

SPACES

SAVING + PRESERVING ARTS + CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS

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Supervisors Connolly, Rice, Sears, Kinsey, and Arnold
Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Dr., Suite 329
San Rafael, CA 94903

To Honorable Supervisors Connolly, Rice, Sears, Kinsey, and Arnold,

As the Director of a nonprofit organization recognized internationally as the largest and most complete archives on art environments, I document and advocate for these sites all over the world. To that end, I wish to bring your attention to David Hoffman's *The Last Resort Lagunitas* constructions, located at 2 Alta Avenue and 230 East Cintura Avenue in Lagunitas, Marin County, one of the few extant art environments in northern California.

Hoffman's personal, individual spaces, replete with innovative architecture and creative sculptures, have significant and positive public ramifications on a variety of levels and, despite their edge of audacity, have much to teach us. Yet although the work of nonacademic artists such as Hoffman are beginning to be included in an expanded definition of art, these kinds of works still often remain in a more tenuous and often precarious position, subject to a variety of risks. Although casual vandalism is always a potential problem, the most severe and irreparable risks are those resulting from misguided governmental officials who are concerned that the constructions do not conform to local building codes or urban plans.

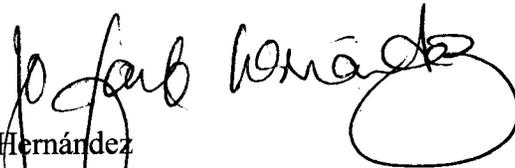
Art environments often challenge aesthetic and conceptual community values at the same time that they are beset by environmental degradations; this combination can be fatal for their ongoing preservation. Because art works of this nature cannot be hermetically stored and protected, they need continued vigilance and a concerted, long-term effort from a broad base of local community members—backed up by art and preservation professionals internationally—to ensure their survival. And while history is full of unfortunate narratives in which art environments were razed as a result of ill-advised municipal or regional attempts to legislate conformity, there are also significant numbers of success stories in which preserved art environments have come to unite their communities, enhancing local identity while bringing widespread recognition from far beyond local borders.

Surely in Marin County, renowned for the creativity of its citizens, the beauty of its environs, and the considered responses of its public officials, efforts will be made to support, maintain, and preserve Mr. Hoffman's creations, rather than let them be destroyed as a result of noncompliance with building codes. We understand that over one thousand local residents have signed a petition urging the County to preserve the property as an historic asset and landmark; this is in concert with the articulated intent of the Marin County General Plan, which clearly calls for the identification, documentation, and preservation of historic and cultural assets. Mr. Hoffman's creations clearly would fit within that rubric. I have no doubt that Hoffman would be willing to work with the County to address any concerns that officials might have, in order to enable movement toward designation of *The Last Resort Lagunitas* as a Marin County Historical Landmark, the application for which has been in the County's possession for over two years.

It is unlikely that *The Last Resort Lagunitas* constitutes any kind of public threat. I therefore urge you to choose to concentrate on the distinction Mr. Hoffman's works are bringing to your communities, and to celebrate, rather than recoil from, the challenges they provoke to our aesthetic and social norms. In so doing, you will not only bring positive acclaim to your communities as we move toward a greater inclusivity in art historical definition, but you will enable future generations to share in the insouciance and the freedom of expression these works of art and architecture extol, and the lessons and joy they impart.

You can find further information about SPACES and about art environments in general on our website, www.spacesarchives.org. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful response to this urgent request for consideration; should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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