

Bayview Rise: Art Concept for the Port of San Francisco's Pier 92 Grain Silos
Haddad|Drugan, Artists
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Project Description

Bayview Rise, an illuminated mural for Port Pier 92, weaves together iconic imagery reflecting the Bayview neighborhood's changing economy, ecology, and community. Its large-scale graphics will make its primary images visible from a distance, while views up close will reveal the abstract patterns from which those images are composed. The artwork is conceived as a gateway into Bayview Hunters Point and will be visible and changing from day to night.

The mural is designed by artists Laura Hadadd and Tom Drugan. The mural's graphic imagery is rooted in the Bayview's historic and future conditions, but with an emphasis on elements that float, fly, and rise. The composition creates a spatial illusion in which elements appear to rise up and out from a horizon where water meets land and sky.

Grounding the image is a bottom layer of water, representing both the San Francisco Bay and the past marshlands of Islais Creek. Submerged in the water, as a symbol of the neighborhood's past, is a reference to historic Butchertown. The primary icon rising from the horizon line is a soaring heron, which ties to nearby Heron's Head Park, a successful environmental restoration by the Port. Other imagery represented in the artwork include native cherry plants, shorebirds, and a reference to a quote by community activist Essie Webb who likened Hunters Point to a balloon waiting to be re-inflated. Because so many individual Bayview heroes came to light in the research process, it was impossible to represent just a few and seemed more appropriate to honor all of them with a concept they might all believe in, that of "rise." The images within the mural have been combined, overlapped, and juxtaposed in a triangular matrix so there appear to be metamorphoses between cherries and balloons, water and birds, land and leaves.

At night colored lights will cycle through the colors red, green, and blue, on both the façade and the adjacent silos. Every night the lighting schedule will vary, so that the art is dynamic and always changing its appearance. The lights will cause the mural imagery to change its appearance with changing light colors. An individual light color will cause parts of the mural of that same color to be highlighted while other colors recede into the dark background. As the light colors shift, images will appear to float in and out of the scene. This striking effect will result in the appearance of an animated graphic abstractly representing a neighborhood in transformation, Bayview Rising.

Project Background

Community Outreach: As part of their application for the Pier 92 project, the artist team of Laura Haddad and Tom Drugan, spent considerable time researching and visiting the Bayview Community in the development of their initial concept. In early 2013, after selected for the commission, the artist team researched the history, culture, and future plans for Bayview Hunters Point. They identified stories that could be included in the artwork, ranging from industry to infrastructure to community to ecology, and compiled them in a layered map. In March, 2013 the artists visited San Francisco to present their research and concepts to the Port's Southern Waterfront Advisory Committee (SWAC) at a meeting at the Bayview Opera House. They also spent an afternoon at the Bayview Branch Library, where they met and discussed the project with community stakeholders.

The conversations the artists had with the stakeholders focused on the important features, places, and people of the Bayview, changes the neighborhood has gone through, and hopes for the future. Key stories voiced by participants centered around:

- community activism for social and environmental justice
- restoration of environmentally degraded sites at the PG&E Plant and Naval Shipyard
- repurposing these sites for green open space, community use, and art
- legacy of community activism, including the historic “Big 5” group of women who advocated for better housing and health clinics, and more recently Queseda Gardens Initiative for a healthier landscape
- historic industries including Butchertown, maritime commerce, and farming
- celebrating heroes

As part of the interview process the artists also shared a group of metal tags, each engraved with a word inspired by their research, and asked people to pick the word(s) that most resonated with them. The words that people selected included: faith, hope, participation, struggle, victory, exchange, diversity, now, then, root, **rise**.

While each person emphasized something different about the neighborhood, a common theme emerged. This theme is a consciousness that the Bayview’s rooted history has galvanized the community, but much work continues to both remedy and rise above its past environmental and social injustices. When asked about particular symbols of the neighborhood, all acknowledged the memory of Butchertown, particularly in that the Port’s Pier 92 property is located in its footprint.

The discussion with the Southern Waterfront Advisory Committee generally supported what was learned earlier from the community interviews. That group additionally supported the incorporation of lighting on the grain silos adjacent to the grain elevator façade artwork to extend the art experience to a larger community.

Through these extended conversations, the artists decided to focus on the concept of “**Rise**,” one of the word concepts preferred by community stakeholders, as an inspiration for the iconic imagery that expresses the community’s aspirations and the Bayview’s future.

Artist Selection:

Port and SFAC staff drafted a RFQ to solicit interest from artists. This process is based upon the SFAC established process utilized by the commission for significant public art projects in San Francisco.

A component of the RFQ included the creation of criteria working with various stakeholders to help guide the artists in the development of their concepts. Criteria included that the art should be temporary and last at least 5 years but ideally 10 or more and be reversible; Any proposed lighting should minimize the use and duration of warmer colored lights, which may interfere with bird navigation; the work should be visible from a distance; and the work should recognize the maritime, cultural and natural history of the area.

The RFQ for artists was issued May 4, 2012 and were due on June 29, 2012, it was open to artists residing in the Western United States. A total of 135 applications were received. SFAC staff reviewed the applications and created a short-list of 23 artist candidates to present to a selection panel.

Panel members included:

- Leslie Katz, Port Commissioner
- Gregory Chew, Art Commissioner
- Leigh Markopoulos, Chair of the Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice, California College of the Arts
- Sophie Maxwell, former Supervisor and Community Representative
- Julio Cesar Morales, Artist, Co-Founder of Queens Nails Annex, Adjunct Curator at YBCA
- Byron A. Rhett, Deputy Director, Planning & Development, Port San Francisco
- Mary Rubin, Senior Project Manager, San Jose Public Art Program

Panelist reviewed each of the 23 screened candidates, discussed the strengths and weaknesses and then scored each respondent. Four artists (including teams) scored highest and were invited to create site specific concepts for the project. The four artists included: 1) The team of Ball and Nogues Studio; 2) the team of Laura Haddad and Tom Drugan; 3) Rigo 23; and 4) Cameron McNall.

After the four artists were invited to advance in the process, a site tour and orientation were given to the artists, each artist was given a stipend and 75 days to create a site specific proposal.

Artists were required to submit a single 24" x 36" graphic that represented and explained their concept. These graphics were displayed at the Bayview Opera House for Public Comment for two weeks. In addition, the concepts were posted (and noticed through various e-mail and community distributions) on the Port's and SFAC's web site for public review and comment.

On January 25, 2013 the selection panel reconvened and the artists presented their concepts for review, question and comments. After all the artists presented their proposals, SFAC staff reviewed the public comments received. The selection panel then scored each artist proposal. The team of Laura Haddad and Tom Drugan and their proposal was ranked the highest and they were selected for this the project opportunity.

The strengths of the Haddad and Drugan proposal are summarized by: appropriate scale of work; understanding of the site's cultural and natural history; understanding of community; and the desire to work with community and staff to refine the design concept.