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# People We Meet: Andy Diaz Hope carves out art and space for artists

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Andy Diaz Hope poses for a picture on July 29 in front of his studio on 21st Street. (Photo by David Mamaril Horowitz / Mission Local)

While San Francisco has lost some charm, says Andy Diaz Hope, it retains some of the misfit magic he fell in love with in the '90s. It's something the longtime artist tries to keep alive.

The sculptor and art installation-maker, now 54, can clearly recall the city's landscape of the '90s and early 2000s, the one known to attract artists and other creatives who comprised a supportive community of similar values. And he remembers the affordable housing crisis forcing many of them out.

"I feel like we're kind of now, a little bit, ghosts in the neighborhood," he said.

For the longtime Mission District resident, physical space is important in at least two senses: In the first, he creates installation art, three-dimensional constructions that temporarily transform a space. In the second, he has carved out affordable studios in his neighbor's home, his own and a compound in Occidental, California, with the intent of making space for other artists.

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Creating studios, he says, also keeps a community of like-minded artists nearby, which helps him focus on work and question himself less.

## **Staying in the City**

College fostered his interest in art, but he wasn't prepared to pursue it. Instead, he tried for "a more normal life" in 1992 as a product designer for Apple and, two years later, founded a furniture company.

In 1998, he realized the dot-com boom would make it impossible to stay in the city, so he transitioned to technology consulting. With his first paycheck as a consultant, he took out a mortgage and bought a house.

"We were lucky that we were able to find our place here in the city a long time ago," he said.

A low overhead means more freedom to spend time in a manner not dictated by money, Diaz Hope said. He realizes his situation has become increasingly difficult for most to attain in San Francisco, and that's something that's made the city less appealing. However, he said, for him the city still fills its niche as the land of misfits.

In 2005, he began his career as a full-time artist, sculpting and making installations. His wife, [Laurel Roth Hope](#), is also a full-time artist, and the two work both individually and collaboratively.

Their work is often on display at the [Catharine Clark Gallery](#) on Utah Street, between 15th and 16th streets.

## Art Installations

One of his early 2019 installations, "An Inexhaustive Study of Power," featured sculptures and furniture from a staging company, representing how in sales, houses are often staged to make them more appealing.

"It's also a form of power here in the Mission," Diaz Hope said.

He contrasted the practice to how it was when he bought a house in '98.

"No one staged the house, nobody came in. There was an empty house; you came in to see if it'd work," he said.

He wants his installations to pull people from their day-to-day so they can reflect and reacquaint themselves with their priorities. It's something he's trying to figure out himself.

"I think I'm on the course to it," he said.

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