

Dear San Francisco Art Commissioners

We have concerns about the relocation of the Chinatown Public Health Center-Dragon currently at the east entrance of the Broadway Tunnel onto the future remodeled Chinatown Public Health Center (CPHC).

We advise **AGAINST** its installation onto the planned renovated CPHC, based on the proposed sites of installation. We have patient privacy, pedestrian safety, building safety, building efficiency, and custodial concerns.

1. Side of the Building Placement Concerns

(a) Patient Privacy (Prominent artwork should not be displayed near the entrances of medical and mental health clinics.)

Coming, and going, the **Powell/Mason Cable Car** runs directly in front of the health center. Placement of the dragon--- or placement of any prominent artwork---will bring out the cameras and videocams as each cable car passes by. In so doing, not only will the dragon be photographed, but also that of staff, patients, and their families in the background.

Of note, there will be a behavioral-mental health clinic for children and adolescents, *Chinatown Child Development Center*, moving into the health center. Strong efforts are needed to protect the privacy of clinicians, staff, patients, and families attending this clinic.

(b) Pedestrian Safety (Prominent artwork should not be displayed near right-turn intersections.)

Placement of the dragon, or any prominent artwork, on the side of the building will bring visitors to look closely at the artwork. Many will stand on the **narrow sidewalk**, or on the **alleyway** itself to take photos, or even take group photos---not realizing the dangers of cars making a **right-turn** in their direction. Drivers may also not be able to see the pedestrians before turning.

(c) Custodial Concerns (Prominent artwork displayed near public buildings will draw onlookers and increase use of the building facilities.)

As a public building, visitors will walk in to use the restrooms. There may be more sidewalk litter. There may be people congregating, posing for photos, being a nuisance, causing a distraction. Additional time and effort may be needed to monitor inside and outside the building.

2. Rooftop Placement Concerns

(a) Future Wind Conditions and Earthquakes Concerns

This past winter, in the nearby financial district, windows were flying off buildings. With climate change, future wind conditions may intensify. There already is a high risk for a strong earthquake in the Bay Area. Placement of any additional non-essential structure on the rooftop adds an unnecessary safety risk.

(b) A Dark Silhouette – Ominous

Placement on the rooftop, even if painted gold, would still have **dark silhouette** when the sun is behind it: during late afternoon, sunset hours, or on cloudy days. The dragon then, may give an unlucky **ominous** appearance.

(c) Solar Panels Concerns

Placement on the rooftop, facing east, will decrease the efficiency of the **roof's solar panels**--- during the morning hours, especially during the winter months. The dragon and solar panels may also be competing for the limited available **space** on the roof.

3. Other Concerns

(a) Who will maintain the dragon artwork?

In the past, dust and bird droppings collected on the dragon at the health center for decades. No one took **responsibility** for maintaining it.

If placed at the renovated health center, who will be responsible for maintaining the dragon?

Will placement of bird repellent spike wires be needed on the dragon?

History suggests no one will take responsibility.

Without periodic maintenance, the dragon will may become an eyesore, contributing to an early deterioration of the building's appearance.

(b) Greatest concern: Opportunity to discuss Alternative Sites

Our **greatest concern** it that there has been little opportunity to discuss alternative options for the dragon, other than where to place it at the Health Center.

Our **greatest concern** is that without discussion of alternative sites, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity will be missed--- to place it where it can have the most positive affect for tourists, the community, the artist, and for the dragon. (In fact, we may have identified such a site.)

See Attachment: *Attraction Distraction v7 .PDF*

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CPHC = Chinatown Public Health Center

CCDC = Chinatown Child Development Center

The Dragon at CPHC

We have many concerns about plans to transfer the **Dragon**, currently at the east entrance of the Broadway Tunnel onto the future remodeled Chinatown Public Health Center (CPHC).

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We have patient privacy, pedestrian safety, building safety, building efficiency, and custodial concerns.

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Of note, there will be a behavioral-mental health clinic for children and adolescents, *Chinatown Child Development Center*, moving into the health center. Strong efforts are needed to protect the privacy of clinicians staffing, patients, and families using this clinic.

b) Pedestrian Safety (Prominent artwork should not be displayed near right-turn intersections.)

Placement of the dragon, or any prominent artwork, on the side of the building will bring visitors to look closely at the artwork. Many will stand on the **narrow sidewalk**, or on the **alleyway** itself to take photos, or even take group photos---not realizing the dangers of cars making a **right-turn** in their direction. Drivers may also not be able to see the pedestrians before turning.

