



LANDMARK DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: MAY 5, 2021

Record No.: 2021-001721DES
Project Address: 800 Chestnut Street (*The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*)
Zoning: RH-3 (Residential-House, Three Family)
40-X Height and Bulk District
San Francisco Landmark No. 85 (San Francisco Art Institute)
Block/Lot: 0049/001
Project Sponsor: SF Planning Department
49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 1400
San Francisco, CA 94103
Property Owner: San Francisco Art Institute
800 Chestnut Street
San Francisco, CA 94133-2206
Staff Contact: Pilar LaValley (628-652-7372)
pilar.lavalley@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Recommend Landmark Designation to the Board of Supervisors

Property Description

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City is a *buon fresco* (true fresco) produced in-situ by Diego Rivera with his assistants John Viscount Hastings (Lord Hastings), Clifford Wight, and plasterer Matthew Barnes between May 1 and 31, 1931 at the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), then known as the California School of Fine Arts. The fresco occupies the north wall of a studio and exhibit gallery, now known as Diego Rivera Gallery. The Diego Rivera Gallery is located to the west of the courtyard in the original 1926 building of the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI).

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City, an approximately 40 foot by 30 foot painting, “covers the upper two-thirds of a pedimented interior wall”¹ of a large double-height room. Centered in the unpainted plaster wall below the fresco is an incised inscription about the history of the fresco. A *trompe l’oeil* scaffolding motif

¹ Stanton L. Catlin, “Mural Census: San Francisco Art Institute,” in *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, ed. Cynthia Newman Helms (New York: Founders Society Detroit Institute of Arts, in association with W. W. Norton, 1986), 284.

divides the fresco into three sections vertically and includes painted post supports that extend down the lower third of the wall to nearly floor level. In a color scheme of blues, reds, ochres and greys, the fresco depicts a “cross-section of the modern American city” with a blue overalled and hard-hatted

...heroic figure of a workman, a painted scaffolding and a rear view of the artist seated on the scaffolding. Within this framework are various figures typifying aspects of construction, labor and planning.²

The San Francisco Art Institute was the first art school established west of the Mississippi River. This institution, which comprises two-thirds of a city block fronting on Francisco, Jones, and Chestnut streets, is in the Russian Hill neighborhood. The facility

...consists primarily of a 1926 building designed by architects Bakewell & Brown (the Original Building), and a 1969 addition designed by Paffard Keatinge-Clay (the Addition). ... A board form concrete wall approximately six feet tall encloses the property which includes an open, grassy area with trees (the Meadow) on the northeast corner of the lot. Surface parking lots are located between the Meadow and SFAI on Jones Street and at the northwest corner of the parcel on Francisco Street.³

The San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) is located in San Francisco’s Russian Hill neighborhood on the northwest corner of Chestnut and Jones streets. The streets adjacent to the campus are occupied by two- to three-story single-family and multi-family residences in a variety of architectural styles. Many of the surrounding residences were constructed in the early decades of the 1900s, but there are also examples from the 1920s, 1950s, and 2000s.

In 1977, the original 1926 building was designated as Landmark No. 85 through Ordinance No. 208-77. The Diego Rivera fresco, *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*, was described and its significance was briefly discussed in this designation.⁴ The 1969 addition was not included in landmark designation. Both the original building and addition were surveyed as part of the Department of City Planning’s 1976 survey. The survey notes the original building and addition “are equally valid architectures, disparate styles, playful, human, and [have] visually creative spatial disproportions.”

The San Francisco Art Institute, at 800 Chestnut Street, was nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A (events) in 2016. The Historic Preservation Commission provided review and comment on a draft National Register nomination for the San Francisco Art Institute in 2015. The Commission concurred with the assessment of the nomination that SFAI was nationally significant under Criterion A (events) for its role in the development of American art and for its contributions to art education in the United States with a period of significance of 1927 through 1980. The Commission stated that they also believed that the property should be nominated under Criterion C (architecture/design) as a facility that possesses high artistic value and incorporates the distinctive characteristics of both Spanish Colonial Revival architecture (original building) and of

² San Francisco Planning Department, “San Francisco Art Institute, Final Case Report” for Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (December 17, 1975), 7.

³ National Register of Historic Places, San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) (800 Chestnut Street) Nomination, City and County of San Francisco, California, 2016, Section 7, pages 4-5. The property was determined eligible for listing but was not listed on the National Register due lack of support by owner.

⁴ San Francisco Planning Department, “San Francisco Art Institute, Final Case Report” for Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (December 17, 1975).

Brutalist architecture (addition). Further, the Commission recognized that both SFAI buildings were designed by master architects: Bakewell & Brown for the original building in 1926 and Paffard Keatinge-Clay for the addition in 1969. Neither the National Register nomination nor the Commission review and comment assess significance of *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*.

Project Description

The item before the HPC is consideration of a Resolution to Recommend Article 10 landmark designation of the Diego Rivera fresco titled *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* to the Board of Supervisors under Article 10 of the Planning Code, Section 1004.2. The pending Landmark designation was initiated by the Board of Supervisors.

On January 5, 2021, Supervisor Peskin introduced a proposed Resolution under Board of Supervisors (hereinafter “Board”) File No. 210016 to initiate the Landmark designation process for the fresco titled *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* in the Diego Rivera Gallery of the San Francisco Art Institute at 800 Chestnut Street. At a hearing of the Land Use and Transportation Committee of the Board on January 11, 2021, the committee voted unanimously to Recommend to the full Board approval of the Resolution to initiate Landmark Designation. On January 12, 2021, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Resolution, and on January 22, 2021, with the Mayor’s signature, Resolution No. 12-21 became effective.

Compliance With Planning Code

Article 10 of the Planning Code.

The executive summary and analysis under review was prepared by Department preservation staff, who meet the Secretary of the Interior’s professional qualifications. The Department has determined that the fresco titled *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* meets the requirements for eligibility as an individual landmark pursuant to Article 10 of the Planning Code. The justification for its inclusion is explained in detail in the attached Landmark Designation Fact Sheet, and briefly in this Executive Summary.

Significance: *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*, which demonstrates familiar themes in Rivera’s work on the critical importance of labor in the artistic and creative process, is culturally and historically significant as the work of preeminent Mexican artist, Diego Rivera. The fresco, designed and painted on a wall selected by the artist from amongst several options, reflects its immediate environment, physically and artistically, is also significant for its association with art education at SFAI, contributing to an expanded academic field of study in mural and fresco painting and influencing many generations of artists that have taught or attended SFAI. This artwork, and the academic program and artists that evolved from it, is also significant for its influence on the New Deal-era Works Project Administration mural program. The fresco is also significant for association with the Latinx and Chicana arts communities through its direct lineage with the Mission Mural movement (also known as community mural movement), a significant and vibrant part of San Francisco’s cultural heritage. The period of significance is 1931 to 1974.

Underrepresented Landmark Types: The proposed landmark designation addresses two previously identified underrepresented landmark types: work of art property type and property associated with Latinx and Chicanx arts communities.

Integrity: *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* maintains a high level of integrity. See Pages 2-3 of attached Landmark Designation Fact Sheet for further analysis.

Character-Defining Features: Character-defining features of *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* are identified in the attached Landmark Designation Fact Sheet on Page 3.

Boundaries of the Landmark: The proposed Landmark site encompasses the location of *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*, which is on the north wall of the Diego Rivera Gallery, an exhibition hall in the San Francisco Art Institute at 800 Chestnut Street (Assessor's Block No. 0049, Lot 001).

General Plan.

The Urban Design Element of the San Francisco General Plan contains the following relevant objectives and policies:

OBJECTIVE 2

CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES THAT PROVIDE A SENSE OF NATURE, CONTINUITY WITH THE PAST, AND FREEDOM FROM OVERCROWDING.

Policy 4

Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.

Designating significant historic resources as local landmarks will further continuity with the past because the buildings will be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

Planning Code Section 101.1 – Eight Priority Policies establishes and requires review of permits for consistency with said policies. On balance, the proposed designation is consistent with the priority policies, and furthers Policy Number 7, which states that landmarks and historic buildings be preserved.

Landmark Designation Procedures

Action by Historic Preservation Commission.

The Historic Preservation Commission on February 4, 2009, by Resolution No. 001, adopted the National Register Criteria as its methodology for recommending landmark designation of historic resources. Under the National Register Criteria, the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, materials, workmanship, and association, and that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or that are associated with the lives of persons

significant in our past; or that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or properties that have yielded, or may likely yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Article 10 of the Planning Code.

Section 1004 of the Planning Code authorizes the landmark designation of an individual structure or other feature or an integrated group of structures and features on a single lot or site, having special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value, as a landmark. Section 1004.1 also outlines that landmark designation may be initiated by the Board of Supervisors or the Historic Preservation Commission and the initiation shall include findings in support. Section 1004.2 states that once initiated, the proposed designation is referred to the Historic Preservation Commission for a report and recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to approve, disapprove or modify the proposal.

Pursuant to Section 1004.3 of the Planning Code, if the Historic Preservation Commission approves the designation, a copy of the resolution of approval is transmitted to the Board of Supervisors and without referral to the Planning Commission. The Board of Supervisors shall hold a public hearing on the designation and may approve, modify or disapprove the designation.

Section 1004(b) requires that the designating ordinance approved by the Board of Supervisors shall include the location and boundaries of the landmark site, a description of the characteristics of the landmark which justify its designation, and a description of the particular features that should be preserved.

If the Historic Preservation Commission approves the proposed designation recommendation, a copy of the resolution of approval is transmitted to the Board of Supervisors, which holds a public hearing on the designation and may approve, modify or disapprove the designation (Section 1004.4). If the Historic Preservation Commission disapproves the proposed designation, such action shall be final, except upon the filing of a valid appeal to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days (Section 1004.5).

Public / Neighborhood Input

Several emails and letters in support of the landmark designation were submitted to the Board of Supervisors during the Board review of the initiation to designate *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*. These letters are attached as part of the Board of Supervisors resolution package.

To date, staff has not received any communications regarding the landmark designation.

Issues & Other Considerations

- **Property owner input:** On April 15, 2021, the Department sent mailed notice to the property owner regarding the landmark designation recommendation hearing scheduled for May 5, 2021.
- **Period of Significance:** The period of significance for *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* fresco is 1931-1974. These dates encompass the painting of the fresco in Diego Rivera Gallery at San Francisco

Art Institute through its primary periods of influence and association with the New Deal Works Project Administration mural program in San Francisco (1934-1948) and the Mission Mural/community mural movement to 1974 when *Homage to Siquieros*, by Jesús “Chuy” Campusano, Luis Cortázar and Michael Rios, was painted at Bank of America branch at Mission and 16th streets. Since the Mission Mural or community mural movement is on-going and continues to develop and grow in San Francisco and internationally, identifying an appropriate end for the period of significance based on this historic association is complicated. 1974 was chosen as the end of the period of significance as this marks the date when *Homage to Siquieros* was painted. This artwork, an important piece in the Mission Mural and community mural movement in San Francisco, with its direct reference to the central figure in *The Making of a Fresco* and its direct connection to Rivera via Emmy Lou Packard, is representative of the influences of Rivera’s work in San Francisco. After 1974, the influence of Rivera becomes more difficult to define and there are many other artists and Mission-based organizations, such as Precita Eyes Muralists and Galería de la Raza, that are more representative of Mission or community muralism.

Environmental Review Status

The Planning Department has determined that actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment (specifically in this case, landmark designation) are exempt from environmental review, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 (Class Eight - Categorical).

Basis for Recommendation

The Department recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission recommend to the Board of Supervisors landmark designation of *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* as it is individually eligible as the work of preeminent Mexican artist Diego Rivera. The fresco is also significant for its association with art education at SFAI, contributing to an expanded academic field of study in mural and fresco painting and influencing many generations of artists that have taught or attended SFAI. This artwork, and the academic program and artists that evolved from it, is also significant for its influence on the New Deal-era Works Project Administration mural program. The fresco is also significant for association with the Latinx and Chicanx arts communities through its direct lineage with the Mission Mural movement (also known as community mural movement), a significant and vibrant part of San Francisco’s cultural heritage.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution Recommending Landmark designation
Exhibit A – Landmark Designation Fact Sheet
Exhibit B – Maps and Context Images
Exhibit C – Draft Landmark Designation Ordinance
Exhibit D – Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 12-21
Exhibit E – Board of Supervisors January 12, 2021 initiation hearing packet



LANDMARK RESOLUTION RECOMMENDATION DRAFT RESOLUTION NO. XXXX

HEARING DATE: MAY 5, 2021

Record No.: 2021-001721DES
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Zoning: RH-3 (Residential-I-House, Three Family)
40-X Height and Bulk District
San Francisco Landmark No. 85 (San Francisco Art Institute)
Block/Lot: 0049/001
Project Sponsor: SF Planning Department
49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 1400
San Francisco, CA 94103
Property Owner: San Francisco Art Institute
800 Chestnut Street
San Francisco, CA 94133-2206
Staff Contact: Pilar LaValley 628-652-7372
pilar.lavalley@sfgov.org

RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS LANDMARK DESIGNATION OF THE FRESCO TITLED "THE MAKING OF A FRESCO SHOWING THE BUILDING OF A CITY", ASSESSOR'S PARCEL BLOCK NO. 0049, LOT NO. 001, AS A LANDMARK CONSISTENT WITH THE PURPOSES AND STANDARDS OF ARTICLE 10

1. WHEREAS, on January 5, 2021, Supervisor Peskin introduced a proposed Resolution under Board of Supervisors (hereinafter "Board") File No. 210016 to initiate the Landmark designation process for Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," painted in 1931 on an interior wall in what is now known as the Diego Rivera Gallery at the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), 800 Chestnut Street, Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0049, Lot No. 001 ("the Fresco"); and
2. WHEREAS, on January 11, 2021, the Board of Supervisors at its Land Use and Transportation Committee meeting recommended unanimously to Recommend to the full Board approval of the Resolution to initiate Landmark Designation (Board File No. 210016); and
3. WHEREAS, on January 12, 2021, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Resolution to initiate Landmark Designation, and on January 22, 2021, with the Mayor's signature, Resolution No. 12-21 became

effective (Board File No. 210016); and

4. WHEREAS, Department Staff, who meet the Secretary of Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards, prepared the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet for the Fresco which was reviewed for accuracy and conformance with the purposes and standards of Article 10; and
5. WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission, at its regular meeting of May 5, 2021, reviewed Department staff’s analysis of historical significance of the Fresco pursuant to Article 10 as part of the Landmark Designation Executive Summary dated April 28, 2021, and recommended Landmark designation through this Resolution; and
6. WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission finds that the nomination of the Fresco as a Landmark is in the form prescribed by the Historic Preservation Commission and contains supporting historic, architectural, and/or cultural documentation; and
7. WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission finds that the Fresco is eligible for local designation for association with art education at SFAI, contributing to an expanded academic field of study in mural and fresco painting and influencing many generations of artists that have taught or attended SFAI; and
8. WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission finds that the Fresco is also eligible for local designation for association with the Latinx and Chicanx arts communities through its direct lineage with the Mission Mural movement (also known as community mural movement); and
9. WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission finds that the designation of the Fresco is also proper given its significance as a work of preeminent Mexican artist, Diego Rivera; and
10. WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission finds that the Fresco meets two of the Historic Preservation Commission’s four priority areas for designation: work of art property type and property associated with Latinx and Chicanx arts communities.; and
11. WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission finds that the Fresco meets the eligibility requirements of Section 1004 of the Planning Code and warrants consideration for Article 10 landmark designation; and
12. WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission finds that the boundaries and the list of character-defining features, as identified in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet, should be considered for preservation under the proposed landmark designation as they relate to the Fresco’s historical significance and retain historical integrity; and
13. WHEREAS, the proposed designation is consistent with the General Plan priority policies pursuant to Planning Code, Section 101.1 and furthers Priority Policy No. 7, which states that landmarks and historic buildings be preserved, and will serve the public necessity, convenience and welfare pursuant to Planning Code, Section 302; and
14. WHEREAS, the Department has determined that landmark designation is exempt from environmental

review, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 (Class Eight - Categorical); and,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends to the Board of Supervisors approval of landmark designation of the fresco titled “The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City,” Assessor’s Parcel Block No. 0049, Lot No. 001 consistent with the purposes and standards of Article 10 of the Planning Code.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Historic Preservation Commission at its meeting on May 5, 2021.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ADOPTED: May 5, 2021



ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK DESIGNATION FACT SHEET



The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City, 2016
Source: SFAI National Register Nomination¹

Historic Name:	<i>The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City</i>
Address:	Diego Rivera Gallery in original 1926 building of San Francisco Art Institute 800 Chestnut Street
Block/ Lot(s):	0049/001
Parcel Area:	75,624 sq. ft.
Zoning:	RH-3 (Residential-House, Three Family)
Year Built:	1931
Artist:	Diego Rivera

¹ National Register of Historic Places, San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) (800 Chestnut Street) Nomination, City and County of San Francisco, California (2016).

Prior Historic Studies/Other Designations:	<p>San Francisco Landmark No. 85, Ordinance No. 208-77 (June 9, 1977).</p> <p>San Francisco Planning Department, “San Francisco Art Institute, Final Case Report” for Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (December 17, 1975).</p> <p>National Register of Historic Places, San Francisco Art Institute (800 Chestnut Street) Nomination, City and County of San Francisco, California, Stacy Farr on behalf of Page & Turnbull, Inc., 2015.</p>
Prior HPC Actions:	<p>Made recommendation for SFAI as Landmark No. 85 in 1975.</p> <p>Review and Comment on National Register Nomination of San Francisco Art Institute (800 Chestnut Street) in 2015.</p>
Significance Criteria:	<p><u>Events</u>: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.</p> <p><u>Architecture/Design</u>: Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, and/or represents the work of a master.</p>
Period of Significance:	<p>The period of significance for <i>The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City</i> fresco is 1931-1974. This date encompasses the painting of the fresco in Diego Rivera Gallery at San Francisco Art Institute through primary periods of influence and association with the New Deal Works Project Administration mural program in San Francisco (1934-1948) and the Mission Mural/community mural movement to 1974 when <i>Homage to Siquieros</i>, by Jesús “Chuy” Campusano, Luis Cortázar and Michael Rios, was painted at Bank of America branch at Mission and 16th street.</p>
Statement of Significance:	<p><i>The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City</i>, painted by artist Diego Rivera and assistants John Viscount Hastings, Clifford Wight, and Matthew Barnes between May 1 and 31, 1931 on the north wall of an exhibition gallery at San Francisco Art Institute, demonstrates familiar themes in Rivera’s work on the critical importance of labor in the artistic and creative process. The fresco is culturally and historically significant as the work of preeminent Mexican artist, Diego Rivera. The fresco, designed and painted on a wall selected by the artist from amongst several options, reflects its immediate environment, physically and artistically, and is also significant for its association with art education at SFAI, contributing to an expanded academic field of study in mural and fresco painting and influencing many generations of artists that have taught or attended SFAI. This artwork, and the academic program and artists that evolved from it, is also significant for its influence on the New Deal-era Works Project Administration mural program. The fresco is also significant for its association with Latinx and Chicanx arts communities through its direct lineage with the Mission Mural movement (also known as community mural movement), a significant and vibrant part of San Francisco’s cultural heritage.</p>

<p>Assessment of Integrity:</p>	<p>The seven aspects of integrity as defined by the National Park Service (NPS) and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association.²</p> <p><i>The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City</i>, painted in 1931 by Diego Rivera and assistants Viscount John Hastings, Clifford Wight, and Matthew Barnes, retains a high degree of integrity to convey its artistic and cultural significance. The fresco retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, association, workmanship, setting, and feeling. Although the fresco has been restored, it retains a high degree of integrity of materials.</p> <p>Overall, the Department has determined that <i>The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City</i> fresco in Diego Rivera Gallery at San Francisco Art Institute retains integrity to convey its historical and cultural significance.</p>
<p>Character-Defining Features:</p>	<p>The character-defining features of <i>The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City</i> that should be preserved or replaced in-kind are those physical features associated with structural support, construction, and visual depiction and expression of the Fresco, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All metal and other furring channels that support the underlying wall behind the Fresco; • All metal lathe and plaster, including the scratch, brown, and other plaster coats that underlie the Fresco; • The combination of pigments and plaster that form the <i>buon fresco</i> artwork; • The size, shape, form, and materials of the Fresco inclusive of the <i>trompe l'oeil</i> painted post supports along the bottom portion of the wall; • The double-height, pedimented solid wall on which the Fresco is located; • The open trusses of the underside of the gable roof of the Diego Rivera Gallery; and, • The placement of the Fresco in relation to the surrounding features of the room, including its height above the floor and its extension to the roofline and corners of the wall.

Statement of Significance Summary

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City, painted by artist Diego Rivera and assistants John Viscount Hastings, Clifford Wight, and Matthew Barnes between May 1 and 31, 1931 on the north wall of an exhibition gallery at San Francisco Art Institute, demonstrates familiar themes in Rivera's work on the critical importance of

² "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation," *National Register Bulletin*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995, 44.

labor in the artistic and creative process. The fresco is culturally and historically significant as the work of preeminent Mexican artist, Diego Rivera. The fresco, designed and painted on a wall selected by the artist from amongst several options, reflects its immediate environment, physically and artistically, and is also significant for its association with art education at SFAI, contributing to an expanded academic field of study in mural and fresco painting and influencing many generations of artists that have taught or attended SFAI. This artwork, and the academic program and artists that evolved from it, is also significant for its influence on the New Deal-era Works Project Administration mural program. The fresco is also significant for its association with Latinx and Chicanx arts communities through its direct lineage with the Mission Mural movement (also known as community mural movement), a significant and vibrant part of San Francisco's cultural heritage.

Property Description and History

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City is a *buon fresco* (true fresco) produced in-situ by Diego Rivera in 1931 at the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), then known as the California School of Fine Arts. The San Francisco Art Institute³ was the first art school established west of the Mississippi River. This institution, which comprises two-thirds of a city block fronting on Francisco, Jones, and Chestnut streets, is in the Russian Hill neighborhood. The facility

...consists primarily of a 1926 building designed by architects Bakewell & Brown (the Original Building), and a 1969 addition designed by Paffard Keatinge-Clay (the Addition). ... A board form concrete wall approximately six feet tall encloses the property which includes an open, grassy area with trees (the Meadow) on the northeast corner of the lot. Surface parking lots are located between the Meadow and SFAI on Jones Street and at the northwest corner of the parcel on Francisco Street.⁴

The streets adjacent to the campus are occupied by two- to three-story single-family and multi-family residences in a variety of architectural styles. Many of the surrounding residences were constructed in the early decades of the 1900s, but there are also examples from the 1920s, 1950s, and 2000s.

San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI)

Constructed by the San Francisco Art Association for the California School of Fine Arts, now the San Francisco Art Institute, the original building at 800 Chestnut Street stands at the northwest corner of Chestnut and Jones streets. One of two primary buildings on the SFAI campus, the original building, constructed in 1926, is located at the south end of the parcel.

The Original Building is inspired by Beaux Arts and Mediterranean influences, and is composed of small interconnected, multi-level volumes that step up Chestnut Street from Jones Street. The volumes of the Original Building are set into the hill and range from one to two stories, giving the building the

³ San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) (1961-Present) or California School of Fine Arts (CSFA) (1916-1961) will both be used throughout this document. The school has also been known as the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art and San Francisco Institute of Art (1893-1916) and California School of Design (1874-1893).

⁴ National Register of Historic Places, San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) (800 Chestnut Street) Nomination, City and County of San Francisco, California (2016), Section 7, pages 4-5.

appearance of an Italian villa. The board form concrete building contains wood and steel frame windows and is capped by gabled, tiled roofs. The building does not have setbacks; the primary façade on Chestnut Street and the secondary façade on Jones Street front the sidewalk. The building is organized around an entrance courtyard which contains a centered, tiled fountain, and a five-story, square campanile capped by a pyramidal roof stands at the northwest corner of the courtyard. . . . The primary entrance is located on Chestnut Street. The arched entry. . . is capped by an arched pediment that features a motif designed in a Churrigueresco style.⁵

In addition to the fresco by Diego Rivera, the interior of the original building also contains murals by several SFAI students and teachers.

In 1936, eleven mural lunettes commissioned by Albert Bender were painted in the Reading Room of the CSFA library. These were painted by artists that included Victor Mikhail Arnautoff, Raymond Sceptre Boynton, William Jurgan Hesthal, Frederick Olmsted and Ralph Stackpole.⁶ Five fresco murals painted in the corridors of the Original Building by students of Ray Boynton and Victor Arnautoff were discovered in 2013. These murals are known to have been painted between 1933 and 1935, and were whitewashed likely in the 1940s. One mural has been attributed to Frederick Olmsted and depicts marble workers.⁷

In the late 1960s, SFAI expanded their facility with the construction of a large addition that occupies the northwestern part of the campus. Designed by architectural firm, Paffard Keatinge-Clay, the cast-in-place concrete building is “...designed in a modern Brutalist style influenced by Le Corbusier.”⁸ The addition is:

...supported by concrete pilotis and is composed of three stories, built into the hill which slopes down from Chestnut Street (south) to Francisco Street (north). Interior spaces at the Addition include a central, triple-height studio space, double height classrooms along the east wall, above which there is a mezzanine level with offices. The Addition is capped by two roof terraces: The lower roof terrace contains sculptural skylights and one-story lecture halls and galleries, and the upper roof terrace features an amphitheater and additional lecture halls.⁹

The addition was further described in a Planning Department staff report to Historic Preservation Commission on the proposed National Register nomination of the property, as follows:

One of the most technically innovative features of the building is the concrete, stepped roof of the lecture hall, which forms an outdoor amphitheater. The 150-foot square studio area is composed of 30-foot concrete structural bays with 20-foot high ceilings punctured by conical skylights angled to the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ San Francisco Planning Department, “San Francisco Art Institute, Final Case Report” for Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (December 17, 1975), 7. Quoted in SFAI NR Nomination (2016), Section 8, page 19.

⁷ SFAI NR Nomination (2016), Section 8, page 19; Anthony Rogers, “Lost Fresco From 1930 Uncovered at San Francisco Art Institute,” August 31, 2015. Accessed via <https://www.7x7.com/lost-fresco-from-1930-uncovered-at-san-francisco-art-institute-1787227514.html>.

⁸ SFAI NR Nomination (2016), Section 7, page 4.

