

# **Huminating Yerba Buena Gardens** Light Installation + Filipino Cultural Marker Findings Summary

FINAL presented by Julie Munsayac + Ciriaco Sayoc // 01.25.24

The objective of this discovery is to assess potential site locations on the Yerba Buena Gardens campus and identify opportunities for light installations and cultural markers that enhance visibility for the Filipino community in the SoMa neighborhood and throughout the Bay Area. This installation will celebrate the heritage and history of Filipinos in SoMa, while contributing to the visual conversation and identity of San Francisco.

# stakeholder alignment

- cultural advisor consultation
- field study
- case studies
- strategic recommendations

3

## stakeholder alignment

Key organizations were interviewed in this process: SOMA Pilipinas, Yerba Buena Community Benefit District, Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy, Children's Creativity Museum, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. This allowed us to understand the perspectives, expectations, and requirements concerning light/art installations on the campus and how the district would benefit from having them.















## cultural advisor consultation

MC Canlas and Alleluia Panis, who have played pivotal roles in establishing the cultural significance and narrative context of the parol through the annual Parol Lantern Festival, were consulted in its symbolism. Their guidance helped shape our recommendations for possible storytelling in the recommended light installations.



MC is a community strategist with Filipino American Development Foundation, historian, ethnotour docent of SOMA Pilipinas, and program director at Bayanihan Community Center.



Alleluia is a renowned artist. choreographer and director of Kularts, the nation's premiere presenter of contemporary and tribal Pilipino arts.

## field study

A thorough field study of the Yerba Buena Gardens campus was conducted independently, and along with a couple of the stakeholder organization representatives. These walk-throughs allowed us to assess the physical dynamics and environmental aspects of potential installation sites, noting factors such as lighting conditions, foot traffic, and accessibility.

## case studies

Other relative light installation projects and cultural markers were researched within San Francisco and in other cultural districts, providing reference and inspiration from their design elements, community engagement strategies, storytelling formats, and positive impacts on neighborhoods.

## strategic recommendations

Based on our interviews, site assessments, and comparative landscape of case studies, we have provided several opportunities for locations + concept design that will provide more visibility to the Filipino Community, as well as benefit the Yerba Buena Gardens Community.

# **1. Understanding**

- 2. Opportunities
- **3. Considerations**
- 4. Case Studies
- 5. Recommendations

9

## **ILLUMINATING YERBA BUENA GARDENS**

# Understanding

**UNDERSTANDING** 

# Background

"We hope to challenge our community's invisibility in the public realm through creative place-keeping and place-making by installing more permanent and highly visible artistic works by Pilipinx art makers. "

## — SOMA PILIPINAS

COLLABORATION WITH SOMCAN AND CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY MUSEUM



# SOMA PILIPINAS

As the Filipino Cultural Heritage District of San Francisco, SOMA Pilipinas has dedicated itself to creating space and opportunities that celebrate the culture and presence of the Filipino community in the SoMa neighborhood and Bay Area. It has ripened into its being, as an agent in Filipino visibility, elevating the cultural tapestry that weaves together the community's stories and holds the diaspora together.





# **YERBA BUENA GARDENS**

As an arts and culture hub, the downtown Yerba Buena neighborhood has the highest concentration of museums in the city and is nested within SOMA Pilipinas. Yerba Buena holds historical relevance for the Filipino community—from Manilatown and displacement, to the establishment of the cultural heritage district; the city's landscape has changed, but the community remains to live and thrive in the area. The gardens is home to seasonal cultural events for the community, including the annual Parol Lantern Festival, Flores de Mayo and the Pistahan Parade and Festival.





# **PAROL LANTERN**

During the holiday season in Filipino communities, parols, a star-shaped lantern, are often displayed. Dating back to the Spanish colonial period of the Philippines, these 5-pointed lanterns were made of bamboo and Japanese paper, illuminated by candles, carried in novena processions, and symbolized the Star of Bethlehem, a guiding light. The Indigenous and precolonial Filipinos had a strong connection to the stars, looking at them to guide them. This connection was embedded into the collective memory and as Chinese lanterns were brought by missionaries to the Philippines, it synthesized together to become the first parols.