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2. Rooftop Concerns

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This past winter, in the nearby financial district, windows were flying off. With climate change, future wind conditions may intensify. There already is a high risk for a strong earthquake in the Bay Area. Placement of any additional non-essential structure on the rooftop adds an unnecessary safety risk.

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Placement on the rooftop, even if painted gold, would still have **dark silhouette** when the sun is behind it: during late afternoon, sunset hours, or on cloudy days. The dragon then, may give an unlucky **ominous** appearance.

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Placement on the rooftop, facing east, will decrease the efficiency of the **roof's solar panels**--- during the morning hours, especially during the winter months. The BTD and solar panels may also be competing for the limited available **space** on the roof.

3. General Concerns

a) Who will maintain the dragon artwork?

In the past, dust and bird droppings collected on the dragon the health center for decades. No one took **responsibility** for maintaining it.

If placed at the renovated health center, who will be responsible for maintaining the dragon?

History suggests no one will take responsibility.

Without periodic maintenance, the dragon will become an eyesore, contributing to an early deterioration of the appearance of the building.

b) Greatest Concern---Opportunity to discuss Alternative Sites

Our **greatest concern** is that there has been little opportunity to discuss alternative options for the dragon, other than where to place it at the Health Center.

Our **greatest concern** is that without discussion of alternative sites, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity will be missed--- to place it where it can have the most positive affect for tourists, the community, the artist, and for the dragon. (In fact, we may have identified such a site.)

