



FINE ART CONSERVATION

CONDITION ASSESSMENT

DATE: 5/31/19
CLIENT: San Francisco Arts Commission
OBJECT: 'Street Life', 2010 by the artist group Rebar.
Artists: Matthew Passmore, John Bela, Blaine Merker, Teresa Aguilera
ACCESSION NO: 2010.6
DIMENSIONS: 17-18' (variable)



DESCRIPTION AND MATERIALS:

This sculpture is formed of:

23 x 2" hollow mild steel pipes, schedule 40. These are welded to a center 8" hollow mild steel pipe, schedule 80. Welding material was solid Carbon-Steel Welding Wire, E70S-6, 0.045" (MIG welding wire).

On the top of the 23 pipes are welded 23 repurposed parking meter heads formed of iron and aluminum, each refinished with red/orange automotive paint and new glass installed. The glass in the parking meters was replaced with glass sheet (chartreuse – 001126) from Bullseye Glass Co, Portland, and attached with Lexel Pro Clear glass adhesive.

There is a concrete footing with an engineered base plate and connections.

Coatings

The pipes are coated with epoxy primer: Zinc Primer: Rustoleum Professional Cold Galvanizing Compound

Topcoat: Matthews Satin VOC MAP 2343 SP Brightray Silver Metallic (exterior polyurethane).

Anti-graffiti coating: Graffiti Melt, Genesis Coatings

CONDITION REPORT:

- The sculpture was recently deinstalled from its location at Leland and Bayshore Avenues in San Francisco.
- Although the sculpture appears to be structurally sound from the exterior, the sculpture is very deteriorated and has extensive ferrous (iron) corrosion on exterior and interior surfaces.
- Viewing of the interior of the sculpture from the bottom, it is clear that the interior of the pipes were not coated and are extensively corroded. Removal of the interior rust and painting is unlikely to be successful and so the sculpture will likely continue to rust from the inside out.
- The interior deterioration has been exacerbated by the design. Water is clearly able to penetrate into the interior as seen by the corrosion on the interior from the underside, and the grime on the interior of the parking meter heads. Exposure to moisture and street grime, sets up pockets for corrosion formation, and there is no access to allow for cleaning or corrosion reduction.
- Also as a result of the design, the upper area where the pipes start to bend outwards from the main stem also form an inaccessible area where dirt and debris can accumulate also leading to corrosion, despite the fact that the stitch welds between the pipes allow drainage.
- On the exterior, there is an overall failure of the protective coatings. The polyurethane and rustoleum primer have not sufficiently protected the mild steel from exposure to the environment, largely because they are not a high performance system and there appears to be some compatibility issues. There has been a widespread delamination of the polyurethane from the primer and some large areas of loss to the primer. Failure of the polyurethane appears to be widespread, and the primer has failed noticeably around the base, exacerbated by acidic dog urine.
- Where the primer is failing, there are extensive areas of ferrous corrosion. This has deeply pitted the steel around the base and is causing delamination of the metal where it is most severe. This is likely to lead to some structural issues.
- There is ferrous corrosion around the attachment points of several letters.

- The once chartreuse color of the glass in the parking meter heads is now black, suggesting that a considerable amount of surface grime has been able to penetrate inside the meters. This may require opening of the meters, although it is not known whether that is possible at this time.
- The paint system on the parking meter heads is also deteriorating to a chalked finish and has faded, especially on the more exposed upper surfaces.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Sculptures made of recycled materials can always be problematic in that the quality of the materials for fabrication are often not of the highest quality.
2. The design of the sculpture allows for grime build up and moisture into inaccessible areas that cannot be repainted or sealed adequately. This will ultimately lead to increasing development of corrosion on the exterior.
3. The interior of the pipes were never protected with coatings and exhibit extensive corrosion. This will eventually lead to rusting of the sculpture from the inside out.
4. The protective paint and coatings were not of a high enough quality, to withstand any degree of outdoor exposure as shown by the degree of failure of primer, top coats, and clear coat, after only nine years.
5. The location has exacerbated the damage, with a foggy, salty environment close to the Bay, presence of dogs, and proximity to freeways and traffic which result in a high level of particulates providing microclimates for corrosion to form.
6. Even if repainted with a high performance paint system, the interiors could not be treated for rust or painted thoroughly, and the spaces between the close fitting pipes at the upper end could not be sandblasted or coated sufficiently without dismantling the sculpture.
7. Overall, the design and fabrication of the artwork have created a situation of inherent vice, meaning that repair and repainting would not be successfully cover all the surfaces, and that long term maintenance will be increasingly expensive.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This sculpture requires an extensive amount of treatment to bring it back to visually good exterior condition. Treatment would include corrosion reduction, overall blasting of the current paint system and repainting and possible replacement of the parking meter heads at an estimated cost of \$60,000-\$75,000. However, since the interior corrosion cannot be stabilized, any repairs to the exterior only address half the problem, and the sculpture is still likely to corrode from the inside out. With this in mind, the inherent vice in the design is an important consideration from a long term preservation, maintenance and budget point of view, and therefore deaccessioning the artwork should be discussed.

The other option is refabrication with higher quality materials and coatings. High grade stainless steel pipes combined with regular cleanings and maintenance would fare better in the long term. The design and accessibility to the top and interior would however continue to be problematic in terms of grime build up and corrosion potential. This type of redesign and fabrication, would probably exceed \$100,000, and may not be value for money given the initial budget for the artwork.

PHOTOGRAPHS:



Current Deinstalled Condition



Overall View of Back of Sculpture



Interior View of Bottom End of the Sculpture Showing lack of Coatings and Extensive Corrosion



Bottom of the Sculpture Showing Advanced Ferrous Corrosion to Metal; Pitting, Blistering and Failure of Paint System



Corrosion on Inaccessible Areas Between Pipes and Upper Surfaces, and Failure of Paint System



Corrosion on Upper Surfaces of Pipes, and Fading of Orange Paint on Meters



Surface Dirt, and Discoloration of the Glass

San Francisco Arts Commission

July 10, 2019

London Breed
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City and County of San Francisco

RE: De-installation of *Street Life* (2010), by Rebar

Dear Leland Ave. Merchants and Community;

The sculpture 'Street Life', 2010 by the artist group Rebar was recently deinstalled from its location at Leland and Bayshore Avenues in San Francisco for a full conservation assessment. Although the sculpture appears to be structurally sound from the exterior, the sculpture is very deteriorated and has extensive ferrous (iron) corrosion on exterior and interior surfaces.

The sculpture requires an extensive amount of treatment to bring it back to visually good exterior condition. Treatment would include corrosion reduction, overall blasting of the current paint system, repainting and possible replacement of the parking meter heads. However, the interior corrosion cannot be stabilized. Repairs to the exterior would only address half the problem. The sculpture would still be likely to corrode from the inside out.

Alternately, redesign and fabrication of the artwork with higher quality materials and coatings might be considered. However, the current design with the top of the pipes not being weather tight, the interior would continue to be problematic and potential corrosion.

Due to the inherent vice in the design and the established costs for restoration or refabrication are well in excess of estimated value of the sculpture. It will be the staff recommendation to the Commission to permanently remove and deaccession the artwork from the Civic Art Collection. This recommendation will be presented to the Visual Arts Committee on July 17, 2019. You are welcome to attend and provide

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public comment or send your written comments via mail to the Arts Commission or to my email address below.

Very truly yours,

Susan Pontious

Civic Art Collection and Public Art Program Director

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