"If the parol evokes nostalgia and longing for the Philippines, the annual parol festival in San Francisco establishes our belonging to our new home. Belongingness is the human emotional need to be accepted in a group, nation, or society. The parol is an emblem of longing and belonging."

**— MC CANLAS, FOUNDER OF PAROL LANTERN FESTIVAL** 

## **ILLUMINATING YERBA BUENA GARDENS**

# Opportunities

**OPPORTUNITIES** 

# Benefits

# CONNECTION

- Public art enhances a place and is a meaningful form of community place-keeping, creating a sense of pride for people who live in and around the Yerba Buena neighborhood
- Represents a connection toward community building, and valuing diversity through action, not just words
- A permanent installation is a commitment to the people who have perservered in the area, just as they have committed to the neighborhood despite the city's transformations—notably during the construction of Moscone Center and the recent challenges posed by the pandemic

# RECLAMATION

- Improves visibility and creates a sense of belonging for the Filipino community, fostering pride and cultural connection to repair harm from previous displacement
- Lifts up the significant role and contributions of Filipino individuals and culture in the neighborhood, allowing for a permanent and authentic voice in the community's storytelling
- Brings awareness to the work SOMA Pilipinas and Yerba Buena Garden institutions are doing together to encourage a reclamation of the space that holds so much history to the Filipino community

# DESTINATION

- Yerba Buena Gardens, as a culture park within a cultural district, will only be made more vibrant by reflecting the culture of its local residents
- A marker for the Filipino community will make for iconic place-keeping and cultural preservation, especially in support of its seasonal festival celebrations
- Lighting makes a significant difference in public space in creating a destination experience, drawing visitors into the neighborhood
- Shining literal light in the gardens will be symbol of revitalizing and investing in the neighborhood and its people

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

# Audience

# **AUDIENCES**

## those that live and thrive here

local residents, neighborhood families, and filipino community that works and gathers in the district

## those looking to be rooted and inspired

visiting filipinos, folks that appreciate art and culture, museum-goers

## those passing through

tourists, shoppers, downtown workers, visitors from outside the neighborhood and city limits

## those that invest + see the possibilities

small businesses, museums, community organizations, funders

28

**OPPORTUNITIES** 

# Locations

## **YERBA BUENA GARDENS**

The Yerba Buena Gardens campus is centrally located in the heart of San Francisco, within the SOMA Pilipinas district. It is bordered by Mission Street to the north, Howard Street to the south, Third Street to the east, and Fourth Street to the west.

The campus is composed of three "central blocks", each fostering into different audiences + activities. Home to prominent cultural institutions, the Yerba Buena Gardens neighborhood is a vibrant and culturally rich oasis in San Francisco's bustling urban landscape—the unofficial arts + cultural enclave of the city.





## **CENTRAL BLOCK 1**

Central Block 1 (CB1) is the most northern block adjacent to the main shopping thoroughfare of Market Street and Union Square. Being home to the Contemporary Jewish Museum and the Mexican Museum, along with three hotels clustered around the plaza of St. Patrick's Church, one of San Francisco's oldest catholic churches, CB1 is a dense reflection of the city's history, its commerce, and cultural communities.

### AUDIENCE

those looking to be rooted and inspired those passing through

### ASSETS

the Contemporary Jewish Museum Mexican Museum St. Patrick's Church Yerba Buena Lane





## **CENTRAL BLOCK 2**

Central Block 2 (CB2) is a green sanctuary that provides respite to the urban landscape of downtown San Francisco. Flanked by the Metreon, YBCA, SFMOMA, and Moscone Center, with access to main public transportation stations and parking garages, CB2 is the heart of the Yerba Buena grounds. With its wide-open communal space, it's an invitation to gather with neighbors, colleagues, fellow San Franciscans, and community.

