

# Blue Studio: Home of Chad Xavier's saintly pigeons

BY ED BOWERS

I LOVE pigeons. When I worked security at Embarcadero Center in 2001 they were my only friends besides a few guards who eventually had nervous breakdowns or committed a faux pas and got fired.

Chad Xavier, who has been a professional artist for 24 years, specializes in portraying pigeons with halos over their heads. They are saints exposed to everything from knives, Bibles, dead fish, crosses, snakes; one is portrayed exposed to only itself standing hunched over like a lonely Times Square junkie on a sidewalk. The pigeons appear all-accepting, asking nothing from anyone, judging no one.

I remember standing on my balcony two years ago and observing a gull swoop down on a group of pigeons standing on the balcony opposite mine. The gull eviscerated one of the pigeons and ate it. The other pigeons stood there next to the gull and did nothing as it digested one of their own. This was in the Tenderloin. A lot of people in the Tenderloin end up like pigeons, and I found Xavier's portraits of pigeons extremely insightful and accurate. They are on display at Xavier's Blue Studio, 2111 Mission St.

But this is not a one-note samba show. There are portraits of people as well, individuals who, from the intense and searing expressions in their eyes, appear to be fighting for their individuality tooth and nail. I know a lot of people like that; they pay for it. If they fail, they end up on the corner of Taylor and Turk begging for quarters.

One all-acrylic painting is of a

woman looking sideways; her expression seemed to change the longer I stared. She appeared to become increasingly angry, almost psychotic. I suppose if I'd stared at her long enough, we might have made friends, or maybe not. Good art is like that: It opens the mind to infinite possibilities. Those possibilities could lead to Nob Hill or Taylor and Turk: As the old saying goes, "Six to one, half a dozen to the other."

There also are pen-and-ink drawings that are extremely interesting. One is of a sunflower with two bald guys in striped suits looking away; in the background is a stained glass motif. Beauty is frightening. Humans are afraid to look at it straight in the face. Pigeons are not.

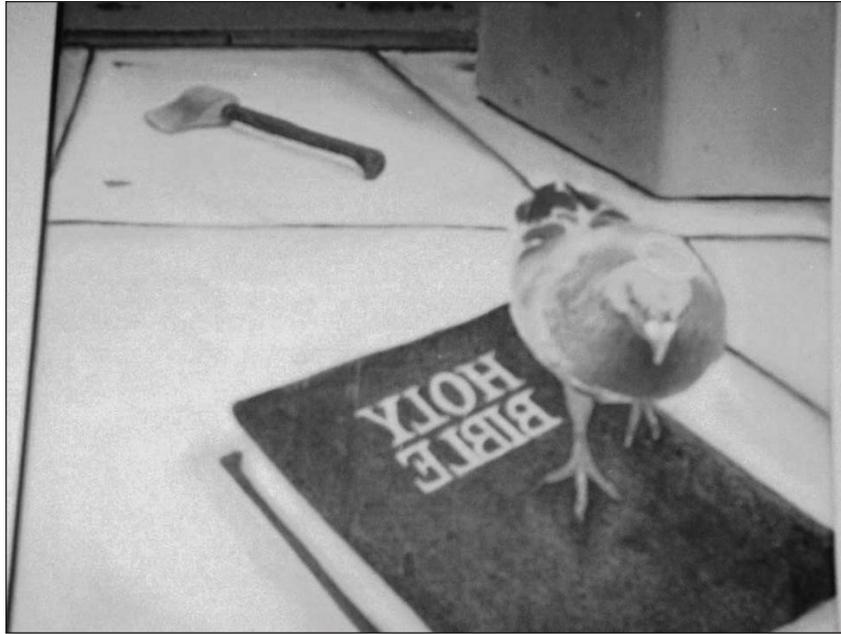


PHOTO BY ED BOWERS

Pigeon with a halo and some heavy reading material at Blue Studio.

Also at this exhibit are three intricate pen-and-ink drawings of Poetry Under The Dome, advertising the annual City Hall event started by poet Charlie Getter where underground poets read their stuff under the rotunda in City Hall. These are beautiful, rather like the Sixties pen-and-inks of rock star events, and I believe they are destined to be extremely valuable. So any of you entrepreneurs out there better get on it now! The April 30 Poem Under the Dome might be the last for quite awhile. I hope so, because there are so many phony exhibitionists in San Francisco congregating to this show to read their rhetoric that it gives poetry and the underground culture a bad name by turning it into a joke.

I was going to do a review of this show in unison with the Blue Studio review but I don't have the stomach for it.

But Xavier's drawings are beautiful, sort of like a lotus rising out of mud. I suggest that anyone with an interest in art go see his work in the Blue Studio. The Blue Studio is a collective where artists who exhibit share the rent and exhibit their pieces without having to get on their hands and knees and beg to be shown in galleries whose bottom line is big money. I believe it needs all the attention it can get.

Xavier is a profound artist and he is doing it himself. I observed visitors to the gallery purchasing his pieces, so get them while they're hot.

Support the Blue Gallery and his work. You will never see pigeons or people the same way again. ■

—Blue Studio is open by appointment only. Call Chad Xavier at 571-7657.

## New visitor policy causing problems, tenants say

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

made \$25 or \$30 an hour.

"But you also find people doing a shitty job at \$1 million a year," he said.

Managers hire the clerks. Are they making poor choices? Are standards too low?

To get rid of lousy managers, tenants have to "put it on people's radars," he said. The same goes for desk clerks, although he said he realized intimidation and retaliation were sometimes at work. Start documenting instances, talk to other tenants, get tenants together to draft a petition, go to Supervisor Chris Daly's office, he said.

"My building did this," said Bruce Windrem from the audience. "We made the complaints and then put them in writing. But they said it was all confidential, a personnel issue. So people felt frustrated."

"Get louder," Masiak said. "If the problem continues, get louder. Work through the organization to get rid of bad ones and praise the good ones —

report the good ones. I can help with this."

Masiak got a round of applause.

Other topics in breakout groups provided opportunities for venting but often ended with loose ends and no direction for action. The overnight guest policy amended by the Rent Board in October is not posted in many SROs and it's causing problems. Clerks aren't aware of it, or misunderstand that visitors don't have to be present at the time the request is made.

Tenants were concerned about getting a \$40 federal rebate back from a \$50 charge for a converter box to switch their television sets to digital by February. One tenant rep from the Pierre Hotel said 10 people at his hotel got the rebate, but others said they didn't. Collaborative staffer Luis Baharona said he was working to set up a meeting with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office to discuss the issue "so that everyone in an SRO gets it."

Baharona chaired the breakout group discussion on safe injection sites, basically a review of what exists in Europe and in Vancouver, Canada. The col-

laborative supports the efforts of the Dope Project and the Drug Policy Alliance to promote safe injection sites in San Francisco. That's an idea that interests Tenderloin police Capt. Gary Jimenez as well. Addicts would have a safe enclosure and individual rooms to fix in, with a nurse on hand and social services available to reduce many problems that addicts cause on the street. Baharona said grassroots volunteers are needed to survey tenants to find what they want to happen, to add to a policy paper that the groups are writing.

A high note of the convocation — before the free dinner was served — was Dean Preston's victory talk. He's a lawyer and executive director of Tenants Together, a group that worked in June to defeat Prop 98, which would have ended rent control in California. As a result of that "trouncing," he said, tenant groups throughout the state got organized like never before.

Preston said now is an opportunity to continue the momentum and "confront loopholes that are adverse to tenants." ■

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