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HEART OF THE CITY: Patricia Araujo and Mark Ellinger

North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District Corporation

134 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102

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**HEART OF THE CITY / Soma Seen
By Wilma Parker, Reviewer at Large**

Seen can be deceiving. On the face of it, Patricia Araujo has all the qualifications to be the next Miss America, or the face of Chanel. Yet she chooses to work as a free lance artist responding to subjects located in one of the two grittiest neighborhoods in Northern California. Mark Ellinger comes off as a well educated country squire or the Dean of an exclusive Connecticut boy's school, yet he has spent his life on the streets, as an observer photographer involved in rough local politics. Nor are they part of the usual self-inebriated band of rattle-tattle street brigands, a backpack here, a skateboard there, here a shopping cart, there some Art Povera, some Mertz and Found Objects usually found having free shows in nonprofit spaces. They sing. They soar. Their execution is professional, expensive, nailed and clean, as once were the buildings they celebrate. They are graduates of top schools. Patricia holds two BFA Degrees, one in Painting and Photography from Notre Dame de Namur, a second BFA, concentrated in Painting, from the San Francisco Art Institute. Mark also studied painting, filmmaking, sound arts, and writing music while at the Art Institute. They have the study of photography in common, which is one of the reasons they hang so well together. Their subjects are the same, just filtered through two distinct personalities.

There is a small room that comes first to hand upon entering the show, and this is where the collaboration comes off at its strongest. The small glowing space is aptly called the Golden Gate Room. Mark's three giclee prints, Tenderloin Sunrise, 13x17", Golden Gate Theater, 13x17", and Empty Buildings, 13x19", engage the viewer with their evocative Tonalist qualities, mysterious, clean, well ordered in their compositional qualities. The familiar in a new light shocks us, because we have all walked these streets, but the grit has gotten us down, literally. Few have looked up at the sky, as Mark has done. Golden Gate Theater in particular draws you in with its welcoming glow, perhaps in anticipation of Opening Night. Yet the sky is still blue.