### AUDIENCE

those that live and thrive here those looking to be rooted and inspired those passing through

### ASSETS

Metreon YBCA Yerba Buena Gardens + its art installations (MLK Memorial Silver Walls) Access to SFMOMA, Moscone Center, Public Transportation + Parking Garages





## **CENTRAL BLOCK 3**

Central Block 3 (CB3) is the southernmost part of the campus and experiences relatively lower levels of traffic compared to other blocks—though most visited by neighborhood residents. Home to the Children's Creativity Museum, Ice Rink, Bowling Center, and Play Circle, CB3 architecturally is a walled fortress—an austere reminder of San Francisco's urban density—but it also provides a safe space for local families with children.

### AUDIENCE

those that live and thrive here

### ASSETS

Children's Creativity Museums Carousel Ice Rink Bowling Center Play Circle


### **ILLUMINATING YERBA BUENA GARDENS**

## Considerations

### EDUCATION / STORYTELLING

- outside audiences often do not understand cultural context or language, need to work through how to best educate non-native audiences
- there are challenges to the understanding of some installations and better efforts need to be made about providing more opportunity for storytelling—provide convenient access to the context and significance of the work
- art + cultural institutions on the campus may not have much influence outside their walls, but there could be a possibility to host conversations around the community art/installations and provide space for storytelling

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

- lighting can be an opportunity to improve real and perceived safety
- public safety issues such as drug use exist, especially near the Mission Street steps and the monuments—often havens for such activities
- foot traffic is limited, especially at night, when activity downtown (which consists mostly of office workers and tourists) wanes

## BUREAUCRACY

- the campus has more liberties for installations since it's private management—permits and regulations involve the city if the installation impedes onto sidewalks or utilizes any exterior facade lighting/logos
- there are inter-organizational challenges in the use of "common" space, especially in terms of private and public events, which may inform where permanent installations are placed

## ACCESSIBILITY

- a cultural marker, before any light installation, may be more accessible
- families and seniors are rarely out after sunset which means they wouldn't be able to benefit from a light installation—there's an overemphasis on evening experience which limits the demographic of the audiences that can enjoy the installation
- the installation should have a daytime / structural presence when its light isn't activated—possibly using natural light creatively

## TECHNOLOGY

- the electrical infrastructure of the campus is dated and past its life cycle, it would require a multi-million budget to update
- instead of creating new or additional electrical infrastructure, it's best to utilize existing capacities, or consider housing a light source indoors that projects out
- any lighting requires maintenance, which may be cost prohibitive
- a cultural marker that doesn't require lighting / electricity may be a more practical opportunity in a permanent installation
- power sources will need to be moved beyond arm's length to avoid any unintended access
- light technology is a quickly evolving field with lasers and LEDs, along with renewable energy sources like solar and wind—and like the campus electrical infrastructure, runs the risk of being outdated in its permanence

## INTERACTIVITY

- unconventional interpretations should be anticipated as some installations may be an invitation for unintended interaction—some welcome, like a child poking around a sculpture, and others not so much, such as skateboarding an edge of a structure
- something at a smaller scale and at a child's eye-level will prioritize interactivity for families, led by a refreshing and youthful curiosity
- one of the more engaging pieces in the gardens is "The Shaking Man" because it is so different—people take photos with it, count his fingers, kids climb his arms

### MATERIAL

- the weather-durability of the structure is important—it will need to be resistant to rain, wind, and uv damage to minimize its maintenance
- the material of the installation will need to recover quickly from vandalism and graffiti
- the weight of any hanging installation and its location may require an engineered truss / structure to carry and fix the lantern

### **ILLUMINATING YERBA BUENA GARDENS**

## Case Studies

# Filipinotown



### FILIPINOTOWN

The gateway, which is named "Talang Gabay: Our Guiding Star," spans 82 feet across Beverly Boulevard in Los Angeles. The structure includes work from Filipino artists Eliseo Art Silva with Celestino Geronimo, Jr., as well as design elements such as the Parol, the Gumamela flower, and the Sarimanok, which are symbols of Filipino culture.

