit developments. These negotiations include both public art considerations and affordable residential and commercial space. Along with advocating for on-site public art, the district may establish an in-lieu fund in future negotiations that can be used to pool funding for public art that is not necessarily attached to the specific site, allowing for more flexible implementation of projects. (The gateway project has already created a variation on this, with the funds earmarked for a gateway project, but the site being flexible.)

Funders

As noted earlier, artists in the district have made headway in securing major local funding for public projects (Rainin, Hewlett, and Creative Work Fund), particularly for large scale performance and temporary public art. There has also been a rise in individual artist funding to implement murals and experimental projects like Arcega's that have public art impacts. Grant funding for permanent work is more limited, so additional sources like major donors will likely have to be sought to implement large scale projects on the slate like the gateway.

A note for the future

As the district develops the capacity of its artists and cultural bearers through small commissions, technical assistance processes, and grant seeking resources, there may be additional opportunities to seed small-scale public art on a broad scale in parallel to the major, formal projects organized by the district, developers, or city entities. In the conceptual and ethical guidelines, we note Roberto Bedoya's consideration of placekeeping over placemaking. In the essay in which he outlined those ideas, he draws upon the Chicano concept of *rasquachification*, the informal artistic and stylistic elements communities implement, through creative use of whatever everyday materials are available, to create their own distinct spaces and community aesthetics. As an organic, community-based, and somewhat anarchistic process, it is not really something that any one person or district can dictate, but when widespread enough, it creates a tipping point that gives a community its own identity. SOMA Pilipinas has recently explored possibilities for regranting to support artist projects. Another, perhaps parallel approach might be to support a wide swath of small scale public art or public-facing projects that help enliven areas within the district, especially along the somewhat hidden residential corridors. These seed funds might not even be directed at artists, as much as a variety of creative community members interested in adding their mark to the public facing spaces in their lives. Returning to Alejo and Ladia's *Plants Have Feelings*, a potential example might be their story of Luisa De la Cruz who helped create the garden in the light well of the I-Hotel. What are the existing, organic and micro-customizations and marks that residents have made that can be amplified and supported—not as the core public art strategy, but as a low-level parallel shift in the visual landscape that helps to move forward the overall baseline of what is possible?



image: photo from *Alejo & Ladia's Plants Have Feelings* of Claudio Domingo, Anacleto Moniz and Luisa de la Cruz tending to the garden in the second-floor light well of the I-Hotel, circa 1970s. Photograph by Crystal K. Huie.



LUZON

MINDANAO

MINDANAO

VISAYAS

SOMA Pilipinas

Public Art Portfolio

Commissioned Concept Proposals
for potential future public art

Street Furniture

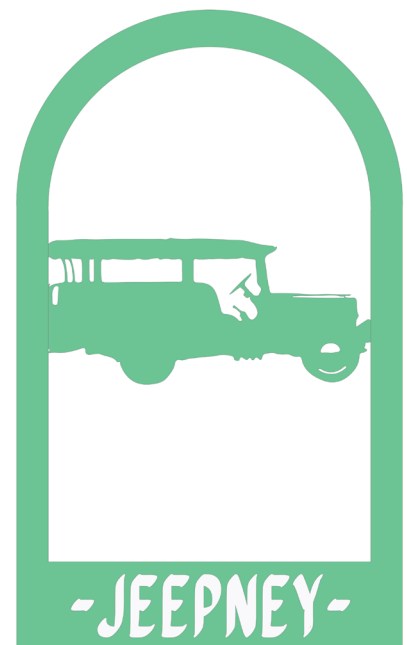
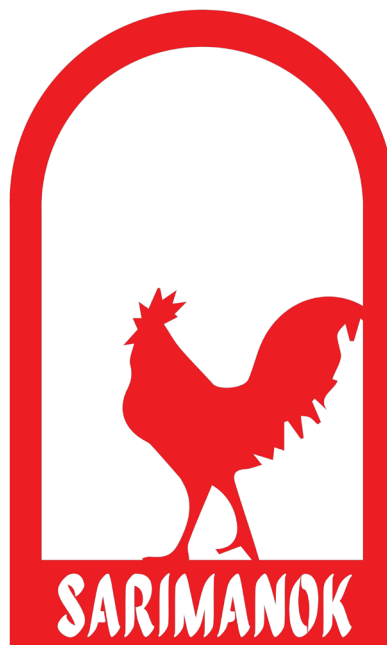
Bike Racks



