

★ MEET THE 2019 FRACCHIA PRIZE WINNERS ★



The 2019 Fracchia Prize awards winners (left to right): Sofia Herron Geller (first prize), Allison Dummell (second prize), and Yanzhu Gong (third prize).

★★★★★ FRACCHIA PRIZE WINNERS ★★★★★

In fall of 2018, San Francisco Historical Society announced a new educational opportunity for San Francisco's high school students, the Fracchia Prize. Named for SFHS founder and President Emeritus Charles Fracchia, the Fracchia Prize will be an annual event that invites students to research some aspect of the city's history and share what they learn with us. The 2018-2019 Fracchia Prize asked students to write an essay in response to this question: "How does the history of my neighborhood affect my life today?" SFHS offered cash prizes to the top three essayists, as well as publication of their work.

Students from all parts of the city submitted essays, and selecting the top three wasn't easy. The winners of this year's competition are:

- FIRST PLACE: Sofia Herron Geller: "Art Activism: San Francisco's Counterculture and Its Impact on the Mission District"
- SECOND PLACE: Allison Dummel: "Living on the Edge"
- THIRD PLACE: Yanzhu Gong: "Mission Bay"

On May 7 the three students, their history teachers, and their families joined SFHS board members for an awards ceremony hosted by Mayor London Breed at her offices in City Hall. Allison's essay was published in the third quarter issue of *Panorama*. Yanzhu's essay will be published in the fourth quarter issue of *Panorama*. Sofia's essay appears on the next page.

ART ACTIVISM:

San Francisco's History of Counterculture and Its Impact on the Mission District

by Sofia Herron Geller

To quote the 4 Non Blondes, a San Francisco-originated, all-women rock group:
*"I realized quickly when I knew I should
That the world was made up of this brotherhood of man."*

My family's third-floor flat rises far above the traffic and shouts of 16th Street, on the northwestern edge of the Mission District. Over the years, I've seen how brotherhood, and sisterhood, truly is central to my neighborhood. In a community of such diverse heritages, backgrounds, and experiences, a sense of shared purpose and values ties us together. For those who remember the Hippies, celebrate their Aztec heritage, busk at BART, play the cajon and steel drums, and paint murals, unity comes from art. Their children, including myself, have grown up with this unity and appreciation for diversity. The distinctive arts culture of the inner Mission is rooted in San Francisco's history of counterculture movements, as local poets, musicians, and muralists continue to express dissent from mainstream society and politics, and advocate for liberal change.

San Francisco's counterculture first began in the late 1800s, with the emergence of the bohemian literary movement. With the rise of industrialization in eastern and midwestern cities, a new materialist culture developed, bringing

corruption and a powerful federal government along with it. Many artists, especially writers, were among the first to criticize American society's increasing emphasis on wealth and status, and instead chose to focus on the purposes of human existence and relationships. Many of these artists were drawn to the West, where a whole new civilization was being formed, one with greater personal freedom for women and more ethnic diversity.



*Members of an early labor union, these waitresses congregated at Mission Dolores.
Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.*



*The Roxie Theatre, located at 16th and Mission Streets, has shown independent films since the 1970s.
Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.*

With tens of thousands of immigrants and white Americans moving to the West Coast, San Francisco developed as a major hub for culture and the arts, literary and otherwise.¹ In San Francisco, communities of free spirits, with antigovernment and anti-materialist belief systems, or “bohemians,” began to form, including groups such as the Bohemian Club. It was during this period that the northern Mission neighborhood blocks around my apartment at “Sixteenth Street and upper Valencia Street developed a bohemian flavor, with cafes, art houses, independent theaters, and bookstores.”² These bohemian meeting places were prototypes for some of today’s beloved institutions on 16th Street,

including the Roxie Theater and Manny’s Café, where locals meet to explore inequalities and relevant political movements. Many authors frequented these meeting places, and used fictionalized works to question society and satirize American involvement in imperialistic wars. Authors such as Jack London and Mark Twain wrote of a different America than the traditional American writers back East, inspired by a freer life out West. Twain himself is quoted as saying, “Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect,” which accurately sums up the disillusionment that these late-19th century thinkers felt toward the increasingly industrialized and imperialistic United States.