# The Contemporary Jewish Museum





### THE CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MUSEUM

An ode to dialogue, the building design is **based on the two Hebrew letters spelling "L'Chaim," which means "To Life."** Following the Jewish tradition, according to which letters are not mere signs, but substantial participants in the story they create, the 'chet' provides an overall continuity for the exhibition spaces, and the 'yud,' with its 36 windows, serves as special event space.

The forms of the addition are clad in luminous blue steel panels, finished in a unique cross-hatching surface that helps to diffuse and soften the reflection of light off the stainless steel. The panels change color depending on the time of day, the weather, and the viewer's position, creating a dynamic, living surface.



## Mexican Museum





### **MEXICAN MUSEUM**

An exquisite and stunning facade is comprised of sprawling stainless-steel panels, providing contrasting views from both inside the museum and out. Topography from the Popocatepet **volcano in Mexico** was used to create the facade imagery. This, coupled with the unique three-dimensional panel innovations, creates a one-of-a-kind viewing experience.

# Stevenson Alley





### **STEVENSON ALLEY LANTERNS**

Inspired by Filipino cultural **heritage lanterns typically put up** around homes and neighborhoods during the Christmas holidays to celebrate Filipino heritage & culture, the Stevenson Alley lanterns are made from native materials of the Philippines, resembling fireflies from afar.

## Lantern Stories





## **LANTERN STORIES**

The first West Coast iteration of Lantern Stories, this public art installation comprises **29 lanterns that illuminate San Francisco Chinatown's history**, **culture, and community**. The images on the lanterns relate the long and fraught history and legacy of Chinese immigration in the United States. Many of the lanterns highlight the arts, calligraphy, music and performance, as well as the community's strong commitment to education, entrepreneurship, and social justice. There are twelve SF-specific lanterns, including Angel Island Detention Center, Entrepreneurship, Earthquake of 1906, Cameron House, and SF Notables featuring Bruce Lee, Amy Tan, journalist Helen Zia, pioneer restaurateur Cecilia Chang, and many others.

# Language of Birds





### LANGUAGE OF BIRDS

Language of the Birds is a permanent site-specific sculpture installed at a pedestrian plaza linking Chinatown and North Beach. Each of the artwork's suspended "books" **mimic a bird in motion**, with various wing positions created by the forms of the pages and bindings. Passing under the flock, pedestrians will notice words and phrases embedded in the plaza floor, which appear to have fallen from the pages above. On closer inspection, the fallen words are in English, Italian and Chinese, and were selected from the neighborhood's rich literary history.

At night, LED lights embedded within the books create visual patterns – at different times one might see the flock subtly pulsing or giving off a spectacular zoetrope effect. It is the first solar power-offset public artwork in California; the artists teamed with scientist David Shearer and Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookstore to provide solar power to the city's grid, offsetting the energy used by the artwork.

## Point Cloud



### **POINT CLOUD**

Point Cloud is housed on the pedestrian bridge connecting the north and south buildings of The Moscone Center. This installation was created by Leo Villareal, the same artist created The Bay Lights. Point Cloud spans 100 feet and is constructed of 858 steel rods and 28,288 LED bulbs that are, like those on the Bay Bridge, individually programmed to change colors every **30 seconds**. It can be experienced by walking the pedestrians bridge to the convention center and witnessed when driving under it.

66

## Caruso's Dream



### **CARUSO'S DREAM**

"...and my room still rocks like a boat on the sea" (Caruso's Dream) features 13 **pianos created from materials that draw on the history of the area**, including vintage chicken-wire glass and **pilings from the old Transbay Terminal**. This permanent sitespecific artwork dangles from the 17-story residential high-rise AVA 55 Ninth Street in SoMa, and is inspired by the moment when opera star Enrico Caruso was awakened by the San Francisco earthquake of April 18, 1906 while staying at the Palace Hotel. He did not know if he was awake or still dreaming as he walked to the window to see the results of the ongoing earthquake. By tuning into short-range broadcast 90.9 FM from 4 p.m. until 10 a.m. (within a block of the artwork), discerning listeners may be serenaded by the Caruso recording that inspired the light visualization dancing through the pianos. Commissioned and funded by developer Avalon Bay through the City's onepercent-for-arts program.