artist: **Mike Arcega**

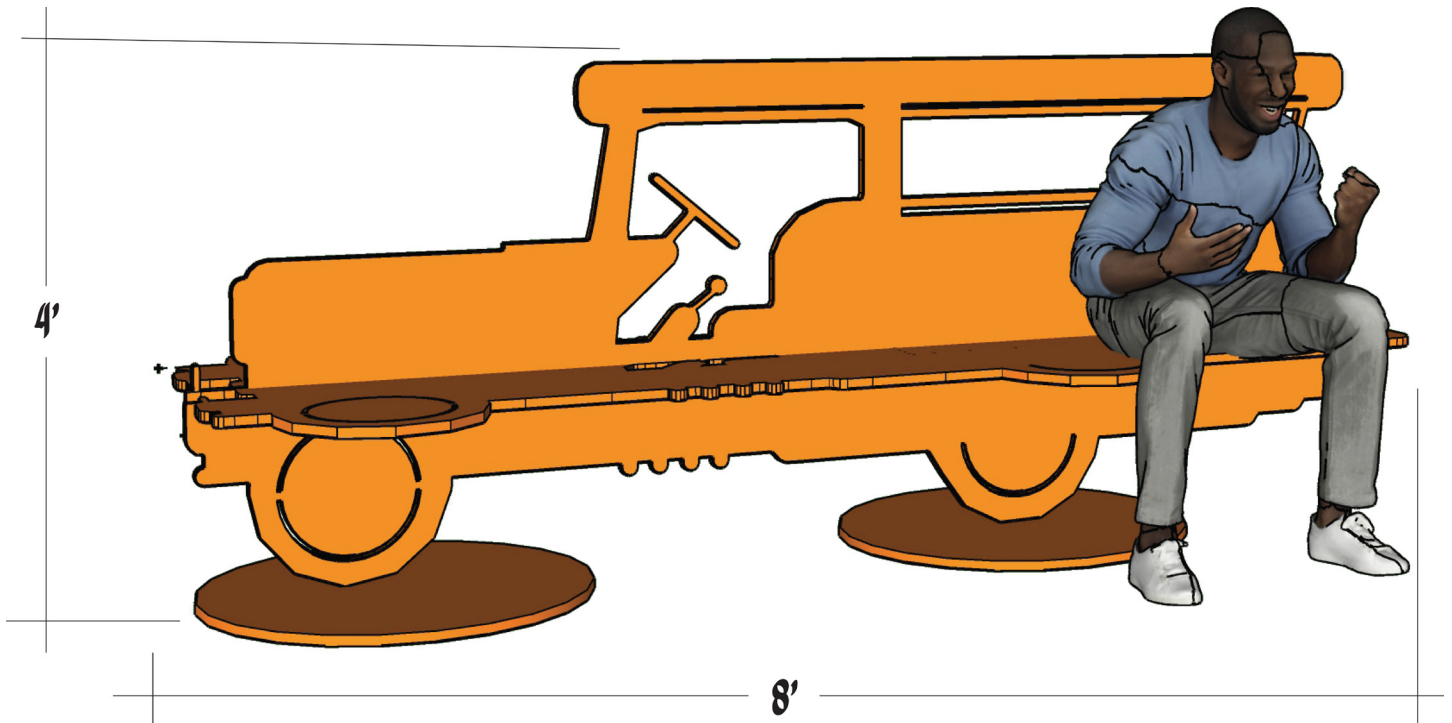
Utilitarian sculptural benches that also act as cultural markers through the selection of iconography identified in community surveys. The icons to the right are a sampling of imagery that can also be adapted to meet the needs of accessibility, function, and structure.

3/4" waterjet cut steel with durable outdoor epoxy paint, ADA compliant design with bright colors for visibility.



Street Furniture

Seating



artist: **Mike Arcega**

Utilitarian sculptural benches that also act as cultural markers through the selection of significant iconography, flora, and fauna. The icons to the right are a sampling of imagery that can also be adapted to meet the needs of accessibility, function, and structure.

3/4" waterjet cut steel with durable outdoor epoxy paint, anchored to concrete with 8 bolts, ADA compliant design with bright colors for visibility.

