Minna Natoma Art Corridor Explanatory Document

In partnership with Public Works, the vision for this project is to transform Minna and Natoma Streets into a unique pedestrian destination by integrating a variety of artists’ designs into the streetscape paving pattern in concert with a series of sculptural street furniture elements such as seating, bollards and bicycle racks. With the underlying belief that artists bring a unique and original perspective to design, the Minna-Natoma Art Corridor is a synergistic collaboration, taking advantage of needed streetscape improvements and the expertise and talent of artists to beautify and energize the alleyways.

PROJECT GOALS
● Create a new visual identity for Natoma and Minna Streets through artist involvement in the design of the streetscape, including paving, lighting, landscaping, and wayfinding.
● Make the Minna-Natoma corridor a “hidden gem” pedestrian destination that pulls people to and from the Transbay Terminal and Yerba Buena Gardens and SFMOMA, and through the passageway between Howard and Natoma Streets, adjacent to SFMOMA.
● Engage artists of local, national, and international renown to create projects that respond to site-specific needs and opportunities.
● Prioritize diversity among artists, elevating typically underrepresented voices in public art projects.
● Maintain visual cohesion within the neighborhood with seamless integration of art into streetscape improvements and the surrounding context.
● Support the various goals, policies, and implementation strategies articulated in:
  ● The South Downtown Design and Activation Plan
  ● Transit Center District Plan
  ● SFMOMA Expansion Plan
  ● YBCBD Street Life Plan

PROJECT SITE
Minna Street from the Salesforce Transit Center to Third Street
Natoma Street from the Salesforce Transit Center to SFMOMA
Located within the SOMA Pilipinas Cultural District.

BACKGROUND
The Arts Commission conducted a public competition resulting in the selection of 13 finalists who were invited to develop an original design proposal for one of the two project categories of either street paving design or sculptural street furniture. There are five finalists for the sculptural street furniture and eight finalists for the street paving. Of the 13 finalists, five artists will be awarded commissions to develop unique designs for the paving and sculptural street furniture.

Public Works will integrate the artists’ designs in their construction documents for Minna-Natoma Art Corridor, which will be publicly bid and built or fabricated by a general contractor. The five artists will work closely with the Arts Commission and Public Works to further develop their designs, review the selection of materials to be used in the implementation of their project and to inspect and approve actual mock ups and the finished construction.
PARTNERS
The Minna-Natoma Art Corridor project brings together a diverse team of stakeholders to transform Minna and Natoma Streets into a pedestrian destination that combines infrastructural upgrades and public art interventions. This project is a partnership between the City, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and the Yerba Buena Community Benefit District (YBCBD). City departments include San Francisco Public Works (Public Works), the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), the San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC), and the San Francisco Planning Department (Planning).

Selection Panel:
Commissioner Suzie Ferras,
Joseph Becker, Curator, SFMOMA
Dena Berd, Director of The Lab
Maria Jenson, Director, SOMART Cultural Center
PJ Policarpio, Independent Curator and Staff member at Fine Arts Museums SF
Denny Phan, Project Manager, Minna Natoma Streetscape Project, Public Works with Nicholas Ancel, Landscape Architecture, Public Works
Advisor to Panel: Constance Cavallos, Yerba Buena Community Benefit District

Proposals were submitted by 13 finalists out of which the following five artists were recommended for these two project categories.
Sculptural Street Furniture: Masako Miki and Jesse Schlesinger. Each artist shall be paid a fee of $35,000.
Street Paving Design: Muzae Sesay for Natoma for a fee of $30,000
Barbara Stauffacher Solomon and Mel Vera Cruz. One artist to be assigned a single block of Minna Street that is 480 feet long for a fee of $35,000 and the other to be assigned two blocks of Minna Street that are approximately 160 feet long for a fee of $30,000.