(A) Side of the Building Concerns

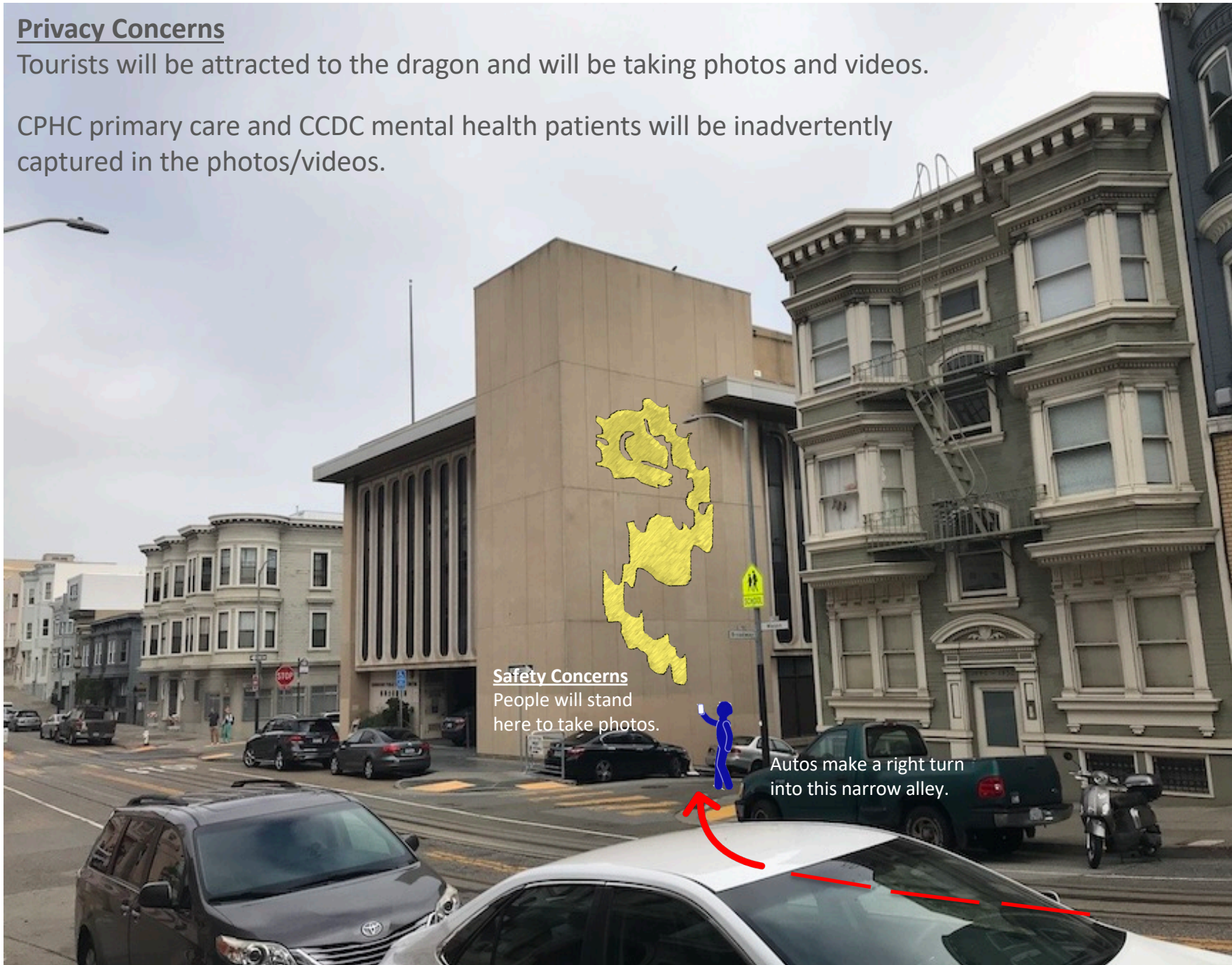
Architect's Model: Side of Building



Privacy Concerns

Tourists will be attracted to the dragon and will be taking photos and videos.

CPHC primary care and CCDC mental health patients will be inadvertently captured in the photos/videos.



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Autos making a right turn into this narrow alley may endanger people gathering to take photos.

Safety Concerns

Privacy Concerns

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(B) Rooftop Concerns

Architect's Model: Rooftop, facing east towards the bay.



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With climate change, future **wind conditions** may intensify. There already is a high risk for a strong **earthquake** in the for Bay Area. Placement of any large art structure on the roof adds an unnecessary safety risk.

Autos make a right turn into this narrow alley.



Placement on the rooftop, even if painted gold, would have a dark silhouette when the sun is behind it, during late afternoon, sunset hours, or on cloudy days. The dragon then, may have an unlucky ominous appearance.



Autos make a right turn into this narrow alley.



The dragon sculpture and solar panels will be competing for the limited available space.



Facing East, the BTM may decrease the efficiency of the rooftop solar panels--- in the morning hours, especially during the winter months.



Safety Concerns

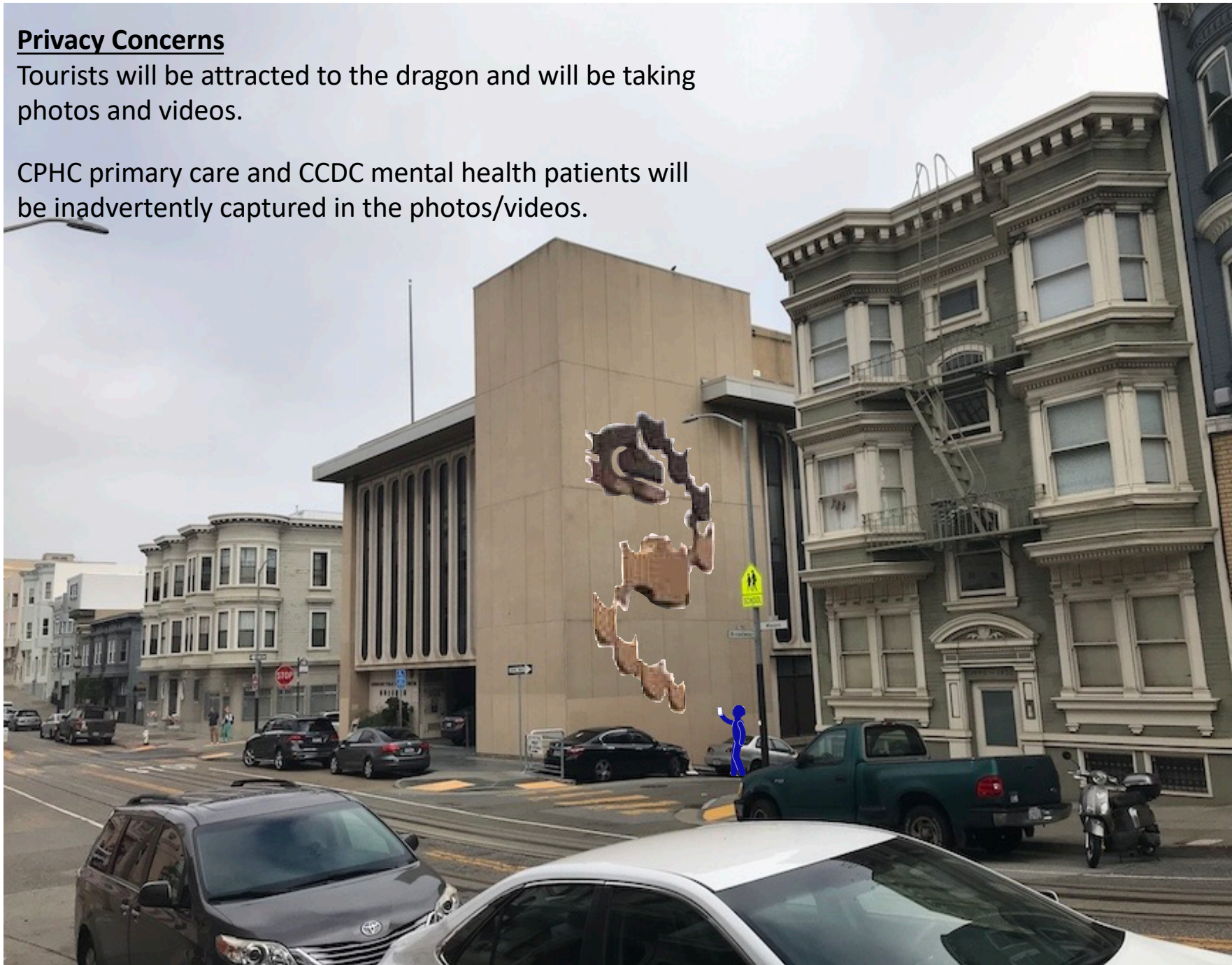
There will always be "that guy" wanting to take a skyward photo under the dragon in the middle meridian.