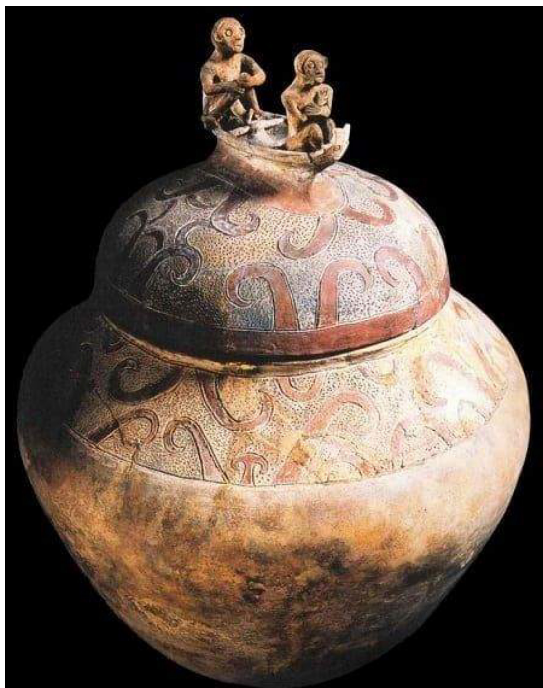


artist: **Mike Arcega**

Based on Balikbayan boxes used by Filipino expats to send supplies, goods, and gifts to relatives and friends in the Philippines, this bronze boundary marker and seat might seem unremarkable, but carries heavy cultural significance. Specific text and design elements can be added to the surface to make the intent clear.

The bronze sculptures would be placed on bulb outs specifically to act as boundary markers and seating.





artist: **O.M. France Viana**

The form for this bench draws on the figurative detail atop the oldest jar found in the Philippines—the Manunggul jar located in the Tabon caves.

Street Furniture

Seating



artist: **O.M. France Viana**

This bench features a play on Upo, a word meaning both to sit and a type of bottle gourd used in Filipino cooking. This kind of punning word play is also integral to Filipino culture and humor.

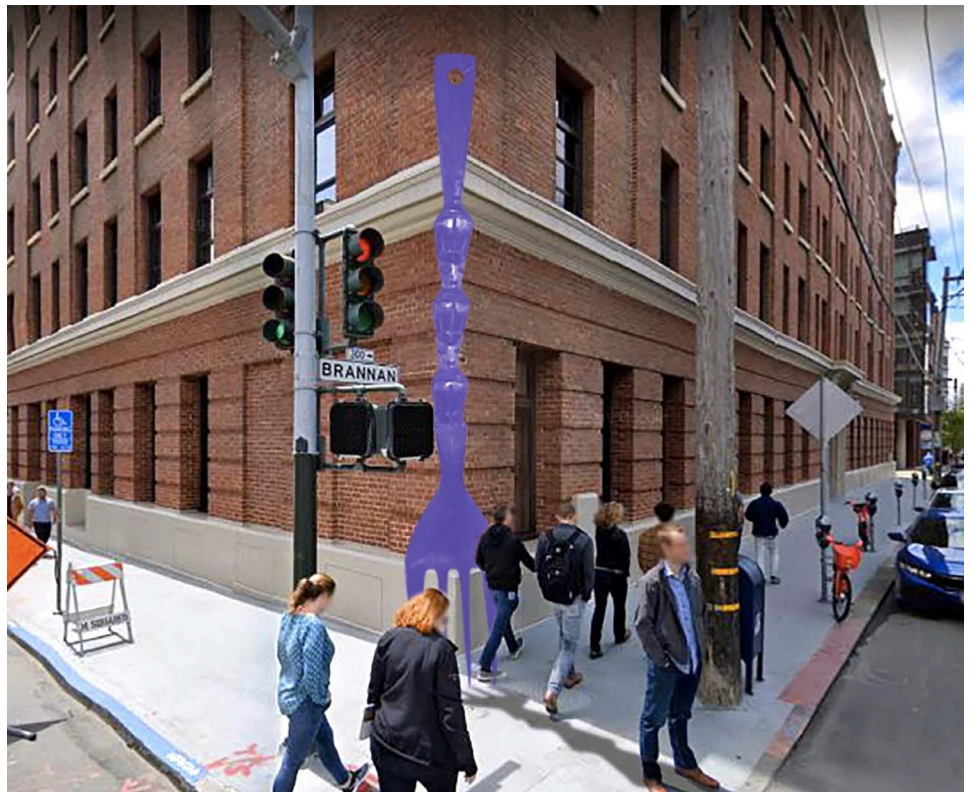
Cultural District

Markers



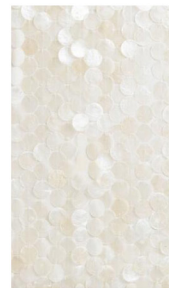
artist: **O.M. France Viana**

Referencing the paired giant spoon and fork often found in Filipino kitchens, these boundary markers would be used as a welcoming gesture, signalling hospitality. The color references ube, the purple yam integral to so many Filipino desserts.