Kelly Ording was selected as an alternate for either street
LISTENING SKY, SEA AND LAND

Seating that references boulders and the sea, inspired by Philippine mythology. Both bronze and concrete are presented as options with several color examples. The playful amorphous shapes and colors provide a sense of movement and invite interaction. By referencing mythologies, my intention is to remind us of our lineage, history, past contributions, and our continued existence in the community.
**Animated Sun, Moon, and Stars**

Two configurations of bollards, based on Philippine mythologies. The shapes represent the sun, moon, and stars. Both bronze and concrete are presented as options with several color examples. The curvilinear shapes and colors provide a sense of movement and invite interaction. By referencing mythologies, my intention is to remind us of our lineage, history, past contributions, and our continued existence in the community.
Connecting Shapeshifter

Bike rack inspired by the idea of collaboration and connection. Shapeshifters represent the idea of new self-identity. Both bronze and concrete are presented as options in a solid color. The extended hand motif provides a sense of continuity and playfulness.
Art Proposal for the Minna Natoma Art Corridor Street Furniture Project
Jesse Schlesinger

The San Francisco skyline, characterized by towering buildings and bridges, is also defined by its singular natural surroundings: Mt Tamalpais, the bay shoreline, the very hills of the city. The grandeur of these natural elements exemplifies this place. Visitors to the Minna Natoma Art Corridor navigate busy streets lined with historic structures, an urban setting in marked contrast to the enduring dramatic presence of the surrounding landscape. The natural resources of this area have had a fundamental role in making the city, and the Minna Natoma Art Corridor, what they are today. The proposed works, consisting of seating, bollards, and sculptures, intend to bring this natural presence to the foreground, working in dialogue with existing plantings and trees to create a bright and visually engaging pedestrian playscape. These artworks will soften and enrich the experience of this corridor, and serve as both a destination and link between the green-space atop the Transbay terminal and that of Yerba Buena Gardens, connecting the transportation hub with the cultural centers.

Appropriate to the urban context, materials will be resilient, durable, and repairable where relevant. Material viability will be determined in conversation with Public Works, YBCBD, and Friends of the Urban Forest, and may include cast metals, stainless sheet metal, stone, concrete, salvaged old growth redwood, and cast glass.
The street design concepts should be useful. MINNA is spelled out in vermilion and white letters of my design, naming the road. My red boots act as arrows delineating the direction of the one way street.

MINNA is spelled out in my BSS Alphabet. I designed these letters to be as simple as possible.

These proposals are based on diagrams and photographs, not reality. I would adapt them to street as appropriate.
My name is Mel Vera Cruz. I am a Cultural Worker for more than two decades working with different groups within the Filipino community. My designs are mainly Homages to my people with Inclusion and Diversity in mind.

Philippines have been here in the United States since October 18, 1587 brought by the Spanish Galleon Tocfo but I feel we are still invisible and under represented so I made a goal to dedicate my Art to make our presence be known. This isn’t about racism but about justification of what I feel the community really deserves.

The South of Market was populated by Filipino Americans before it got gentrified. The scope of their presence reached across Market Street, up to Chinatown but I never see any trace of what have been. This opportunity will change that so I thank all the people who have the vision to make this a possibility.

I work as a Graphic Designer for the California Department of Transportation for more than 10 years and have worked directly with Highway Engineers, Landscape Designers and Public Information Officers so I know a thing about Road Construction, its process and limitations because this is my day job.

I came in the United States in 1995 at 31 years old so I’m a World Citizen because I’m an immigrant. The United States is a country built by immigrants like me and I am honored to be part of it. My concepts are all inclusive not only because of the reasons I stated above but hospitality is part of mine and the Filipino Culture.

These designs are bonds to Integrate not to Separate because Diversity and Inclusion are main features of a city like San Francisco.

I got excited about the design possibilities but I removed them down and divided them into three concepts. Here they are.

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**1 BANIG**

The BANIG represents the 3 regions of the Philippines, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao because it is woven throughout the country. It is usually recognized by all Filipinos because they wear it on one way or the other. It is a kind of sleeping mat made out of usually Buri (palm leaves) as you can see in the pictures on the left. This is where I patterned this design.

It is a kind of weaving so it symbolizes integration. Every Filipino will give their own spin, in this case their motifs just to make their guests feel comfortable so the Bani is like saying You are Welcome. I understand the pride of Filipinos if this happens because it will make them feel at home. It will give them back their heritage in this city. It’s basically made out of natural fibers and that’s why I used vectors instead of gradients. It’s easier to adjust to specifications when needed.