Photo above: Empty Buildings, by Mark Ellinger



Photo above: Tenderloin Sunrise, by Mark Ellinger

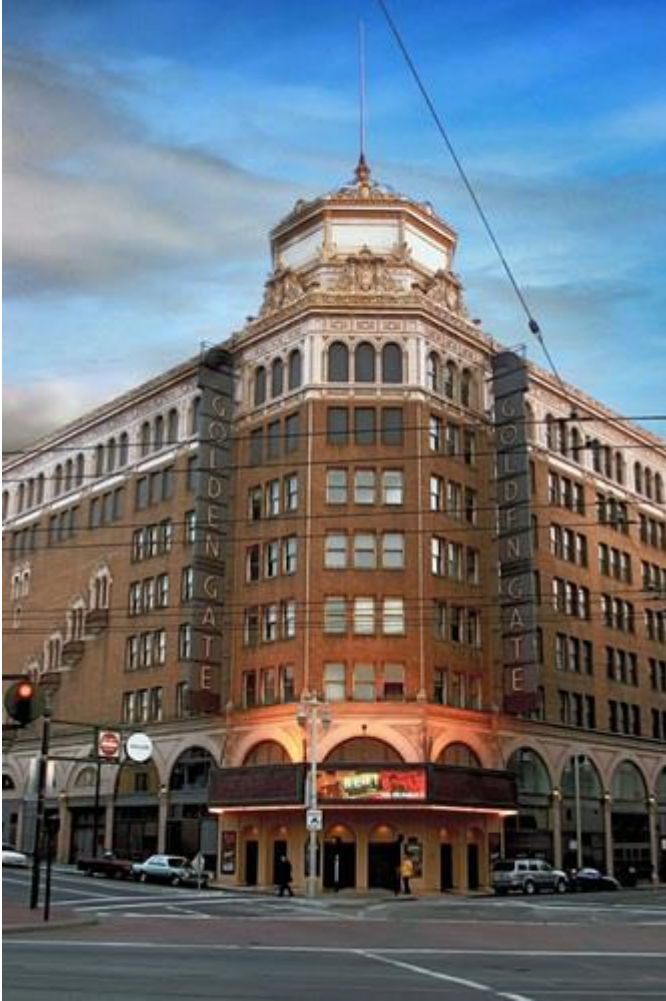


Photo above: Golden Gate Theatre, by Mark Ellinger

Words are important to both of these most verbal artists. Mark has waited for months, perhaps, for the exact moment when the Marquee would say RENT. A subject uppermost on the minds of all San Franciscans, especially those at the Housing Clinic. Multiple meanings: rent the musical, rent the worry, or are these buildings, so underused and seemingly abandoned, perhaps for rent? Patricia's lipstick-glossy A New Day, 6th and Market, shows the same Golden Gate Theater, but now transformed into pure geometry and solid space, the tonality taking you off the mean grey fog-bound streets abandoned even by sailors into the cleanest of deep blue tangerine atmospheres reminiscent of a day at the Taj Mahal. Perhaps that is where all our sailors went. Mark's fourth print in the Golden Gate Room also uses carefully culled and placed text, "keep right" (multiple meanings), "Broadway is Magic", and the enigmatic "Te".



Photo above: A New Day: 6th and Market, (oil on panel), by Patricia Araujo

The main room, because of its sheer size, multiple uses, and overwhelming ceiling beams works less well for the collaboration, especially for Mark, who has to compete with the fenestration rhythm of many small windows and doors. It is in this room that Patricia can flex her mural muscle, and show that she can command large-scale color and composition. Like Mark, she continues to play with text. Metamorphosis II, 48x68”, is a strong set of forms that crackle as they slash into each other. Under the well-known Emporium Dome floats a sign—Sheedy, a famous San Francisco construction icon. It instantly refers us back to the city, to construction, redevelopment. But at blurry first glance it could say “seedy”. Or is it an even more scatological reference to city construction standards. All the more powerful criticism, coming from the face of Chanel!



Photo above: Metamorphosis II, (oil on canvas), by Patricia Araujo

Patricia's oracularly titled Hibernia Meets Furniture and Carpets, and New Hibernia, both large for this show at 36"x48", are early Flemish in finish and perfection of execution. These dreamlike, hypnotic and radiant paintings convey a sense of the sublime and religious rarely seen since Gerard David painted his Archangel Gabriel in the fifteenth century. Patricia has written before of her interest in sacred spaces. Now we see what that can mean. These particular paintings would not be out of place in the Metropolitan's early Italian collection, say next to Fra Angelico. And all in the Tenderloin/South of Market!



Photo above: Hibernia meets Furniture and Carpets, (oil on canvas), by Patricia Araujo



Photo above: New Hibernia, (oil on panel), by Patricia Araujo

It is to be hoped that these works and these artists will sometime emerge from this cozy cocoon in the basement and into the mainstream of a Modern Art venue. Is this possible for San Francisco Tenderloin artists? This is Big Museum stuff, and both artists have all the prerequisite experience. Both artists have planned that their new books would come out at this opening, and be available during the show. Patricia's Soma Seen, and Mark's Up from the Deep: The Hotel Project Part Two: Mid-Market Street are by Blurb Creative Publishing. We hope to see them for sale around town soon, perhaps at the San Francisco Historical Society's bookshop on Mission Street near SFMOMA, and also at the SFMOMA bookstore. They would make valuable additions to each bookstore.

The show is up until January 15, (and has extended its duration through April 15th!), at the North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District office, 134 Golden Gate Avenue, just across the street from St Boniface Church. Visiting hours are Fridays from 2-5PM, or by special appointment by calling (415) 440-7570.

Patricia's book, SOMA SEEN is available on the internet, and from Patricia at www.AbstractMetropolis.com

Mark Ellinger's book can be acquired by going to his website @ <http://upfromthedeep.wordpress.com>. Both are worth having, for anyone interested in art, or the Architectural history of this unique and historic San Francisco neighborhood. A reference book on both counts.