

Big BiP murals bloom around town



By Anita Katz Aug 22, 2017



An anonymous artist known as BiP has created the eye-catching mural "Figurine" on the wall of the Alise hotel in...

By Anita Katz



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"Figurine," a huge mural of human-like golden flowers painted on the outside wall of the Alise hotel in the inner Tenderloin, is arresting and romantic.

The seven-story installation by the muralist and graffiti artist known as BiP is one of four paintings so far in his Bay Area Megamural Series, a street project involving hundreds of cans of spray paint, uplifting designs and museum-worthy artwork — but with no museum admission fee.

Public support has allowed the series, which began as a five-building project, to expand to include at least a dozen local buildings, according to Michael Atto, a community liaison for the project.

A globally known anonymous and independent artist based in the East Bay, BiP (stands for Believe in People) works in both graffiti and authorized modes, creating eye-catching paintings with a pop-art or surrealist look and an often playful tone. His themes include love, joy and human connection.

The Bay Area Megamural Series, which BiP is conducting in partnership with producer Atto, is designed to provide the public with museum-caliber art in free, street settings and to help the Bay Area mural scene regain international attention.

With the unveiling of "Figurine" in July, BiP has completed four murals. All were painted with building-owner permission. Most have involved an owner request for an "original BiP installation," with the owner supplying financing, Atto says.



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BiP maintained complete creative control over the designs.

In addition to the evocative “Figurine” — which pictures blooms that look like brains, and share roots and feelings — the series also includes “No Ceiling.”

Unveiled earlier this year on a South of Market wall near the Westfield San Francisco Centre, the mural celebrates local talent and female ability, picturing a girl with muscles Popeye might envy, a Rosie the Riveter-style pose and a tattoo featuring an anchor and two local area codes.

“Self Consuming Self-Dave,” on the wall of the San Francisco City Center Hostel in the Tenderloin, features a man with a microscope examining what is in his heart, literally as well as reflectively.

“Vintage,” in downtown Oakland, consists of an older fan looking elated while holding a vinyl-era thrash-metal album.

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While he keeps his identity secret, BiP is reportedly a self-taught artist from the East Coast who, in what might be described as a modern-day Gauguin scenario, left a conventional financial-world career to realize his calling as a painter. He severed ties with his earlier life so he could anonymously create public art.

Atto credits unanticipated public support, along with the success of the series thus far, for its expansion beyond five buildings.

While we'll have to stay tuned for the details, Atto can reveal that the next building in the series will be its largest yet.

“In some sense, the public has given us a mandate to continue with or without institutional support, and BiP has directed that mandate to define a new approach to public art,” Atto says.

IF YOU GO

Murals by BiP

Figurines, 580 Geary St., S.F.

No Ceiling, 816 Mission St., S.F.

Self Consuming Self-Dave, 685 Ellis St., S.F.

Vintage, 1600 Broadway, Oakland

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