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OPINION- 'DRAGON RELIEF'

Understanding

Original landmark dragon sculpture, previously titled simply "Dragon Relief" by the deceased San Francisco-born artist Patti Bowler, 1969, is effectively an architectural frieze. This is typically defined as an ornamental band, often decorated with relief sculpture, incorporated with the exterior of buildings that typically run along the top of a wall or elsewhere around the exterior of a building. It generally contributes to the overall aesthetic and storytelling of that building.

The current "Dragon Relief" frieze integrates the opaque exterior building material (precast-concrete cladding) as a background framework, from which the relief is represented by metal shapes there resemble a dragon. The sculpture creates the illusion of the dragon moving in/out of the opaque precast concrete building material. This setting for the historical dragon sculpture is both quietly restrained and understated in its location above the Broadway tunnel entrance, standing as a stoic sort of guardian.

The "Dragon Relief" sculpture is currently designated as a vital and valued part of the SF Civic Art Collection, being one of the first public artworks to have resulted from the city's Art Enrichment Ordinance

Current Proposals

Tuesday, October 31, 2023

Current proposals for the original “Dragon Relief” sculpture envision re-cycling parts of the original dragon sculpture. Only fragments or relief components, of the original sculpture are to be adapted to new locations and the sculpture is thus ‘re-imagined’. Either as a “kite” that flies above the building above the roof on the east, or recomposed in a dynamic vertical composition near the western entrance. The “kite” version jettisons or edits out the companion part of the original sculpture, that being the integral solid background of the existing building architecture itself. Whereas, missing in the ‘re-composed’ option on the west, is the linear solid panel backing from which the relief emerges, to complete the architectural frieze.

In both cases, reinterpretations become loud symbolic ‘billboard’ expressions for the entire Chinatown community as a district vs a low-level subdued announcement above the tunnel entry.

Opinion

The new proposals that re-interpret the original artistic “Dragon Relief” sculpture fall short of both relevance for the new modern architecture of the building, as well as, an expression suitable for the Chinatown community today. Following are significant considerations:

1. the SF ARTS commission, per their mission, is to be a champion for the Arts & Artists. That implies a duty to safeguard (as in preserving copyright) the authentic legacy of an artist’s work (either living or deceased) to safeguard against any other party exerting creative license with another artist’s original artwork?

I do not support the rooftop ‘re-use ’or ‘re-cycling ’of any pre-

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existing art work or installation, attributed to another artist, for this project.