⁹ Ibid, pages 4-5.

north. The north façade of the building is a concrete slab brise-soleil used as a structural element, and provides privacy while modulating the light of the painting studios.¹⁰

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City

The fresco, *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*, created in *buon fresco* or true fresco style by artist, Diego Rivera, occupies the wall of a studio and exhibit gallery, now known as Diego Rivera Gallery, in the San Francisco Art Institute (formerly California School of Fine Arts). Diego Rivera Gallery is located to the west of the courtyard in the original 1926 building of the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI). The

...double-height gallery features the Diego Rivera mural on its north wall. A wood stair with a decorative metal balustrade parallels the north wall in front of the mural and leads to the second floor of the SFAI building. The south gable end contains a circular multi-light window [that faces onto Chestnut Street]. There are arched six-light windows in the second story of the east wall. The room has wood flooring, simple, unfinished walls, and terminates in a ceiling with decorative trusses and exposed rafters.¹¹

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City (also known as *La construccion de un fresco* and *Making of a Fresco, Showing the Building of a City*), an approximately 40 foot by 30 foot painting, “covers the upper two-thirds of a pedimented interior wall”¹² of the large double-height room. Centered in the unpainted plaster wall below the fresco is an incised inscription that reads:

This fresco painted by Diego Rivera in nineteen hundred and thirty-one is the gift of William Lewis Gerstle during his term as President of the San Francisco Arts Association for the years nineteen hundred and thirty and nineteen hundred and thirty-one.¹³

Diego Rivera completed the fresco with his assistants John Viscount Hastings (Lord Hastings), Clifford Wight, and plasterer Matthew Barnes between May 1 and 31, 1931. Several of these assistants also worked with Rivera on his other projects in the United States; in a typewritten note by unknown author included in the SFAI Archives, these artists and their roles in the project (as well as Albert Barrows and Ralph Stackpole) were described as follows:

Viscount John Hastings, radical English lord and painter who had just come from Tahiti, Mexico-bound to study under Rivera, found him in in SF and enlisted as his assistant. Clifford Wight, an English sculptor, also became his helper, and followed him later to Detroit. Matthew Barnes, artist, actor, versatile and picturesque personality, became his plasterer. Albert Barrow[s], engineer, helped him with technical advice, and Ralph Stackpole became adviser-extraordinary on every question which arose.¹⁴

¹⁰ San Francisco Planning Department, “National Register Nomination, Review and Comment Case Report,” 800 Chestnut Street (San Francisco Art Institute), Case No. 2015-011315FED (October 1, 2015), 3.

¹¹ SFAI NR nomination, 2016, Section 7, page 7.

¹² Stanton L. Catlin, “Mural Census: San Francisco Art Institute,” in *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, ed. Cynthia Newman Helms (New York: Founders Society Detroit Institute of Arts, in association with W. W. Norton, 1986), 284.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ No author, typed below “From Scaffoldings” fragment, no date. San Francisco Art Institute Archives.

Like all of the murals painted by Rivera on walls of buildings in Mexico and the United States, including those at the Detroit Institute of Art (The *Detroit Industry* Murals, designated as a National Historic Landmark) and at the former Pacific Stock Exchange (155 Sansome Street, now The City Club) (*Allegory of California* – pending San Francisco Landmark designation), *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* was painted in *fresco buono* or true fresco. This technique is

...the ancient Italian tradition as the Mexican artists [such as Diego Rivera] interpreted it. In this process, fine marble dust is mixed with slaked lime to create the painting surface. In *fresco buono*, the plasterer prepares the painting surface with layers of cement and rough lime plaster, a day's worth of work; the artist applies the color as long as the surface remains moist. As the plaster dries, the painting becomes part of the wall.¹⁵

In 1992, SFAI held a two-day master workshop of painting conservators and arts professionals focused on *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* with Lucienne Block and Stephen Pope Dimitroff, artists and associates of Rivera who have undertaken major cleaning and restorative treatments of Rivera frescoes at SFAI as well as the Detroit Institute of Arts. According to the condition description completed in 1992, as part this workshop, the fresco is composed of

aggregate and lime plaster applied in four progressively fine layers over the course of four weeks. Final layer is plumb and polished and applied in one-day increments known as 'giornata.' Each giornata defines the area to be painted that day or in one period. Generally, Rivera painted for long periods—commonly 20 hours.

Some incised-method cartooning (image outlines) is visible throughout. Plaster is generally in good structural condition. The surface texture of this mural is rougher than that of the Stock Exchange mural. This is most likely from having been applied more quickly, causing some uneven troweling and polishing of the plaster. Both are the work of Rivera's plaster Mathew Barnes.¹⁶

The 1992 description continues, noting that the paint surface consists of

true fresco technique—brushstrokes of hand ground metal oxide pigments in water applied to wet plaster. ... Some pounce-method (lines of small black dots) and pencil cartooning is visible through the paint surface. Paint application is thin overall—significantly thinner than the paint application on the Stock Exchange mural—and is generally thought to have been done fairly quickly.¹⁷

While participants in the 1992 workshop did not evaluate the secondary support or substrate of the wall supporting the fresco, their description is consistent with that provided by architect Timothy Pflueger, noting that the fresco is attached to "furred" wall consisting of a

¹⁵ National Register of Historic Places, Coit Memorial Tower (Amendment), City and County of San Francisco, California, National Register #07001468, 2018, Section 8, page 29.

¹⁶ Diego Rivera Mural Conservation Workshop, 1992. San Francisco Art Institute.

¹⁷ Ibid.

...protracted system of galvanized metal lath to which a plumb layer of concrete has been applied. The plaster layers of the fresco are then applied to the concrete of the furred wall. This creates an airspace between the back of the mural and the building. This was done to mitigate moisture and expansion damage.”¹⁸

Pflueger, in a typewritten page titled “Notes Re Rivera Fresco,” described the “furring” as being accomplished in the following manner:

the concrete wall was drilled for expansion bolts, to which horizontal runner bars were applied. Ordinarily these runner bars are placed 3 or 4 feet apart, but in this instance we placed them 2 feet apart in order to get a stiffer job. These runner bars were wired to the expansion bolts. To these runner bars we tied the vertical metal studs at 12 inch centers. These were wired to the runner bars. The metal lath was then wired to the studs. ...we had all of this material galvanized as a more certain protection against corrosion.¹⁹

Architect Timothy Pflueger, who worked with Rivera on all three of his large San Francisco projects, is credited as having offered the commission that brought the artist to the Bay Area in 1930. However, Pflueger’s offer of a fresco commission and Rivera’s arrival in San Francisco to commence the Stock Exchange project marked the end of a multi-year campaign by local art patrons and artists affiliated with SFAI to bring Rivera to San Francisco. Although many art collectors, galleries, and institutions in the United States may have supported the idea of having Diego Rivera, then one of the most famous artists in the world, come to San Francisco, it was Pflueger, Ralph Stackpole, William Gerstle, and Albert Bender that were most involved in the effort.²⁰

Beginning as early as 1925, articles about Rivera [and other Mexican artists] began to appear in the United States.²¹ Around the same time, galleries and museums around the world also sponsored major exhibitions of Mexican art, such that “[d]uring this period... Mexican muralists became world celebrities. ... They became so important that artists came from around the world to be in their presence and study their paintings. Between 1920 and 1930, Mexico became a world center for art.”²² Much of this attention focused on Diego Rivera and a small but steady stream of artists, intellectuals, and interested lay people came to Mexico to watch him work.²³ Among the artists that went to Mexico were “two California artists, Ray Boynton, who taught *buon fresco* (true fresco) courses at the California School of Fine Arts, and Ralph Stackpole, a San Francisco-based sculptor who had known Rivera in Paris.”²⁴ When they returned to San Francisco from Mexico in 1926 and 1928, respectively, both Boynton and Stackpole brought back examples of Rivera’s work, including two pieces that were hung at SFAI at behest of board members William Gerstle and Albert Bender. Boynton may have been the first to

¹⁸ Diego Rivera Mural Conservation Workshop, 1992. San Francisco Art Institute.

¹⁹ Letter/note from Timothy Pflueger, “Notes Re Rivera Fresco,” undated, San Francisco AI Archives.

²⁰ San Francisco Art Institute, Diego Rivera Mural webpage at <https://sfai.edu/about-sfai/diego-rivera-mural>.

²¹ Ernest Goldstein, *The Journey of Diego Rivera* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Lerner Publications, c1996), 31-33.

²² Ibid.

²³ Laurance P. Hurlburt, “Diego Rivera (1886-1957): A Chronology of His Art, Life and Times,” in *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, ed. Cynthia Newman Helms (New York: Founders Society Detroit Institute of Arts, in association with W. W. Norton, 1986), 59.

²⁴ National Historic Landmarks Program, “National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry* Murals, Detroit Institute of Arts” (February 8, 2013), 16.

recommend bringing Rivera to San Francisco for a commission.²⁵ Such recommendation may have been made to Albert Bender, who was one of Rivera's strongest supporters, purchasing and loaning or donating Rivera's art for the first exhibitions and shows by the artist in San Francisco, who made the first offer of a mural commission in San Francisco in 1927, which Rivera declined due to a conflicting invitation to visit Russia.²⁶ Following Stackpole's return from Mexico in 1928 or 1929, Bender once again invites Rivera to San Francisco, but again the artist's had schedule conflicts and was also unable to secure a visa. At around this same time, "William Gerstle, president of the [San Francisco] Art Association, was very excited about the work and commissioned Rivera to do a small wall, 120 feet square, in the school" and donated "\$1,500...for the mural."²⁷ Rivera does not appear to have been enthusiastic about the proposed wall space, which would remain an issue for the SFAI commission even after he arrived in San Francisco in 1930.

During the same period as Boynton's and Stackpole's travels to Mexico, newspaper articles began to mention that SFAI was considering offering Rivera a commission to paint a fresco in their building. In the fall of 1927, an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* stated, based on information provided by Albert Bender, that Rivera would be visiting San Francisco that holiday season to "give lectures and a limited course in his theory of the mechanical analysis of painting" and that there was a "rumor that [a] wealthy patron is making tentative arrangements for Rivera to do mural at California Institute of Fine Arts."²⁸ Several articles followed in the final months of 1927 indicating that Rivera's visit had to be postponed – he was in the Soviet Union at the time – but that he hoped to travel to San Francisco in the coming months.²⁹ Though Rivera failed to show up in San Francisco for another three years, his popularity only grew during that time through articles and exhibits in San Francisco and across the United States.

In 1927, Rivera's artworks were enjoyed at two popular exhibitions in San Francisco at the Gallerie Beaux Arts and the East West Gallery. Local art patrons were further encouraged in their interest in Rivera's work when many of their artworks by the artist were purchased or borrowed in 1928 for a show at the Weyhe Gallery in New York.³⁰ Again, in 1928, local media began reporting on a Rivera commission at SFAI. In July a headline ran that "Rivera May Win Contract Here" and the accompanying story stated that while correspondence was still under way to work out the details, a fund had been set aside by one of the board of directors for the sole purpose of commissioning Rivera to do a "decoration at the school."³¹ In what may have been an effort to encourage support of this proposal, the article went on to explain that Rivera's frescoes in public buildings in Mexico City were regarded as the "outstanding achievements of contemporary art" and that his work had been shown locally

²⁵ San Francisco Art Institute, Diego Rivera Mural webpage at <https://sfai.edu/about-sfai/diego-rivera-mural>.

²⁶ San Francisco Art Institute, Diego Rivera Mural webpage at <https://sfai.edu/about-sfai/diego-rivera-mural>.

²⁷ San Francisco Planning Department, "National Register Nomination, Review and Comment Case Report," 800 Chestnut Street (San Francisco Art Institute), Case No. 2015-011315FED, October 1, 2015, 6-7; Luis-Martín Lozano, "1929-1931 V. Revolutions and Allegories: Mexico and San Francisco," in *Diego Rivera: The Complete Murals*, Luis-Martín Lozano and Juan Rafael Coronel Rivera, ed. Benedikt Taschen (Los Angeles: Taschen, c2008), 265.

²⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Rivera to Visit S.F. During the Holiday Season," October 30, 1927. Accessed via <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.sfpl.org/>.

²⁹ "San Francisco Chronicle, "Rivera's Proposed Visit is Delayed," December 25, 1927. Accessed via <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.sfpl.org/>.

³⁰ *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Rivera's Work to Be Shown in New York," January 1, 1928. Accessed via <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.sfpl.org/>.

³¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Rivera May Win Mural Contract Here," July 15, 1928. Accessed via <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.sfpl.org/>.

at several galleries in addition to being in the collections of patrons, art collectors, the California School of Fine Arts, and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor.³² Many of the pieces in the latter collections appear to have been donations to these institutions from Albert Bender. A month later, Albert M. Bender, reported that Rivera had accepted a commission to do a mural fresco in the California School of Fine Arts. Although Rivera's date of arrival had not been set at time of the newspaper report, it was noted that he intended to travel to San Francisco within the next several months "when on his way to Russia to do extensive work there."³³ It is unclear whether Rivera actually expected to undertake the SFAI project in 1928 given his commitments, both professional and political, in Mexico. At the time of the SFAI announcement, Rivera was just returning from a challenging visit to the Soviet Union to a changing political landscape in Mexico. His political activities came under increased scrutiny – in both Mexico and the United States – and he met and married Frida Kahlo. At the same time, he also began work on his comprehensive history of the Mexican nation at the Palacio Nacional in 1929 and, a short time later, accepted a lucrative commission from the US Ambassador to Mexico for the Palacio de Cortés in Cuernavaca.

Although he was recognized as an artist of international importance prior to travelling to San Francisco, the Stock Exchange commission, along with the long-frustrated promise of the SFAI project, may have come at an opportune moment for Rivera, personally and professionally. His government commissions, especially with the US Ambassador to Mexico, who was closely affiliated with powerful capitalists like J.P. Morgan and the Rockefeller family, raised concerns amongst the Mexican Communist Party and Stalinist Soviet Union about his allegiance. Even as Rivera avowed his leftist principles, he was expelled from the Mexican Communist Party and shunned by party members.³⁴ The political intrigues swirling around Rivera during this period threatened to overwhelm or shut down his most significant projects, including his work at the National Palace. In addition to his eagerness to explore the United States, a place that "...brought together factories, scientific genius, and an industrial mechanical age that let [Rivera] produce art that could speak to the people who worked in the new society,"³⁵ the commissions on offer in San Francisco may have provided the artist with a strategic opportunity to break away from political and personal entanglements in Mexico.

It seems equally plausible that the Pacific Stock Exchange commission was a strategic move on the part of Rivera's supporters in San Francisco.

In late September 1930, Pflueger announced that he had commissioned Rivera to paint a mural for the Luncheon Club of the Pacific Stock Exchange in a building he had designed. His decision raised alarm among the media: "Radical To Do Exchange Mural," wrote one newspaper, and another asked, "Will Art Be Touched in Pink?" Originally, Rivera's patrons had planned his first commission at the California School of Fine Arts, "the heart of mural training." Criticism over Pflueger's decision may have led Rivera's patrons to paint the Luncheon Club mural first, notes [art historian] Lee, where a private commercial space rather than an academic public space ruled out "arguing in the public sphere." What the club

³² Ibid.

³³ *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Rivera to Do Fine Arts School Mural," August 26, 1928. Accessed via <https://infoweb-newsbank.com.ezproxy.sfpl.org/>.

³⁴ Robert W. Cherny, *Victor Arnautoff and the Politics of Art* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2017), 64-66; Hurlburt, *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, 71; Lee, *Painting on the Left*, 52-55.

³⁵ Goldstein, 50.

chose to put on its walls was its own business, but radical political content was out. “I hold a contract with Rivera. And I hold the pursestrings for the job,” Pflueger stated. “Should he attempt any of the caricaturing for which he is famous...well, there is power in pursestrings.”³⁶

Even while concerns over Rivera’s politics were raised with this announcement, choosing to bring Rivera to San Francisco with the Stock Exchange project, described at the time as a “temple of capitalism,” may have eased apprehensions of the Department of Justice which was hesitant to issue Rivera a travel visa. Even so, Dwight Morrow, who as US Ambassador to Mexico had recently seen the completion of the commission he had given Rivera at Palacio de Cortés, and Albert Bender, wealthy San Francisco art patron and Rivera sponsor, had to intercede on behalf of Rivera – and of the pending Stock Exchange and SFAI commissions – to get a travel visa issued.

Meanwhile, details regarding the SFAI project were still being worked out. As with his commission at the Stock Exchange, SFAI made clear that they expected a non-political work: “The character of the mural might have a very wide choice of subject matter—anything but of a political nature...”³⁷ In late May 1929, a month before Rivera’s expected arrival in San Francisco, an acquisitions committee of the San Francisco Art Association met and proposed the forty-foot-long outdoor loggia as the site of the mural. Having previously vetoed Gerstle’s original offer of a small wall space,

Rivera rejected as unsuitable this long, fractured architectural space in favor of the large open walls of the art gallery. ... Curiously, Rivera first selected the south wall of the gallery, its surface broken by a circular window. At this time, he had already decided on the general compositional device of scaffolding, as well as artists... The second sketch, for the north wall where Rivera would finally paint, depicts subject matter more akin to the completed fresco – sculptors, muralists, and architects work, with their patrons studying the artists’ plans.³⁸

Additional information from the San Francisco Art Institute archives suggests that negotiations over the location and breadth of the fresco at the school extended up to, and perhaps beyond, when Rivera finally started painting. Although he had accepted SFAI’s commission and fee of \$1,500, Rivera appears to have desired a larger canvas. He may even have had reason to hope that he would end up decorating the entire exhibition gallery. Contrary to the statement quoted above regarding his plans for the SFAI fresco, Rivera appears to have been revising theme and motif as well as location until painting began.

...he first planned to paint a large female allegorical figure, not at the [Stock Exchange], but at the Fine Arts school – she was to be surrounded by representations of the industry and labor relations of the city in particular and California as a whole. The original plan included several walls... Though Gerstle’s original invitation still stood, this larger project proved impossible.... Finally, when the time came for

³⁶ Laurance P. Hurlburt, *The Mexican Muralists in the United States* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 100.

³⁷ Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists*, 114.

³⁸ Ibid, 114-115.

him to return to Mexico, Rivera agreed to paint just the north wall of the exhibition gallery – leaving open the possibility of painting other frescoes in the near future. And so, in a mere thirty days, he painted his fresco of the arts and industries of North America.³⁹

Rivera eventually received 2,500 dollars instead of the 1,500 initially stipulated. Gerstle made a donation to the Board of the School, which in turn paid Rivera this amount. According to the SFAI archives, they paid Matthew Barnes' fees in addition.⁴⁰

The difficulties in resolving details around the SFAI project, along with increasingly demanding requests from his patrons in Mexico to return to work at the Palacio Nacional, certainly led to the compressed timeframe in which Rivera painted *The Making of a Fresco* and made it “necessary to work night and day and behind locked doors...”⁴¹ Although it was originally the first (unofficial) commission offered to Rivera, *The Making of a Fresco* would end up being the last painted, during the shortest period of work, by the artist during his first visit to San Francisco.

The sketch plans Rivera seems to have prepared in anticipation of or solicitation for covering multiple walls in the SFAI gallery suggest that neither the scaffolding motif nor the image of the monumental worker were among the artist's initial inspirations for the fresco. While scaffolding becomes a recurring motif in the sketches prepared for first the south wall and then the north wall of the gallery in 1931, the heroic worker does not appear in any of the extant plans for the SFAI project. Other imagery in the completed fresco appears to relate closely to the latest sketch plan for the north wall of the gallery; perhaps the central figure shifted from female allegorical figure to the laborer to better fit what Rivera would later describe, saying:

The fresco I painted in the San Francisco School of Fine Arts seems to me to express exactly the objective situation which produced it and to contain, technically, all the possibilities of mural painting; and, since it was executed in a technical school of the plastic arts, these, naturally had to be its first functions.⁴²

A *trompe l'oeil* scaffolding motif, similar to the scaffolding shown in sketch plans for the painting and for the actual functional scaffolding designed and constructed by Rivera for the creation of the fresco, divides the fresco into three sections vertically and includes painted post supports that extend down the lower third of the wall to nearly floor level. In a color scheme of blues, reds, ochres and greys, the fresco depicts a “cross-section of the modern American city” with a blue overalled and hard-hatted

³⁹ Lozano, in *Diego Rivera: The Complete Murals*, 265.

⁴⁰ Lozano, in *Diego Rivera: The Complete Murals*, footnote 32, 267.

⁴¹ Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists* (1989), 113.

⁴² Diego Rivera, *Portrait of America* (New York: Covici-Friede, 1934). Quoted in exhibit titled *Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects: SFAI Histories, Matrix*, UC Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archives (2020), accessed at [Object 27 - Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects \(matrix277.org\)](https://matrix277.org).

...heroic figure of a workman, a painted scaffolding and a rear view of the artist seated on the scaffolding. Within this framework are various figures typifying aspects of construction, labor and planning.⁴³

Both hands of the monumental figure, in the center panel, rest on levers, suggesting that he is in control of all the activity depicted around him. The “lower central panel of the mural shows the figures of Timothy Pflueger, Arthur Brown, Jr. and William Gerstle” while “Ralph Stackpole can be seen in the left central panel.”⁴⁴ Art critic Laurance P. Hurlburt provides further description:

A gigantic figure of a “hard-hat” laborer operating machinery...forms the dominant central image of the mural. This figure is itself being painted in the fresco by Rivera and his associates, [Viscount John] Hastings and [Clifford] Wight, in the upper level of the scaffolding, with Rivera (his ample behind protruding over the edge of the scaffolding) and [Matthew] Barnes in the middle...At the bottom, the architects [Timothy] Pflueger and [Arthur, Jr.] Brown flank the patron [William] Gerstle and hold study plans for an architectural project. In the left segment of the mural...sculptor Ralph Stackpole works with a pneumatic hammer on a monumental sculptural piece... Above, Rivera depicted industrial exhaust fans... To the lower right, the architects and designers [Matthew Baltekal-]Goodman, [Geraldine Colby] Frickle, and [Albert or Alfred] Barrows sketch and plan, while above, laborers install steel girders of a building under construction.⁴⁵

There is some confusion as to whether the woman in the lower right panel is meant to be Geraldine Colby Frickle, a designer who taught at SFAI, or Mrs. Marion Simpson, a patron of Rivera and SFAI. Similarly, some sources identify the man bent over sketching at the drafting table in the lower right panel as Albert Barrows, a painter, photographer, and architect who would have been part of the SFAI circle at the time Rivera was in San Francisco, or as Alfred Barrows, a mathematician and engineer who studied and lectured on the Golden Section, a theory relating art and mathematics of which Rivera was a proponent.

Incorporating portraits of recognizable individuals was a common element in Rivera’s murals; in his murals in both Mexico and the US, these portraits included historical figures, patrons, assistants, fellow artists and teachers, as well as friends and acquaintances. In *the Making of a Fresco*, Rivera depicted his patrons – Pflueger, Brown, and Gerstle, the three men who commissioned him for the SFAI mural⁴⁶ – studying plans and directing the construction (of fresco? of a building? of the city?) while Rivera himself, along with other artists and assistants – Stackpole, Hastings, Wight, and Barnes – are shown at work. The other individuals shown developing architectural plans in the fresco – Goodman, Frickle, and Barrows – were friends, colleagues, or persons of note in fields of design and architecture.

⁴³ San Francisco Planning Department, “San Francisco Art Institute, Final Case Report” for Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (December 17, 1975), 7.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists* (1989), 121-122.

⁴⁶ Leticia Alvarez, *The Influence of the Mexican Muralists in the United States: From the New Deal to the Abstract Expressionism* (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Master Theses, 2001), 29-30. Accessed via <http://hdl.handle.net/10919/32407>. Catlin, *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, 283.

Extant blueprints from the project show the *trompe l'oeil* scaffolding, which Hurlburt notes as the motif that “forms the compositional and thematic core of the mural.”⁴⁷ Further description provides that the “dominating compositional device of the builders’ scaffold spreads across the whole surface of the mural, conveniently framing every sub-plot of activating and lifting the eye up towards the triangular apex of the wall where the wood coloring of the scaffold poles seems to become part of the actual wooden timber rafts of the studio’s.”⁴⁸ Architect Timothy Pflueger, who was involved in three of Rivera’s four projects in San Francisco, was familiar with the construction details for the SFAI project and described the design of the scaffolding as being of the utmost practicality – providing the greatest access to the surface to be painted while also being easy to dismantle and reinstall should the artist or visiting patrons wish to review the fresco.⁴⁹

Given the themes surrounding art, industry, and labor that Rivera sought to evoke in *The Making of a Fresco*, use of the scaffolding makes sense; it is a simple, age-old tool used by artists, artisans, and laborers that adds visual depth, layering artists and artisans atop the products they are creating, while also showing artists and laborers at work, creating sculptures, taking measurements, and so on. Other observers have also suggested that the scaffolding, which Rivera included in slightly different configurations in two sketches made as studies for the SFAI fresco, creates a “a triangular triptych,”⁵⁰ a form “traditionally used to evoke the mystery or holiness of the Trinity in ancient Italian artistic traditions and religious conventionalism”⁵¹ that would have been a familiar reference for Rivera from his studies in Europe. Hurlburt, who describes *The Making of a Fresco* as the weakest of Rivera’s murals in San Francisco, states that the scaffolding is a detriment to the painting because it breaks the composition into incoherent and unrelated elements.⁵² Another art historian, Francis O’Connor, wrote that the scaffolding motif created a “symmetrical compartmentalized composition” and that the fresco featured a “rather stiff deployment of figures”⁵³

No matter the intent, the scaffolding no less than the gigantic figure of the laborer dominates the fresco. It is the figure of the laborer, however, that was considered revolutionary. In an article about the unveiling of the fresco in August 1931, it was described as follows:

It depicts realistically, but with symbolic implications, the activities of the arts and industry in America. In it artists are shown portraying a great figure of a workman. Sections of the mural typify industry and the pursuits of creative beauty.⁵⁴

Art historian Anthony W. Lee points out in his book, *Painting from the Left*, that when Rivera “... painted the image of the American worker in *Making a Fresco*, he was also providing the city with its first image for and about

⁴⁷ Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists* (1989), 122.

⁴⁸ Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siquieros* (San Francisco, California: Chronicle Books, 1998), 126.

⁴⁹ Letter/note from Timothy Pflueger, “Notes Re Rivera Fresco,” undated, San Francisco AI Archives.

⁵⁰ Alvarez, 29-30; Catlin, *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, 283.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists* (1989), 122.

⁵³ Francis O’Connor, “The Influence of Diego Rivera on the Art of the United States during the 1930s and After,” in *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, ed. Cynthia Newman Helms (New York: Founders Society Detroit Institute of Arts, in association with W. W. Norton, 1986), 173.

⁵⁴ *San Francisco Chronicle*, “Critics View Rivera’s Art, School Mural,” August 12, 1931. Accessed via <https://infoweb-newsbank.com.ezproxy.sfpl.org/>.

labor...”⁵⁵ that could be specifically associated with the organized labor movements of the period. Further, by painting himself in the act or work of painting Rivera showed his solidarity with the figure of the worker, a tricky proposition for Rivera in his own position as employer of the worker assistants that he also depicts in the fresco and for how it might contravene his project-based relationship to his patrons.⁵⁶

Where some critics decry *The Making of a Fresco*’s compositional limitations, stiff figures, or what they perceive as the overly politically neutral tone of Rivera’s work in the United States, others perceived a work in which Rivera’s “proletarian sympathies” were being displayed in “subjects and methods accessible to the masses.”⁵⁷ Lee suggests that *The Making of a Fresco* has a purposefully “slippery quality” in its irregular “compartmentalizing grid” of scaffolding, shifting perspectival depth from space to space within that grid, and “...distinct difference between ‘real’ and ‘painted’ figures.”⁵⁸ In this analysis, the relationships depicted in the mural between patron and worker, industry and labor, progressives and radicals become increasingly unresolved or “slippery.” The monumental worker, so radical a presence on first impression, fades somewhat as he is “...continually displaced as the central focus by competing activity and directional miscues,”⁵⁹ leaving the underlying relationships between Rivera and his patrons and of patrons and workers, in general, unresolved.

