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10-Year Battle Ends

Artists Leave Goodman Building

By Katy Butler

About 25 artists packed their belongings and left the historic Goodman Building yesterday, ending a 10-year struggle to stay in the hotel and avoiding forcible removal by sheriff's deputies.

The leave-taking attracted figures from both sides of the Goodman controversy and several prominent San Francisco artists and writers.

As a lighting designer loaded his mattress into a borrowed van, the San Francisco Mime Troupe banged on drums, one man held red roses and another read a poem. There were tears and songs, and an attempt by the evicted artists to make defeat look like victory.

Even as they loaded possessions into boxes, the artists vowed to return to the mansard-roofed residential hotel at 1117 Geary Boulevard, now owned by the city Redevelopment Agency, if the agency's designated developer fails to attract federal funds for a subsidized rental project.

At the beginning of a press conference in a black-painted storefront theater, Martha Senger, a painter and the backbone of the Goodman artists' resistance group, did a little dance. She wore a red velvet brocade coat and a fixed smile. But when the television cameras began to roll, she faltered.

Suddenly in tears, she said: "We've tried to put a real good face on this thing, but within an hour or so we'll be scattered all over the city. The building is not just a physical four walls for 35 people, it's a blue-laden place in a culture that has lost its meaning."



MARTHA SENGER, LEADER OF THE RESISTANCE GROUP
First she smiled, then she cried

In an agreement worked out with Sheriff Michael Hennessey, the artists promised to leave peacefully the 114-year-old Italianate Victorian they loved for the light that poured through its tall curved windows.

The Redevelopment Agency had obtained the eviction order, saying that its designated developer needed free access to the building by the end of the month or would lose federally subsidized housing funds needed to convert part of the

building into apartments.

Poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti said that the end of the Goodman Building was part of the continuing destruction of artists' housing in a city where Hotaling Place, the Montgomery Block, Project One and other famous artists' quarters have fallen victim to skyscrapers and other development.

"Gentrification is ruining the city," said Ferlinghetti, who lives in North Beach and said he has been

looking for a painting studio there for four years. "The city has been active on the side of developers; they took the other side; they found undeveloped buildings artists to use. I'm too cynical to think there's a hope of the artists getting back in, but I'm here to support them."

For nearly 10 years, the artists led by Senger, battled the Redevelopment Agency, asking for permission to rehabilitate the building themselves. Although they succeeded in getting more than \$40,000 federal and state funds for development plans and hundreds of thousands of dollars in loan commitments, they never succeeded in convincing the Redevelopment Agency they could put together a financially viable project.

The building, architecturally unusual for San Francisco, was acquired by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in the early 1970s as part of its plans to demolish and rebuild the Western Addition.

The artists came close to success in 1977 when they finally reached agreement with developer Alan Wofsy to rehabilitate the building but to allow them to stay. But the deal fell through when artists discovered that federal housing funds then required building separate bathrooms and kitchen for each living unit, making rehabilitation costs prohibitive.

Instead, the agency accepted a proposal from Wofsy in 1978 to develop subsidized rental housing at the building and some new flats on Myrtle Street. The Myrtle Street flats were eventually rehabilitated as condominiums and off-