2. Another concern arises regarding the possibility of legal restrictions at play here as well per SFAC policy guideline: **4. 3. 4. Ineligible Applicants:- City staff are not eligible for consideration for public art commissions?** Does that not legally provide restrictions governing SFDPW's artistic role vs a commissioned artist to put forth artistic recommendations

3. Following are some specific concerns:

1. **Aesthetic Dissonance:** Large-scale sculptures philosophically clash with the modernist architectural style of a building. It disrupts the harmony and coherence of the overall design.
2. **Cultural Sensitivity:** The decision to 're-use 'or 're-cycling' parts of the earlier sculpture results in culturally insensitivity. What some groups find inspiring or meaningful do not resonate with others, thereby creating division or controversy within the community.
3. **Cultural Sensitivity, Expression and Identity:** Public art is a potent medium for expressing and celebrating cultural identities that reflect the values, histories, and aspirations of a community or a society at large. By virtue of the Chinatown community being conflicted and undecided regarding approval of the re-interpreted "Dragon Relief" sculpture has confirmed that there is a 'Lack of Representation '(sans a majority or unanimous support). Not all members of the community identify with or adhere to the chosen signs or symbols. The decision by an external authority to impose signs/symbols through sculpture in architecture in such a community is both

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forced and inappropriate.

4. **Diverging Artistic Interpretations:** Art is typically subjective, and what one person sees as a powerful statement might be interpreted differently by someone else. This subjectivity has led to differing opinions stalemated about the value and relevance of the sculpture.
5. **Timelessness and Trends:** Modern architecture often seeks timelessness, aiming to transcend transient stylistic trends. Decorative sculpture can be subject to shifting tastes and might not stand the test of time in the same way that minimalist, functional designs can.

RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, I do not support the rooftop 're-use' or 're-cycling' of any pre-existing art work or installation, using large-scale sculpture on buildings in Chinatown.

Please consider that it may be more appropriate to locate the Dragon off-site as an historic exhibit with a historical plaque?

With regard to an Architectural standpoint, the Dragon Sculpture is no longer applicable to a new modernist building design. Notwithstanding, the original Art deserves to be both appreciated as an important Art piece within the City, either in a park or donated to the Asian Art Museum. Fortunately there are many more appropriate options available be explored that continues our collective support for both Artist and the Arts!



November 14, 2023

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of the organizations below, we wanted to express our disappointment on the “Dragon Relief” community process. **Additionally, we wanted to affirm one of the proposals to remove the sculpture from the building completely, rather than relocating it onto the building.**

Historical and institutional exclusion is harmful. Currently, there are only a few Asian American artists in the SFAC public art collection whose work exists in an outdoor, public space in Chinatown out of the hundred or so in the collection. The opportunity to reconsider the large-scale “Dragon Relief” presents a critical moment for representation, identity and pride.

“**Dragon Relief**” by Patti Bowler does not inspire community pride, does not have a foundation in community process, and holds little value toward community health and wellness. We urge the City, San Francisco Arts Commission, and InterEthnica, and the architects to reconsider the community process and the artwork itself.

Our comments are as follows:

1) Community outreach process should be empowering—not performative. We are disappointed that the City kept ignoring public feedback and lacks sincerity in listening to the community. For instance:

1. **The survey outreach has been insufficient.** Many community members did not receive the survey released August 30 on the future of the “Dragon Relief” sculpture, including key stakeholders: API Council, NICOS, and Chinatown Public Health Center staff.
2. **The survey and public listening session lacked key background information on the artwork** that could have empowered the community to make informed decisions.
3. **The survey is biased and misleading.** The option for removal was placed toward the end of the survey, after a long series of questions on its relocation on the building itself.

Considering the amount of negative community feedback there has been around the sculpture, removal of the sculpture must be considered.

2) The community should not foot the bill to “tolerate” or “store” an artwork that doesn’t represent the community. It perpetuates generational harm to make the community choose between budget and overdue representation.

3) The sculpture should be removed, and the responsibility should fall on the City to develop a process for determining its new location: The city needs to take ownership of this public process rather than the (largely uncompensated) community taking on additional labor.

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you reconsider the process for the “Dragon Relief” with the recommendations above. Thank you for accepting this letter and your time.

Sincerely,

**Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco
Chinatown Community Development Center
SRO Families United Collaborative
Self-Help for the Elderly
Community Tenants Association
Ping Yuen Residents Improvement Association
API Council**

**Community Demands an Equitable Process for the Chinatown Health Center
Dragon Sculpture "Dragon Relief"**

社區訴求：重新考慮華埠公共衛生局外“龍浮雕”（Dragon Relief）”雕塑的投選過程”

The community urges the SF Arts Commission to reconsider the process for the "Dragon Relief" to one that is more empowering of the community and allows for the opportunity to highlight Asian American artists and art.

社區人士希望三藩市藝術委員會（SFAC）重新考慮“龍浮雕”的投選過程，以確保過程對社區公平且充分支持亞裔藝術家和藝術。

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