Practices that developed in the 19th-century bohemian organizations, such as examining mainstream culture, discussing deeper meanings about humanity, and expressing these meanings through art, reemerged in the 1950s. Continuing the legacy of Twain and his contemporaries, artists of the Beat Generation promoted freedom from what they saw as a flawed American society, through their visual art and poetry. The San Francisco Beatniks, including writers Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, rejected the materialism, conservative views, and conformity of post-World War II America. Like the “bohemians” before them, the Beatniks also established organizations and locations, such as City Lights Bookstore in North Beach, where they could discuss and debate societal issues.

Throughout the 60s and 70s, San Francisco’s counterculture evolved, as free speech demonstrations and Beatnik disillusionment were replaced by protests against the Vietnam War and conservatism. These protests, sit-ins, and demonstrations inspired a mass-migration to San Francisco from around the U.S., resulting in the Hippie Era. Culminating in the 1967 Summer of Love in Golden Gate Park, more than 100,000 young Hippies flooded into San Francisco. Like the bohemians of the previous century, the Hippies “did not agree with most of the ideas of mainstream society, and through their writing, music, and clothes, expressed their new ideas.”³ Art and music were central to the spread of Hippie ideas, and musicians from Jerry Garcia to Janis Joplin wrote hit songs with lyrics promoting the



*A small child dances at a drum circle on Golden Gate Park's Hippie Hill.
Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.*

free love and anti-war ideals of the Summer of Love. Today, these ideas have “evolved into ‘San Francisco values’—left-wing or rigidly liberal politics, social tolerance, gender and sexual freedom, a shared sense of community, concern about the planet’s inherent fragility, and an embrace of change.”⁴

The Hippies, Beatniks, and bohemians were centered in different locations of San Francisco, but their ideas are reflected in the Mission today, in art forms from drum circles in Dolores Park to bandas de samba to bright, beautiful murals. These creative outlets all serve

to bind the community together, and can also be used to make political statements. From Clarion Alley to the Women’s Building, the “Mission tradition of public murals has expanded from individual oases of political art in the urban landscape, predominantly identified with Latino culture, to rivers of vibrant and powerful expressions of all kinds.”⁵

I live in the Mission, and these accessible and bold works of art remind me to be active in my community, to volunteer to help others, to learn about current events, and to attend public hearings and demonstrations that tackle “everything from ongoing free speech issues to environmental activism, workers’ rights, civil rights, the student loan crisis, and America’s growing income gap.”⁶ We’ve learned from the past that unity is strength, and only by taking action together can we come up with solutions.

In particular, Mona Caron’s WEEDS series (mural project) exemplifies the use of art as activism in the Mission. Throughout my life, I’d always noticed a mural of a biker at Ocean Beach, visible



One of Mona Caron’s WEED murals on Church Street. Her work is very colorful. To see her work, visit MonaCaron.com. Image used by permission of Mona Caron.

just when the J train emerges above ground, at Church and Duboce Streets. The entire back wall of Safeway portrays scenes of San Francisco and Critical Mass, and also numerous native poppies and lizards. A few weeks ago, I read an interview—in the print *SF Chronicle* that my parents still insist on getting—of the artist Mona Caron. Although I’d never heard of her before, I learned that Mona has designed and painted not only the Duboce bikeway mural, but also many of the other large, beautiful murals that I pass every day. Intrigued, I did some more research and discovered her global Weeds Project, “a series of paintings of urban weeds, created as a tribute to the resilience of all those beings who no one made room for, were not part of the plan, and yet keep coming back, pushing through and rising up.”⁷

The resilience and importance of nature that Caron advocates for in her murals of weeds, are realized in the Dearborn Community Garden. Wedged between 17th and 18th Streets on a little alley across from the Women’s Building, the garden used to be



Winter at the Dearborn Garden. Photo taken by author.

a parking lot for employees of a PepsiCo factory, before the factory closed in 1991. The plot of land was sold to “the City and County of San Francisco, which subsequently built a police station that stands there today. At the same time, PepsiCo donated the land that held its parking lot to the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG).”⁸ In 2001, the young Dearborn Garden faced having its land seized by the City, for various illegalities. In contrast with the large, multinational Pepsi Corporation,

the small, independent Dearborn Garden wasn’t generating revenue for the city, and therefore was “not part of the plan.” But SLUG stood up. That is to say, when the deed-less land donation to SLUG was challenged by the City, a handful of motivated community gardeners resisted the attempts, and decided to officially organize. They elected a board, set up dues for members of the garden, and began to pay taxes on their use of the land.