### **ILLUMINATING YERBA BUENA GARDENS**

## Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATIONS** 

## **Placefinding** Yerba Buena Gardens Signage

### PLACEFINDING

Creating wayfinding signage that pulls from the materiality of parol lanterns and iconic Philippines architecture, while creating cast shadows of color during the daytime. Simulating capiz window panels and doors, the style of the signage is both modern, nostalgic, and functional all at once.

LOCATION all throughout the campus **AUDIENCE** 

those that live and thrive here those looking to be rooted and inspired those passing through

**ELEMENTS** natural light embossed colored plastic wood laminate






PERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS GALLERIES & FORUM



BLUE SHIELD OF CALIFORNIA THEATRE AT YBCA

### MARTIN LUTH KING, JR. MEMORIAL

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3

METREON

### THE FUN ZONE



CE RINK



BOWLIN



CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY MUSEUM



CAROUSEL

YERBA YERBA RJENA BUENA GARDENS CONTENTIAL





### YERBA BUENA GARDENS

MOSCONE CONVENTION CENTER

100

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR MEMORIAL

JOYRIDE PIZZA B RESTAURANT AND BAR



THE FUN ZONE

CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY MUSEUR PLAYGROUND CAROUSEL





## **Tunnel of Light** Monument Parols

### TUNNEL OF LIGHT

The western monument, with its vine-covered canopy, provides the structural awning to hang and shelter a cluster of traditional parols, creating an intimate space. As fire exit structures for the convention center underground, the monument has recently been a public safety concern, but with illuminated parols, this hallway can convert to a tunnel of light, celebrating the district's culture, welcoming pedestrians into the gardens.

### LOCATION

*western monument CB2* 

### AUDIENCE

those that live and thrive here those looking to be rooted and inspired those passing through

### ELEMENTS

existing light infrastructure LED lighting colored acrylic

77

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## Sun Pride

Illuminated + Re-imagined Flags on Yerba Buena Gardens Light Poles



### **SUN PRIDE**

The sun is powerful icon of independence and sovereignty for Filipinos and its symbolism on the national flag represents the way of life (and history) on the islands. Displaying re-imagined sun-star flags by local artists, in possible collaboration with Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, on the existing light poles that line the garden pathway, engages community and provides a sense of pride, contributing to the vernacular of identity.

### LOCATION

CB2 pathway & Stone Stage Banners CB3 Children's Creativity Museum *district street pole banners* 

### **AUDIENCE**

those that live and thrive here those looking to be rooted and inspired those passing through

### ELEMENTS

existing light infrastructure LED lighting metal rods waterproof fabric













## Starlight SOMA Pilipinas YBCA Office Windows

### STARLIGHT

Light is the true medium of any illuminated parol—how it dances and communicates the meaning through scattered color. By tinting the exterior windows of the SOMA Pilipinas office with parol-inspired panels of color and projecting light out, the spirit of the parol is embodied in the heart of the district.

LOCATION

SOMA PIlipinas office in YBCA CB2

**AUDIENCE** 

those that live and thrive here those looking to be rooted and inspired **ELEMENTS** natural lighting indoor LED lighting window decals





## North Star St. Patrick's Window Light Projections

### **NORTH STAR**

The town center is an important space in the barangay (a neighborhood or village in provincial Philippines), it is where the community gathered to celebrate and hold civic engagement, often close to the church. The plaza in front of St. Patrick's is the district's symbolic town center and can act as a intangible canvas with light projecting out of the church's stained glass windows, as if a holy spirit were casting light from the luminous parol, out towards the public congregation. With a bold juxtaposition of the historic past with modern vibrance, this concept could spark a reintroduction of the church as a sacred space of quietude. Also opportunity for seasonal programming.