The design is basically a side so I avoided gradients but it doesn’t mean it has to be aesthetically inferior. I used the eye dropper in Illustrator to get the color from the Duratherm palette but I know them as other kind of construction process. I also understand this design does not totally meet the space, each motif has its own needs and that’s why I used vectors instead of gradients. It’s easier to adjust to specifications when needed.

The design I understand this kind of process will have a lot of limits due to the material being used.

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**2 HABLON**

"Habal" originated from the word halat, which means hand-woven. Halat is typically used to make traditional parolling (skirts), barong tagalog, sari, and barong. Also see example on the right.

I chose this pattern as design to represent the Filipino Americans because of its neutrality. This pattern may be recognizable to Filipinos but the squares and rectangles represent anyone and anything. I chose this among other native designs from the Philippines because it is aesthetically pleasing for everyone. It is significant because San Francisco thrives on diversity.

I made two versions, one with the Outlines showing other possibilities to accommodate the Duratherm process.

I appreciate and would like to emphasize the inclusion of CHINATOWN Filipinos in this process because as a Filipino immigrant, I feel we are under represented. This is a great opportunity for Filipino Americans to integrate in the presence of the city of San Francisco and have that sense of ownership that they deserve.

I chose the design thinking of construction limitations too without sacrificing the aesthetic side. They are flat and repetitive for easier application. The patterns are usually adjustable to accommodate the requirements on all sides.

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**3 THE SUN**

This design was based on our Sun. Just like Gold, our Sun went to the process of the elements to reach its current state. Humans have 5 limbs, 5 senses, 5 fingers, most flowers have 5 petals and I believe they are all synthesized and happened for a reason.

In the collective mind, I have read that the number five represents Life. It represents the four elements plus spirit which controls everything. It made sense to me because it’s simplicity is like the Lotus flower, it starts from Mud (Earth) then the stem goes through Water then from water, it goes up to air and blooms towards the Sun (Fire).

I believe this is universal. Everyone and everything goes through this simple process so I patterned this design on this idea because it symbolizes All of Us. I believe inclusion is one of the important things in this project so I always make it a point to make my designs appeal to everyone.

The concept is synonymous with the Golden State. It is aligned with nature and the beliefs of the indigenous people who were here first but it will also resonate with everyone with a twist for Filipino Americans because I used the Sun graphic from the Philippine flag towards the end of the design.

I did this design with Duratherm process in mind so I used their color palette and used filled lines combined with custom and existing template shapes that represent, one photo shows from left to right - Earth, Noise, Air, Fire and the Sun which symbolize our spirit. The backgrounds of the design changes and those symbols represent the Elements in its same color.

I’d like people walking from the terminal towards the museums walk through and experience this process.
EXPLORING TOGETHER

“Exploring Together” is a unique streetscape design that celebrates Filipino heritage while also touching on regionally-specific themes.

The colors of the water in the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean often show up in my work, as well as the iconic sailboats dotting the Bay. For me, the boat is a symbol of a journey, freedom and the ability to change the course of one’s life. Similarly, boats play an essential role in traditional Filipino life. Boats are vessels that can travel between the hundreds of islands, explore the Archipelago, and are used for fishing and recreation. The Balingasay is the oldest water vessel in the Filipino Archipelago. It is “an integral aspect of the indigenous Filipino spirituality.” Its purpose extends beyond the practical to that of ritual, “a vessel to the realm of the spirit.” The boat is a symbol of the diaspora of Filipinos and is equally so prevalent in the Bay Area. Sailboats can be seen everyday in the Bay, a culture of sailing that dates back to the Oriente/Sulu boats that cruised throughout the Bay. Those commonalities are the basis for my design. We are all traveling through life, over land and over sea, and ultimately finding a home together.

The streetscape mural design also shows the rising (or setting) sun, fog, and the lunar cycle. These natural forces tie us all together as people, the human experience determined by our surroundings. The sun design is unabashedly California-esque, with its gradients of yellow over the blue of the water. Fog is an also an iconic presence in San Francisco, a weather pattern experienced by everyone who lives and works here. The fog design in “Exploring Together” is based on Orlone baskets and weavings, an homage to the Okinawa Nation. This mural design considers the many layers of local history, its many people, cultures, and ecologies.