artist: **Cheyenne Concepcion**

This marker utilizes Capiz shells—native to the Philippine island of Panay—a material valued for traditional crafts as well as later colonial religious architecture. The laser cut details on columns would be customized for each site, with one side featuring a map of significant locations in the district and the other featuring a didactic describing the history of the location. The pattern on the sides can also vary by site and can be commissioned by other artists to introduce a range of textures. The column will feature internal lighting that is visible through the cut portions in the steel.



Capiz Panel on Metal Frame



Untreated Steel, 1/8" on Steel Frame



A commissioned 2D graphic for each site



Concrete Base securing light-structure



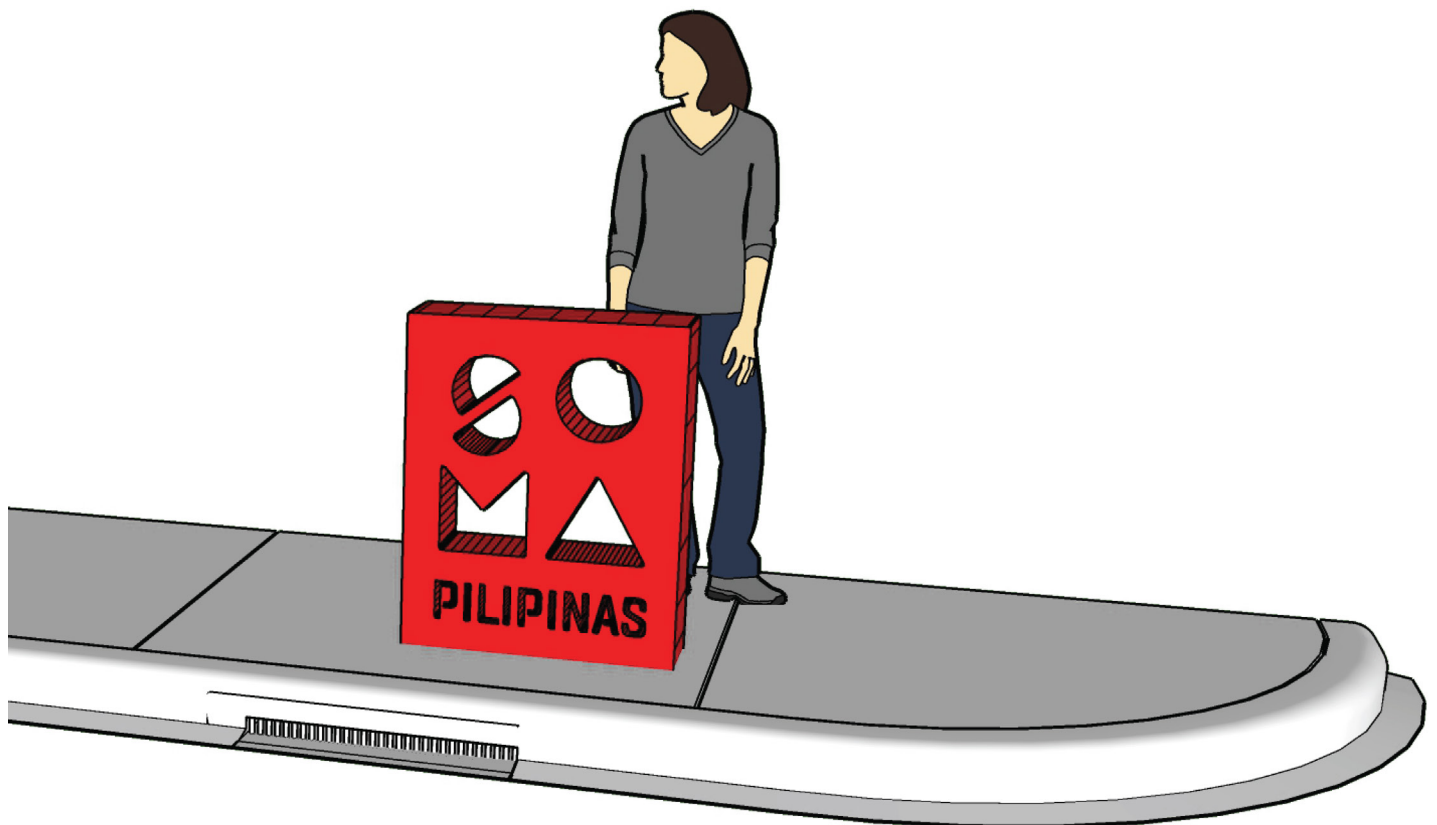
Cultural District

Markers

artist: Mike Arcega

Straightforward and clear concrete boundary markers.

Cast concrete, brightly painted for visibility and as selected by the neighborhood.



Plaque

artist: **Bastos Collective**

A plaque illustrating a range of community members and telling the story of the district. Suggested sites include key anchoring entities including Bindlestiff Studio and the Filipino Education Center at Bessie Carmichael Elementary.



2016: SOMA Pilipinas is officially recognized by the City of San Francisco as SF's Filipino Cultural Heritage District, under the leadership of the Filipino-American Development Foundation. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, more than 5,000 Filipino-Americans call this area their home. The Filipino population in SoMa has been cut in half over the last 10 years, and the formation of the Cultural District is a proactive initiative effort to protect our communities, preserve our culture, heritage and cultural assets. SoMa is a place made possible because of our community's struggle and resilience to make a home here along with the leadership of women, workers, artists, youth, seniors and immigrant families. SOMA Pilipinas embraces the spirit of bayanihan: the collective determination to honor and make history, build community and progress forward.

2017: SOMA Pilipinas is recognized by the State of California as 1 of 14 Cultural Districts by the California Arts Council, cited as a cultural, social, arts, and service hub for Filipinos throughout Northern California.



Crosswalks

artist: Mel Vera Cruz

Hinabi patterns including regional and Tribal citation for the textile reference.