The piece – or perhaps the residual association with Rivera, a leftist artist– was radical enough during the McCarthy-era for SFAI’s president and board to decide to conceal the artwork. The fresco was covered from public or student view in the 1950s when a drop ceiling and demising wall were constructed in the gallery. Although some sources state that these obstructions were removed, and the fresco rededicated, following Rivera’s death in 1957, other evidence suggests that the fresco remained partially or fully covered until the early 1980s. A photograph taken by a student in 1968 shows the fresco behind curtains. SFAI archival materials include several communications from Emmy Lou Packard, an artist who worked with Rivera and was also close friends with Rivera and Kahlo, dating from 1981 and 1985, noting the presence of curtains hung across the fresco, which she indicates were then kept open but still obscured several feet along both vertical sides of the painting. Packard also decries the presence of a tool/workroom enclosure covering the base of the wall where the storage of tools was causing damage to the lower areas of the painting. Packard, along with Peter Rodriguez, founder of the Mexican Museum, recommended that SFAI remove this workroom and curtains, stating that Latin Americans who visited the mural found these elements disrespectful to the artwork and artist.

The fresco was deemed to be in overall sound condition by participants in the July 1992 workshop focused on the artwork. At that time, workshop participants identified dirt and cotton-lint (noted at the time that this may have come from the linen curtains that covered the fresco for many years) adhered to the surface of the fresco and several areas of damage at lower sections of fresco where it is accessible to human touch. The workshop participants undertook a very gentle dry brush cleaning and heat removal of tape that had adhered to the lower right corner of the fresco. Additional information from SFAI archives indicates that prior to 1992 the fresco had been cleaned and repaired at least twice: in 1977, Emmy Lou Packard, an artist would had assisted Rivera on his *Pan-American Unity* fresco, documented condition and retouched several locations at the lower left section and

⁵⁵ Anthony W. Lee, *Painting On The Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics, and San Francisco’s Public Murals* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1999), 104.

⁵⁶ Lee, 104.

⁵⁷ *San Francisco Chronicle*, “All Serene as Local CWA Art Plan Starts,” January 11, 1934. Quoted in Lee, 107.

⁵⁸ Lee, 112.

⁵⁹ Lee, 113.

on the trompe l'oeil post supports that extend to the floor; and, in 1986, Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Dimitroff completed maintenance work that included “general cleaning of the fresco, a touching up of all scratches and nicks, to the lower section of the fresco, and the repair of the worker’s badge...(removing the marks [hammer and sickle] that were not in the original painting...).”⁶⁰ Some nicks and abrasions to the lower left corner of the fresco were also repaired in 1990.

An update to the July 1992 condition report was added in August 1992, noting that following the “improper installation and removal of plastic sheeting intended to protect the mural from wood dust associated with refinishing of the gallery floor there were several new gouges of the paint surface as well as a layer of surface dust from the sanding of the wood floor.”⁶¹

Visual inspection of the fresco has not been undertaken in preparation of this report, but there is no indication that its physical condition has been compromised in recent years.

Events: *Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.*

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City, painted in 1931 at the San Francisco Art Institute (then California Institute of Fine Arts) by Mexican artist, Diego Rivera, is significant for its association with art education at SFAI, contributing to an expanded academic field of study in mural and fresco painting and influencing many generations of artists that have taught or attended SFAI. This artwork, and the academic program and artists that evolved from it, is also significant for its influence on the New Deal-era Works Project Administration mural program. The fresco is also significant for its association with Latinx and Chicanx arts communities through its direct lineage with the Mission Mural movement (also known as community mural movement), a significant and vibrant part of San Francisco’s cultural heritage.

Nuestra Historia: San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement (draft) states that the “essential threads of Latino muralism as it exists today in San Francisco can be traced to the rise of the Mexican Mural Movement during the 1920s”⁶² and that Rivera’s “impact on the California School of Fine Arts/SFAI was vital and long lasting” providing a “cadre of local artists trained in fresco and mural painting.”⁶³ Timothy W. Dresher, in his book, *San Francisco Bay Area Murals: Communities Create Their Muses: 1904-1997*, is even more explicit on these connections, stating that “Diego Rivera significantly influenced San Francisco muralists” with technical and stylistic aspects being passed on to later generations as “New Deal artists watched him paint in person, and sometimes worked as his assistants” while “subsequent muralists learned about his murals...by visiting the walls.”⁶⁴ In some instances, Rivera’s influences are particularly clear, such as in Chuy Campusano’s *Homage to*

⁶⁰ Lucienne Bloch, Letter to Mr. Steve Goldstein, San Francisco Art Institute, August 18, 1986. San Francisco Art Institute Archives.

⁶¹ No Author, “New Conditions,” August 1992, attached to the report prepared by participants in the July 1992 conservation workshop. San Francisco Art Institute Archives.

⁶² Jonathan Lammers and Carlos Cordova, *Nuestra Historia, San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement: Part III-g: Visual Arts*, December 2020 (Draft for Review), 10.

⁶³ Ibid, 13.

⁶⁴ Timothy W. Dresher, *San Francisco Bay Area Murals: Communities Create Their Muses: 1904-1997* (St. Paul: Pogo Press, 1998), 10.

Siquieros (1975) in which he “revises Rivera’s Art Institute image of the construction of a worker into the construction of a model Latino.”⁶⁵ The Mission mural or community mural movement also includes many artists and organizers who have been students at SFAI or have worked with other artists trained by Rivera: some examples include Emmy Lou Packard and collaborations with younger generation of Mission artists, including Michael Rios and Chuy Campusano during the painting of their *Homage to Siquieros*; Luis Cervantes and Precita Eyes Muralists; Galería de la Raza and one of its initial co-directors René Yañez; Los Mujeres Muralistas and its three founders, Patricia Rodriguez, Graciela Carrillo, Irene Perez, and Consuelo Mendez.

The National Historic Landmark nomination for Rivera’s *Detroit Industry* summarizes the influence of the 1920s Mexican Mural Movement as:

In the history of mural painting in America, the most commanding and vivid works came from the hands of three Mexican artists: Jose Clemente Orozco (1883-1949), David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974), and Diego Rivera (1886-1957). Known as *los tres grandes* (“the big three”), these leading artists of the 1920s Mexican Mural Movement, who rejected the elite walls of museums and galleries, painted monumental murals on public buildings as part of Mexico’s post-revolutionary cultural plan to educate the masses. The commissioning of works in the United States by these Mexican artists “coincided with a broader popular fascination with Mexican culture.”⁶⁶ The American 1930s “‘Mexican craze’ or ‘Mexican invasion,’” as contemporary art critics termed it – “created masterworks” and “enjoyed immense political and popular acclaim.”⁶⁷ Between 1930 and 1933, “these three Mexican artists created murals in the United States that had a lasting impact on the history of its mural art, both immediately and in terms of Rivera’s and Orozco’s impact on the New Deal art projects”⁶⁸ as the program looked to Mexico for inspiration and organization. “Through the Mexican presence,” writes historian Ingrid Fey, “the fresco technique became more well-known and appreciated in the United States.”⁶⁹

As noted previously, the presence of an art school that not only had a *buon fresco* mural training program but also an actual fresco painted by Rivera, one of *los tres grandes*, made SFAI and San Francisco a natural locus for the New Deal-era mural program as well as for the first New Deal projects and for progressive mural artists of the 1930s and 1940s. SFAI’s existence in San Francisco dated to the previous century with the establishment of the San Francisco Art Association.

First organized in 1871 as the San Francisco Art Association, the institution now known as the San Francisco Art Institute is the “...first art school established west of the Mississippi River [that] has played a significant role in fostering and promoting American artists—particularly artists identified with California and the American West, a

⁶⁵ “National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry* Murals,” 13.

⁶⁶ Anna Indych-López, *Muralism Without Walls: Rivera, Orozco, and Siquieros in the United States, 1927-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1. Quoted in “National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry* Murals,” 13.

⁶⁷ Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists* (1989), 4. Quoted in “National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry* Murals,” 13.

⁶⁸ Francis V. O’Connor, *The Mural in America: Wall Painting in the United States from Pre-History to the Present* (New York: 2010), Part 7, Ch. 28, C, <http://www.muralinamerica.com/>. Quoted in “National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry* Murals, 13.

⁶⁹ “National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry* Murals, 13.

region which historically lacked financial, curatorial, and intellectual support networks for fine artists.”⁷⁰ SFAI has been particularly important in “developing a ‘California School’ of Abstract Expressionism following World War II, as well as its association with the development of Bay Area Figurative art.”⁷¹ It is also the first institution of its kind to develop a fine art photography department, established under the direction of Ansel Adams and Minor White, and is notable for its contributions to mural art, avant-garde film, Funk art, and Conceptual art.⁷² SFAI and its faculty also played key roles in the establishment of major art institutions in San Francisco, including the Palace of Fine Arts, the California Palace of the Legion of Honor (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco), and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.⁷³ In recognition of its exceptionally important role in educating and employing artists who contributed significantly to the arts of California, the American West, and the United States, SFAI was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2016.

When it was established in 1871, the San Francisco Art Association had the goals of offering art exhibitions and establishing an art academy. Following a series of successful exhibitions, the Art Association opened the California School of Design in 1874.⁷⁴ For many years the Art Association’s school operated out of rented or donated commercial spaces. From 1893 to 1924 (the facility was rebuilt after the 1906 fire), the school was located at the former Mark Hopkins mansion on Nob Hill; during much of this period the facility was known as the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. In 1916, following the Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), the school was reorganized around new a director and instructors and renamed the California School of Fine Arts.

One of the changes made by the new director, Lee Randolph, was to introduce mural painting into the academic program at SFAI. In 1916, Roy Boynton was hired to teach the newly approved *buon fresco* (or true fresco) classes based on the principles of the best-known French precedents.⁷⁵ At the time, many San Franciscans only exposure to mural painting came from the thirty-five murals of monumental size, painted on canvas, that had been displayed at the recently ended PPIE. The early years of the mural painting program focused on teaching technical skills of *buon fresco* painting – an unusual technique to focus on given that even many of the European examples of the period were painted on canvas – under the principle that “murals should not draw too much attention to their context, but only their decorative existence.”⁷⁶ For nascent muralists in the United States during this period, the mural was meant to decorate semi-public spaces in important buildings; it was the buildings themselves and the patronage of community leaders displayed by the installation of such murals that was to be expressive. Though the SFAI mural program of this early period differed greatly from the muralism that would soon develop in Mexico, the existence of this program was responsible for the connections that were initially made between Roy Boynton, Albert Bender, and Diego Rivera and which developed to the point that his first commissions in the United States would be in San Francisco.

⁷⁰ SFAI NR Nomination (2016), Section 8, page 12.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² SFAI NR Nomination (2016), Section 8, pages 12-13.

⁷³ SFAI NR Nomination (2016), Section 8, page 13.

⁷⁴ SFAI NR Nomination (2016), Section 8, page 14.

⁷⁵ Lee, 33.

⁷⁶ Anthony W. Lee, “Diego Rivera’s ‘The Making of a Fresco’ and Its San Francisco Public,” *The Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1996), 75. Accessed via <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1360730>.

The school opened in a new location and new building in 1927, several years before the economic hardships of the Great Depression depressed student enrollment and threatened the school's viability. Even during this dismal economic period, the

...Depression years also exerted a tremendous influence on American art—particularly on styles such as regionalism and social realism, as well as mural art. The CSFA had been offering classes in mural art since at least 1916, but the school absorbed a vital new influence when the sculptor Ralph Stackpole returned from Mexico with examples of works by Diego Rivera. ... In 1931—the same year that the mural was completed—Rivera remarked that art movements in the United States were still greatly influenced by Europe, but, that “the moment has come for an outpouring of artistic impulse, and gradually the art centre of the world will be moved from Europe to America.”⁷⁷

Rivera, along with his fellow Mexican muralists, believed that the artworks they were producing were not only an important source of shifting this art center but were also changing the meaning and method of public art. Rivera noted that that his mural work and that of Mexican muralism for the “...first time in the history of monumental painting – ceased to use gods, kings, chiefs of state, heroic generals, etc. as central heroes... For the first time in the history of art, Mexican mural painting made the masses the hero of monumental art.”⁷⁸ Many art historians agree about the significance of this change, at least regarding mural art. Art critic Peter Schjeldahl, as recently as last year, wrote that Rivera “inspired American painters to create tableaux of laboring and protesting workers... and of historical events and themes.”⁷⁹ Francis O'Connor regards the 1930s as a “transition to a new conception of the mural,” crediting the Mexican artist presence in America:

[T]he Mexicans brought to the United States a sense of the mural's capacity for expressing social concern, a fascination with the country's rampant technology, and a revival of the fresco technique. While they initiated the decade to mural painting and their artistic influence is undoubted, they did not in fact, directly address either the history or social reality of this country.... Their influence lay in reinvigorating the mural as an art form capable of addressing public issues at a time American Artists needed means and permissions.⁸⁰

Rivera and the other Mexican muralists launched a tradition of infusing history, social commentary, and regional identity with monumental paintings in public spaces. Their technical, stylistic, and philosophical traditions heavily influenced mural projects carried out under the Federal Art Project during the New Deal era of the 1930s and early 1940s, when the federal government began to fund large-scale public art projects as a method of employing artists during the Great Depression. Tomás Ibarra-

⁷⁷ San Francisco Planning Department, Case Report for SFAI Landmark designation (1975), 3.

⁷⁸ Luís Cardoza y Aragón, “Diego Rivera's Murals in Mexico and the United States,” in *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, ed. Cynthia Newman Helms (New York: Founders Society Detroit Institute of Arts, in association with W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), 187.

⁷⁹ Peter Schjeldahl, “The Lasting Influence of Mexico's Great Muralists,” *The New Yorker*, February 24, 2020. **March 2, 2020 Issue.**

⁸⁰ Francis V. O'Connor, *The Mural in America: Wall Painting in the United States from Pre-History to the Present* (New York: 2010), Part 7, Ch. 28, C, <http://www.muralinamerica.com/>. Quoted in “National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry Murals*, 20-21.

Frausto, author of “A Panorama of Latino Arts,” published in *American Latinos and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study* (2015), notes how the U.S. government drew inspiration from Mexico in the development of its public art programs.⁸¹

It was on this basis, in 1933, that George Biddle, an artist who had traveled through Mexico on a sketching trip with Diego Rivera in 1928 and was friends with Franklin D. Roosevelt, championed the creation of a Federal Art Project.⁸² Shortly thereafter, the first New Deal program to solely aid unemployed artists, the short-lived Public Works Art Project (PWAP), was established. Created in 1933 and funded through the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the PWAP operated from December 1933 to June 1934 and during that time more than 3,000 artists across the country decorated public buildings with murals and other works depicting everyday American life. The Coit Tower murals are the first known and the largest PWAP/CWA-funded project, carried out in late 1933 and early 1934; during this same time period, Rivera was in New York working on the RCA mural. WPA murals in San Francisco span the entire period of the New Deal from 1934 through the final WPA mural, the panels at Rincon Annex post office (now Rincon Center) painted by Anton Refregier from 1946-1948.⁸³

Rivera’s *The Making of a Fresco* at SFAI influenced the New Deal mural program in its conception of the role of public art, pulling from this local example as well as the broader 1920s Mexican Mural Movement to which it is directly connected. For the Coit Tower project, a total of 26 artists were hired to complete a series of images supporting a unified theme of “Aspects of Life in California.”

Acknowledging the link to Rivera and the other Mexican muralists, nearly all of the Coit Tower murals were executed in fresco, that is, painted directly on wet plaster. Another Coit Tower muralist, Maxine Albro, had traveled to Mexico in the mid-1920s and studied under Rivera’s assistant, Pablo O’Higgins.⁸⁴

Among the other artists were Clifford Wight, Bernard Zakheim, Ralph Stackpole, and Victor Arnautoff (last three studied at SFAI) who had all trained or worked with Rivera. Arnautoff, who was designated technical advisor of the Coit Tower project, worked with Rivera for nearly two years beginning in 1929, primarily on the Palacio de Cortés and Palacio Nacional projects.⁸⁵ In 1930, shortly before leaving for San Francisco and SFAI – where Arnautoff had recently studied and taught – Rivera put Arnautoff in “charge at the National Palace and gave him general oversight responsibilities elsewhere.”⁸⁶ Wight, who worked as Rivera’s assistant in San Francisco on the SFAI and Stock Exchange projects and in Detroit, painted four of the six tall figures along the windows at Coit Tower, which share similarities to the giant worker in *The Making of a Fresco*. Further, Rivera’s interpretations of the vision of

⁸¹ Jonathan Lammers and Carlos Cordova, *Nuestra Historia, San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement: Part III-g: Visual Arts*, December 2020 (Draft for Review), 14.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Timothy W. Dresher, *San Francisco Bay Area Murals: Communities Create Their Muses: 1904-1997* (St. Paul: Pogo Press, 1998), 11.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Robert W. Cherny, “The Controversy at Coit Tower in 1934,” *The Argonaut* (Vol. 28, No. 1, Summer 2017), 73.

⁸⁶ Robert W. Cherny, *Victor Arnautoff and the Politics of Art* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2017), 68.

California's wealth coming from natural resources and labor is found in the Coit Tower murals as well as in community murals showing Latino migrant labor."⁸⁷

Historian Stacy Farr also addressed the links between SFAI and Federal Art Project, stating:

During the 1930s, works by Diego Rivera proved greatly influential—particularly for artists employed through the Federal Art Project created by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Many Federal art projects were undertaken in the San Francisco Bay Area, which in part helped the CSFA continue to attract artists and faculty during the Depression. These included Victor Arnautoff, Jose Moya del Pino, Lucien Labaudt, Marian Hartwell, Ruth Cravath, Ray Bertand and Ralph Stackpole.⁸⁸

Other New Deal-era art programs included the Department of the Treasury's Section of Painting and Sculpture, later known as the Section of Fine Arts (1934-1942), and the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP, 1935-1938).⁸⁹ The breadth of artworks produced collectively from 1934 to 1942 is truly amazing: with approximately 100,000 paintings, 18,000 sculptures, 13,000 prints, and 4,000 murals.⁹⁰ Art historian Francis O'Connor notes that:

Of all the cultural institutions of the 1930s, none caused more murals to be painted than the innovative government programs set up between 1933 and 1935 by the New Deal administration to help artists survive the Depression. The resulting programs had an enormous impact on the nation, set precedents for future government cultural patronage, and, both despite and because of their controversial nature at the time, have come to be the most popularly remembered of the New Deal's achievements.⁹¹

As the United States economy rebounded and the New Deal art programs expired, many of the San Francisco-based mural artists that had studied at SFAI or worked with Rivera, such as Victor Arnautoff and Emmy Lou Packard, continued to pursue large public murals. Muralism, however, decreased in popularity in the United States and there were few large public commissions following the New Deal-era, especially during the war years of the 1940s. At SFAI, the mural art academic program advanced with incorporation of updated philosophies on muralism and the role of public art from experiences gained from the New Deal mural program. SFAI, including its mural art program, was part of an explosion of creativity in art in San Francisco and the US, in the 1940s through 1960s, that led, in part, to the emergence of Abstract Expressionism and of Bay Area Figurative Art, a distinct regional school of Abstract Expressionism. One of the factors in this creative propulsion was the influence of the GI Bill, which allowed thousands of veterans to pursue higher education – including training in art schools.⁹² During this period, the GI Bill also increased access and enrollment of Latino artists at SFAI. Among

⁸⁷ Timothy W. Dresher, *San Francisco Bay Area Murals: Communities Create Their Muses: 1904-1997* (St. Paul: Pogo Press, 1998), 11.

⁸⁸ SFAI NR Nomination (2016), Section 8, page 19.

⁸⁹ Draft San Francisco New Deal Historic Context Statement, 24-32, 43-46; Coit Tower National Register Nomination, 2018, Section 8, pages 25-26.

⁹⁰ Megan Hogan, "1934: A Stimulus Package for the Soul," in *Common Ground*, Summer 2009, 25.

⁹¹ Francis V. O'Connor, *The Mural in America: Wall Painting in the United States from Pre-History to the Present* (New York: 2010), Part 7, Ch. 28, C, <http://www.muralinamerica.com/>. Quoted in "National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry Murals*, 20.

⁹² SFAI NR Nomination (2016), Section 8, page 22.

these students were Mexican American veterans such as Luis Cervantes, José Ramón Lerma, and Ernie Palomino, all of whom emerged as influential artists in San Francisco.⁹³

In 1961, the school was renamed the San Francisco Art Institute and began making plans to expand its facility at 800 Chestnut Street, which resulted in the construction of the addition by Paffard Keatinge-Clay in 1969. During this period SFAI “witnessed a proliferation of artistic expression that was increasingly eclectic and not necessarily aligned with any particular “school” or movement.”⁹⁴ Included in the student body of SFAI during the 1960s and 1970s was a new wave of Latino artists who became immersed in evolving trends such as installation art, video, and muralism.⁹⁵ Many of these students became recognized Mission artists including René Yañez, Graciella Carillo, Consuelo Lopez, Patricia Rodriguez, Juan Alicia, Irene Perez, Luis Cervantes, Michael Rios and later Cristianne Dugan-Cuadra and Manuel Sanchez.⁹⁶

Following their studies at SFAI, several Latino artists established galleries that nurtured contemporary visual arts in the Mission. Among the most influential as relates to muralism was Galería de la Raza, New Mission Gallery, and Precita Eyes Muralists. New Mission Gallery was established in 1962 by Luis Cervantes, Ernie Palomino, and Joe White (Cervantes and Palomino both studied at SFAI) and is credited as being the first contemporary visual arts gallery in the Mission District.⁹⁷ In 1977, Luis Cervantes and his partner, Susan (Kelk) Cervantes founded Precita Eyes Muralists another influential element in the Mission District’s community mural movement. In addition workshops and tours, Precita Eyes has coordinated the creation of many collaborative works in San Francisco and is has become a national leader in promoting community-based models of mural making.⁹⁸ Galería de la Raza,⁹⁹ a cultural center “formed to cultivate Chicano art and share it with a wider audience”¹⁰⁰ and co-directed by an SFAI alumnus, René Yañez, has been very influential. Its existence and early successes shifted the locus of mural activity in San Francisco to center on the Mission District and it has been important in promoting works associated with the community mural movement.¹⁰¹

While muralism as developed and practiced by Mexican artists during the 1920s Mexican Mural Movement enjoyed a surge in popularity during the 1930s and 1940s through the Federal Works Program, murals as an art form in the United States did not become widespread until during the Chicano movement of the 1960s and

⁹³ *Nuestra Historia, San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement: Part III-g: Visual Arts*, December 2020 (Draft for Review), 20.

⁹⁴ SFAI NR Nomination (2016), Section 8, page 31.

⁹⁵ *Nuestra Historia, San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement: Part III-g: Visual Arts*, December 2020 (Draft for Review), 20.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 22.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 44.

⁹⁹ On August 17, 2016, the 24th Street site of Galería de la Raza/Studio 24 Building was added to the Landmark Designation Work Program as part of the Planning Department’s San Francisco Sites of Civil Rights Project. On April 3, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended to the Board of Supervisors to landmark this resource. The process remains underway.

¹⁰⁰ California Office of Historic Preservation, *Latinos in Twentieth Century California: National Register of Historic Places Context Statement* (Sacramento: California State Parks, 2015), 59.

¹⁰¹ *Nuestra Historia, San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement: Part III-g: Visual Arts*, December 2020 (Draft for Review), 28.

1970s.¹⁰² In his essay on Latino arts in the American Latino Theme Study, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto notes that American Latino artists in the 1930s were aware of Rivera and the other Mexican artists of the Mexican Mural Movement and that their “passionate defense of mural art and formal explorations with diverse forms of public art directly influenced many Latino artists and seeded the ground for muralism as a major Latino genre during the Civil Rights era.”¹⁰³ Muralism in particular was “one of the most widely known visual art forms that arose out of the Chicano movement.”¹⁰⁴ The section on visual arts in the *Nuestra Historia: San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement* (Draft) provides the following context on mural art in the Chicano Movement:

The Chicano Movement, or *El Movimiento*, first evolved in the U.S. southwest and encompassed a broad set of issues affecting persons of Mexican origin or descent, including the restoration of land grants, worker’s rights, political representation, and improved access to employment and education. Chicano and other Latino artists of the period actively engaged in the movement, committing their artistic skills to social justice and helping the movement flourish.¹⁰⁵ As related by Josie S. Talamantez, author of the successful National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Chicano Park in San Diego:

Murals became the artistic vehicle of choice for educating a large illiterate populace about ideals of a new society and the virtues and evils of the past. Murals had the advantage of making direct appeals; they provided a near-perfect organizing tool that had specific cultural antecedents and precedence in the cultural and revolutionary tradition of Mexico.¹⁰⁶

Nuestra Historia: San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement notes that the earliest community murals were completed around 1970 in various locations around the city. The efforts of Galería de la Raza and the growing importance of the Chicano mural movement focused development of muralism in the Mission. Among the artists that painted the earliest murals (not extant) in the Mission were a number of artists who had studied at SFAI, including Michael Rios, Patricia Rodriguez, and Consuelo Lopez. Formed to focus on expressing the beauty and strength of women in Latino culture and foster empowerment, one of the most significant artist collectives to emerge was Las Mujeres Muralistas, a highly influential cooperative of all-women artists.¹⁰⁷ The collective was founded by Chicanas Patricia Rodriguez, Graciela Carrillo, Irene Perez, and Venezuelan artist, Consuelo Mendez (all of whom attended the San Francisco Art Institute), but grew over time to include other artists such as Miriam Olivo (Venezuelan), Ruth Rodriguez (Puerto Rican), Xochitl Nevel-Guerrero (Chicana), Ester Hernandez (Chicana),

¹⁰² California Office of Historic Preservation, *Latinos in Twentieth Century California: National Register of Historic Places Context Statement* (Sacramento: California State Parks, 2015), 59. Quoted in *Latino Historic Context Statement* (Draft), 58.

¹⁰³ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, “A Panorama of Latino Arts,” American Latino Theme Study, National Park Service, 2018. Accessed via <https://nps.gov/articles/latinothemearts.htm>.

¹⁰⁴ California Office of Historic Preservation, *Latinos in Twentieth Century California: National Register of Historic Places Context Statement* (Sacramento: California State Parks, 2015), 59. Quoted in *Latino Historic Context Statement* (Draft), 58.

¹⁰⁵ Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, “A Panorama of Latino Arts,” American Latino Theme Study, National Park Service, 2018. Quoted in *Nuestra Historia, San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement: Part III-g: Visual Arts*, December 2020 (Draft for Review), 30.

