

= Ashurbanipal ( sculpture ) =

Ashurbanipal , also known as the Ashurbanipal Monument or the Statue of Ashurbanipal , is a bronze sculpture by Fred Parhad , an artist of Assyrian descent . It is located in the Civic Center of San Francisco , California , in the United States . The 15 @-@ foot ( 4 @.@ 6 m ) statue depicting the Assyrian king of the same name was commissioned by the Assyrian Foundation for the Arts and presented to the City of San Francisco in 1988 as a gift from the Assyrian people . The sculpture reportedly cost \$ 100 @,@ 000 and was the first " sizable " bronze statue of Ashurbanipal . It is administered by the City and County of San Francisco and the San Francisco Arts Commission .

Parhad 's work was met with some criticism by local Assyrians , who argued it was inaccurate to portray Ashurbanipal holding a book and a lion , or wearing a skirt . The critics thought the statue looked more like the Sumerian king Gilgamesh ; Renee Kovacs , a " scholar and self @-@ stated Assyriologist " , believed the sculpture depicted neither figure , but rather a Mesopotamian " protective figure " . Parhad defended the accuracy of his work , while also admitting that he took artistic liberties .

= = Background = =

Ashurbanipal was designed by Fred Parhad , an Iraqi @-@ born artist of Assyrian descent . Parhad rejected formal arts studies at the University of California , Berkeley and relocated to New York , where the Metropolitan Museum of Art allowed him to study its Assyrian collection . The work was commissioned by the Assyrian Foundation for the Arts under the direction of its president , Narsai David . The Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation also claims to have commissioned the work . Funds were collected from Assyrians throughout the United States .

In 1987 , The Telegraph reported that the work cost \$ 100 @,@ 000 and was the first " sizable " bronze statue of Ashurbanipal . It was presented to the City of San Francisco as a gift from the Assyrian people on May 29 , 1988 , unveiled at the entry to the Asian Art Museum on Van Ness Avenue . The statue now stands on Fulton Street between the Main Library and Asian Art Museum , within the city 's Civic Center . It is administered by the City and County of San Francisco and the San Francisco Arts Commission .

The Smithsonian Institution lists Frank Tomsick as the installation 's architect and MBT Associates as its architectural firm . Ashurbanipal was surveyed by the Smithsonian 's Save Outdoor Sculpture ! program in 1992 . In 1996 , plans for a Civic Center pedestrian mall were being developed by the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association ; one planner advocated for construction of an Assyrian garden , including lotus blossoms , pomegranate trees and reeds , at the site of the statue .

= = Description = =

The 8 @-@ foot ( 2 @.@ 4 m ) patinated bronze statue , mounted on a base and a plinth to reach a total height of 15 feet ( 4 @.@ 6 m ) , weighs approximately 1 @,@ 800 pounds ( 820 kg ) . It depicts Ashurbanipal , the Assyrian king known for building the eponymously named Library of Ashurbanipal , the first and largest library in Nineveh . The bearded king is shown wearing earrings and a tunic ; he is holding a book ( or clay tablet ) in one arm and a lion cub in the other . According to the Historical Marker Database , the tablet reads in cuneiform : " Peace unto heaven and earth / Peace unto countries and cities / Peace unto the dwellers in all lands / This is the statue presented to the City of San Francisco by the Assyrian people in the 210th year of America 's sovereignty " .

The " larger @-@ than @-@ life " , full length statue stands above a plinth adorned with a lotus blossom design and a concrete base with an anti @-@ graffiti coating . The base includes rosettes and a bronze plaque . One inscription below the statue reads the text of the tablet in English , Akkadian cuneiform and Aramaic . The text " Ashurbanipal , King of Assyria , 669 ? 627 B.C. " appears above and the text " Dedicated May 29 , 1988 " appears below , both in English . Another inscription below the statue reads , " Presented to the City of San Francisco by the Assyrian

Foundation for the Arts through donations of American Assyrian Association of San Francisco / Assyrian American National Federation " , followed by a list of names of donors . In December 2010 , the San Francisco Chronicle reported that a large plaque from the sculpture was missing .

= = Reception = =

In December 1987 , as news began to circulate about the commissioned work , local Assyrians accused Parhad of misrepresenting Ashurbanipal . Criticisms included the depiction of the king holding both a book and a lion , which they argued he " wouldn 't do " , and for dressing him in a skirt , which they claimed he would never have worn . The critics thought the statue made a better portrayal of the Sumerian king Gilgamesh . One critic said :

It 's very simple . The statue represents Gilgamesh .... No Assyrian has a right to imagine things about our king . It 's exactly like making a copy of the Statue of Liberty and saying it is George Washington .... Assyrian kings didn 't wear miniskirts . They wouldn 't have been holding a lion or a book . It 's an insult to the Assyrians .

Narsai David responded :

They are entitled to their opinion .... We have never said this is a museum @-@ quality reproduction .... We have always said this is a characterization of Ashurbanipal as done by a 20th @-@ century artist . If they choose to think of this as Gilgamesh , they are free to do so .

Renee Kovacs , a " scholar and self @-@ stated Assyriologist " , said the statue depicted neither Ashurbanipal or Gilgamesh , but rather a Mesopotamian " protective figure , like a guard . " Parhad defended the accuracy of his work , while also admitting that he took artistic liberties and attempted to incorporate the various aspects of Assyrian culture , from its hunting mastery to its admiration for writing . He said of the sculpture :

The piece has authentic qualities to it , but it is also my statue .... With the earrings and the clothing and the hair and his daggers , it is Ashurbanipal . But in the choice of ( stance ) , the fact that he is holding a tablet and a lion , that is mine . I wanted myself to be represented in the piece .