Folsom & 4th

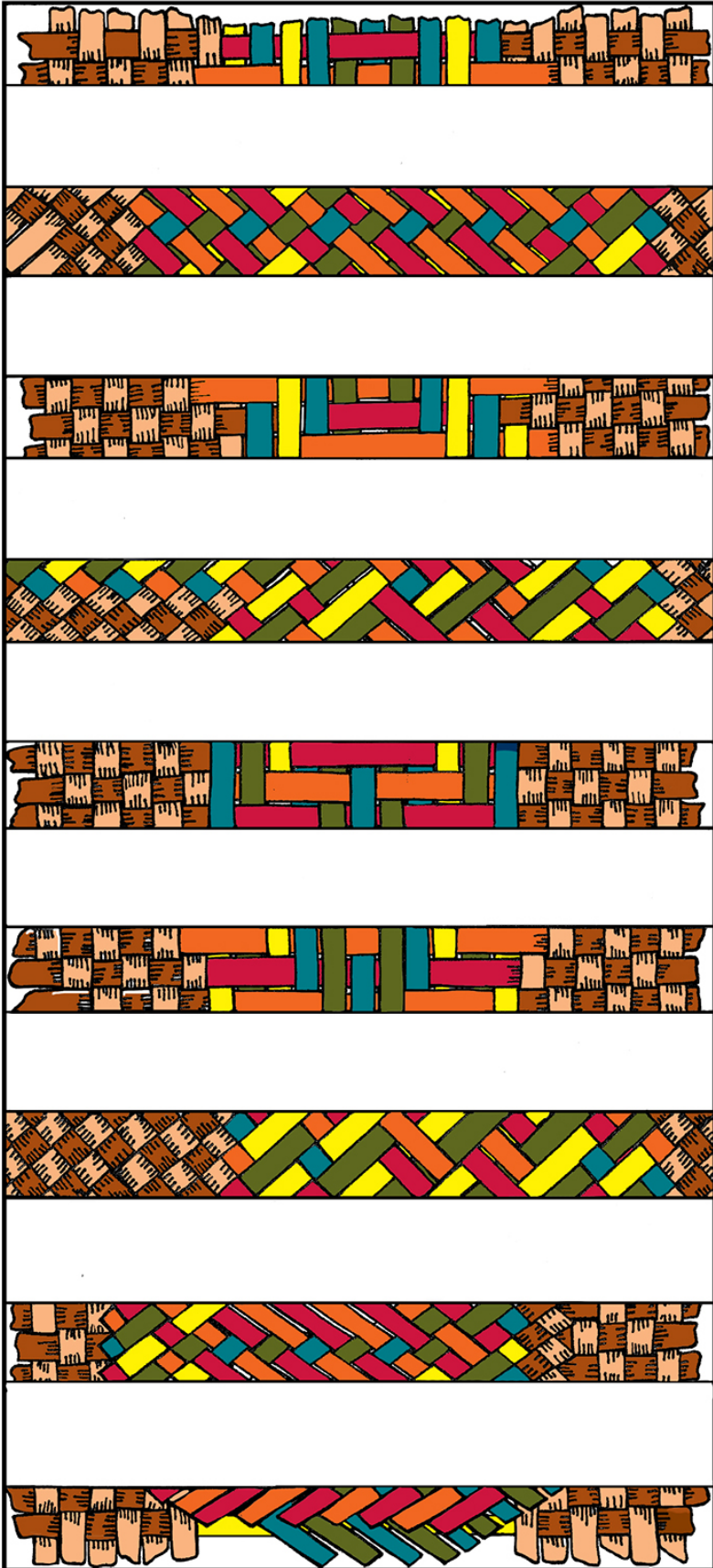


Howard & Russ



Mission & Yerba Buena





artist: **Cece Carpio**

Banig woven patterns.

Mission & Yerba Buena



Crosswalks

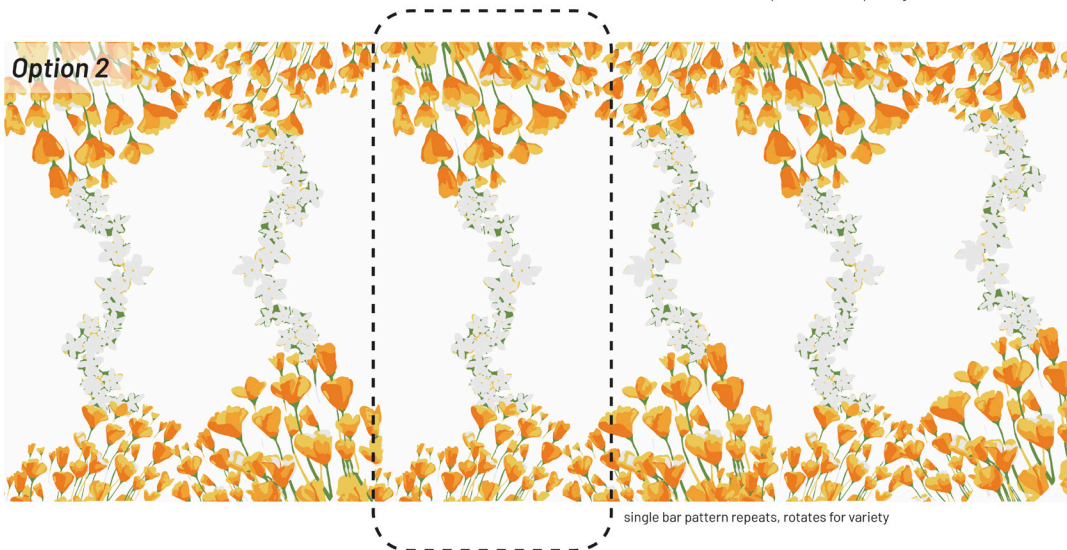
artist: CAMO Design Studio (Christina Antiporda & Marcus Owens)

Patterns made up of sampaguita, California poppy, banana leaves, and Naraa tree leaves. Additional crosswalk safety lines can be added.