Today, Dearborn gardeners, including my family, have the opportunity to cultivate crops in the middle of urban San Francisco. Dearborn Garden was always a fun place for me to climb trees as a kid. I realize now that the garden also taught me to appreciate where our food comes from and to take time to be in nature whenever possible. In the garden, plots feature a variety of vegetables and flowers, and are recognizable by unique birdbaths, tall sunflowers, and blossoming lemon trees. But despite small variations, there is a communal element that

makes Dearborn Garden a microcosm of the Mission. The bi-annual garden meetings are led by a mixture of original and newer members, and feature the most direct democracy I’ve ever seen, with all members voicing suggestions and concerns for the garden, and all members voting on the decisions. The meetings, which always culminate in a liberal or pro-union parody of some popular song, demonstrate a uniquely San Franciscan mindset, based on equality, environmental sustainability, and community.



In the Mission District, the legacy of love is visible even on doors. Photo taken by the author.

Many of these “Hippie” ideals originated with long-time garden members who have lived in the Mission for decades. I’ve tasted the kale quiches, seen the photos of communes, and heard the ’60s protest songs enough to understand the strong influence of San Franciscan counterculture on many residents of the Mission. These family members, friends, and neighbors have become pillars of our community, loud voices calling for equality for underrepresented women, immigrants, homeless, LGBTQ people, and everyone in between.

Literary geniuses of the bohemian crowd, contemporary poets of the Beat Generation, musical groundbreakers of the Hippie era, and spray-paint wielding muralists today have all taught us the importance of activism, togetherness, and creativity.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sofia Herron Geller is senior at Lowell High School and is excited to graduate soon. She plans to study sociology and environmental science at UC Davis next year. Her hobbies include listening to and playing music, reading, filmmaking, and spending time in nature. She thanks the San Francisco Historical Society and Mayor Breed for this opportunity to be published!

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The 2020 Fracchia Prize winner Winnie Quock (first prize).



The 2020 Fracchia Prize winner Indigo Mudbhary (second prize).



The 2020 Fracchia Prize winner Luke Zepponi (third prize).

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In fall 2018, San Francisco Historical Society announced a new educational opportunity for San Francisco's high school students, the Fracchia Prize. Named for SFHS founder and President Emeritus Charles Fracchia, the Fracchia Prize is an annual event that invites students to research some aspect of the city's history and share what they learn with us. The 2019–2020 Fracchia Prize asked students to write an essay describing the history of Golden Gate Park and develop a walking tour on an area of the park. As in the previous year, SFHS offered cash prizes to the top three essayists, as well as publication of their work.

This year's Fracchia Prize was co-sponsored by San Francisco City Guides and San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department. SFHS expresses gratitude to longtime supporter Ray Lent and his associates at Placer Partners for funding the 2020 cash prizes.

Students from all parts of the city submitted essays, and the winners of this year's competition are:

- ★ FIRST PLACE: “Botany and Horticulture: Symbols of Flourishing Against the Odds” by Winnie Quock (George Washington High School)
- ★ SECOND PLACE: “Horticultural History: Learning About San Francisco's Past through the Garden Gems of the City's Favorite Park” by Indigo Mudbhary (Lick-Wilmerding High School)
- ★ THIRD PLACE: “It's a Ringer! One Perfect Day in Golden Gate Park” by Luke Zepponi (Abraham Lincoln High School)

On Tuesday, December 15, the three students, their history teachers, and their families joined SFHS board members virtually in a Zoom meeting for an awards ceremony hosted by the Office of the Mayor and SFHS. Mayor London Breed attended the entire ceremony, graciously addressing the student winners and acknowledging SFHS for its continued work in education. Guests included the three winners and their families. (See pictures on the facing page.) Board Vice President Tom Owens was the emcee. Indigo Mudbhary's essay was published in the fourth quarter 2020 issue of *Panorama*. Luke Zepponi's essay was published in the first quarter 2021 issue of *Panorama*. Winnie Quock's essay begins on the next page.