¹⁰⁶ Josie S. Talamantez, “Chicano Park and the Chicano Park Murals: A National Register Nomination,” 6. Quoted in *Nuestra Historia, San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement: Part III-g: Visual Arts*, December 2020 (Draft for Review), 31.

¹⁰⁷ *Nuestra Historia, San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement: Part III-g: Visual Arts*, December 2020 (Draft for Review), 35.

and non-Latina, Susan Cervantes.¹⁰⁸ Works by the collective include: *Latino America* (not extant), painted in 1974 on building at 2922 Mission Street; *Para el Mercado*, painted in 1974 on exterior of former Paco's Tacos at 24th and South Van Ness Streets; *Fantasy World For Children* (extant), painted in 1975 at 24th Street Mini-Park.

Another influential artwork – and one with direct connections to Rivera and the Mexican Mural Movement – is *Homage to Siqueiros*, painted in true fresco by Jesús “Chuy” Campusano, Luis Cortázar and Michael Rios (studied at SFAI) in 1973-74, at the Bank of America branch at 2701 Mission Street.¹⁰⁹ Like Rivera's earlier work in San Francisco, this piece incorporated social and political content for a corporate client. The technical advisor for the group was Emmy Lou Packard, who had studied at SFAI and had also been Diego Rivera's chief assistant on *Pan American Unity* mural painted as part of the “Art in Action” series at the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1940.

In San Francisco, the

Chicano Mural Movement... was unique in that it was absorbed into a broader cultural vision that encompassed a pan-Latino sense of community. This was the result of a number of factors, including the pioneering influences of Diego Rivera and other Mexican muralists, as well as the creative foment of the Beat Movement during the 1950s. The essential crucible, however, arrived in the 1960s, when various threads including the Chicano Movement, the Student Movement, and Third World ideology began to fuse. With the Mission District as its epicenter, a new visual art, sometimes called Mission Muralismo, continued to evolve during the 1970s and 1980s, when it assumed increasing identification with revolutionary movements in Central and South America.¹¹⁰

The use of murals as symbolic representations of social struggles that transcend race and ethnicity has also been described as the Community Mural Movement. Timothy Dresser, author of *San Francisco Bay Area Murals: Communities Create Their Muses: 1904-1994*, offers a helpful definition of community murals:

Community murals may be painted by groups of individuals, but they are always closely related to those who live or work near them. The relationship of community artworks to their communities is dynamic, intimate, extended and reciprocal.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ *Nuestra Historia, San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement: Part III-g: Visual Arts*, December 2020 (Draft for Review), 38.

¹¹⁰ *Nuestra Historia, San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement: Part III-g: Visual Arts*, December 2020 (Draft for Review), 31.

¹¹¹ Timothy Dresser, *San Francisco Bay Area Murals: Communities Create Their Muses: 1904-1994* (St. Paul: Pogo Press, 1994), 12. Quoted in *Nuestra Historia, San Francisco Latino Historic Context Statement: Part III-g: Visual Arts*, December 2020 (Draft for Review), 32.

In this sense, the Chicano Mural Movement / Community Mural Movement – and the diffuse influence of Rivera’s work, including *The Making of a Fresco*, on this movement, had and continues to have a profound effect on the visual language and texture of the Mission District, as well as San Francisco as a whole.

Architecture/Design: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values.

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City at the San Francisco Art Institute, which demonstrates familiar themes in Rivera’s work on the critical importance of labor in the artistic and creative process, is culturally and historically significant as the work of preeminent Mexican artist, Diego Rivera. Painted in 1931, at the end of Rivera’s first visit to San Francisco, this was his first fresco in the United States for a public audience. In it, Rivera sought to depict “a dynamic concerto of construction – technicians, planners and artists working together to create a modern edifice.”¹¹²

Diego Rivera (1886-1957)

Diego María de la Concepción Juan Nepomuceno Estanislao de la Rivera y Barrientos Acosta y Rodríguez, known as Diego Rivera (1886-1957), was born in Guanajuato, Mexico and died in Mexico City, Mexico at the age of 70. Born a twin, Rivera’s twin brother, José Carlos María, died at the age of two; a sister, María Rivera Barrientos, was born in 1891. After acquiring the nickname “the engineer” because of his interest in mechanical objects, especially trains and mining objects,¹¹³ Diego grew up in a family that encouraged his interest and aptitude in art. Rivera, who began drawing at a young age, wrote that the “earliest memory I have of my youth is that I was drawing.”¹¹⁴ His supportive parents encouraged him by installing canvases and chalkboards on the walls of their home and enrolling him in the oldest art school in Latin American, the San Carlos Academy of Fine Arts (Academia de San Carlos). Following graduation in 1906, Rivera spent the next fourteen years in Europe. He returned to Mexico in 1922 at the behest of José Vasconcelos to begin the monumental frescoes on public buildings that were to ignite the Mexican Mural Movement and define his career.

After moving to Paris, Rivera met and married his first wife, Angelina Beloff, in 1911, with whom he had a son (Diego) who died as a child. During this marriage, Rivera also fathered a daughter (Marika) with his mistress, Marie Vorobieff-Stebelska. He divorced Beloff in 1922 and married Guadalupe Marín, with whom he had two daughters, Ruth and Guadalupe. While still married to Marín, Rivera met and began an affair with Frida Kahlo, an art student at the time. Kahlo and Rivera were married in 1929, divorced in 1939, and remarried at San Francisco City Hall in 1940. After Kahlo’s death, Rivera married his agent, Emma Hurtado.

Unless otherwise noted, the following biographical information about Rivera is taken from the National Historic Landmark nomination for *The Detroit Industry Murals*:

¹¹² Diego Rivera, *My Art, My Life: An Autobiography* (New York: Dover Publications, 1991). Quoted in Lozano, in *Diego Rivera: The Complete Murals*, 290.

¹¹³ Hurlburt, *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, 25.

¹¹⁴ Bertram D. Wolfe, “Diego Rivera—People’s Artist,” *The Antioch Review*, Spring, 1947, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring, 1947), 101.

... When he was ten years old, his mother oversaw his admission into evening classes at the oldest art school in Latin American, the San Carlos Academy of Fine Arts (Academia de San Carlos). Two years later, in 1898, he became a full-time student at the academy. After graduating in 1906, he narrowly lost the academy's competition for a fellowship to Europe. Nonetheless, Rivera prevailed in securing a modest four-year traveling scholarship from the governor of the state of Veracruz and he left for Europe in January 1907.¹¹⁵ Living in Europe, primarily in Paris, for most of the next 14 years, he eventually became involved in the European avant-garde.¹¹⁶

From 1907 to 1913, Rivera was supported, in part, in his European studies and travels by grants from the Mexican government. After these grants ended in 1913, Rivera supported himself through the sale of his works at various exhibitions. Rivera's first two years in Europe were spent in Spain where he was initially a student of Eduardo Chicharro y Agüera while forming friendships with leading members of the Spanish avant-garde, including the writers Ramón Gómez de la Serna and Ramón del Valle-Inclán and the painter María Gutiérrez Blanchard.¹¹⁷ Rivera moved to Paris in early 1909, where with the exception of brief sojourns to other parts of Europe for study and exhibitions, and a brief visit to Mexico on the eve of the Mexican revolution in 1910, he lived until 1920. In Paris he became close friends with artists Ralph Stackpole, Amadeo Modigliani, Angel Zárraga (a Latin American émigré), Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger, Marc Chagall, and Pablo Picasso.¹¹⁸ Rivera and Ralph Stackpole corresponded throughout their lives, in French, their common language.¹¹⁹ He also became friends with Russian writers Maximilian Voloshin and Ilya Ehrenburg, expanding his awareness of leftist principals. In 1917, he befriended the physician and art historian Elie Faure in 1917; this would be a lifelong friendship with Faure acting as Rivera's mentor in the development of his mature style.¹²⁰ Rivera spent his extended artistic apprenticeship in Europe against the backdrop of the Mexican revolution (1910-1920), World War I (1914-1917), and the Russian revolution (1917).

At [José] Vasconcelo's [Minister of Education] urging, Rivera continued his training in Italy in February 1920. There, he studied "Renaissance art in the hopes of establishing a philosophy of public art that will be adequate for postrevolutionary Mexico."¹²¹ Over the next seventeen months, Rivera immersed himself in Italy's thirteenth- and fourteenth-century frescoes and murals. Mastering the tools and techniques of traditional fresco painting, he would then use these techniques to create a new and revolutionary public art in Mexico.

Returning to Mexico in 192[1], Rivera adopted a new and more politicized attitude toward art. He viewed himself as a "cultural" rather than an "elitist" artist, and joining with [David] Siquieros and painter Xavier Guerrero to create *El Sindicato de Pintores y Escultores* (The Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and

¹¹⁵ Hurlburt, *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, 25. Quoted in *The Detroit Industry Murals* NHL Nomination, 14.

¹¹⁶ "National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry Murals*, 14.

¹¹⁷ Hurlburt, *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, 30.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 37.

¹¹⁹ Letters between Stackpole and Rivera are part of the collection of Stackpole papers at the University of California, Berkeley Bancroft Library.

¹²⁰ Hurlburt, *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, 45.

¹²¹ Hurlburt, *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, 47. Quoted in "National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry Murals*, 14.

Sculptors). The manifesto of this group stated, “We repudiate the so-called easel painting and all the art of ultra-intellectual circles, because it is aristocratic and we glorify the expression of Monumental Art because it is a public possession.”¹²²

Prior to beginning work on his mural cycle at the Ministry of Public Education Building, Rivera travelled to the Yucatán to view the sites of Chichén Itzá and Uxmal and then to Tehuantepec to learn more about the Zapotec culture. The imagery Rivera encountered on these tours combined with the classical art training he had undertaken in Europe to produce a Mexican artist proud of his country’s pre-Columbian past with “profound understanding of fresco painting that would become his signature in mural painting.”¹²³ In making this fusion, Luis Cardoza y Aragón argues that it is this fusion, this “rediscovery of his native land, this rescue of what was his own” that is the “transcendent genius of Rivera’s career” and that Rivera’s role in Mexico’s rediscovery of its past and the roots of its culture cannot be overestimated.”¹²⁴

From shortly after his return to Mexico in the early 1920s until he travelled to San Francisco in 1930, Rivera was the center of a burst of artistic activity focused on large public murals. Many of these projects, which were generally commissioned by the Mexican government, overlapped, requiring Rivera to divide his time and attention over multiple projects. This required a certain amount of political savvy – to assuage and prioritize patrons at different levels of government – and a workforce that included multiple assistants. Many of the initial commissions were also begun in collaboration with other artists – like the New Deal-era Work Progress Administration programs of the 1930s, the murals produced in Mexico were sponsored by the government – a group of individuals unified in addressing a public project. In many cases, the collaborations ended acrimoniously with Rivera commandeering the project, including removing and repainting work previously completed by other artists and his assistants.

During this period, Rivera painted murals or mural cycles at Anfiteatro Bolívar (1922), Secretaría de Educación Pública/Ministry of Public Education Building (1923-1928), Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo (1924, 1926-1927), Palacio Nacional/National Palace (1929-1930, 1935), Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia (1929), and Palacio de Cortés (1930). Rivera began to gain attention, including from the United States, with his work at the Secretaría de Educación Pública/Ministry of Public Education Building where

between 1923 and 1924, Rivera covered the walls of a three-story courtyard at the Ministry of Public Education Building with 124 frescoes. According to Bertram Wolfe, Rivera’s biographer, the series brought fame to Rivera throughout the Western world, and “initiated a revival of mural painting,

¹²² Alvarez, “The Influence of the Mexican Muralists,” 11. Quoted in “National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry Murals*, 14.

¹²³ Goldstein, 34.

¹²⁴ Luís Cardoza y Aragón, “Diego Rivera’s Murals in Mexico and the United States,” in *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, ed. Cynthia Newman Helms (New York: Founders Society Detroit Institute of Arts, in association with W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), 186.

decendent since the late Renaissance, a revival felt first in Mexico and then in the United States.”¹²⁵
Rivera’s undisputed masterpiece marked a sudden turning point in the Mexican art movement.¹²⁶

When Rivera first returned from Europe, political relations between the leftist government in Mexico and the capitalist United States were fraught. Exchanges between the countries, particularly cultural or artistic exchanges, were minimal. Strange then, that

Rivera’s introduction to the United States came partially through international diplomacy. In November 1927, the US Ambassador to Mexico, Dwight Morrow, had traveled to Mexico to defuse tense Mexican-American relations and secure threatened US industrial holdings. Morrow formulated a radical solution to which he successfully persuaded Rivera, the MCP’s [Mexican Communist Party’s] leading figure, “to reverse his position on the American presence and cooperate with the new cultural policy.”¹²⁷

Part of this new cultural policy focused on cultural and artistic exchanges between the two countries. For Morrow this meant, in part, commissioning Rivera for the Palacio de Cortés mural, entitled *The History of Cuernavaca and Morelos*, in 1929. The commission “originated in the ambassador’s desire to make a gift to Mexico that would stand in remembrance of his mission, his liking for the people, and the attachment he had formed to his Cuernavaca home.”¹²⁸ In making this commission, Morrow paid Rivera the largest fee he had received on a mural commission to that point in time. It also meant encouraging US galleries and museums to hold exhibitions and to expand their holdings of Mexican art; his association with Morrow caused Rivera to be expelled from the Mexican Communist Party and shunned by many leftists during this period.

Morrow also conceived of the famous “Mexican Arts” exhibition in American that was partially prompted by the “search for common American cultural origins.” Including works of Rivera, Orozco, Siquieros, the exhibit focused on “authentic” Mexican culture featuring early, old, and modern art. Organized by the American Federation of Arts, which had been established in 1909 “to enrich the public’s experience and understanding art,” and financed by the Carnegie Corporation, the exhibit toured fourteen cities between 1930 and 1932 and proved popular with art patrons newly exposed to artistic developments in Mexico.¹²⁹

Other galleries and museums around the world also sponsored major exhibitions of Mexican art during this period, such that “[d]uring this period... Mexican muralists became world celebrities. ... They became so important that artists came from around the world to be in their presence and study their paintings. Between 1920 and 1930, Mexico became a world center for art.”¹³⁰ At that center was Rivera, who, by 1934, had “...virtually

¹²⁵ Bertram D. Wolfe, *Diego Rivera: His Life and Times* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939), 182. Quoted in “National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry Murals*, 15.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Catlin, “Mural Census, Palacio de Cortés” in *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, 269.

¹²⁹ “National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry Murals*, 15.

¹³⁰ Goldstein, 31-33.

single-handedly, forged a strong mural tradition...He was the best, and certainly the most famous, muralist in the Americas..."¹³¹

Architect Timothy Pflueger commissioned Rivera in late September 1930 to paint a mural for the Luncheon Club of the Pacific Stock Exchange, a building he had designed. On the heels of the opening of the very popular *Mexican Arts* exhibition in New York, and with local artists and media decrying him in headlines, such as "Artists Fight on Employing a Mexican 'Red,'" ¹³² Rivera and his wife Frida Kahlo arrived in San Francisco.

Between mid-December and February 14, [1930,] Rivera painted the *Allegory of California* on the club's stairway wall and ceiling. Laurance P. Hurlburt describes the wall portion of the mural as "Rivera's most successful work from the 1930-31 San Francisco period.... In both color and overall design, Rivera recreates the actual topographical features of California."¹³³

After completing the *Allegory of California*, and before starting his commission at the California School of Fine Arts, Rivera completed a small mural [*Still Life and Blossoming Almond Trees*] at the home of Sigmund and Rosalie Stern in Atherton, California. Mrs. Stern, well known in the Bay Area business and cultural community and a collector of Rivera's paintings, had invited Diego and his wife Frida to rest at her home. Here Rivera created a mural for Mrs. Stern of an idealized landscape scene that marked his first use of a "portable" mural format.¹³⁴

Rivera next turned to this commission at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute), a location that, unlike the Stock Exchange Luncheon Club mural, would ensure that this mural was aimed at a public audience. Once again, concerns over political content reigned as the San Francisco Art Association made clear their desire for a nonpolitical work: "The character of the mural might have a very wide choice of subject matter—anything but of a political nature—of course suitable for an art institution." Rivera's mural, *Making of a Fresco, Showing the Building of a City*..., portrays the productive role of artistic and mural laborers. The scene is dominated by a giant hard-hat laborer shown being painted by Rivera and his assistants on scaffolding. On the bottom level of the mural, Rivera paints individuals known to him—Pflueger, Brown, Stackpole, and the patron Gerstle—as architects, artists, and designers involved in building a city. On the top level, laborers install steel girders on a building.¹³⁵

Although it is the largest of the murals Rivera created in San Francisco in 1930-1931, *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* was completed in the shortest period of time. In contrast to even the smallest

¹³¹ Francis O'Connor, "The Influence of Diego Rivera on the Art of the United States during the 1930s and After," in *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, ed. Cynthia Newman Helms (New York: Founders Society Detroit Institute of Arts, in association with W. W. Norton, 1986), 171. Quoted in "National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry Murals*, 19-20.

¹³² *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Artists Fight on Employing Mexican 'Red,'" September 24, 1930. Accessed via <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.sfpl.org/>.

¹³³ Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists* (1998), 108. Quoted in "National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry Murals*, 16.

¹³⁴ This artwork is now installed at University of California Berkeley's Stern Hall.

¹³⁵ "National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry Murals*, 17.

mural from this period – the mural completed at the Stern residence – the time spent at SFAI is notable with most sources noting that the mural was painted from May 1 to 31. It is said that Rivera and his assistants worked late nights, even locking themselves in overnight, to finish to piece. As he was working at SFAI, Rivera was overdue to return to Mexico to complete work at the National Palace.

Upon completion of *The Making of a Fresco*, Rivera left San Francisco to return briefly to Mexico to work on the National Palace project. Several months later, Rivera returned to the United States for a solo retrospective – only the second such show to be held at the museum – at the Museum of Modern Art in New York for which he painted eight “portable” frescos. Following the success of this show, which set attendance records, Rivera travelled to Detroit to begin work on the Detroit Institute of Art project. The Detroit Institute of Art project was officially dedicated a little over a year later in a swirl of controversy over the religious and political content of the murals. Meanwhile, Rivera had already moved on to his next commission, the RCA mural, in New York. The RCA mural engendered such controversy that Rivera was forced to stop work shortly before the fresco was completed. The fresco was then destroyed. This action prompted a protest demonstration by the artists then working on the Coit Tower murals, after which two of the artists added newspaper headlines and accounts of the protest in their murals.¹³⁶ The resulting scandal caused other pending commissions in the United States to be cancelled and Rivera’s sojourn in the United States abruptly ended in December 1933.

Rivera returned in 1940 to paint his last mural in America. His ten-panel mural for the Golden Gate International Exposition, *Pan-American Unity*, advocated against Fascism. Mounted on portable steel frames, it now resides at City College of San Francisco. Rivera remained a highly influential figure in the development of national art in Mexico throughout his life. In 1957, he died in Mexico City at the age of seventy.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Cherny, Robert W. Cherny, “The Controversy at Coit Tower in 1934,” *The Argonaut* (Vol. 28, No. 1, Summer 2017), 73.

¹³⁷ “National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry* Murals, 20.

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Photos



San Francisco Art Institute, 1953.

Source: San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection (AAD-7799)



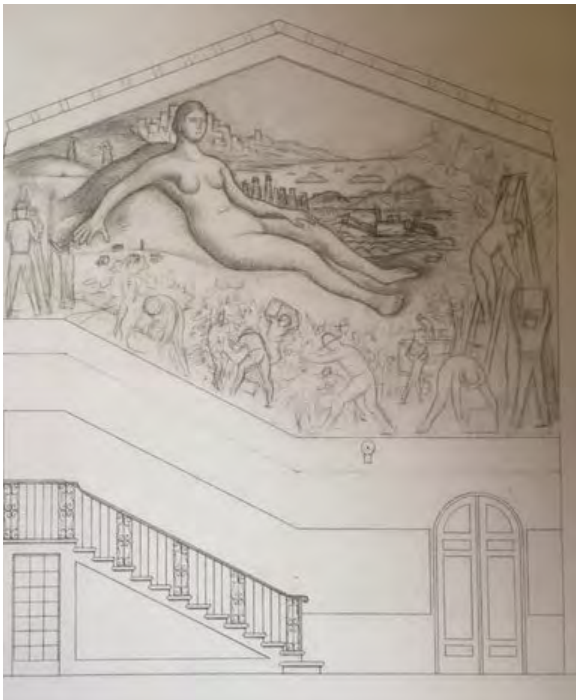
Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Timothy Pflueger, and Ralph Stackpole, November 10, 1930.

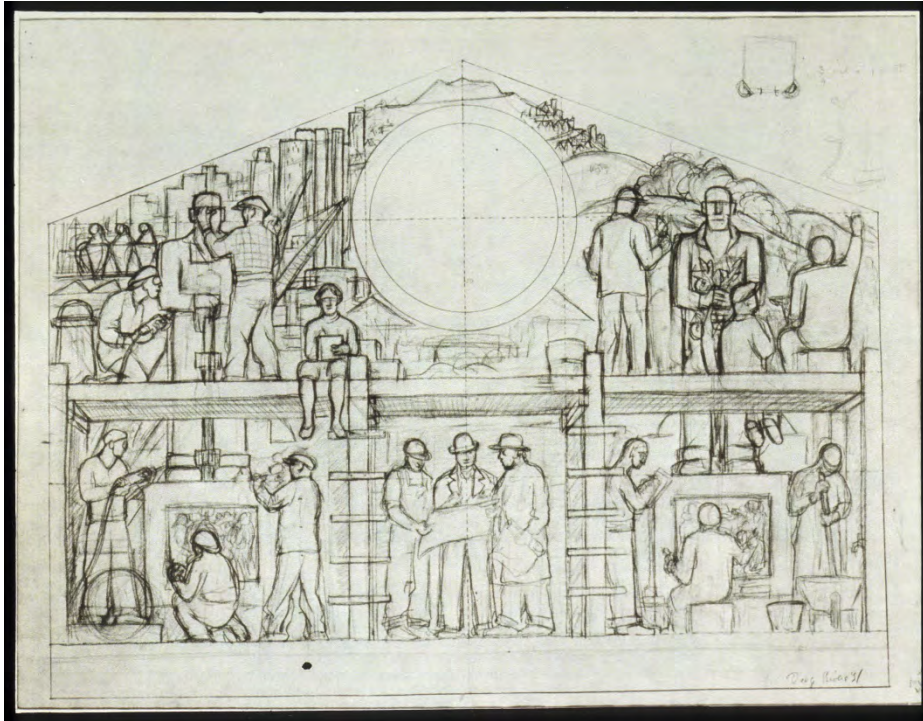
Source: San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection (AAK-0311)



Studies for San Francisco Art Institute Mural, 1930-1931.

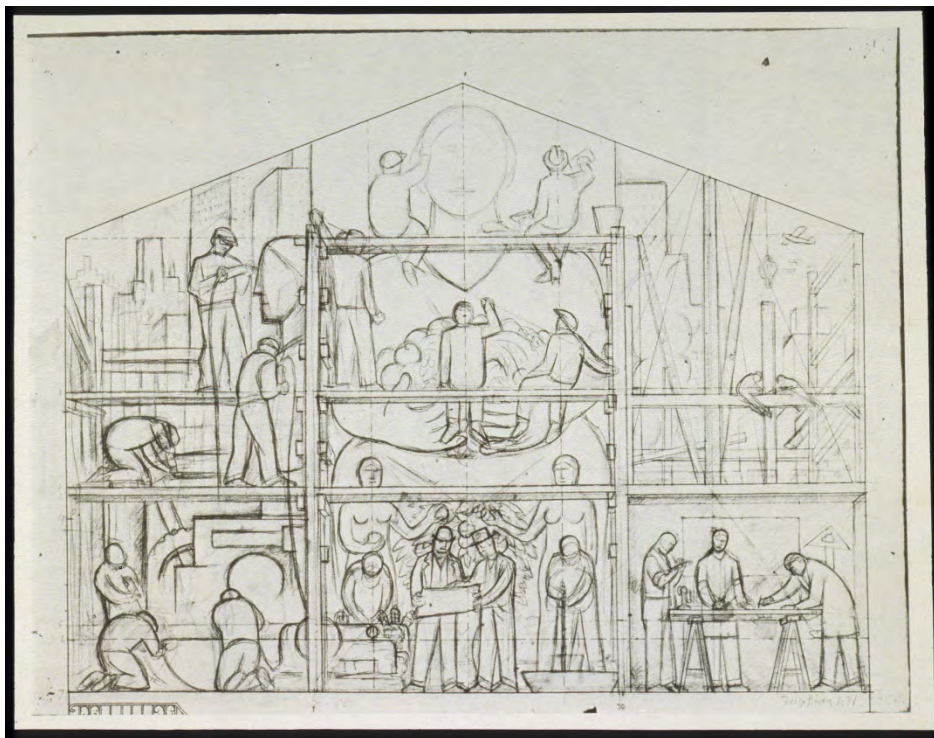
Source: Luis-Martín Lozano, "1929-1931 V. Revolutions and Allegories: Mexico and San Francisco," in *Diego Rivera: The Complete Murals*, Luis-Martín Lozano and Juan Rafael Coronel Rivera, ed. Benedikt Taschen (Los Angeles: Taschen, c2008), 267.