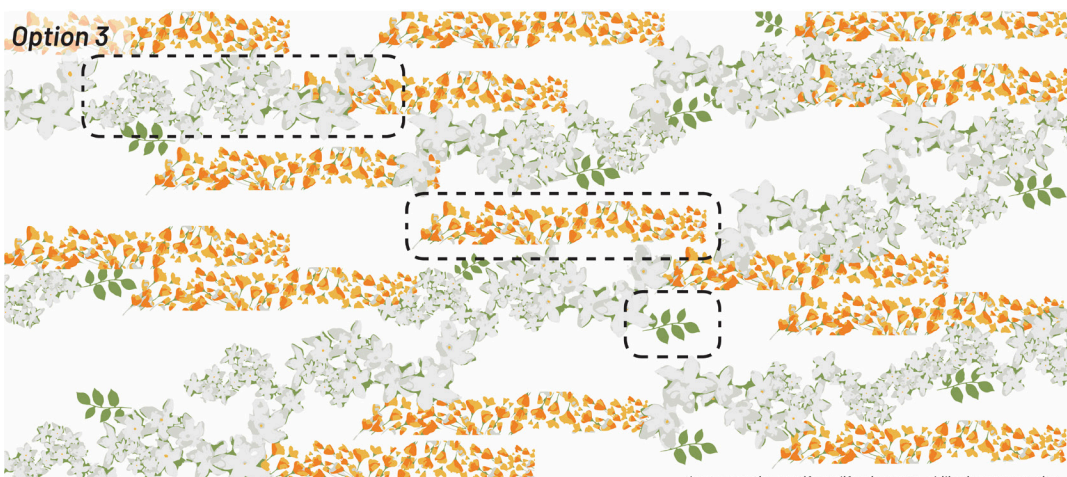
Mission & Yerba Buena



overall composition with repeating motifs at different scales



single bar pattern repeats, rotates for variety



three repeating motifs: california poppy, philippine sampaguita, and philippine narra tree

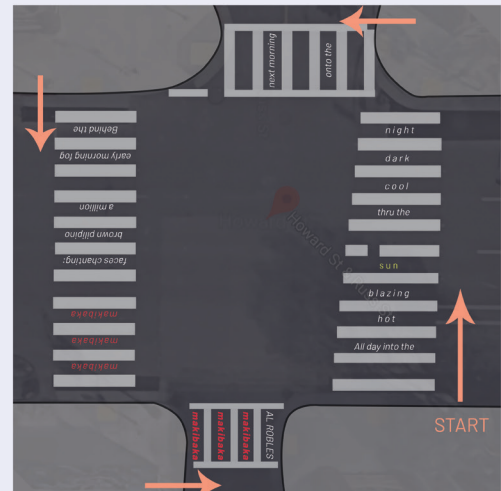
artist: **Kim Arteche**

10K Carabao Beat Street pays homage to the poetry of Al Robles, the Filipino poet and activist whose work laid the groundwork for SOMA Pilipinas's community and cultural ethos. The pieces take excerpts from his *Rappin' With Ten Thousand Carabaos in the Dark* and lays them on the street to be reflected on by pedestrians as they navigate the neighborhood.

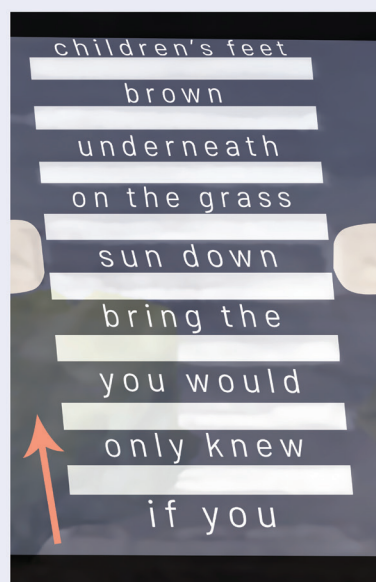
Howard & Russ
Mission & Yerba Buena



As pedestrians cross Howard Street, text is read from Left to Right, and from the nearest to farthest as they approach the end of the crosswalk.



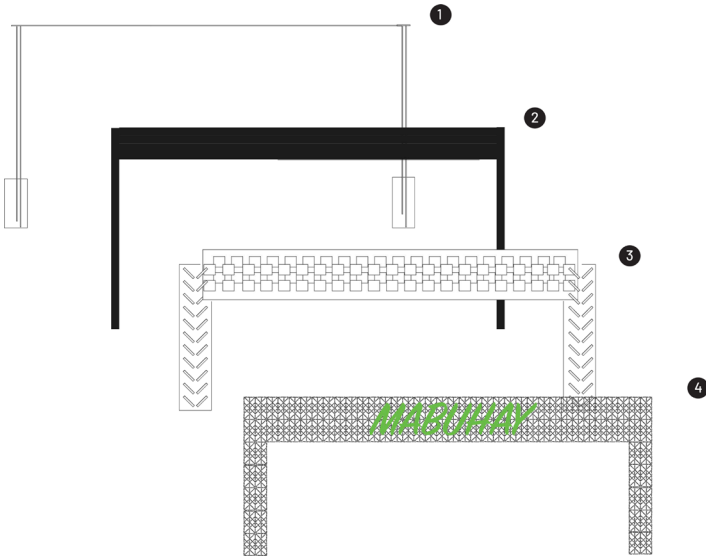
People walking can start at the Northwest corner of Howard and Russ Street, and continue counter-clockwise to complete one phrase of Robles' poetry.