BOTANY AND HORTICULTURE:

Symbols of Flourishing Against the Odds

by Winnie Quock

Back in the early 1800s, San Francisco did not have a designated area for a recreational park. The idea of a “public pleasure ground” for everyone regardless of social status to enjoy, proposed by Frederick Law Olmstead in 1866, was new for the people of San Francisco in a time when different classes did not often interact. The area known as Golden Gate Park today was once part of vast sand dunes known as the “Outside Lands.” Olmstead declared the city’s choice to build a park over sand dunes impossible, but his humanist philosophy of the park greatly inspired William Hammond Hall.

After the state legislature passed an act establishing Golden Gate Park on April 4, 1870, Hall won the contract to survey park land and was appointed engineer of Golden Gate Park in 1871. Construction started the same year, and the park opened for recreational use in 1880. In 1890, John McLaren became the Superintendent of the park, and during his 56 years in this position, he and his team of gardeners planted over two million trees. The earthquake of 1906 damaged the park, and in the aftershocks of the earthquake, those who lost their homes used the park as refuge. During the Great Depression, work on the park nearly came to a standstill if not for the New Deal. Work on the park continues today for minor issues like roads.

Today, Golden Gate Park is not only known for its diversity of flora and horticulture, but also for being flourishing and unbeaten. Each of the stops below represent a struggle and a success, whether for

the people honored in the memorials or the difficulty in constructing these places.

On the east end of the park, popular destinations include the California Academy of Sciences, the de Young Museum, and the Conservatory of Flowers. Though San Francisco’s temperate climate encourages visitors at any time of the year, the flowers bloom around spring, from March to May.

Stops on the Tour

1. Rhododendron Dell
2. The de Young Museum
3. Japanese Tea Garden

Lunch Stop: *Cafes in the museums or food trucks*

4. California Academy of Sciences
5. Shakespeare Garden
6. Botanical Garden

1. RHODODENDRON DELL

The Rhododendron Dell’s formal name is the John McLaren Memorial Rhododendron Dell, after the former superintendent. McLaren learned horticulture at the Edinburgh Botanical Gardens and immigrated to the United States in 1872. Many credit McLaren for the high diversity of plant life in Golden Gate Park.

For his extensive work, city officials wanted to place a statue of McLaren in the park. However,



*The Rhododendron Dell's formal name is the John McLaren Memorial Rhododendron Dell, after the former superintendent.
Photo by Mark Scheuer.*

he adamantly refused, hiding the monument in a box. The statue was taken out of storage after his death and displayed at the entrance of the dell on Eighth Avenue.

Maintenance of the dell was nearly impossible. Without cover from trees, the wind blew nutrients away and the flowers burned to death in the direct sunlight. These conditions toppled the trees surrounding the dell; gardeners had no choice but to scrape the dell bare to start again.

Fortunately for the gardeners passionate about their work for these flowers, as well as the visitors to the dell, the rhododendrons bloomed again in 2010. Today, you can stroll among the flowers and take pictures. The optimal time to view the rhododendrons is in March and April.

2. THE DE YOUNG MUSEUM

Golden Gate Park was the site of the California Midwinter International Exposition in 1894. Originally the Fine Arts Building for the exposition, the museum was renamed after the chair of the exposition organizing committee, Michael H. de Young. The original building had an Egyptian Revival style, with images of the Egyptian cow goddess Hathor.

The original building grew into a museum housing art from the Americas, Oceania, Africa, and even a large Asian Art Collection that moved out in 2003. However, the museum building took significant damage in the 1906 earthquake, forcing closure for over a year for repairs. In 1929, the original Egyptian-style building was demolished because it was declared unsafe. The de Young Museum had to close again following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, which damaged the structure of the building.

The new de Young Museum, which opened in 2005, is now the most visited museum west of the Mississippi. This new museum retains a few of the features from the original, such as the sphinxes, the original palm trees, and the Pool of Enchantment.

Visitors to the museum can observe contemporary and traditional art from across the world, as well as special exhibits. One of the towers, the Hamon Observation Tower, is also open to visitors with free admission and has a 360-degree view of the city.