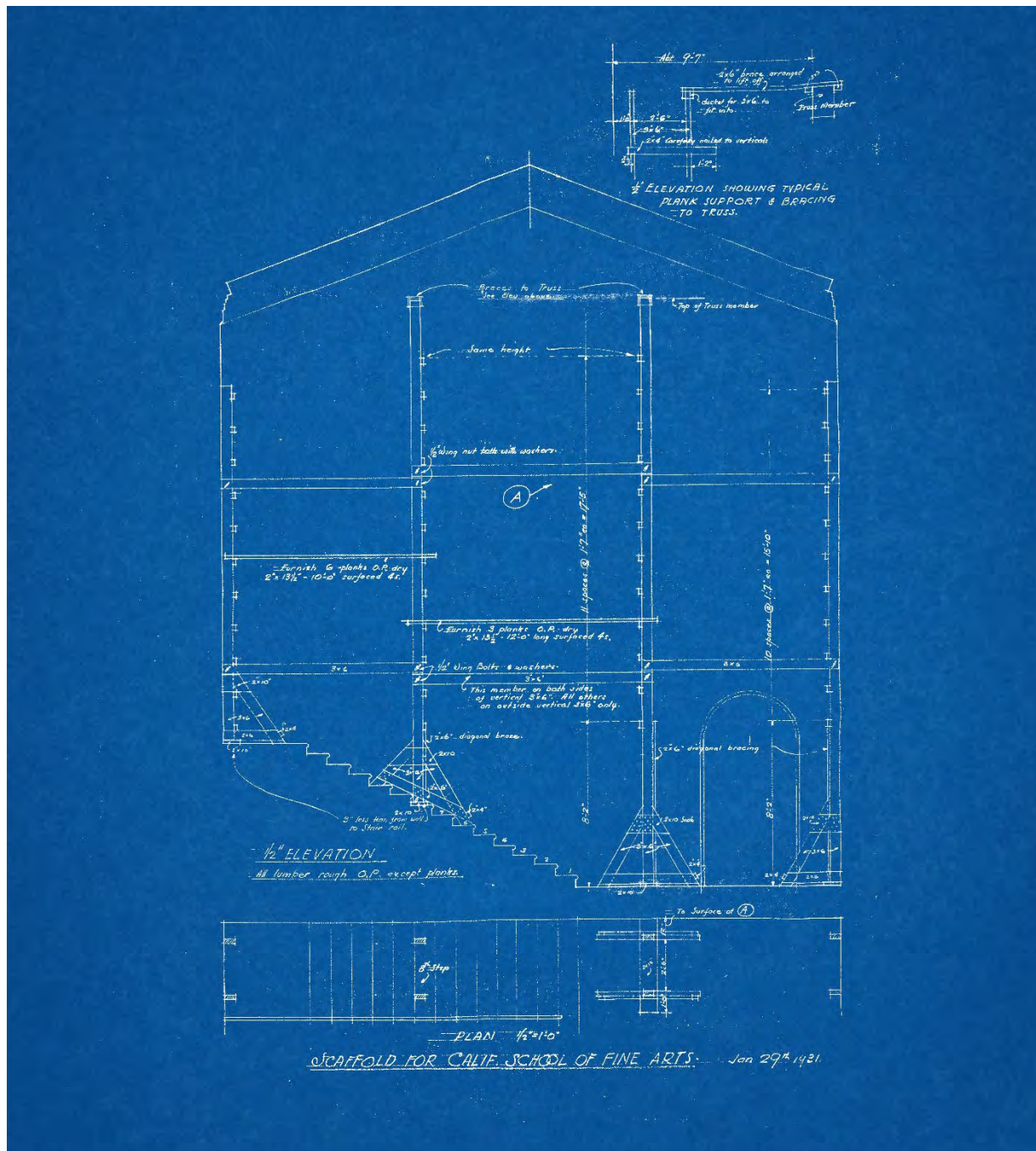




Sketches for south wall (top) and north wall (bottom) at SFAI, 1931

Source: *Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects: SFAI Histories, Matrix*, UC Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archives (2020), accessed at [Object 27 - Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects \(matrix277.org\)](https://matrix277.org).





Blueprint for scaffolding to construct *The Making of a Fresco* at SFAI, 1931.

Source: *Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects: SFAI Histories, Matrix*, UC Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archives (2020), accessed at [Object 27 - Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects \(matrix277.org\)](https://matrix277.org).



Detail of center panel of *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*, 1931.

Photographer: Gabriel Moulin Source: Archives of American Art: John Weatherwax Papers related to Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, 1928-1988: Box 1, Folder 25: Photographs of Murals, circa 1930s. [Box 1, Folder 25 | A Finding Aid to the John Weatherwax papers relating to Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, 1928-1988, bulk 1931-1933 | Digitized Collection | Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution \(si.edu\)](#)



Diego Rivera with William Gerstle and Arthur Brown, Jr. in front of *The Making of a Fresco* in progress, 1931.
Source: *Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects: SFAI Histories, Matrix*, UC Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archives (2020),
accessed at [Object 27 - Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects \(matrix277.org\)](https://matrix277.org).



Student exhibit in Diego Rivera Gallery with *The Making of a Fresco* in background, 1948.
Source: *Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects: SFAI Histories, Matrix*, UC Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archives (2020), accessed at [Object 27 - Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects \(matrix277.org\)](https://matrix277.org).



Diego Rivera Gallery with drop ceiling and demising wall covering *The Making of a Fresco*, circa 1950.
Source: *Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects: SFAI Histories, Matrix*, UC Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archives (2020), accessed at [Object 27 - Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects \(matrix277.org\)](https://matrix277.org).



Portion of *The Making of a Fresco* peeking out from behind a curtain covering the rest of the fresco, 1968.

Source: *Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects: SFAI Histories, Matrix*, UC Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archives (2020), accessed at [Object 27 - Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects \(matrix277.org\)](https://matrix277.org).



Timothy Pflueger and Diego Rivera, 1940

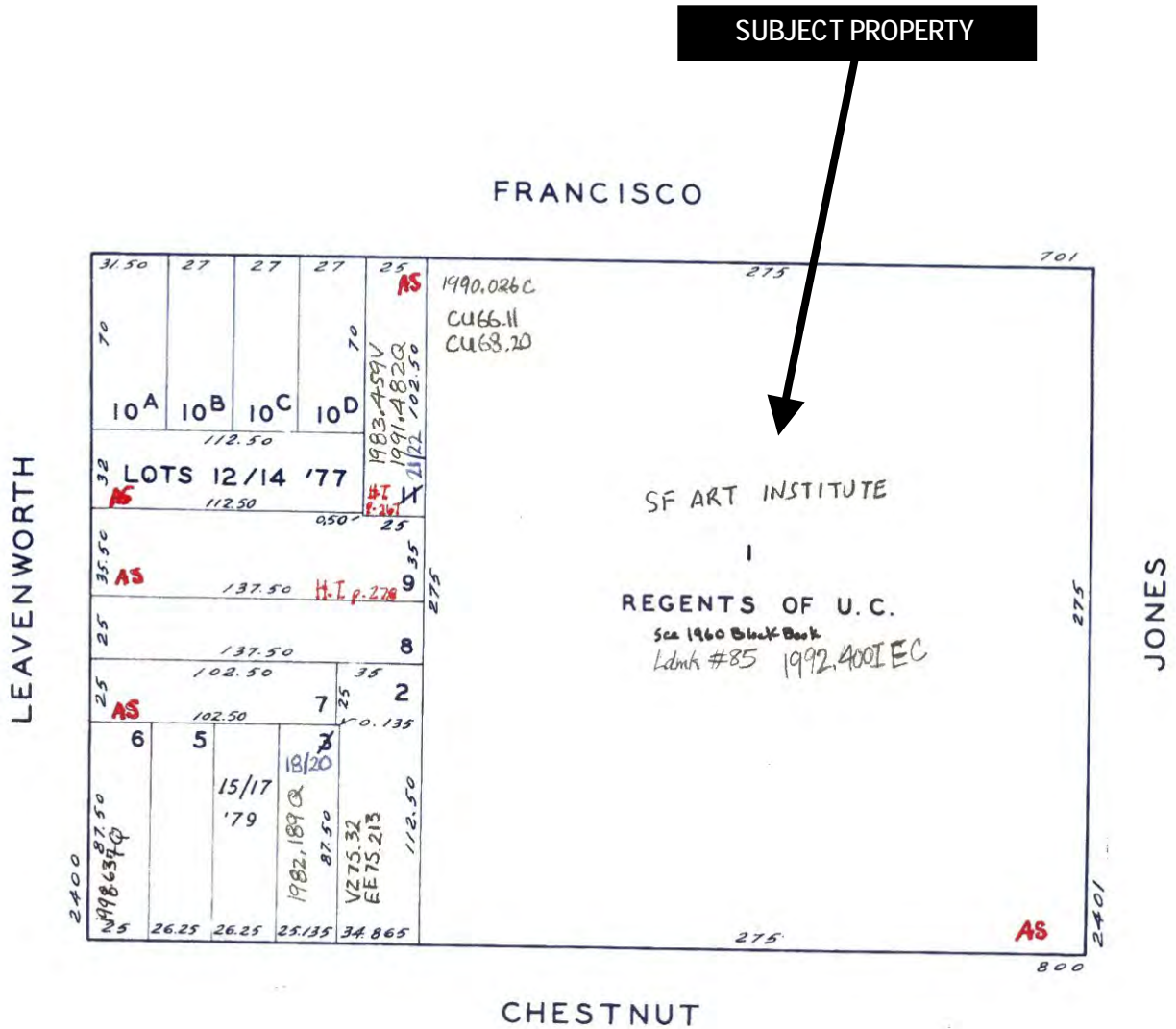
Source: SF Public Library Historical Photograph Collection (AAK-0314)



The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City.

Source: Wescover at <https://www.wescover.com/p/murals-by-diego-rivera-at-san-francisco-art-institute--PSJORIUeSGM>

Parcel Map



Article 10 Landmark Designation
Case Number 2021-001721DES
The Making of a Fresco, 800 Chestnut Street

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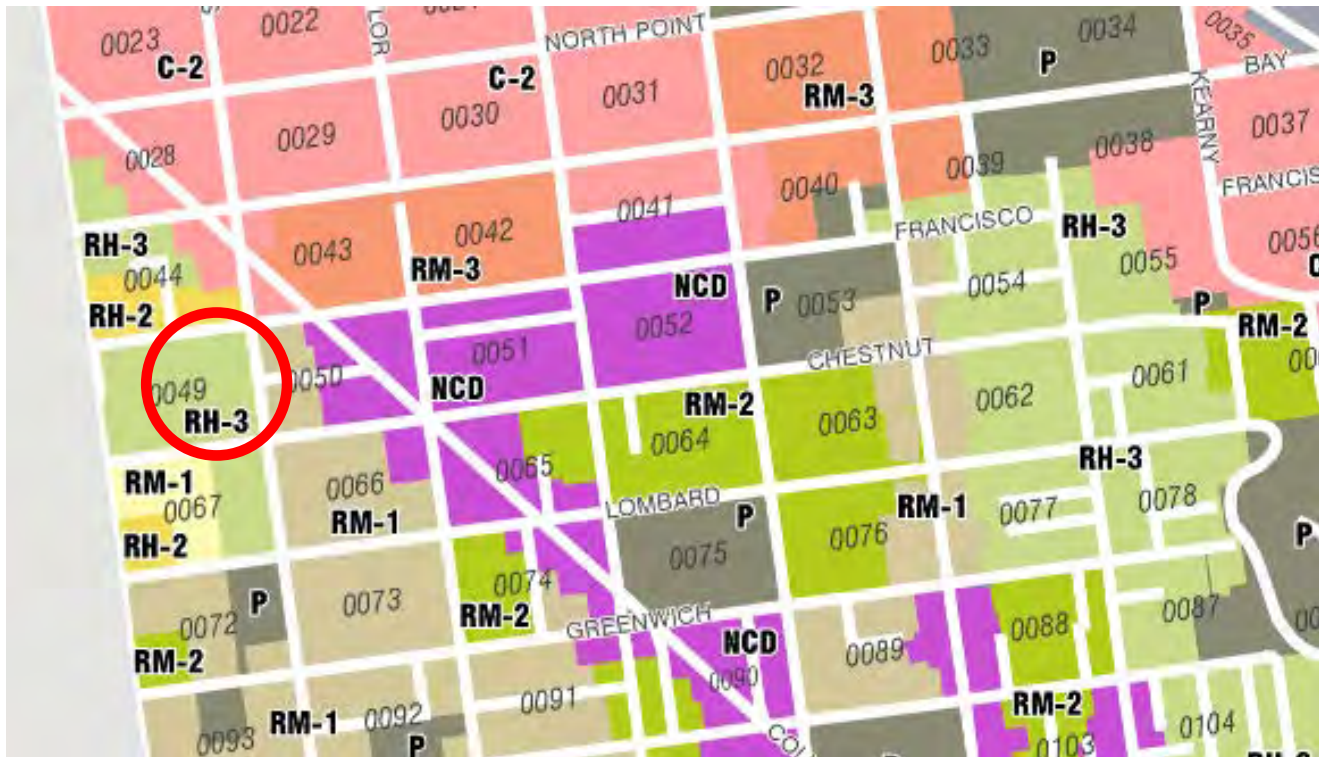


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Zoning Map



Article 10 Landmark Designation
Case Number 2021-001721DES
The Making of a Fresco, 800 Chestnut Street

Aerial Photo



SUBJECT
PROPERTIES



Aerial Photo



Aerial Photo - 1938



1938 Aerial Photograph – Image 45: San Francisco Aerial Views

(Image Source: David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, <https://www.davidrumsey.com/>)

Excerpt showing Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0049. San Francisco Art Institute property outlined in red.



[Planning Code - Landmark Designation - "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," San Francisco Art Institute, 800 Chestnut Street]

Ordinance amending the Planning Code to designate the fresco titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City" in the Diego Rivera Gallery of the San Francisco Art Institute, 800 Chestnut Street, Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0049, Lot No. 001, as a Landmark consistent with the standards set forth in Article 10 of the Planning Code; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making public necessity, convenience, and welfare findings under Planning Code, Section 302, and findings of consistency with the General Plan and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

NOTE: **Unchanged Code text and uncodified text** are in plain Arial font.
Additions to Codes are in single-underline italics Times New Roman font.
Deletions to Codes are in ~~strikethrough italics Times New Roman font~~.
Board amendment additions are in double-underlined Arial font.
Board amendment deletions are in ~~strikethrough Arial font~~.
Asterisks (* * * *) indicate the omission of unchanged Code subsections or parts of tables.

Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

Section 1. Findings.

(a) CEQA and Land Use Findings.

(1) The Planning Department has determined that the Planning Code amendment proposed in this ordinance is subject to a Categorical Exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq., "CEQA") pursuant to Section 15308 of California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Sections 15000 et seq., the Guidelines for implementation of the statute for actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment (in this case, landmark designation). Said

determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. _____ and is incorporated herein by reference. The Board of Supervisors affirms this determination.

(2) Pursuant to Planning Code Section 302, the Board of Supervisors finds that the proposed landmark designation of the fresco titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City" in the Diego Rivera Gallery of the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), 800 Chestnut Street ("the Fresco"), Assessor's Parcel Block No. 0049, Lot No. 001, will serve the public necessity, convenience, and welfare for the reasons set forth in Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. _____, recommending approval of the proposed designation, which is incorporated herein by reference.

(3) The Board of Supervisors finds that the proposed landmark designation of the Fresco is consistent with the General Plan and with Planning Code Section 101.1(b) for the reasons set forth in Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. _____.

(b) General Findings.

(1) Pursuant to Charter Section 4.135, the Historic Preservation Commission has authority "to recommend approval, disapproval, or modification of landmark designations and historic district designations under the Planning Code to the Board of Supervisors."

(2) The Landmark Designation Fact Sheet was prepared by Planning Department Preservation staff. All preparers meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for historic preservation program staff, as set forth in Code of Federal Regulations Title 36, Part 61, Appendix A. The report was reviewed for accuracy and conformance with the purposes and standards of Article 10 of the Planning Code.

(3) The Historic Preservation Commission, at its regular meeting of May 5, 2021, reviewed Planning Department staff's analysis of the historical significance of the Fresco set forth in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet dated _____.

1 (4) On January 12, 2021, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 12-
2 21, initiating landmark designation of the Fresco as a San Francisco Landmark pursuant to
3 Section 1004.1 of the Planning Code. On January 22, 2021, the Mayor approved the
4 resolution. Said resolution is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No.
5 210016.

6 (5) On May 5, 2021, after holding a public hearing on the proposed designation
7 and having considered the specialized analyses prepared by Planning Department staff and
8 the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended
9 designation of the Fresco as a landmark consistent with the standards set forth in Section
10 1004 of the Planning Code, by Resolution No. _____. Said resolution is on file with the
11 Clerk of the Board in File No. _____.

12 (6) The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that the Fresco has a special
13 character and special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value, and that its
14 designation as a Landmark will further the purposes of and conform to the standards set forth
15 in Article 10 of the Planning Code. In doing so, the Board hereby incorporates by reference
16 the findings of the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet.

17
18 Section 2. Designation.

19 Pursuant to Section 1004 of the Planning Code, the fresco titled "The Making of a
20 Fresco Showing the Building of a City" in the Diego Rivera Gallery of the San Francisco Art
21 Institute, 800 Chestnut Street, Assessor's Block No. 0049, Lot No. 001, is hereby designated
22 as a San Francisco Landmark consistent with the standards set forth in Section 1004.
23 Appendix A to Article 10 of the Planning Code is hereby amended to include this property.

24
25 Section 3. Required Data.

1 (a) The description, location, and boundary of the Landmark site consists of the fresco
2 titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City" on the north wall of the Diego
3 Rivera Gallery of the San Francisco Art Institute, on the City parcel located at 800 Chestnut
4 Street, Assessor's Block No. 0049, Lot No. 001, in San Francisco's Russian Hill
5 neighborhood.

6 (b) The characteristics of the Landmark that justify its designation are described and
7 shown in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet and other supporting materials contained in
8 Planning Department Record Docket No. 2021-001721DES. In brief, the Fresco is eligible for
9 local designation as it is associated with events that have made a culturally and historically
10 significant contribution to the broad patterns of San Francisco history and it embodies the
11 distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction and work of master artist
12 Diego Rivera. Specifically, designation of the Fresco, which demonstrates familiar themes in
13 Rivera's work on the critical importance of labor in the artistic and creative process, is proper
14 given its association with the preeminent Mexican artist, Diego Rivera. The Fresco, designed
15 and painted on a wall selected by the artist from amongst several options, reflects its
16 immediate environment, physically and artistically, and is also significant for its association
17 with art education at SFAI, contributing to development of an academic field of study in mural
18 and fresco painting and influencing many generations of artists that have taught or attended
19 SFAI. This artwork, and the academic program and artists that evolved with and around it, is
20 also significant for its influence on the New Deal-era Works Project Administration mural
21 program. The Fresco is also significant for its association with the Latinx and Chicanx arts
22 communities through its direct lineage with the Mission Mural movement (also known as the
23 community mural movement), a significant and vibrant part of San Francisco's cultural
24 heritage.

(c) The particular features that should be preserved, or replaced in-kind as determined necessary, are those generally shown in photographs and described in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet, which can be found in Planning Department Record Docket No. 2021-001721DES, and which are incorporated in this designation by reference as though fully set forth. Specifically, all those physical and spatial features of the wall and room where the Fresco is located associated with the structural support, construction, and visual depiction and expression of the Fresco should be preserved or replaced in-kind, including:

(1) All metal and other furring channels that support the underlying wall behind the Fresco;

(2) All metal lathe and plaster, including the scratch, brown, and other plaster coats that underlie the Fresco;

(3) The combination of pigments and plaster that form the *buon fresco* artwork;

(4) The size, shape, form, and materials of the Fresco inclusive of the *trompe l'oeil* painted post supports along the bottom portion of the wall;

(5) The double-height, pedimented solid wall on which the Fresco is located;

(6) The open trusses of the underside of the gable roof of the Diego Rivera Gallery; and,

(7) The placement of the Fresco in relation to the surrounding features of the room, including its height above the floor and its extension to the roofline and corners of the wall.

Section 4. Effective Date.

This ordinance shall become effective 30 days after enactment. Enactment occurs when the Mayor signs the ordinance, the Mayor returns the ordinance unsigned or does not sign the ordinance within ten days of receiving it, or the Board of Supervisors overrides the

1 Mayor's veto of the ordinance.

2
3
4 APPROVED AS TO FORM:
DENNIS J. HERRERA, City Attorney

5 By: /s/ Victoria Wong

6 VICTORIA WONG
7 Deputy City Attorney

8
9 n:\legana\as2021\1800206\01529072.docx

1 [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a
2 Fresco Showing the Building of a City"]

3 **Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for**
4 **Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City,"**
5 **painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut Street.**

6
7 WHEREAS, Diego Rivera remains one of the most important and famous Mexican
8 artists of all time, whose fresco work helped to establish the thriving Mexican Mural Art
9 Movement in the 1920s, and who painted his first murals in the United States in San
10 Francisco; and

11 WHEREAS, San Francisco is home to three of Rivera's masterpieces, including the
12 second Diego Rivera fresco completed in the United States entitled "The Making of a Fresco
13 Showing the Building of a City" (the "Mural"), which was painted in 1931 and remains in its
14 original home at the Diego Rivera Gallery inside the San Francisco Art Institute at 800
15 Chestnut Street; and

16 WHEREAS, The mural was commissioned by then-San Francisco Art Institute
17 President William Gerstle and took a month to complete, and depicts a fresco within a fresco
18 in which various real life figures, including Rivera himself, general designers, builders,
19 painters, architects and laborers construct a building, and, at its center, a gigantic worker –
20 the colossal proletarian – symbolizing the entire international working class, powerfully
21 demonstrating a familiar theme in Rivera's work of the critical importance of labor in the
22 artistic and creative process; and

23 WHEREAS, The mural also includes depictions of real-life figures including Timothy
24 Pfleuger (designer of the San Francisco Stock Exchange), William Gerstle (banker,
25 philanthropist, and president of the San Francisco Art Institute who commissioned the mural),

1 Arthur Brown (architect who designed Coit Tower, the San Francisco Opera House, and San
2 Francisco City Hall), and Marion Simpson (mosaic artist in Berkeley who designed murals for
3 the Alameda County courthouse); and

4 WHEREAS, As with his immediately-preceding fresco in San Francisco, the Allegory of
5 California, the Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City attracted immediate criticism
6 and harsh reactions to Rivera's Marxist political leanings, and quickly became one Rivera's
7 most significant and well-known works; and

8 WHEREAS, The Mural is of particular significance to the Latinx and Chicanx
9 communities, and, along with Rivera's other murals in San Francisco, is part of the direct
10 lineage of the Mission Mural movement which remains a significant and vibrant part of San
11 Francisco's cultural heritage, and it is the responsibility of civic and academic institutions to
12 include these communities in decisions pertaining to the Mural; and

13 WHEREAS, In 1977, the City and County of San Francisco designated pursuant to
14 Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code the San Francisco Art Institute at 800 Chestnut
15 Street as Landmark Number 85; and

16 WHEREAS, The official case report for Landmark No. 85 makes extensive reference to
17 and describes the Rivera Mural, and can be read as intending that Article 10 protections
18 extend to any alteration, removal, or demolition of the Mural itself; and

19 WHEREAS, Since its creation, the Mural has been made available for free, public
20 viewing, has inspired generations of artists, including alumni of the San Francisco Art Institute,
21 and countless members of the public, alike; now, therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, That the Board hereby initiates separate landmark designation of Diego
23 Rivera's masterpiece fresco "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," created
24 in 1931 at its sole and current location at the San Francisco Art Institute building at 800
25 Chestnut Street (Landmark No. 85); and, be it

1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Planning Department
2 prepare a Landmark Designation Report to submit to the Historic Preservation Commission
3 for its consideration of the special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value of
4 the Mural; and, be it

5 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Historic Preservation
6 Commission consider whether the Mural warrants landmark designation and submit its
7 recommendation to the Board according to Article 10 of the Planning Code.



City and County of San Francisco
Tails
Resolution

City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

File Number: 210016

Date Passed: January 12, 2021

Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut Street.

January 11, 2021 Land Use and Transportation Committee - RECOMMENDED AS COMMITTEE REPORT

January 12, 2021 Board of Supervisors - AMENDED, AN AMENDMENT OF THE WHOLE BEARING SAME TITLE

Ayes: 11 - Chan, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

January 12, 2021 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED AS AMENDED

Ayes: 11 - Chan, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

File No. 210016

I hereby certify that the foregoing
Resolution was ADOPTED AS AMENDED
on 1/12/2021 by the Board of Supervisors
of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

London N. Breed
Mayor

1/22/21

Date Approved

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



City Hall
Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco 94102-4689
Tel. No. 554-5184
Fax No. 554-5163
TDD/TTY No. 554-5227

MEMORANDUM

LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

SAN FRANCISCO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

TO: Supervisor Myrna Melgar, Chair, Land Use and Transportation Committee

FROM: Erica Major, Assistant Clerk, Land Use and Transportation Committee

DATE: January 12, 2021

SUBJECT: **COMMITTEE REPORT, BOARD MEETING**
Tuesday, January 12, 2021

The following file should be presented as a **COMMITTEE REPORT** at the Board meeting, Tuesday, January 12, 2021. This item was acted upon at the Committee Meeting on Monday, January 11, 2021, at 1:30 p.m., by the votes indicated.

Item No. 14 File No. 210016

Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut Street.

RECOMMENDED AS A COMMITTEE REPORT

Vote: Supervisor Myrna Melgar - Aye
Supervisor Dean Preston - Aye
Supervisor Aaron Peskin - Aye

c: Board of Supervisors
Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board
Alisa Somera, Legislative Deputy
Anne Pearson, Deputy City Attorney
Kristen Jensen, Deputy City Attorney

File No. 210016 Committee Item No. 3
Board Item No. 14

COMMITTEE/BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA PACKET CONTENTS LIST

Committee: Land Use and Transportation Committee Date January 11, 2021

Board of Supervisors Meeting Date January 12, 2021

Cmte Board

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Motion
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Resolution
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ordinance
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Legislative Digest
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget and Legislative Analyst Report
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth Commission Report
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Introduction Form
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Department/Agency Cover Letter and/or Report
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MOU
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grant Information Form
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grant Budget
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Subcontract Budget
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contract/Agreement
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Form 126 – Ethics Commission
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Award Letter
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Application
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public Correspondence

OTHER (Use back side if additional space is needed)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<u>BOS Ord No. 208-77 053177</u>
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Completed by: Erica Major Date January 7, 2021

Completed by: Erica Major Date January 12, 2021

1 [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a
2 Fresco Showing the Building of a City"]

3 **Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for**
4 **Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City,"**
5 **painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut Street.**

6
7 WHEREAS, Diego Rivera remains one of the most important and famous Mexican
8 artists of all time, whose fresco work helped to establish the thriving Mexican Mural Art
9 Movement in the 1920s, and who painted his first murals in the United States in San
10 Francisco; and

11 WHEREAS, San Francisco is home to three of Rivera's masterpieces, including the
12 second Diego Rivera fresco completed in the United States entitled "The Making of a Fresco
13 Showing the Building of a City" (the "Mural"), which was painted in 1931 and remains in its
14 original home at the Diego Rivera Gallery inside the San Francisco Art Institute at 800
15 Chestnut Street; and

16 WHEREAS, The mural was commissioned by then-San Francisco Art Institute
17 President William Gerstle and took a month to complete, and depicts a fresco within a fresco
18 in which various real life figures, including Rivera himself, general designers, builders,
19 painters, architects and laborers construct a building, and, at its center, a gigantic worker –
20 the colossal proletarian – symbolizing the entire international working class, powerfully
21 demonstrating a familiar theme in Rivera's work of the critical importance of labor in the
22 artistic and creative process; and

23 WHEREAS, The mural also includes depictions of real-life figures including Timothy
24 Pfleuger (designer of the San Francisco Stock Exchange), William Gerstle (banker,
25 philanthropist, and president of the San Francisco Art Institute who commissioned the mural),

1 Arthur Brown (architect who designed Coit Tower, the San Francisco Opera House, and San
2 Francisco City Hall), and Marion Simpson (mosaic artist in Berkeley who designed murals for
3 the Alameda County courthouse); and

4 WHEREAS, As with his immediately-preceding fresco in San Francisco, the Allegory of
5 California, the Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City attracted immediate criticism
6 and harsh reactions to Rivera's Marxist political leanings, and quickly became one Rivera's
7 most significant and well-known works; and

8 WHEREAS, In 1977, the City and County of San Francisco designated pursuant to
9 Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code the San Francisco Art Institute at 800 Chestnut
10 Street as Landmark Number 85; and

11 WHEREAS, The official case report for Landmark No. 85 makes extensive reference to
12 and describes the Rivera Mural, and can be read as intending that Article 10 protections
13 extend to any alteration, removal, or demolition of the Mural itself; and

14 WHEREAS, Since its creation, the Mural has been made available for free, public
15 viewing, has inspired generations of artists, including alumni of the San Francisco Art Institute,
16 and countless members of the public, alike; now, therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, That the Board hereby initiates separate landmark designation of Diego
18 Rivera's masterpiece fresco "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," created
19 in 1931 at its sole and current location at the San Francisco Art Institute building at 800
20 Chestnut Street (Landmark No. 85); and, be it

21 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Planning Department
22 prepare a Landmark Designation Report to submit to the Historic Preservation Commission
23 for its consideration of the special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value of
24 the Mural; and, be it

1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Historic Preservation
2 Commission consider whether the Mural warrants landmark designation and submit its
3 recommendation to the Board according to Article 10 of the Planning Code.
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FILE NO. 90-774

ORDINANCE NO. 20877

DESIGNATING THE SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE AS A LANDMARK PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 10
OF THE CITY PLANNING CODE

Be it Ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

Section 1. The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that the San Francisco
Art Institute, 800 Chestnut Street, a portion of Lot 1 in Assessor's Block 49
has a special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic
interest and value, and that its designation as a Landmark will be in furtherance
of and in conformance with the purposes of Article 10 of the City Planning Code
and the standards set forth therein.

