

# MAP of FOG 2





# THESE STAGNANT STREETS



San Francisco's Sunset District, and the areas around it, are as suburban as the city gets. That's a big part of the reason they're so looked down on by the rest of the city—it reminds people of what they came to San Francisco to get away from. Even so, the Sunset is far from being typical suburbia. This is still San Francisco, and the things this city is known for find their own way of being represented here. Immigrant culture, for example, is in full effect. More Chinese and Chinese American people live in the Sunset than anywhere else in the city (including China Town), and the Irish community is also a prevalent influence—with the United Irish Cultural Center making its home in the outer avenues, and hundreds of first-generation and fresh-off-the-boat Irish folks walking the streets. San Francisco's religious diversity is on display too, with churches and temples for faiths you'd never find in the Bible Belt—even the Church of Satan has suburban San Francisco roots. But my favorite manifestation of the Sunset's San Francisco style relates to the unusual ways people decorate their homes. Far from the cookie-cutter, homeowner-association constraints that dictate typical suburban sterility, the Sunset is a place where you can see what happens when you give a weirdo some land.

## **Junk House – Near Noriega Street and 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue**

I also refer to this place as Beachcomber House because of all the old fishing floats and boat fenders strung up in the design. I'm guessing that whoever lives here likes to go for walks and pick up whatever random junk catches their eye. Then they bring it home and work it into the collection decorating the yard of their house. Nautical flotsam, including the floats and fenders



already mentioned, is prevalent, but toy horses and flamingos are also featured (see the picture on the previous page). From across the street it looks like a mess, but if you get up close you can see the objects are deliberately placed and carefully arranged, hanging from a network of strings or attached to stakes driven into the ground. There's so much stuff that you can only take in the general effect at first, and then start to notice the details.



### **Pastoral House – Near Noriega Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

The cool thing about this house isn't the mural—which is admittedly a bit saccharine—but the fact that the mural is paired with a miniature garden. I can't think of any other examples of using painting and gardening together in a unified way, but it's an intriguing concept, and it's pretty well carried out here. The garden features some of the same flowers—golden poppies, impatiens, sunflowers—that appear in the picture, but the picture also host rabbits and cats and cardinals, plus a wood nymph and a milk maid. It's practically Bambi's forest. The Sunset is known for it's lack of lawns—lots of home owners pave over their front yards to create more parking space. This house's yard used to be concrete too; now it illustrates another option.



### **Fresco House – Near Cragmont Avenue and Quintara Street**

It's hard for me to give a clear description of the massive mural that dominates the eastern side of this house (and flows out onto the house front) because the scale is so grandiose, and the images so dramatic, that I can't seem to wrap my head around it. This much I can tell you: there are several colossal, god-like figures (truly colossal, the figure whose hand reaches out to the front is large enough to hold a good-size dog in his palm) engaged in theatric posturing amid billowing sheets and clouds. It looks like a scene lifted from the Sistine Chapel, even down to the fresco-like medium of painted stucco.



### **Miniature Houses – Near Ortega Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

You might not notice it if didn't know to look, but a few of the houses on the western side of this block have something strange in common: the mailbox for each house is a perfect miniature replica of the house itself. Look beyond that and you'll see other similarities: white picket fences and manicured hedges so idealized that the buildings themselves sort of look like toys.

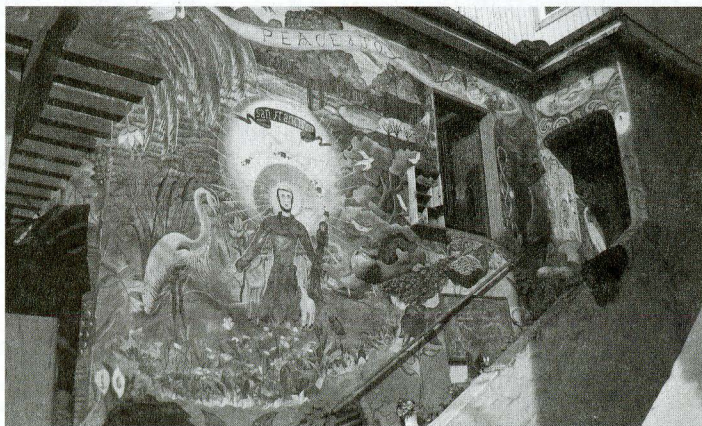




## Everything House – Near Kirkham Street and La Playa Street



This is the most awe-inspiring house I've ever seen. Each of the houses mentioned in this edition of These Stagnant Streets has something that makes it special, but the Everything House has all of those individual special things combined in one building, plus tons of other stuff. Like Junk House, Everything House has artfully arranged nautical flotsam, toy horses, etcetera. Like Fresco House, Everything House features a massive, terrifying, religious-feeling mural. Like Pastoral House, Everything House incorporates gardening in its display. Like the Miniature Houses, Everything House has customized art miniatures. It's incredible, and it's in the Sunset.



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