



Self-Portrait with San Francisco

Date: 1985

Dimensions: Other: 51 × 75 × 7 cm (20 1/16 × 29 1/2 × 2 3/4 in.)

Medium: Mixed media relief

Credit Line: Gift from Mark Hasencamp, Los Angeles, CA

Description: "In this work, I portray myself—life-size in the frame and much smaller, with a close friend, on a topographical outcropping--enjoying the spectacle of my native city. At the time (1985) I had moved East to start an art museum career in Washington D.C. I thought of San Francisco often and visited when I could, reveling in its beauty, familiarity and uniqueness. I felt I knew it like the palm of my hand. The view is the essential one of San Francisco, in my opinion, from Marin County, with the Golden Gate Bridge looming.

Everything you see here means something to me. The painted cityscape and harbor are jammed with the landmarks, neighborhoods, roller-coaster streets, gliding vessels, cloud-streaks and choppy waters that mesmerized me as a child and teenager. The shirt in the large figure, my real one, is from college days at UC Berkeley, and sections of a well-worn Mexican cane chair, a Northern California relic I took to DC, jazz up the frame. Up top, on the left, is the shield symbol of my New England prep school, and on the right, a '50s parrot-mascot ad for Ghirardelli Chocolate, a brand bearing my mother's maiden name whose now-famous waterfront factory building is where my newly-married father started his work life (the Ghirardellis sold out in 1964, after 112 years.) A Papal flag flies at either end of the frame, and there's a cross up in the middle. An animal pelt invokes the Wild West, which this is.

Expressive, encrusted figurative art was all the rage in the 1980s. I was inspired by this trend but also felt the pull, creating this work, of California "Funk" assemblage, Currier & Ives city vistas, black folk art, Baroque altarpieces, and Asher B. Durand's mystical Hudson River canvas, "Kindred Spirits" (1849). The heart and soul of this work, however, is crazy, wonderful San Francisco."

—Sidney Lawrence, Washington DC, April 2015

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