



Photographs by JOHN GIBBINS San Diego Union-Tribune

**THE WALL** around La Jolla artist Nasser Pirasteh's home is full of messages from people supporting his vivid sculpture, titled "In Out."

# City wants this to go away

## La Jolla man is ordered to remove frontyard art piece or face fines

BY DEBBI BAKER

A La Jolla man who was ordered to take down his frontyard art installation that officials declared was an unpermitted structure has two more weeks before the city-imposed deadline ends and hefty fines could begin.

The hut-shaped piece is 8 feet by 10 feet and made of concrete, metal, glass and other materials in vivid shades of pinks, purples and turquoise.

Using markers, pastes and crayon, supporters have written more than 120 messages on the white plaster wall around Nasser Pirasteh's ocean-view home on Nautilus Street and Avenida Manaña.

"You are nice and I like your art," said one. "Homes like this inspire passion, love, hope and make me want to dance," said another.

And a third: "Art makes life beautiful."

Others scrawled "Don't destroy it!" and "Please let it stay."

The words, many written by children, are accompanied by whimsical drawings as fanciful as the sculpture, which is titled "In Out." The drawings include hearts, rainbows, flowers, suns and



**UNDER SAN DIEGO'S** municipal code, Pirasteh did not have a permit to build an accessory structure in his frontyard. "The city is not my enemy," he says.

happy faces.

"I love this," Pirasteh said. "Look at all these friends."

The messages began to appear after Pirasteh put out a cardboard sign pasted with newspaper articles about the artwork, the five-page removal notice from the city and a personal letter from him that begins "Dear friends." The letter says that the sculpture is an art installation only, and is not, and has never been, a building.

That's the heart of the

city's complaint.

The city's notice states that the homeowner was in violation of seven sections of San Diego's municipal code involving an accessory structure in his frontyard that he did not have a permit to build.

"You are hereby ordered," it reads, to "remove the unpermitted structure." It goes on to say that failure to comply will result in penalties that "may be assessed at a daily rate not to exceed \$2,500 per day violation; not

to exceed a total maximum of \$250,000 per parcel of structure for any related series of violations."

The deadline was May 6, but Pirasteh was granted a two-week extension because of the death of his mother-in-law, he said.

"He definitely has the right to appeal," said city spokesman Anthony Santacrocce.

But, he added, "the stance of the city has not changed. As far as we're concerned, it's a structure."

"The city is not my enemy," Pirasteh said. "I never felt any bad feelings about this. People are just doing their jobs."

The artist also has his detractors.

In a previous story about him, one person commented, "This guy's house and yard is one of THE biggest eyesores in La Jolla. Definitely proves the old adage that 'One man's trash is another's treasure.' Sadly, this one is mostly trash."

"This 'art' is hideous," wrote another, although he disagreed with the city's demanding that it be removed, calling it "government run amok."

Pirasteh said he would love to talk to the folks who don't like his art.

He also said he doesn't know what he's going to do when the new deadline arrives.

"If this were a building and it violated the code, then it should be taken down," he said. "But art lifts all of us up and should stand. And this is art."

Santacrocce said that if Pirasteh is not in compliance once the deadline passes, the fines will begin.

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