To read this passage, start on the Yerba Buena Gardens side of Mission Street, and walk towards St. Patrick's Church, reading from Left to Right.



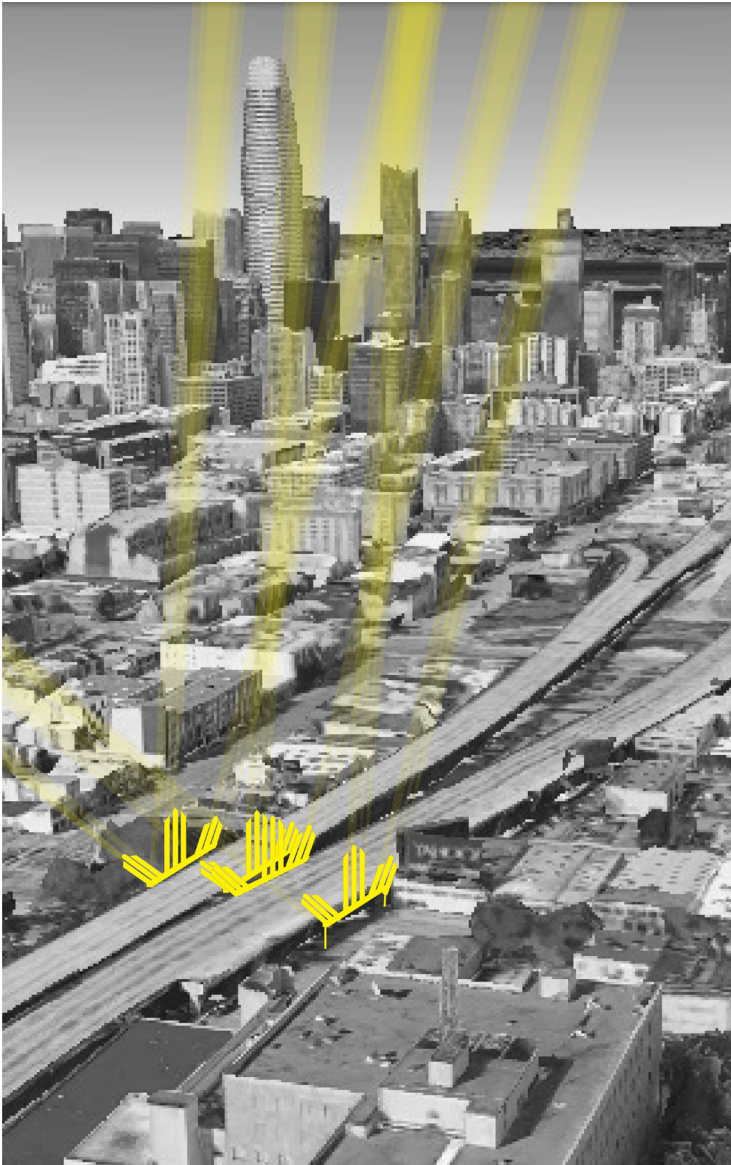
Gateway



artist: CAMO Design Studio (Christina Antiporda & Marcus Owens)

This gateway design at the opening of Russ facing Victoria Manalo Draves Park acts as an entrypoint to the residential neighborhood from two of the District's key assets: the park and Bessie Carmichael School.

The layered framework for the gateway includes 1) irrigation and electrical systems, 2) a structural steel frame, 3) green wall felt or similar planting fabric, 4) and a cast iron lattice evoking Filipino weaving patterns and the neon light.



artist: **CAMO Design Studio (Christina Antiporda & Marcus Owens)**

This gateway design would embrace and radiate from the freeway at 6th Street, highlighting the future park slated to be developed immediately adjacent to the foot of the gateway. The illuminated structure would also be visible from the freeway, emphasizing the presence of the district for those passing through or exiting the freeway to drive into the community.

The piece would be a steel lattice fit with LEDs.