For more about the de Young hours, ticket prices, and upcoming events, go to <https://deyoung.famsf.org/visit-us>



*The author in front of today's de Young Museum.
Photo by Mark Scheuer.*

3. JAPANESE TEA GARDEN

The Japanese Tea Garden is another remnant of the 1894 Midwinter Exposition. The tea house in the garden, or *ochaya* in Japanese, became permanent in the park and is now the oldest *ochaya* in the United States.

After the exposition closed, Makoto Hagiwara wanted to maintain the Japanese-style garden for future generations to appreciate. He became caretaker of the garden, pouring in resources and passion into the garden. He and his family were forced out of the park in 1901 because of anti-Asian sentiments in San Francisco. He opened another Japanese garden just outside the park, across Lincoln Way. He was invited back to Golden Gate Park several years later and lived there with his family until his death in 1925. During WWII, Hagiwara's family were forcibly moved to internment camps due to anti-Japanese sentiment, and the Hagiwara family had to leave their home in the garden behind. Their house and their Shinto shrine were demolished.

Today, Hagiwara's original goal of preserving an authentic Japanese garden for people to experience is still retained. Visitors can see wisteria, the Monterey pines, and dwarf trees planted by the Hagiwara family, as well as the water and rocks integral to a traditional Japanese Zen garden. The optimal time to view the cherry blossoms is in March and April. Enjoy the tea from the *ochaya*, and be sure to sample the fortune cookies, invented by Hagiwara himself!

For more about the hours and ticket prices, go to <https://www.japaneseteagardensf.com/vist>

LUNCH STOP

Sit down in the Academy of Sciences cafe or the de Young Museum cafe and get a taste of cuisine from around the world. Or order some food from the food trucks between the two museums and enjoy your meal outside.

4. CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

A group of "seven San Francisco gentlemen" met in 1853 with the intention to form an institution of natural sciences, recounted from historian Theodore Henry Hittell's book, *The California Academy of*

Sciences: 1853–1906. As fieldwork produced natural specimens, the men made a museum on Market Street to store and display them.

In 1906, the fire that had started after the Great Earthquake consumed the Academy of Sciences building. Luckily, "all the records" were "saved"; but unluckily, most of the specimens were gone. The Academy of Sciences moved to Golden Gate Park, and opened its doors again in 1916 with a dedication to science education: to "explore, explain, and sustain life on Earth."

Disaster struck again after the Loma Prieta earthquake, badly damaging the structure of the academy. For the new building, Italian architect Renzo Piano made a design for environmental sustainability, with a wavy green dome mirroring the hills of San Francisco.

The new California Academy of Sciences today has four main sections: the Steinhart Aquarium, the Osher Rainforest, the Morrison Planetarium, and the Kimball Natural History Museum. Interact with the plant and animal life, as well as the exhibits in the Academy, and get tickets to the planetarium showings.

For more about hours and ticket prices, go to <https://www.calacademy.org/hours-admission>

5. SHAKESPEARE GARDEN

Officially the Garden of Shakespeare's Flowers, the idea for this garden came from Alice Eastwood, Director of Botany in the Academy of Sciences, in 1928. The Shakespeare Garden contains plants used as symbols in Shakespeare's work, including poppies, mandrakes, lilies, and violets.

Shakespeare wrote his most influential works containing the plant specimens in the garden around the time his acting career struggled. In London in 1593, acting work became scarce because of the Black Plague, which killed one-tenth of the population. All of the theaters in London closed due to this "sickness."

Visitors to the garden can see the blooms Shakespeare used in his works and learn more about the Bard through his quotations written on plaques in the garden.



The author with the statue of John McLaren in the Rhododendron Dell. Photo by Mark Scheuer.

6. BOTANICAL GARDEN

McLaren planned a botanical garden to take shape in the 1890s, but the project received no funding due to lack of interest. Then, in 1926, Helene Strybing donated seed money for the arboretum in memory of her husband. Coupled with help from the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, the garden began construction, opening May 1940.

Today, the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society oversees the arboretum, as well as the Helen Crocker Russell Library of Horticulture at the entrance. The garden itself is divided into sections, such as the Montane Tropic and the Mediterranean. When visiting the garden, be sure to check out the library and take a walk in the garden.

For more about hours and ticket prices, go to <https://www.sfbg.org>

The walking tour ends here. This is only one side of the Golden Gate Park, so feel free to explore the rest of “Everybody’s Park”!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Winnie Quock is a senior at George Washington High School.

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