LOCATION

St. Patrick's plaza *CB1* 

**AUDIENCE** 

those looking to be rooted and inspired those passing through

**ELEMENTS** *light projectors* LED lighting







## Wave Refections Mirror Mural in CB3 Hallway



### WAVE REFLECTIONS

Before colonization and the first parols, indigenous Filipinos navigated the waters by looking at the stars. By building a mural or mobile of mirror panels that pay homage to the symbolism of water and stars in Philippine culture, wind and natural light interact with the installation, causing a shimmering effect, almost like sunlight dancing on the ocean. An indoor light projector situated in the Ice Rink Lobby can be activated at night to create an oceanic feel, reflecting on the walls.

LOCATION

promenade between ice rink and bowling alley CB3

**AUDIENCE** 

those that live and thrive here

**ELEMENTS** natural lighting mirror tiles projected light







## Navigation **Motion-Activated Light Installation** in Third Street entrance



### NAVIGATION

With San Francisco's history of buried ships and the Philippines being a maritime and diasporic community, creating a wall (or fishnet) of motion-activated LED lights that represent starlight and the night constellation invites people into the gardens by creating light waves with each step. Strategically located along the pedestrian walkway and plaza fountains, adjacent to the Third Street entrance across from SFMOMA, this installation can be seen from inside the museum's exhibit space, fostering a dialogue between the bird's eye view of the city and the one experienced close to the ground.

LOCATION

Third Street entrance across from SFMOMA CB2

### **AUDIENCE**

those that live and thrive here those looking to be rooted and inspired those passing through

**ELEMENTS** LED lights waterproof fabric metal rods







# Horizons

### **Upper Promenade Capiz Light Installation**

### HORIZONS

The canopy that covers the commercial promenade of the upper plaza is composed of glass tiles that have tarnished into a capiz-like quality. This has inspired the possibility of illuminating the canopy in colored lighting to mimic the luminosity of a large scale parol, possibly creating an illusion of a Pacific sunrise at dawn and sunset at dusk, often unseen in San Francisco's climate and downtown horizon—nodding to the golden sun of SOMA Pilipinas.

### LOCATION

canopy on upper plaza above MLK Memorial CB2

### **AUDIENCE**

those that live and thrive here those looking to be rooted and inspired those passing through

### **ELEMENTS** LED lighting

acrylic panels






**RECOMMENDATIONS** 

# Orbit

# Large Sculpture in Third Street Plaza

## ORBIT

Just as the sun is the center of our solar system, pulling the heavenly bodies into its gravity in an orbital dance, Yerba Buena Gardens is the cultural center of the city. By placing a large-scale metal sculpture / structure in the Third Street plaza, surrounded by water and the nearby sunken boat installation, SOMA Pilipinas can hold space as the community center of the district, reflecting a bright people that have called it home for so long, and warmly welcoming visitors into an often ignored garden.

### LOCATION

CB2 Third Street Plaza (CB1 Plaza) (CB2 Mission Street Stairs)

### **AUDIENCE**

those that live and thrive here those looking to be rooted and inspired those passing through

ELEMENTS *large-scale metal sculpture / structure* 









**RECOMMENDATIONS** 

# **Tabi Tabi Po** Hidden Garden-wide Duendes

## TABI TABI PO

Duendes are Filipino folkloric creatures that live under dirt mounds in the forest, often believed to be mischevious spirits—which is why Filipinos say "tabi tabi po" to excuse themselves from disturbing them. By creating miniature bronze sculptures by local artists and hiding them throughout Yerba Buena, we hold space for a multitude of storytelling, create community engagement, and invite people to be present, be curious, and explore.

LOCATION all throughout the campus **AUDIENCE** 

those that live and thrive here those looking to be rooted and inspired those passing through

**ELEMENTS** existing light infrastructure LED lights bronze sculptures





## Alleluia Panis + MC Canlas

Yerba Buena Community Benefits District Scott Rowitz + Constance Cavallas

> Yerba Buena Gardens Festival Marcelo Aviles + Cristina Ibarra

Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy Jill Linwood + Seve Ghose

**Children's Creativity Museum** Carol Tang + Nicki Aquino

YBCA Cary McClelland + Amy Kisch