(a) Designation. Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning Code,
Chapter II, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, the San Francisco Art
Institute is hereby designated as a Landmark, this designation having been duly
approved by Resolution No. 7569 of the City Planning Commission, which Resolution
is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors under File No. 90-77-4.

(b) Required Data. This designation is applicable only to that portion
of Lot 1 in Assessor's Block 49 which is occupied by the portion of the San
Francisco Art Institute which was built in 1926. The descriptions of the
characteristics of the landmark which justify its designation; and of the
particular features that should be preserved; as included in the said Resolution,
are hereby incorporated herein and made a part hereof as though fully set forth.

APPROVED AS TO FORM

RECOMMENDED

THOMAS M. O'CONNOR
CITY ATTORNEY

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

By Robert A. Dineen
Deputy City Attorney

By Rai Y. Okamoto
Director of Planning

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

LM # 85

Passed for Second Reading
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

MAY 23 1977

Ayes: Supervisors Barbagelata, Feinstein, Francois, Gonzales, ~~Kopp~~, Mendelsohn, Molinari, Nelder, Pelosi, Tamaras, von Beroldingen.

~~Noes: Supervisors~~

Absent: Supervisors ~~KOPP~~

Clerk

File No.

JUN 9 1977
Approved

Read Second Time and Finally Passed
Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

MAY 31 1977

Ayes: Supervisors Barbagelata, Feinstein, Francois, Gonzales, Kopp, ~~Mendelsohn~~, Molinari, Nelder, Pelosi, Tamaras, von Beroldingen.

~~Noes: Supervisors~~

Absent: Supervisors ~~BARBAGELATA~~ MENDELSON

Clerk

I hereby certify that the foregoing ordinance was finally passed by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Mayor

SAN FRANCISCO

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. 7569

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate the 1926 structure designed by Bakewell & Brown for the San Francisco Art Institute at 800 Chestnut Street as a Landmark pursuant to the provisions of Article 10 of the City Planning Code was initiated by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board on January 8, 1976, and said Advisory Board, after due consideration has recommended approval of this proposal; and

WHEREAS, The City Planning Commission, after due notice given, held public hearings on February 5, and October 7, 1976, to consider the proposed designation and the report of said Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS, The Commission believes that the proposed Landmark has a special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value; and that the proposed designation would be in furtherance of and in conformance with the purposes and standards of the said Article 10;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, First, the proposal to designate the aforementioned structure of the San Francisco Art Institute at 800 Chestnut Street as a Landmark pursuant to Article 10 of the City Planning Code is hereby APPROVED, the precise location and boundaries of the Landmark site being those of the 1926 structure designed by Bakewell and Brown fronting on Chestnut Street, said structure being situated on Lot 1, in Assessor's Block 49;

Second, That the special character and special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value of the said Landmark justifying its designation are set forth in the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board Resolution No. 137 as adopted on January 8, 1976, which Resolution is incorporated herein and made a part thereof as though fully set forth;

Third, That the said Landmark should be preserved generally in all of its particular exterior features as existing on the date hereof and as described and depicted in the photographs, case report and other material on file in the Department of City Planning Docket LM76.1;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commission hereby directs its Secretary to transmit the proposal for designation, with a copy of this Resolution, to the Board of Supervisors for appropriate action.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the City Planning Commission at its regular meeting of October 7, 1976.

Robert H. Feldman

Robert H. Feldman
Acting Secretary

AYES: Biernan, Dearman, Pinn, Lau, Miller, Starbuck.

NOES: None

ABSENT: Rosenblatt

PASSED: October 7, 1976

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
Final Case Report -- December 17, 1975

SAN FRANCISCO ART
INSTITUTE

OWNER: The Regents of the University of California

LOCATION: 800 Chestnut Street, northeast corner of Jones; the parcel is square with frontages of 275 feet on Chestnut, Jones and Francisco, Being Lot 1 in Assessor's Block 49.

HISTORY: Designed by the architectural firm of Bakewell and Brown, this building was erected for the San Francisco Art Association to house the California School of Fine Arts (now known as the San Francisco Art Institute). It was built in 1926, and dedicated January 15, 1927.

The San Francisco Art Association was organized in March of 1871 for the "promotion of Painting, Sculpture and Fine Arts akin thereto, the diffusion of a cultivated taste for art in the community at large, and the establishment of an Academy or School of Design."

The membership was drawn both from artist and lay groups. The first Board of Directors consisted of Juan B. Wandesforde, Samuel Marsden Brookes, Frederick Whympier, Edward Bosqui, William L. Marple, Benjamin P. Avery, Gideon J. Denny and Noah Brooks. Others that served on the Board during the early years of the Art Association were William Alvord, Andrew S. Halladie, Pietro Mezzara, Darius Odgen Mills, Thomas Hill, Joseph Charles Duncan (the father of Isadora), William C. Ralston, William Hahn, Julian Rix, Norton Bush, Jules Tavernier, Charles F. Crocker, William Keith and James D. Phelan.

During the first year of its existence, the Art Association met in the Museum Room of the Mercantile Library. Later it occupied quarters at 313 Pine Street and in 1876, moved to 430 Pine Street, sharing space with the Bohemian Club. Meanwhile the Art Association opened the California School of Design in 1874, making it the oldest art school west of the Mississippi and the fourth oldest in the nation.

Amelia Ransome Neville remembered the rooms "over the California Market, of all places, where art was pervaded with the aroma of fish and the sound of the butcher's cleaver was heard. Mingled with my memories of Private Views that opened Spring Exhibitions in the old rooms are scents of the Market."

Virgil Williams was hired as the school's first Director. He had previously been in charge of the gallery in Woodward's Gardens. When Williams died in 1886, Thomas Hill took charge of the school until a new Director could be found. In 1887, Emil Carlsen came out from New York to take the position, which he held until 1889. Raymond Yelland ran the school for a year, then Arthur Mathews was placed in charge. It was while teaching at the school that Mathews met Lucia Kleinhans, a student, who later became his wife. Mathews was Director until 1906.

HISTORY:
(Continued)

Other students during the school's early years were Fanny Osborne (later, Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson) and her daughter Isobel. The novelist Frank Norris, Matilda Lotz (who also studied in Paris with Rosa Bonheur), Christian Jorgensen, Ernest Peixotto and Theodore Wores attended the school during this period. When Oscar Wilde visited San Francisco in 1882, Wores painted his portrait.

The San Francisco Art Association was incorporated in 1889. After the death of Mark Hopkins in 1878, his widow married Edward F. Searles from Methuen, Massachusetts and moved east leaving empty the mansion at the top of Nob Hill. When the former Mrs. Hopkins died, Mr. Searles gave the mansion for the use of the Art Association, to be known as the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. This transfer was made in February of 1893, by deed to the Regents of the University of California, "for the exclusive uses and purposes of instruction and illustration of Fine Arts, Music and Literature, or any of them, including the maintenance of galleries and reading rooms, and other suitable means of such instruction and illustration." In March of this same year, the move was made to the mansion.

The Candian painter, Emily Carr, who was a student at this time, describes the move in her autobiography Growing Pains. Also attending at that time were painters James Swinnerton, Joseph Raphael, Xavier Martinez and sculptor Earl Cummings.

From 1895 to about 1897, a class in drawing for apprentice architects who were working in local architectural offices was conducted with Bernard Maybeck in charge. It seems likely that Willis Polk was one of the students of this class since he was the chairman of a committee of apprentices that petitioned for the class.

The fire of 1906 destroyed the mansion, gallery and the school rooms together with nearly all their contents: pictures, statuary, library, and school equipment.

In spite of the lack of funds, the Art Association managed to erect a building on the foundation of the ruined mansion and classes resumed in 1907, while much of the city still lay in ruins. Loring P. Rixford was the architect for this simple, frame building which was intended as a temporary structure. In 1910, Rixford designed a gallery addition built of steel and concrete to house the Emanuel Walter Collection of art work that was left to the Art Association.

With the opening of the School in 1907, Capt. Robert Howe Fletcher was appointed the director of the San Francisco Institute of Art, as it was then called, and Theodore Wores was hired as dean of the faculty, which position he held until 1913.

HISTORY:
(Continued)

Among the board members were John I. Walter, John Galen Howard and Charles Templeton Crocker. Some of the instructors during this time were Eugen Neuhaus, Earl Cummings, Pedro Lemos, Frank Van Sloun and Agatha Van Erp. It is said that Maurice Logan was the first student to enroll in the school after the fire.

The school's exhibition in the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 was awarded a gold and a silver medal for its excellence. Members of the faculty, ex-faculty and ex-students were well represented in the Exposition's art exhibit, many of them winning awards.

Faculty and students alone contributed some thirty works: thirteen murals and seventeen sculptures. Included were the murals of Antonio Sotomayer, Dorothy Wagner Puccinelli, Squire Knowles, Armin Hansen, Helen Forbes, Maynard Dixon, While Jacques Schnier, Michael Von Meyer, Clara Huntington, Adeline Kent, Frederick Olmsted, Helen Phillips and Haig Patigian exhibited sculptures.

After the Exposition, the Art Association maintained the Palace of Fine Arts building as a museum, opening May 1, 1916. J. Nilsen Laurvik, director of the museum, felt that "almost from its inception the Museum in the Palace of Fine Arts has taken its place as one of the most active cultural influences that San Francisco has ever had. It has become in a very real sense the center of the cultural activities of our city, a rallying-place for all the arts, a sort of forum where the exponents of the Seven Arts may meet and have their say on a basis of their common interest in Art...." The upkeep on the building forced the Art Association to abandon the structure in 1924. In 1925, the Forty-eighth Annual Exhibition of the Art Association was held in the newly opened California Palace of the Legion of Honor.

In 1920, the Art Association obtained the permission of Edward Searles to sell the property on Nob Hill. After several offers, it was finally agreed to accept \$350,000 for the lot. This sale was consummated in 1923. A search was then begun for a new site for the Art Association and the Chestnut Street property was purchased in 1924, for \$50,000, along with the gore at Francisco, Jones and Columbus, which was later sold. During this time, classes were held at 15 California Street in the Glenwood Building.

The firm of Bakewell and Brown was chosen to design the new building. Arthur Brown, Jr. was a member of the Board of Directors of the Art Association from at least 1919 through 1950, during which time he served as first vice-president in 1919, 1922 and 1927, and president of the Board in 1920-21, 1928-29 and 1937-39. The following resolution was adopted by the Board, March 14, 1935. "Resolved unanimously by the President and Board of Directors of the San Francisco Art Association that Arthur Brown, Jr. is eminently entitled to our gratitude and praise for his invaluable services in preparing for permanent exhibitions the galleries of the San Francisco Museum of Art.

HISTORY:
(Continued)

"They desire also, at this time, to express their high sense of appreciation for his inestimable contributions to the development and beauty of our City and to wish him long life and health to continue to shed lustre on the profession of architecture and to enjoy the honorable rewards of his genius, industry, and artistry."

It is possible that Willis Polk would have been the architect rather than Brown. On January 15, 1923, Polk submitted "a suggested scheme to provide a new and adequate building for the Art School. The Plan provides for the disposal of the present property and purchasing of the Tobin Lot on the southeast corner of California and Taylor Streets. To erect thereon a new fire-proof construction building meeting the present needs of the School with provision made for future growth. In connection therewith to build an apartment house containing ten apartments deluxe, the income from which, in excess of interest, sinking funds and other expenses will leave a fund of \$18,500 yearly which can be devoted to School purposes." The scheme contains a plot plan and a financial statement. Whatever possibilities the scheme held were terminated when the Tobin property was sold, and the following year, Willis Polk died.

The new building was erected in 1926 at a cost of about \$250,000, and formal dedication was held January 15, 1927.

James D. Phelan left a bequest of \$100,000 to the Art Association for the establishment of a museum at the California School of Fine Arts. However, this additional wing on the new building was not added, instead the money was used as a scholarship fund, following the dictates of the will. He also left his estate in Saratoga, Montalvo Villa, in trust to the Art Association. Phelan was a member of the Art Association from 1884 until his death in 1930. In 1885, at the age of 24, he was elected to the Board.

Conceived by the Art Association as a unit of the cultural group in the Civic Center, the San Francisco Museum of Art was opened in 1935, as a continuation of the Association's operation of the galleries in the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art and in the Palace of Fine Arts Museum. In later years, the Museum became an independent organization but retains a relationship of friendly cooperation.

In the 1920s, the revival of interest in mural painting quickly spread across the nation. As early as 1918, the California School of Fine Arts' catalogue stated: "Mural painting is fast coming to the front as the leading mode of expression of the painter's art and practice work in this important subject will be given advanced students." Instruction was offered until World War II, covering such techniques as fresco, lime-casein; egg, glue tempera; and wax emulsion.

Ray Boynton, who is said to have introduced mosaic in the 1920s "in a manner which met contemporary aesthetic criteria," (Jean Goodwin, "California Mosaics," Art for the Millions, edited by

HISTORY:

(Continued)

Francis V. O'Connor, 1973) was instructor in mural painting at the school for many years. Other members of the faculty during this period were Victor Arnautoff, Jose Moya del Pino, Gottardo Piazzoni, Lee Randolph (director), Gertrude Partington Albright, Marian Hartwell, Ruth Cravath, Rudolph Schaeffer, Spencer Macky, Otis Oldfield, Lucien Labaudt, Ray Bertrand, Nelson Poole, Edgar Walter and Ralph Stackpole.

Many murals, as well as sculptures, plaques, and the like were done in both public and private buildings in the Bay Area by faculty and students of the school. With aid furnished by the WPA, many more were added to the Bay Area's collection. Of the 25 works in Coit Tower listed in the Art Commission's A Survey of Art Work in the City and County of San Francisco (1975), 20 were done by faculty and students, a project of the WPA. These include, as well as many of those already listed, Edith Hamlin, George Harris, Clifford Wight, Mallette Dean, Ben Cunningham and Jame Berlandina (Howard).

Diego Rivera painted his first murals in the United States in San Francisco. In 1930, he executed a fresco in the Stock Exchange Lunch Club followed by one in the California School of Fine Arts. He was again invited to do a work for the city, this time for the Golden Gate International Exposition, which was held on Treasure Island in 1939. He worked on this mural, which was part of the Art in Action project, during the fair and for three months after it closed, creating a portable work some 22 X 73 feet, divided into ten sections. At this time, he accepted an invitation to teach at the school but other commitments took him elsewhere.

After World War II, under the able direction of Douglas MacAgy, the school became the West Coast birthplace of Abstract Expressionism at about the same time of its development in New York. "It can be said," wrote Terry St. John, Associate Curator of Art, Oakland Museum, "that during the years 1947-1953, the high point of Abstract Expressionism in the Bay Area produced an intensity of activity combined with an interchange of dialogues that at times anticipated developments in the East." Probably the most influential teacher was Clyfford Still. Other faculty members were Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, Richard Diebenkorn, Elmer Bischoff, Jean Varda and Hassel Smith, and among their many students who have since become noted artists were Frank Lobdell, John Hultberg, Deborah Remington, Jeremy Anderson and James Weeks, all of whom later taught at the school.

In 1946, Ansel Adams started a photography program as the first course in photography as a fine art to be offered in an American college. This department was taken over and run by Minor White until the early 1950s. Visiting instructors included Imogen Cunningham, Edward Weston and Dorothea Lange.

Timothy Pflueger died in 1946. He had been a member of the Art Association since 1929, President of the Board from 1932 to 1937, and a member of the Board from 1930 until his death. "By his constant active interest in the Association and its School he contributed greatly to their development and progress."

HISTORY:
(Continued)

In the 1950s, with Diebenkorn, Weeks, Bishoff, Nathan Oliveira and David Park on the faculty, the school became known as the center of the new style of San Francisco figurative painting.

In the fall of 1953, a BFA degree program was established in all departments with the first class graduating in 1955; thirteen students received the BFA degree. The MFA degree program was added in the Fall of 1958.

On the 15th of February, 1961, the San Francisco Art Association and the California School of Fine Arts became known as the San Francisco Art Institute. It was felt "that the name California was too vague, but that San Francisco had, in addition to specificity, a strong emotional appeal throughout the country; that School is a word completely without meaning now and that 'college' had little more, but that 'institute' carries a high prestige factor now and for the foreseeable future; and, finally, the Fine Arts made it difficult to understand how photography, teacher training, advertising design, etc., could be taught."

By 1959, the need was felt for expansion of the school. John Bolles, who was president of the Board, presented plans for the addition of a studio wing and a gallery, to be done in a style similar to that of the original building. A lack of funds delayed this project and when the time finally arrived when the project could be done, a new architect and a new plan were chosen. In 1965, Paffard Keatinge Clay was selected as architect, and plans were soon under way. By 1969, the new building wing was completed, at a cost of \$1.8 million. Writing in the January - February 1970 issue of Architectural Forum, Roger Montgomery stated: "The building section Clay invented responds directly to the site to produce a sequence of architectural experiences unmatched elsewhere in this city of stunning sites and spaces."

The enrollment for Fall 1974 and Spring 1975 was about 900 for each semester, which includes part time students. In May of 1975, 168 BFA degrees were awarded and 43 MFA degrees. This is in contrast to the 60 students who enrolled in 1874.

To attempt listing all the major students and faculty members who have been associated with the school would be impossible but a few that have not elsewhere been mentioned are Maynard Dixon, John Gutzon Borglum (of Mount Rushmore fame), Edgar Walter, Beniamino Bufano, Adeline Kent, Robert Motherwell, Ronald Bladen, Roy De Forrest, Robert Morris, Chryssa, Joan Brown, William Wiley, and Bruce Nauman.

INTERIOR
MURALS:

Ralph Stackpole returned from Mexico in 1926 with two pictures by Diego Rivera. William Gerstle, president of the Art Association, was very excited about the work and commissioned Rivera to do a small wall, 120 feet square, in the school. Rivera arrived in San Francisco in 1930. When he saw the original wall he said it was too small and selected the largest wall in the school without asking for more than the \$1,500 Gerstle had donated for the mural. The was completed in 1931.

INTERIOR
MURALS:
(Continued)

A fresco panel 40' x 30', it depicts a cross-section of the modern American city. Dominating the painting is a heroic figure of a workman, a painted scaffolding and a rear view of the artist seated on the scaffolding. Within this framework are various figures typifying different aspects of construction, labor and planning.

The lower central panel of the mural shows the figures of Timothy Pflueger, Arthur Brown, Jr. and William Gerstle. Ralph Stackpole can be seen in the left central panel. According to Bertram Wolfe, Rivera's biographer, the following assistants are also represented: Viscount John Hastings, Clifford Wight, Matthew Barnes, Michael Baltekal-Goodman, Mrs. Marion Simpson and Albert Barrows.

In 1936, eleven lunettes were painted in the Reading Room of the Anne Bremer Memorial Library. These murals were commissioned by Albert Bender. The artists are Victor Arnautoff, Ray Boynton, William Hesthal, Gordon Langdon, Frederick Olmsted, and Ralph Stackpole. A dedicatory plaque was executed by Jacques Schnier. Of the many murals that were done around the school by students only two remain. One shows Spencer Macky and his class at work, and the other, Gottardo Piazzoni, with a group of students out of doors. The patio mural done by Ray Boynton depicts the Board of Trustees at the time the school was built.

ARCHITECTURE:

On the 15th of January, 1927, "...the beautiful new building of the California School of Fine Arts officially opened its high, green doors leading to the stone-framed pool in the wide, arch-framed patio." About 3500 people attended the opening ceremonies. Among the speakers on this occasion was E. Spencer Macky, secretary of the San Francisco Art Association. "The appropriate simplicity and commanding beauty of the architecture of this building will emphasize the importance and dignity of living art in our midst today."

The building (really a series of buildings or spaces) is done in a modified version of the Spanish Colonial Revival Style. The walls are stripped concrete dyed a soft adobe-ochre under red tile roofs that are many-leveled with skylights rising above to give northlight to the various studios. A bell tower rises above the patio in the style of the Spanish missions. The building covers the entire Chestnut Street side of the property, and about one third of the Jones Street side. It consists of three floors with a ground floor and basement below, and three more floors rising above in the tower, all built on many levels. Originally, a six-foot wall with concrete capping enclosed the remainder of the property, but sections of this wall were removed when the new building wing was added in the late 1960s.

ARCHITECTURE:

The entrance archway on Chestnut Street is done in a modified Churrigueresque manner with additional ornamentation above the doorway on Jones Street. Other ornamentation was originally planned for both the exterior and interior of the building but was omitted, apparently because of a lack of funds. A museum/sculpture wing was omitted as well. The sculpture wing was finally completed by December of 1929 and a ceramics room added to this wing in 1934. An arched porch opening on the Francisco Street side of the building was removed when the new building wing was added.

The cloistered court, or patio, is the central area of the School surrounded on three sides by studio, office and gallery space, and on the fourth by a high wall that effectively screens the area from street noises. In the center of the patio is a tiled fountain in the Moorish style raised to seat level. Bricks are laid across the patio in a pattern often used in Spain.

The tower rises 99' 6" from the northwest corner of the patio (195' 6" above sea level).

ZONING AND
SURROUNDING
LAND USE:

The property is zoned R-3 (Low-Medium Density Multiple Residential) with a height and bulk limit of 40-X. The surrounding land uses are largely residential ranging from single-family dwellings to low-rise apartment structures except for commercial establishments on Columbus Avenue.

Member, Board of Supervisors
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

AARON PESKIN

DATE: January 7, 2021

TO: Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

FROM: Supervisor Aaron Peskin, Chair, Land Use and Transportation
Committee

RE: Land Use and Transportation Committee
COMMITTEE REPORTS

Pursuant to Board Rule 4.20, as Chair of the Land Use and Transportation Committee, I have deemed the following matters are of an urgent nature and request they be considered by the full Board on Tuesday, January 12, 2021, as Committee Reports:

201370 Interim Zoning Controls - Large Residential Projects in RC, RM and RTO Districts

Resolution imposing interim zoning controls for an 18-month period for parcels in Residential-Commercial Combined (RC), Residential - Mixed (RM) and Residential - Transit Oriented (RTO) districts, requiring Conditional Use Authorization for any residential development that does not maximize the number of units allowed by applicable density restrictions; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section, 101.1.

[TBD] Urging California Regents to Consider the Proposed UCSF Parnassus Expansion Plan EIR at their March 2021 Meeting

Resolution urging the California Regents to move consideration of the proposed University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) Parnassus Expansion Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) from their January 2021 meeting to their March 2021 meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORT MEMORANDUM

Land Use and Transportation Committee

[TBD] Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"

Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut Street.

These matters will be heard in the Land Use and Transportation Committee at a Regular Meeting on Monday, January 11, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

/s/ Aaron Peskin

From: [Adrian Card](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Diego Rivera Mural
Date: Tuesday, January 12, 2021 10:49:28 AM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Ms. Major,

I'm writing to you as an alumnus of the San Francisco Art Institute, and I wanted to voice my support for landmarking the Diego Rivera mural at 800 Chestnut Street.

Thank you,
Adrian Card

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Adrian Card
Harpsichord decoration, murals
& historically-based decorative painting
www.adriancard.com
707-894-9210
www.artisticlicense.org

From: [Christopher Sabre](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: sfartistsalumni@gmail.com
Subject: 210016[Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"]
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 12:25:30 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Members of the Committee:

Please consider designating the Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City" a landmark. It would not be an exaggeration to call the mural part of the soul of the San Francisco Art Institute and City's North Beach neighborhood. My mother, Marjorie Eakin, and other fresco artists of the 1930's whose work can still be seen at the Institute were inspired by Diego's mural. The Rivera mural must remain in place under the ownership of the San Francisco Art Institute.

Sincerely,

Christopher Sabre

From: [Maggie Bradley](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: 210016- [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"]
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 12:29:43 PM
Attachments: [Diego Mural 210016.pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

To The City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors,

I think Diego's mural is very clear about who he sees himself, the artist, wanting to highlight. We artists are workers among workers, those who have a long history building the foundation of this city. The importance of the gigantic laborer in the middle cannot be overlooked. Imagine the image without the figure in the middle and without all the laborers depicted. You would be left with business men and a group of what appears to be architects. In fact, Diego himself, or his backside, would not be part of the narrative either. This story of erasure will be the same for the city of San Francisco if we continue to allow art to be sold off and artists to be priced out. I came to this city because I believed in its willingness to put progressive ideas to the test. I come from a town in Georgia where strict religious views and conservatism reigned supreme. There was little room for trying alternative methods and supporting diversity in many forms, so I rebelled. Following this upbringing, I experienced years of addiction and poverty which lead me to see the value of structure, handwork and discipline. When I made it to San Francisco to attend SFAI, I thought I had been given a chance of a lifetime. I worked extremely hard to make ends meet all while attending this school and maintaining a 3.8 GPA. I am not unique. Many artists who worked at the school as teachers and staff, as well as the students, worked extremely hard to be there. Since March 2020 when the consequences of the SFAI Board of Trustees members and administration's gross mismanagement combined with the high cost of living/operating in San Francisco, came to an impasse, I went to every "agency" in place to protect students. This includes, calling the DA's office, WASC the accreditation agency, The BPPE, The Department of Education, Private Lawyers and finally local media. Not one agency stepped in and removed this Board and the people responsible. This left students scrambling, teachers out of work, staff losing healthcare and much more damage created all during a global pandemic. I hear once you hit the top, class/power wise, there is a lot of hand shaking and deals made between friends of friends of friends. Seems Diego was able to represent those as well, featured in well dressed clothes, backs facing the laborers, looking at new plans they have, ignoring the laborers building the city. I cannot help but feel the magnitude of the expression on this lone giant laborers face. Diego was trying to show you, I am trying to tell you and the community who showed up today are trying to speak up for the forgotten community of diverse artists who are workers. May San Francisco use the WPA model as an example of funding artists who are workers directly, so that as we all recover from this pandemic and the consequences of poor financial decisions and oversight, we may progress forward with change and preserve a core part of The City of San Francisco's foundation built by everyday artists and workers.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Marguerite Bradley, Maggie Bacon
Artist, In favor of Landmark Status
SFAI 2020

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Maggie Bacon

Artist/Oil Painter

Typos are common errors and sure signs of a human touch.