The mural design’s moon phases indicate the lunar cycles that influence the tides; the moon a well-known acquaintance for the sailor. The phases of the moon in this design are depicted in colorful tones that allude to the City’s colorful mix of ethnicities, ideas, and histories.

As a pedestrian enters the streetscape, they first encounter lines of blue, a gradation in color from dark to light. Large boats interrupt the blue lines of the water, grouped together in some areas and independent in others. Continuing along the street, the viewer then come across the bright yellows of the rising sun and fog pattern with its white shapes interspersed among the asphalt background. Ultimately, the viewer arrives at the colorful shapes of the lunar cycle. Traveling between lines and shapes, the design shifts and changes, never repeating itself. There is also a story telling aspect to this design. A story about boats traveling to a far away land or boats exploring their native land, under the sun and the moon.

This design would be created using both the Thermoplastic Inlay technique for the line-work and the Thermoplastic overlay technique for the solid shapes. Keeping in mind that the thermoplastic inlay and overlay techniques are the most durable, I set out to create designs primarily using lines and solid shapes. This design has a grey background representing an asphalt street. Because the line-work and solid shapes are balanced in the composition, the Thermoplastic Inlay and overlay techniques would similarly switch back and forth, balancing both mediums.

**DuraTherm Inlay Surface System**
- Improves traffic safety + visibility
- Highly durable
- Linework color
- Standard and customizable colors

**DecoMark Surface Signs**
- Maximizes traffic guidance
- Engineered to last 6-8x longer than paint
- Large surface area vibrant color
- 33 standard colors

Both application results are ADA compliant and pedestrian- and wheelchair-friendly.
In addition to the “Exploring Together” design, I wanted to create a wholly abstract design, expressing some of the ideas I am exploring in my own work today. SOMA is home to many of the museums and cultural centers of San Francisco and “Love Letters to My Home” is an example of the contemporary work being created in the Bay Area today. Living and working in the Bay Area since graduating from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1999, my work is highly influenced by my home. My choices of color, composition and expression of line-work are all love letters to those who came before me and the Bay Area arts community today.

My work focuses on blending organic and geometric shapes with exact lines, painting intuitive and mathematical mark-making. Much of my work speaks about time, reinterpreting the way in which time moves in a poetic way. My paintings explore the marking of time, questioning how one is able to register time in a visual way. My paintings empower the viewer, enabling them to search their own memories or experiences to create meaning. I often separate my paintings between abstracted landscapes and geometric abstractions, the former being intuitive, the latter being more intentional. While one work is done in an active state, the other is done in a meditative or quiet state. The landscapes tend to pull their palette from the natural world, while the geometric pieces give me an excuse to experiment with color often using bright, uplifting tones. “Exploring Together” and “Love Letters to My Home” are examples of these types of work. While “Exploring together” uses a landscape-based work to speak about Filipino and San Franciscan cultures, “Love Letters to My Home” uses abstract geometric work to speak about joy and the creative spirit.

“Love Letters to My Home” uses shapes made up of line-work and solid colors to create a composition that playfully bounce along the street. Arcs and semi-circular shapes curve and pop, playing together. Together, the entire design creates a bright, modern playground potential. As a pedestrian enters the streetscape, they are greeted by six solid, bright-colored shapes. Looking beyond, they see a series of shapes made up of lines and solid shapes. The colors shift from pink and purples to bright oranges and reds, to blues, greens and yellows back to oranges and purples. Traveling along, the pedestrian can meander along the line-work, bouncing between solid shapes and back to line-work. The line-work and solid shapes bounce back and forth, balancing these elements. This design would be created using both the Thermoplastic Inlay technique for the line-work and the Thermoplastic overlay technique for the solid shapes. Keeping in mind that the Thermoplastic Inlay and overlay techniques are the most durable, I set out to create designs primarily using lines and solid shapes. This design has a grey background representing an asphalt street. Because the line-work and solid shapes are balanced in the composition, the thermoplastic Inlay and overlay techniques would similarly switch back and forth, balancing both mediums.

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