

**San Francisco Arts Commission**

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City and County of San Francisco

February 21, 2018

**Arts Commission Staff Report – Historic Preservation Commission Hearing on the Certificate of Appropriateness for the removal of the “Early Days” sculpture from the *Pioneer Monument***

- The “Early Days” sculpture grouping has been a longstanding point of concern for the community. Extensive debate occurred at the Arts Commission as well as the Planning Commission back in 1990-1996 when the Pioneer Monument was relocated to its current site in order to make way for the construction of the New Main Library. The consensus solution at that time was to install bronze plaques at the site contextualizing the monument as a whole and providing the public with a perspective of the devastating effect that the arrival of the first Europeans to California had on the resident Native Americans. At that point, Fulton Street between Larkin and Hyde was intended to become a pedestrian plaza, and the plaques were located with the intent they be easily approachable by the public.
- In August 2017, almost immediately following the events in Charlottesville, North Carolina surrounding the removal of a monument to Confederate general Robert E. Lee, the Arts Commission began receiving renewed requests from the public to remove the “Early Days” sculpture from the *Pioneer Monument*.
  - At the core of the repeated requests for removal is the allegorical sculpture’s depiction of the degradation and genocide of Native American peoples, utilizing visual stereotypes common at the turn of the twentieth century to depict all Native Americans which are now universally viewed as disrespectful, misleading, and racist.
- On October 2, 2017 at a Meeting of the full Arts Commission, Commissioners received significant public comment in support of the removal of the sculpture, as well as a few dissenting opinions. Commissioners voted unanimously to pass Resolution No. 1002-17-251, requiring staff to initiate the review process described in Section 7 of the guidelines of the Civic Art Collection of the City and County of San Francisco in order for the Commission to consider removal of the “Early Days” sculptural group of the *Pioneer Monument*. For reference, these policies and procedures are included in the last pages of the Case Report you have before you.

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- The late Mayor Lee, Supervisor Kim, and Mayor Farrell are on record as supporting the call for removal of the sculpture from public view.
  - Should the Historic Preservation Commission approve the Certificate of Appropriateness, the next step will be to bring the removal of the sculpture back to the full Arts Commission for final resolution.
- As a function of the removal process, the sculpture will be cleaned and prepared for long term storage by conservation professionals adhering to the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice set forth by the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. The granite plinth beneath the sculpture will be repaired to the extent that no openings from the former connection points for the sculpture will remain on the horizontal surface that could compromise the granite elements over time. Materials utilized will be specified by qualified professionals in historic preservation and work will be executed by firms with previous experience with historic monuments. No material will be destroyed as a function of this project. The sculpture will be crated and placed in long term, secure, fine art storage.