210016- [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"] Sponsor: Peskin
Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut Street.

To The City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors,

I think Diego's mural is very clear about who he sees himself, the artist, wanting to highlight. We artists are workers among workers, those who have a long history building the foundation of this city. The importance of the gigantic laborer in the middle cannot be overlooked. Imagine the image without the figure in the middle and without all the laborers depicted. You would be left with business men and a group of what appears to be architects. In fact, Diego himself, or his backside, would not be part of the narrative either. This story of erasure will be the same for the city of San Francisco if we continue to allow art to be sold off and artists to be priced out.

I came to this city because I believed in its willingness to put progressive ideas to the test. I come from a town in Georgia where strict religious views and conservatism reigned supreme. There was little room for trying alternative methods and supporting diversity in many forms, so I rebelled. Following this upbringing, I experienced years of addiction and poverty which lead me to see the value of structure, handwork and discipline. When I made it to San Francisco to attend SFAI, I thought I had been given a chance of a lifetime. I worked extremely hard to make ends meet all while attending this school and maintaining a 3.8 GPA. I am not unique. Many artists who worked at the school as teachers and staff, as well as the students, worked extremely hard to be there.

Since March 2020 when the consequences of the SFAI Board of Trustees members and administration's gross mismanagement combined with the high cost of living/operating in San Francisco, came to an impasse, I went to every "agency" in place to protect students. This includes, calling the DA's office, WASC the accreditation agency, The BPPE, The Department of Education, Private Lawyers and finally local media. Not one agency stepped in and removed this Board and the people responsible. This left students scrambling, teachers out of work, staff losing healthcare and much more damage created all during a global pandemic. I hear once you hit the top, class/power wise, there is a lot of hand shaking and deals made between friends of friends of friends. Seems Diego was able to represent those as well, featured in well dressed clothes, backs facing the laborers, looking at new plans they have, ignoring the laborers building the city.

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Thank you for your time and consideration,

Marguerite Bradley, Maggie Bacon
Artist, In favor of Landmark Status
SFAI 2020

From: [Monica Bravo](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Statement for meeting of 1-11-21
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:07:40 PM
Attachments: [Bravo BoS meeting 1-11-21.pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Erica Major,

Please find attached my remarks pursuant to agenda number 210016: Initiating Landmark Designation—800 Chestnut Street—Diego Rivera's Mural *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of the City*," sponsored by Aaron Peskin.

Best,

Monica Bravo, PhD
Assistant Professor
History of Art and Visual Culture
California College of the Arts

--

CCA is situated on the unceded territories of the Ohlone peoples.

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City

Board of Supervisors meeting, 1-11-21

Agenda number 210016

Initiating Landmark Designation—800 Chestnut Street—Diego Rivera's Mural *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of the City*

Sponsored by Aaron Peskin

Statement:

Hello, I'm Dr. Monica Bravo, I am an art historian and assistant professor at California College of the Arts. I'm a specialist in the modern art of the Americas, having written a book on U.S. photographers in dialog with modern Mexican artists including Diego Rivera forthcoming from Yale University Press, as well as teaching courses on the Mexican Cultural Renaissance at Yale University and Mexican Modernism and Murals from Museums to the Street at CCA.

My concern is that the mural will be removed from its site. Although I understand that Rivera made this fresco on a steel framework, such that it may physically be removed from the site without damage to the painting, the imagery of this work is so entirely self-referential to the dimensions and context of the site that to remove it, in my professional opinion, would be to destroy it.

First, many do not realize that what looks like wooden scaffolding, upon which Rivera's bottom is perched, is actually a painted part of the mural, which then three-dimensionally extends below the fresco. Rivera has depicted himself and his assistants as artists, yes, but more importantly as workers contributing to the building of the city, as are the other individuals you see in the various sections of the mural. This is an invaluable message for art students, that they have a crucial function in society, and was one of the reasons why Rivera chose this subject for this site.

Second, Rivera has organized the composition such that it is legible from any position within what is now known as the Rivera gallery. There is one source of natural overhead light in the gallery's skylight, with another set of clerestory windows facing the courtyard, and Rivera *designed* the work such that areas of more detail and brighter color are closer to our eye levels. The upper regions are allowed to fall off, giving the impression of those areas receding into space. The space itself is chapel-like, and with his mural Rivera, consecrates its sacred use to one of active art making; the area's current use as a student gallery is entirely consistent with this.

Third, this mural, more than the *Allegory of California* at the Stock Exchange or private residential paintings he made in San Francisco and at Berkeley in 1930, launched the mural movement in the Bay Area. The Mexican Cultural Renaissance was the basis for the New Deal Works Progress Administration; many of SF's muralists trained or worked with Rivera at the SFAI site. Their works could once be seen across the city, and many still are, including at the nearby Coit Tower. These developments further paved the way for the Chicana mural movement that began in the Mission in the 1970s. Both for its historical significance and continued social utility to a next generation of artmakers, the mural should receive landmark designation.

Finally, many of you will be familiar with the destruction of Rivera's mural *Man at the Crossroads* at Rockefeller Center in 1934, primarily for the artist's inclusion of a portrait of Vladimir Lenin. Fortunately, he was able to re-create the mural according to his personal vision in Mexico City at the Museo de Bellas Artes. On other occasions, Rivera made relatively small frescos on steel frames which were specifically designed to travel as portable frescoes. This was not the case in *Making of a Fresco*. This is a site-specific work that depends on its current (permanent) site and function—as a student gallery at an art school, within the architectural space, and location at 800 Chestnut Street in North Beach—for its meaning. To remove the mural would be to destroy the work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Monica Bravo', with a stylized, cursive script.

Monica Bravo, PhD
Assistant Professor
History of Art and Visual Culture
California College of the Arts

From: [Elizabeth Travelslight](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Public comment: Agenda Item 210016 [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"]
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:49:46 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

My name is Elizabeth Travelslight, I'm a lifelong San Francisco resident and the proud parent of an SFUSD 2nd grader. I am an artist, an adjunct professor of mathematics and science, former president of SFAI's Adjunct Faculty Union, and I have taught courses that examine SFAI's history and the economics of art. Since 2014, I witnessed first-hand how the board of trustees' arrogance and incompetence caused SFAI to become a fiscally-unsafe organization that created precarious teaching and learning conditions for students and faculty of color.

We are here because of careless philanthropists who failed to follow through on a public promise to raise **\$19M** for SFAI's campus expansion to Fort Mason Center. These trustees gambled ambitious fundraising goals on a loan leveraged against the school's Chestnut Street campus—the buildings, the artworks, the livelihoods of its community members, and the future of the school itself. Their failure to follow through on this promise first left students and faculty to shoulder the burden, now they want to remove and sell a landmark work of art to compensate for their shortfall. This reckless so called "philanthropy" needs to be stopped and this site-specific mural must be protected from their negligence.

Rivera's mural makes a very simple point: The role of the artist in the building of San Francisco is to center and uplift our city's workers. To remind us of who actually brings our great city to life. Persistent race and wealth inequalities have allowed death and disease to rain down upon our most vulnerable communities and our essential workers. If our city is going to recover from this devastating pandemic, we need to heed Rivera's message—not let incompetent "philanthropists" cart it off to cover for their broken promises or take further risks with additional loans against it.

Students paid the price for this debt by covering high tuition and costs of living with student loans and their facilities suffered from inadequate investment. Faculty paid the price by enduring stagnant salaries and the indignity of part-time, precarious adjunct positions year after year. SFAI's inability to support and retain significant representation of faculty and staff of color has been an unacknowledged loss for San Francisco's entire arts community and for students of color in particular who need mentors to help them navigate an art world shaped by colonialism, Eurocentrism, and white privilege.

These so called "trustees" left a gaping multi-million-dollar hole in a deeply important institution of learning—gutting a community that has served San Francisco and the creation of art around the world for 150 years. Only they know why they abandoned and now try to obscure this fiduciary-responsibilities. Mistake? Malfeasance? I don't know. Someone should really investigate that. 70 adjuncts laid-off, 300 students forced out. And now the removal and sale of this monumental work of art? These are considerable costs for philanthropic hubris.

The Making of a Fresco showing the Building of a City is a testament to the purpose of art by one of the world's most celebrated artist of color—to use it to cover and compensate for ongoing derelictions of duty by SFAI's trustees is unethical and an unforgiveable slap in the face to every artist of color that has ever called San Francisco home. We cannot allow the incompetent wealthy to run roughshod over our city's cultural legacy. Now more than ever we need to remember who

we really are.

I affirm Supervisor Peskin's resolution and respectfully ask that you do the same.

Thank you.

Best wishes,
Elizabeth

*** ** *

Elizabeth Travelslight

elizabethtravelslight.com
i-a-f-s.org
artandactivism.org

From: [SoCaliForeign](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: DIEGO RIVERA IS SACRED
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:12:40 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

MAKE IT A HISTORICAL LANDMARK
I STUDIED AT SFAI AND THAT MURAL HELPED ME SEE MYSELF WHEN I WASNT
REPRESENTED IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA
I REFUSE TO LET GEORGE LUCAS HAVE PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF THIS
MASTERPIECE

WITH CONVICTION,

IZZY DIER

From: [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: [Hepner, Lee \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Fwd: Professional support from an art historian regarding Landmark Designation of Rivera mural
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 7:03:22 PM

Please include in the file for today's item no. 3.
Aaron

From: Peskin, Aaron (BOS) <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>
Sent: Monday, January 11, 2021 7:02:19 PM
To: Monica Bravo <bravo@cca.edu>
Subject: Re: Professional support from an art historian regarding Landmark Designation of Rivera mural

Thanks so much!
Aaron

From: Monica Bravo <bravo@cca.edu>
Sent: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:17:19 PM
To: Peskin, Aaron (BOS) <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>
Subject: Professional support from an art historian regarding Landmark Designation of Rivera mural

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Supervisor Peskin,

I am an art historian and assistant professor at California College of the Arts, as well as an expert on the work of the Mexican muralists, especially Diego Rivera. I have attached a statement I wrote in support of your landmark designation proposal, which I planned to potentially remark upon at today's Board of Supervisors meeting (I submitted the document to Erica Major as well). I would like to simply emphasize my support and offer my expertise on the issue. I could offer testimony as to the site's importance or write an op-ed for the *SF Chronicle*, for example, if this would be of use in securing landmark designation.

Best,

Monica Bravo, PhD
Assistant Professor
History of Art and Visual Culture
California College of the Arts

<https://www.monica bravo.info/>

--

CCA is situated on the unceded territories of the Ohlone peoples.

From: [Lindsey White](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#); [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: A message from SFAI Faculty about Initiating Landmark Designation 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 5:17:02 PM
Attachments: [Catherine Opie Letter.pdf](#)
[Faculty Senate Diego Rivera Mural.pdf](#)
[Reimagine Committee Letter to the Board on the Diego Mural 12.16.20 \(2\).pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Supervisor Aaron Peskin and Erica Major,

I'm writing to share three documents for your records that oppose the sale or removal of Diego Rivera's mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City".

1. A letter is from a well respected artist and SFAI Alumni, Catherine Opie to the SFAI Board
2. A letter from SFAI's Faculty Senate to the SFAI Board
3. A letter from SFAI's Reimagine Committee.

Thank you,
Lindsey White

--

Lindsey White

Assistant Professor // Photography Department Chair

SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE

800 Chestnut Street, San Francisco, CA 94133

www.sfai.edu

My open letter to the trustees of SFAI.

January 7, 2021

An Open Letter to the Board of Trustees of the San Francisco Art Institute:

I am writing this letter with a great amount of sadness, not only during what has been happening throughout our country; a global pandemic, a coup by the president, but for the uncertainty for the future of art for educators and students.

These are not normal times and a great amount of reflection and action is needed among all of us. I am shocked and saddened that SFAI has put Diego Rivera's 1931 mural, The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City, up for sale.

This is an incredibly unconscionable decision. Solely the fact that the Diego Rivera mural has become a monetary asset in the minds of the trustees; an asset thought to help the institution survive. Of course, I want SFAI to survive, but not by gutting one of the most important artworks in the history of the institution. The Diego Rivera mural has lived and inspired many generations of artists at 800 Chestnut. Quite frankly this is sickening and I am profoundly against the sale of the Diego Rivera mural, thus making my letter public.

I am a proud SFAI alum, BFA, Class of 1985. My teachers were the best of the best - instilling the drive and passion I needed to be an artist, especially an artist who bears witness with a camera documenting America. I have continued on with their inspiration in teaching for the past 30 years, 24 of them at UCLA. I have also had the honor of serving as a trustee and board member at The Hammer Museum, MOCA, The Andy Warhol Foundation, and The Mike Kelley Foundation. With this experience of being a trustee, I understand how hard decisions are to make when an institution free falls into financial crisis after financial crisis.

It is the Board of Trustees responsibility for the fiscal health of the institution. In other situations, I have seen board members reach deep into their pockets to fulfill the health of the institution and their responsibilities as trustees. It is not something that I have heard or I am aware of among the trustees of SFAI and there have been no news articles declaring the generosity of a large gift to stabilize the institution.

The strategic plan of selling the Rivera is unacceptable and this has led me to the decision to pull my piece from the upcoming auction for SFAI of Alumni artist works. The piece is a unique Surfer photograph that I was proud to give to help the institution. I can no longer be a part of a legacy that will sell off an essential unique piece of history, especially one of the importance of the site specific of a Diego Rivera mural. Artists are asked to be philanthropists; it is truly important that my work can create an ability of helping organizations with their future. The Board of Trustees has abused this in not making the gesture of donations themselves. The time is now, generosity is met with generosity. The fact that UC Regents has stepped in to pay the note and we have lost 800 Chestnut Street is a travesty. San Francisco has more millionaires and billionaires geographically than most cities in America.

I ask the board to reconsider their decision to sell the Diego Rivera mural. I also ask the board to dig deep in your own pockets in raising an endowment for the preservation of SFAI that is

truly reflective of the community of philanthropists of the Bay Area. This cannot be figured out by selling such an important site-specific artwork such as Diego Rivera's mural.

Sincerely, Catherine Opie

From: Faculty Senate of the San Francisco Art Institute
To: The San Francisco Art Institute Board of Trustees
Subject: Sale of the Diego Rivera mural

12/16/2020

Dear Board of Trustees:

The Faculty Senate has voted against the sale and removal of the Diego Rivera mural. There has been a lack of serious deliberations with the faculty and staff over such a consequential decision.

- The cultural significance of the Diego Rivera mural requires that it remain in place, given its subject matter and site specificity, its inestimable place in the history of SFAI and art history, as well as its status as a San Francisco city landmark.
- A decision to proceed with a sale will be on an accelerated timetable without substantial input from SFAI's community stakeholders, leading arts professionals, and San Francisco city leaders.
- Deliberations related to the future of the mural must include BIPOC scholars in addition to organizations recommended by the faculty:

Chon Noriega, Director UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center
<https://www.chicano.ucla.edu/about/director>

C. Ondine Chavoya, Ph.D, Chair of Latina/o Studies Program, Associate Professor of Contemporary Art, Williams College
<https://latino-studies.williams.edu/profile/ochavoya/>

Tatiana Flores, Ph.D. Professor Art History and LCS(Latino, Caribbean art; contemporary art; socially conscious art forms)
<https://latcar.rutgers.edu/people/core-faculty/48-tatiana-flores>

Barbara Haskell, Art historian and museum curator, curator Whitney Museum of American Art.
Currently on view- Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925-1945
<https://whitney.org/exhibitions/vida-americana>

Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager of the City of Oakland
rbedoya@oaklandca.gov

National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures
nalac.org

The National Hispanic Cultural Center Foundation.
nhccfoundation.org

The Consulate General of Mexico in San Francisco and San Jose
consulmex.sre.gob.mx/sanfrancisco/
consulmex.sre.gob.mx/sanjose/

Coalition to Protect Public Art
<https://www.protectpublicart.org/>

- Faculty Senate has been given neither an accounting of SFAI's current financials nor a financial plan concerning the future.
- There haven't been sufficient explorations into creative alternatives to an outright sale/removal of the mural that may also enable SFAI to continue under a sustainable model.

The Faculty Senate welcomes an expanded discussion with the Board about the Diego Rivera mural. As we enter our 150th year, the mural represents the iconic, symbolic heart of SFAI. It signifies the fundamental bridge between our historic past and collective goals for the future.

Sincerely,

Brett Reichman, Faculty Senate President
Lindsey White, Faculty Senate Vice President
Claire Daigle, Faculty Senate Secretary

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To: The San Francisco Art Institute Board of Trustees
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Tatiana Flores, Ph.D. Professor Art History and LCS(Latino, Caribbean art; contemporary art; socially conscious art forms)
<https://latcar.rutgers.edu/people/core-faculty/48-tatiana-flores>

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Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager of the City of Oakland
rbedoya@oaklandca.gov

National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures
nalac.org

The National Hispanic Cultural Center Foundation.
nhccfoundation.org

The Consulate General of Mexico in San Francisco and San Jose
consulmex.sre.gob.mx/sanfrancisco/
consulmex.sre.gob.mx/sanjose/

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<https://www.protectpublicart.org/>

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Sincerely,

Brett Reichman, Faculty Senate President
Lindsey White, Faculty Senate Vice President
Claire Daigle, Faculty Senate Secretary

LETTER OF APPEAL TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AT SFAI DECEMBER 15, 2020

As SFAI prepares to celebrate its 150th anniversary, we, the Reimagine Committee, are tasked by the SFAI Board of Trustees to recommend a comprehensive vision that renews our ability and commitment to prepare emerging artists to meet the increasing challenges they will undoubtedly face in the future. The Reimagine Committee is organized to include the wider SFAI community, experts in related fields, and most importantly a wide range of alumni across the world. As promised, the Reimagine Committee has developed a comprehensive and innovative proposal for the relaunching of SFAI by: setting aside the assumptions that have driven our institutional decision making for the last several decades; taking a fresh look at our mission and values; producing and analyzing a comprehensive set of financial models; proposing a dynamic system of pedagogy; refocusing our efforts to champion racial, social, and environmental justice; and establishing a non-hierarchical structure of governance.

We appreciate the board dialoguing with us and taking a first step in extending the conversation to the community about our joint responsibilities at SFAI, like the Diego Rivera Mural.

In alignment with our models for re-imagining SFAI, the Reimagine Committee strongly disagrees with the idea that the sale and removal of the Diego Rivera mural will save SFAI. Contrary to our knowledge and recommendations, such actions by the SFAI Board of Trustees will cause irreparable harm to the ethical, moral, cultural, social, political, civic, domestic, and international standing of our institution. We are confident that SFAI will cease to exist as the public memory we all wish to be our legacy should the institution fail to understand the power of art in this particular context and matter. Considering all that we have imagined together as a Re-imagine Committee, we feel it is our duty to advise the SFAI Board of Trustees in good faith and partnership. We present this letter to you with the intention to collaboratively promote the success of our beloved institution. Together we must seek to better maintain Rivera's scaffold, and jointly use it for depicting a more desirable future for SFAI and citizens of San Francisco.

ETHICAL REASONS

- **Place:** We urge the Board to move away from its ideas to sell and remove the Diego Rivera mural to a private donor since it is a work in which place matters.
 - To pursue such a sale constitutes and evokes forced removal, and the ongoing displacement, erasure and ghosting of BIPOC narratives and histories. As art institutions, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, work diligently to acquire works by people of color, SFAI is considering the sale and removal of its mural by Diego Rivera.
 - Unless proven otherwise, nowhere within the study of Diego Rivera's work is there evidence that his portable mural technology signifies his intention or

permission for the mural to be relocated away from the San Francisco Art Institute or the City of San Francisco.

- **Labor:** The implications of SFAI's proposal to sell the Diego Rivera Mural suggest that, at this moment, it must rely on the labor of an artist of color to lift it from its financial crisis. The labor, depicted in the mural by a Mexican Artist, leads us to reflect on what was once made public by the Chicano movement led by the late and honorable Cesar Chavez with regards to the U.S. exploitation of indigenous labor from south of the U.S. Mexico Border. For example, in light of a sale, the public may inquire about whether SFAI is offering a large number of scholarships to prospective students of color such as Dreamers in the State of California. Such a course of action can only be brokered with the assistance of large Latinx, Xicanx, and Hispanic organizations such as foundations, associations, and government entities.
- **Consultation:** It is a colonial practice to assume that one individual speaks for or represents entire races of people. One individual—whether an artist, student, expert, or person of a particular cultural background—cannot speak for or represent entire races of people in justifying a large cultural decision. Any determinations concerning the stewardship of the mural can only be ethically accomplished through the involvement of powerful organizations that best represent the people whose heritages are embedded within the mural, and organized communities of the people themselves. In this case Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, Xicanx, and Indigenous Americans that are in relationship to the mural. Furthermore, the context of international relations between the United States and Mexico must be accounted for.
- **Commodification of culture:** By selling the mural, SFAI would be commodifying and erasing a vital history of the institution. The power of mural art is derivative of the collective and co-determined, publicly-imbued, meanings. Removing such an iconic generator of imagination from SFAI without public input constitutes another example of disaster capitalism at the expense of people of color.
 - The mural is the property of the People at large, including but not limited to the people of The United States, Mexico, and the city of San Francisco. Removing the mural from its original context is equal to defacing a historical asset, and while the board may not view its protection in place as a legal obligation, any plan to remove or sell it should be approved by diverse publics at large.
- **Impact for SFAI:** Selling the mural places people of color who are adamantly opposed to its sale in a vulnerable political position. Internally speaking, the conversation about the mural has to engage the shared governance bylaws at SFAI. From the students' perspective, having the opportunity to share their work with Diego Rivera is unmatched.

- **Theme:** Diego Rivera's gesture at SFAI is in opposition to the nature of its sale. A communist Mexican artist made a painting about the building of San Francisco, while the SFAI Board of Trustees may authorize its sale to be removed and relocated to another city. To destroy the place-specific semiotic power (or the site-specific meaning) of the mural is akin to reducing it to a necrotized anthropological artifact (a dead cultural object whose meaning is no longer determined by practice, but through the colonial gaze of western science, art theory, and tourism). Currently the Diego Rivera Mural is one of SFAI's most valuable teaching tools. It's alive because it is practiced in pedagogy for the transference, recovery, and creation of knowledge within an environment of praxis.

CURRENT FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

- It is our understanding that the board has been proceeding without a multi-year financial forecast. We also note that the board lacks a treasurer, in violation of California non-profit law, and does not have a standing finance committee, which is a violation of its own bylaws. We urge the board not to make weighty financial decisions without more careful research into their likely implications.
- Every financial model we have seen for SFAI includes millions of dollars of deficit spending every year. Our financial model derived from current financial data anticipates on the order of \$20 million in deficit spending over the next four years, even with significant enrollment growth. This deficit spending does not include buying back our rights to Chestnut Street, and is in addition to any debt service obligations the board might take on in the meantime.
- Every plan we have heard for SFAI operations involves paying for those operating deficits by selling or borrowing against the mural. When this multi-million dollar line of credit comes due in 2-3 years it seemingly would trigger the sale of the mural for repayment, so it is not clear there is a meaningful difference between selling the mural now or using it as the basis for a loan.
- According to Reimagine team financial forecasts, a sale of the mural for \$50 million dollars would not guarantee SFAI's financial future. Between debt obligations, operating deficits, and infrastructure spending needs, SFAI would likely spend all of that money on the Chestnut Street real estate. The best case scenario we can see is that SFAI will be unable to cut tuition, raise salaries, improve acceptance rates, or invest in new physical or intellectual infrastructure.
- The worst case scenario we can see is that SFAI would sell the mural and then run out of money before it can get to break-even operations. We ask whether SFAI wants to begin a headlong multi-year drive towards enrollment of 600 knowing that it might fail on the way there. Will our recruiting materials include a warning that we might fail to make payroll before students are able to complete their degree program?

- We are not prepared to assume that SFAI would realize \$50 million from a sale of the mural. It is our understanding that no prospective buyer has committed to a price, and we don't feel that we understand what SFAI's costs might be associated with the sale, such as legal representation, financial fees, permitting requirements, PR expenses, and the cost of removal and delivery.
- We have no reason to believe that a capital campaign would be able to bring in substantial funding to offset these financial challenges. We urge the board to base its fundraising expectations on SFAI's track record over the past five years.
- We have heard mentioned that a benefactor might wish to endow the mural in place. If this is a possibility, it bears further discussion. We caution the board not to assume that a line of credit secured against the mural will be paid off by such a donor. Furthermore, before the board imagines new artwork or programs that could be funded in this way, it must take a realistic look at the existing expenses it will have to cover with those funds.

PRACTICAL REASONS

- Representative cultural foundations and organizations may suggest that any proceeds earned from the mural should include a plan to allocate a largely significant portion of those funds to support the community in which this work originates, namely Lantinx and Indigenous communities. The goal of leveraging the labor and vision of a Mexican artist to save a historically and currently white institution does not serve our communal goals to bring anti-racist practices to the operations across the institution.
- The sale could potentially damage the reputation of SFAI as having committed an unforgivable act. This damage may be reflected throughout the art world, and with publics throughout San Francisco, the State of California, the United States, and Mexico.
- The sale of the mural is a short term financial situation and does not guarantee the long term engagement of the Mexican and Latinx Indigenous stewardship of the mural. The root of the problem is the school's unsustainable business model and underdeveloped fundraising pathways.
- SFAI did not shut down in March 2020. We are still standing, and there are other alternatives that can be explored financially before relying on what some might perceive the "easy way out." There are numerous alternatives that have not yet been explored or exhausted, including expanding online public ed; new degrees that may generate revenue; external sponsorships; partnerships with other institutions; making the Chestnut campus more of a cultural and tourist destination.
- The SFAI Board has not exhausted all avenues to funding the mural by consulting with the Bay Area art community and/or consulting with city and state officials to help find or contribute funds to keep the mural in place. It would be a profound loss if the Bay Area

art community did not prioritize securing the mural. Losing our iconic fresco would diminish the significance of San Francisco's culture locally to globally.

- A decision like this shouldn't be made before the Reimagine Committee has shared their report. A decision like this is harmful to the reimagine process. While we are all clear that time is short, and finances are pressing, this action can be detrimental to the validity of SFAI to exist as a cultural institution.

Signed by the Reimagine Committee:

Tom Loughlin
Karen Topakian
Cristóbal Martínez
Lindsey White
Matt Borruso
Jennifer Locke
Orit Ben-Shitrit
Irene Carvajal

Ana Suek
Zeina Barakeh
Kat Trataris
Kavenamua Hambira
Oscar Lopez Guerrero
Annie Reiniger
Emily Reynolds
Rye Purvis

From: [Chris Manfield](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Diego Rivera mural at the San Francisco Art Institute a landmark
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 3:33:15 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

To whom it may concern,

This mural is a fresco, painted for the specific space, and for the city and workers of San Francisco. This mural holds the legacy of Diego Rivera's presence in San Francisco and a direct line, through Coit Tower to muralists today, especially in the community of artists in the Mission. The importance of Diego Rivera for the community has been enormous. Latinx artists have fought for recognition for generations, and Diego Rivera's murals and the history of his presence in the city with Frida Kahlo has been an inspiration on that long history. An artwork's value is not limited to its market price. The mural "**The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City**" should therefore be recognized as a historical landmark.

Sincerely,
Christian Tan

From: [Juana Alicia Araiza](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Diego Rivera Mural Preservation at the San Francisco Art Institute Site
Date: Sunday, January 10, 2021 6:55:26 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

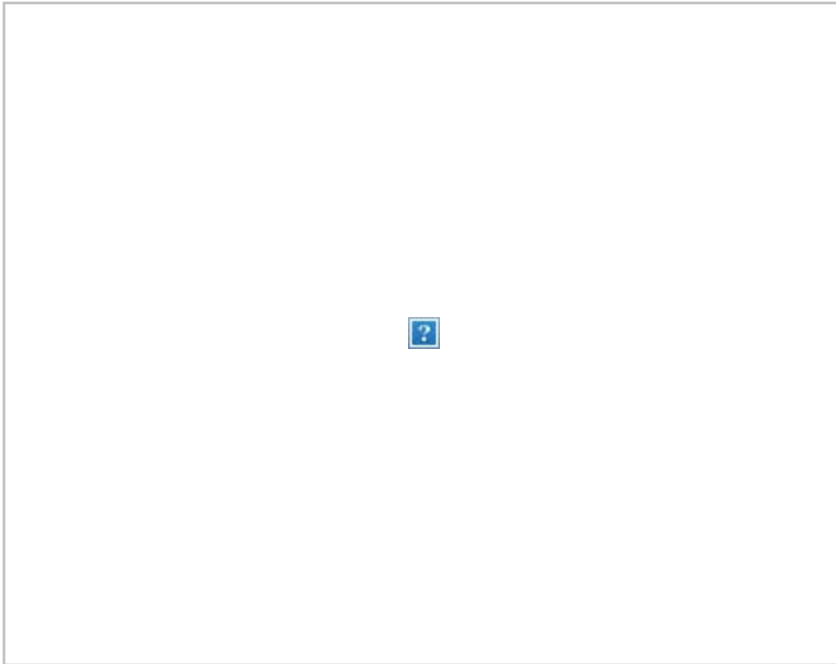
Dear Ms. Major and Other Concerned Parties,

I am writing to express my opposition to the removal of Diego Rivera's fresco, **The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City**, currently located at the San Francisco Art Institute, where it was created as a site-specific work of art. The disgraceful proposition by SFAI to sell the iconic San Francisco legacy work in order to pay for the art school's financial bungling, is unacceptable to me, as a public artist and beneficiary of the legacy of that mural. As a Masters of Fine Art graduate of SFAI, I did my thesis in fresco painting under the tutelage of Rivera's painting assistants and restorers of that fresco, Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Dimitroff. These two artists trained a generation or two of Bay Area muralists in the fresco technique, which the Dimitroffs had mastered while assisting Rivera in Detroit, New York and San Francisco. They widened the circle of politically aware artists who learned from the Mexican Mural Movement, and these generations went on to create a potent and internationally recognized mural movement in the Bay Area. The Rivera mural played a key role in the formation of many artists that attended or taught at the Art Institute over many generations. Among those artists were members of Las Mujeres Muralistas, Dewey Crumpler, Luis and Susan Cervantes, Lucia Ippolito and many more. **The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City** is part of our community's cultural heritage and an important signifier for the history of San Francisco's labor movement as well.

As a muralist and art professor, I have taken many students to draw, critique and reinterpret the mural. It is one of the several fresco jewels in the City's crown of WPA and [Public Works of Art Project](#), and part of a tour that includes the San Francisco Stock Exchange and Coit Tower. Rivera and his colleagues' murals in Mexico were the inspiration for putting artists to work on the government payroll during the Great Depression, and could not be more relevant than they are today, as we face another catastrophic economic and social depression in the United States, complicated by the

corona virus pandemic. I urge the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to exercise their leadership in favor of preserving this monumental testimony to the power of an artist's vision to shape their world. San Francisco has traditionally been a beacon for human rights and progressive voices, and a vanguard in the arts. It is essential that the Rivera fresco at the SFAI be made a permanent part of the City's history landmarks for the benefit of future generations.

Thank you for your consideration,



GET OUT!•¡FUERA! Drawing on scratchboard, Juana Alicia ©2020

[Juana Alicia](https://www.juanaalicia.com)

<https://www.juanaalicia.com>

From: [Adrian Card](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Diego Rivera Mural
Date: Tuesday, January 12, 2021 10:49:28 AM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Ms. Major,

I'm writing to you as an alumnus of the San Francisco Art Institute, and I wanted to voice my support for landmarking the Diego Rivera mural at 800 Chestnut Street.

Thank you,
Adrian Card

--

Adrian Card
Harpsichord decoration, murals
& historically-based decorative painting
www.adriancard.com
707-894-9210
www.artisticlicense.org

From: [Christopher Sabre](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: sfartistsalumni@gmail.com
Subject: 210016[Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"]
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 12:25:30 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Members of the Committee:

Please consider designating the Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City" a landmark. It would not be an exaggeration to call the mural part of the soul of the San Francisco Art Institute and City's North Beach neighborhood. My mother, Marjorie Eakin, and other fresco artists of the 1930's whose work can still be seen at the Institute were inspired by Diego's mural. The Rivera mural must remain in place under the ownership of the San Francisco Art Institute.

Sincerely,

Christopher Sabre

From: [Maggie Bradley](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: 210016- [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"]
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 12:29:43 PM
Attachments: [Diego Mural 210016.pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

To The City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors,

I think Diego's mural is very clear about who he sees himself, the artist, wanting to highlight. We artists are workers among workers, those who have a long history building the foundation of this city. The importance of the gigantic laborer in the middle cannot be overlooked. Imagine the image without the figure in the middle and without all the laborers depicted. You would be left with business men and a group of what appears to be architects. In fact, Diego himself, or his backside, would not be part of the narrative either. This story of erasure will be the same for the city of San Francisco if we continue to allow art to be sold off and artists to be priced out. I came to this city because I believed in its willingness to put progressive ideas to the test. I come from a town in Georgia where strict religious views and conservatism reigned supreme. There was little room for trying alternative methods and supporting diversity in many forms, so I rebelled. Following this upbringing, I experienced years of addiction and poverty which lead me to see the value of structure, handwork and discipline. When I made it to San Francisco to attend SFAI, I thought I had been given a chance of a lifetime. I worked extremely hard to make ends meet all while attending this school and maintaining a 3.8 GPA. I am not unique. Many artists who worked at the school as teachers and staff, as well as the students, worked extremely hard to be there. Since March 2020 when the consequences of the SFAI Board of Trustees members and administration's gross mismanagement combined with the high cost of living/operating in San Francisco, came to an impasse, I went to every "agency" in place to protect students. This includes, calling the DA's office, WASC the accreditation agency, The BPPE, The Department of Education, Private Lawyers and finally local media. Not one agency stepped in and removed this Board and the people responsible. This left students scrambling, teachers out of work, staff losing healthcare and much more damage created all during a global pandemic. I hear once you hit the top, class/power wise, there is a lot of hand shaking and deals made between friends of friends of friends. Seems Diego was able to represent those as well, featured in well dressed clothes, backs facing the laborers, looking at new plans they have, ignoring the laborers building the city. I cannot help but feel the magnitude of the expression on this lone giant laborers face. Diego was trying to show you, I am trying to tell you and the community who showed up today are trying to speak up for the forgotten community of diverse artists who are workers. May San Francisco use the WPA model as an example of funding artists who are workers directly, so that as we all recover from this pandemic and the consequences of poor financial decisions and oversight, we may progress forward with change and preserve a core part of The City of San Francisco's foundation built by everyday artists and workers.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Marguerite Bradley, Maggie Bacon
Artist, In favor of Landmark Status
SFAI 2020

--

Maggie Bacon

Artist/Oil Painter

Typos are common errors and sure signs of a human touch.

210016- [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"] Sponsor: Peskin
Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut Street.

To The City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors,

I think Diego's mural is very clear about who he sees himself, the artist, wanting to highlight. We artists are workers among workers, those who have a long history building the foundation of this city. The importance of the gigantic laborer in the middle cannot be overlooked. Imagine the image without the figure in the middle and without all the laborers depicted. You would be left with business men and a group of what appears to be architects. In fact, Diego himself, or his backside, would not be part of the narrative either. This story of erasure will be the same for the city of San Francisco if we continue to allow art to be sold off and artists to be priced out.

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Thank you for your time and consideration,

Marguerite Bradley, Maggie Bacon
Artist, In favor of Landmark Status
SFAI 2020

From: [Monica Bravo](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Statement for meeting of 1-11-21
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:07:40 PM
Attachments: [Bravo BoS meeting 1-11-21.pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Erica Major,

Please find attached my remarks pursuant to agenda number 210016: Initiating Landmark Designation—800 Chestnut Street—Diego Rivera's Mural *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of the City*," sponsored by Aaron Peskin.

Best,

Monica Bravo, PhD
Assistant Professor
History of Art and Visual Culture
California College of the Arts

--

CCA is situated on the unceded territories of the Ohlone peoples.

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City

Board of Supervisors meeting, 1-11-21

Agenda number 210016

Initiating Landmark Designation—800 Chestnut Street—Diego Rivera's Mural *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of the City*

Sponsored by Aaron Peskin

Statement:

Hello, I'm Dr. Monica Bravo, I am an art historian and assistant professor at California College of the Arts. I'm a specialist in the modern art of the Americas, having written a book on U.S. photographers in dialog with modern Mexican artists including Diego Rivera forthcoming from Yale University Press, as well as teaching courses on the Mexican Cultural Renaissance at Yale University and Mexican Modernism and Murals from Museums to the Street at CCA.

My concern is that the mural will be removed from its site. Although I understand that Rivera made this fresco on a steel framework, such that it may physically be removed from the site without damage to the painting, the imagery of this work is so entirely self-referential to the dimensions and context of the site that to remove it, in my professional opinion, would be to destroy it.

First, many do not realize that what looks like wooden scaffolding, upon which Rivera's bottom is perched, is actually a painted part of the mural, which then three-dimensionally extends below the fresco. Rivera has depicted himself and his assistants as artists, yes, but more importantly as workers contributing to the building of the city, as are the other individuals you see in the various sections of the mural. This is an invaluable message for art students, that they have a crucial function in society, and was one of the reasons why Rivera chose this subject for this site.

Second, Rivera has organized the composition such that it is legible from any position within what is now known as the Rivera gallery. There is one source of natural overhead light in the gallery's skylight, with another set of clerestory windows facing the courtyard, and Rivera *designed* the work such that areas of more detail and brighter color are closer to our eye levels. The upper regions are allowed to fall off, giving the impression of those areas receding into space. The space itself is chapel-like, and with his mural Rivera, consecrates its sacred use to one of active art making; the area's current use as a student gallery is entirely consistent with this.

Third, this mural, more than the *Allegory of California* at the Stock Exchange or private residential paintings he made in San Francisco and at Berkeley in 1930, launched the mural movement in the Bay Area. The Mexican Cultural Renaissance was the basis for the New Deal Works Progress Administration; many of SF's muralists trained or worked with Rivera at the SFAI site. Their works could once be seen across the city, and many still are, including at the nearby Coit Tower. These developments further paved the way for the Chicana mural movement that began in the Mission in the 1970s. Both for its historical significance and continued social utility to a next generation of artmakers, the mural should receive landmark designation.

Finally, many of you will be familiar with the destruction of Rivera's mural *Man at the Crossroads* at Rockefeller Center in 1934, primarily for the artist's inclusion of a portrait of Vladimir Lenin. Fortunately, he was able to re-create the mural according to his personal vision in Mexico City at the Museo de Bellas Artes. On other occasions, Rivera made relatively small frescos on steel frames which were specifically designed to travel as portable frescoes. This was not the case in *Making of a Fresco*. This is a site-specific work that depends on its current (permanent) site and function—as a student gallery at an art school, within the architectural space, and location at 800 Chestnut Street in North Beach—for its meaning. To remove the mural would be to destroy the work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Monica Bravo', with a stylized, cursive script.

Monica Bravo, PhD
Assistant Professor
History of Art and Visual Culture
California College of the Arts

From: [Elizabeth Travelslight](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Public comment: Agenda Item 210016 [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"]
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:49:46 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

My name is Elizabeth Travelslight, I'm a lifelong San Francisco resident and the proud parent of an SFUSD 2nd grader. I am an artist, an adjunct professor of mathematics and science, former president of SFAI's Adjunct Faculty Union, and I have taught courses that examine SFAI's history and the economics of art. Since 2014, I witnessed first-hand how the board of trustees' arrogance and incompetence caused SFAI to become a fiscally-unsafe organization that created precarious teaching and learning conditions for students and faculty of color.

We are here because of careless philanthropists who failed to follow through on a public promise to raise **\$19M** for SFAI's campus expansion to Fort Mason Center. These trustees gambled ambitious fundraising goals on a loan leveraged against the school's Chestnut Street campus—the buildings, the artworks, the livelihoods of its community members, and the future of the school itself. Their failure to follow through on this promise first left students and faculty to shoulder the burden, now they want to remove and sell a landmark work of art to compensate for their shortfall. This reckless so called "philanthropy" needs to be stopped and this site-specific mural must be protected from their negligence.

Rivera's mural makes a very simple point: The role of the artist in the building of San Francisco is to center and uplift our city's workers. To remind us of who actually brings our great city to life. Persistent race and wealth inequalities have allowed death and disease to rain down upon our most vulnerable communities and our essential workers. If our city is going to recover from this devastating pandemic, we need to heed Rivera's message—not let incompetent "philanthropists" cart it off to cover for their broken promises or take further risks with additional loans against it.

Students paid the price for this debt by covering high tuition and costs of living with student loans and their facilities suffered from inadequate investment. Faculty paid the price by enduring stagnant salaries and the indignity of part-time, precarious adjunct positions year after year. SFAI's inability to support and retain significant representation of faculty and staff of color has been an unacknowledged loss for San Francisco's entire arts community and for students of color in particular who need mentors to help them navigate an art world shaped by colonialism, Eurocentrism, and white privilege.

These so called "trustees" left a gaping multi-million-dollar hole in a deeply important institution of learning—gutting a community that has served San Francisco and the creation of art around the world for 150 years. Only they know why they abandoned and now try to obscure this fiduciary-responsibilities. Mistake? Malfeasance? I don't know. Someone should really investigate that. 70 adjuncts laid-off, 300 students forced out. And now the removal and sale of this monumental work of art? These are considerable costs for philanthropic hubris.

The Making of a Fresco showing the Building of a City is a testament to the purpose of art by one of the world's most celebrated artist of color—to use it to cover and compensate for ongoing derelictions of duty by SFAI's trustees is unethical and an unforgiveable slap in the face to every artist of color that has ever called San Francisco home. We cannot allow the incompetent wealthy to run roughshod over our city's cultural legacy. Now more than ever we need to remember who

we really are.

I affirm Supervisor Peskin's resolution and respectfully ask that you do the same.

Thank you.

Best wishes,
Elizabeth

*** ** *

Elizabeth Travelslight

elizabethtravelslight.com
i-a-f-s.org
artandactivism.org

From: [SoCaliForeign](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: DIEGO RIVERA IS SACRED
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:12:40 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

MAKE IT A HISTORICAL LANDMARK
I STUDIED AT SFAI AND THAT MURAL HELPED ME SEE MYSELF WHEN I WASNT
REPRESENTED IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA
I REFUSE TO LET GEORGE LUCAS HAVE PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF THIS
MASTERPIECE

WITH CONVICTION,

IZZY DIER

From: [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: [Hepner, Lee \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Fwd: Professional support from an art historian regarding Landmark Designation of Rivera mural
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 7:03:22 PM

Please include in the file for today's item no. 3.
Aaron

From: Peskin, Aaron (BOS) <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>
Sent: Monday, January 11, 2021 7:02:19 PM
To: Monica Bravo <bravo@cca.edu>
Subject: Re: Professional support from an art historian regarding Landmark Designation of Rivera mural

Thanks so much!
Aaron

From: Monica Bravo <bravo@cca.edu>
Sent: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:17:19 PM
To: Peskin, Aaron (BOS) <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>
Subject: Professional support from an art historian regarding Landmark Designation of Rivera mural

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Supervisor Peskin,

I am an art historian and assistant professor at California College of the Arts, as well as an expert on the work of the Mexican muralists, especially Diego Rivera. I have attached a statement I wrote in support of your landmark designation proposal, which I planned to potentially remark upon at today's Board of Supervisors meeting (I submitted the document to Erica Major as well). I would like to simply emphasize my support and offer my expertise on the issue. I could offer testimony as to the site's importance or write an op-ed for the *SF Chronicle*, for example, if this would be of use in securing landmark designation.

Best,

Monica Bravo, PhD
Assistant Professor
History of Art and Visual Culture
California College of the Arts

<https://www.monica bravo.info/>

--

CCA is situated on the unceded territories of the Ohlone peoples.

From: [Lindsey White](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#); [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: A message from SFAI Faculty about Initiating Landmark Designation 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 5:17:02 PM
Attachments: [Catherine Opie Letter.pdf](#)
[Faculty Senate Diego Rivera Mural.pdf](#)
[Reimagine Committee Letter to the Board on the Diego Mural 12.16.20 \(2\).pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Supervisor Aaron Peskin and Erica Major,

I'm writing to share three documents for your records that oppose the sale or removal of Diego Rivera's mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City".

1. A letter is from a well respected artist and SFAI Alumni, Catherine Opie to the SFAI Board
2. A letter from SFAI's Faculty Senate to the SFAI Board
3. A letter from SFAI's Reimagine Committee.

Thank you,
Lindsey White

--

Lindsey White

Assistant Professor // Photography Department Chair

SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE

800 Chestnut Street, San Francisco, CA 94133

www.sfai.edu

My open letter to the trustees of SFAI.

January 7, 2021

An Open Letter to the Board of Trustees of the San Francisco Art Institute:

I am writing this letter with a great amount of sadness, not only during what has been happening throughout our country; a global pandemic, a coup by the president, but for the uncertainty for the future of art for educators and students.

These are not normal times and a great amount of reflection and action is needed among all of us. I am shocked and saddened that SFAI has put Diego Rivera's 1931 mural, The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City, up for sale.

This is an incredibly unconscionable decision. Solely the fact that the Diego Rivera mural has become a monetary asset in the minds of the trustees; an asset thought to help the institution survive. Of course, I want SFAI to survive, but not by gutting one of the most important artworks in the history of the institution. The Diego Rivera mural has lived and inspired many generations of artists at 800 Chestnut. Quite frankly this is sickening and I am profoundly against the sale of the Diego Rivera mural, thus making my letter public.

I am a proud SFAI alum, BFA, Class of 1985. My teachers were the best of the best - instilling the drive and passion I needed to be an artist, especially an artist who bears witness with a camera documenting America. I have continued on with their inspiration in teaching for the past 30 years, 24 of them at UCLA. I have also had the honor of serving as a trustee and board member at The Hammer Museum, MOCA, The Andy Warhol Foundation, and The Mike Kelley Foundation. With this experience of being a trustee, I understand how hard decisions are to make when an institution free falls into financial crisis after financial crisis.

It is the Board of Trustees responsibility for the fiscal health of the institution. In other situations, I have seen board members reach deep into their pockets to fulfill the health of the institution and their responsibilities as trustees. It is not something that I have heard or I am aware of among the trustees of SFAI and there have been no news articles declaring the generosity of a large gift to stabilize the institution.

The strategic plan of selling the Rivera is unacceptable and this has led me to the decision to pull my piece from the upcoming auction for SFAI of Alumni artist works. The piece is a unique Surfer photograph that I was proud to give to help the institution. I can no longer be a part of a legacy that will sell off an essential unique piece of history, especially one of the importance of the site specific of a Diego Rivera mural. Artists are asked to be philanthropists; it is truly important that my work can create an ability of helping organizations with their future. The Board of Trustees has abused this in not making the gesture of donations themselves. The time is now, generosity is met with generosity. The fact that UC Regents has stepped in to pay the note and we have lost 800 Chestnut Street is a travesty. San Francisco has more millionaires and billionaires geographically than most cities in America.

I ask the board to reconsider their decision to sell the Diego Rivera mural. I also ask the board to dig deep in your own pockets in raising an endowment for the preservation of SFAI that is

truly reflective of the community of philanthropists of the Bay Area. This cannot be figured out by selling such an important site-specific artwork such as Diego Rivera's mural.

Sincerely, Catherine Opie

From: Faculty Senate of the San Francisco Art Institute
To: The San Francisco Art Institute Board of Trustees
Subject: Sale of the Diego Rivera mural

12/16/2020

Dear Board of Trustees:

The Faculty Senate has voted against the sale and removal of the Diego Rivera mural. There has been a lack of serious deliberations with the faculty and staff over such a consequential decision.

- The cultural significance of the Diego Rivera mural requires that it remain in place, given its subject matter and site specificity, its inestimable place in the history of SFAI and art history, as well as its status as a San Francisco city landmark.
- A decision to proceed with a sale will be on an accelerated timetable without substantial input from SFAI's community stakeholders, leading arts professionals, and San Francisco city leaders.
- Deliberations related to the future of the mural must include BIPOC scholars in addition to organizations recommended by the faculty:

Chon Noriega, Director UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center
<https://www.chicano.ucla.edu/about/director>

C. Ondine Chavoya, Ph.D, Chair of Latina/o Studies Program, Associate Professor of Contemporary Art, Williams College
<https://latino-studies.williams.edu/profile/ochavoya/>

Tatiana Flores, Ph.D. Professor Art History and LCS(Latino, Caribbean art; contemporary art; socially conscious art forms)
<https://latcar.rutgers.edu/people/core-faculty/48-tatiana-flores>

Barbara Haskell, Art historian and museum curator, curator Whitney Museum of American Art.
Currently on view- Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925-1945
<https://whitney.org/exhibitions/vida-americana>

Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager of the City of Oakland
rbedoya@oaklandca.gov

National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures
nalac.org

The National Hispanic Cultural Center Foundation.
nhccfoundation.org

The Consulate General of Mexico in San Francisco and San Jose
consulmex.sre.gob.mx/sanfrancisco/
consulmex.sre.gob.mx/sanjose/

Coalition to Protect Public Art
<https://www.protectpublicart.org/>

- Faculty Senate has been given neither an accounting of SFAI's current financials nor a financial plan concerning the future.
- There haven't been sufficient explorations into creative alternatives to an outright sale/removal of the mural that may also enable SFAI to continue under a sustainable model.

The Faculty Senate welcomes an expanded discussion with the Board about the Diego Rivera mural. As we enter our 150th year, the mural represents the iconic, symbolic heart of SFAI. It signifies the fundamental bridge between our historic past and collective goals for the future.

Sincerely,

Brett Reichman, Faculty Senate President
Lindsey White, Faculty Senate Vice President
Claire Daigle, Faculty Senate Secretary

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To: The San Francisco Art Institute Board of Trustees
Subject: Sale of the Diego Rivera mural

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rbedoya@oaklandca.gov

National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures
nalac.org

The National Hispanic Cultural Center Foundation.
nhccfoundation.org

The Consulate General of Mexico in San Francisco and San Jose
consulmex.sre.gob.mx/sanfrancisco/
consulmex.sre.gob.mx/sanjose/

Coalition to Protect Public Art
<https://www.protectpublicart.org/>

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Sincerely,

Brett Reichman, Faculty Senate President
Lindsey White, Faculty Senate Vice President
Claire Daigle, Faculty Senate Secretary

LETTER OF APPEAL TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AT SFAI

DECEMBER 15, 2020

As SFAI prepares to celebrate its 150th anniversary, we, the Reimagine Committee, are tasked by the SFAI Board of Trustees to recommend a comprehensive vision that renews our ability and commitment to prepare emerging artists to meet the increasing challenges they will undoubtedly face in the future. The Reimagine Committee is organized to include the wider SFAI community, experts in related fields, and most importantly a wide range of alumni across the world. As promised, the Reimagine Committee has developed a comprehensive and innovative proposal for the relaunching of SFAI by: setting aside the assumptions that have driven our institutional decision making for the last several decades; taking a fresh look at our mission and values; producing and analyzing a comprehensive set of financial models; proposing a dynamic system of pedagogy; refocusing our efforts to champion racial, social, and environmental justice; and establishing a non-hierarchical structure of governance.

We appreciate the board dialoguing with us and taking a first step in extending the conversation to the community about our joint responsibilities at SFAI, like the Diego Rivera Mural.

In alignment with our models for re-imagining SFAI, the Reimagine Committee strongly disagrees with the idea that the sale and removal of the Diego Rivera mural will save SFAI. Contrary to our knowledge and recommendations, such actions by the SFAI Board of Trustees will cause irreparable harm to the ethical, moral, cultural, social, political, civic, domestic, and international standing of our institution. We are confident that SFAI will cease to exist as the public memory we all wish to be our legacy should the institution fail to understand the power of art in this particular context and matter. Considering all that we have imagined together as a Re-imagine Committee, we feel it is our duty to advise the SFAI Board of Trustees in good faith and partnership. We present this letter to you with the intention to collaboratively promote the success of our beloved institution. Together we must seek to better maintain Rivera's scaffold, and jointly use it for depicting a more desirable future for SFAI and citizens of San Francisco.

ETHICAL REASONS

- **Place:** We urge the Board to move away from its ideas to sell and remove the Diego Rivera mural to a private donor since it is a work in which place matters.
 - To pursue such a sale constitutes and evokes forced removal, and the ongoing displacement, erasure and ghosting of BIPOC narratives and histories. As art institutions, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, work diligently to acquire works by people of color, SFAI is considering the sale and removal of its mural by Diego Rivera.
 - Unless proven otherwise, nowhere within the study of Diego Rivera's work is there evidence that his portable mural technology signifies his intention or

permission for the mural to be relocated away from the San Francisco Art Institute or the City of San Francisco.

- **Labor:** The implications of SFAI's proposal to sell the Diego Rivera Mural suggest that, at this moment, it must rely on the labor of an artist of color to lift it from its financial crisis. The labor, depicted in the mural by a Mexican Artist, leads us to reflect on what was once made public by the Chicano movement led by the late and honorable Cesar Chavez with regards to the U.S. exploitation of indigenous labor from south of the U.S. Mexico Border. For example, in light of a sale, the public may inquire about whether SFAI is offering a large number of scholarships to prospective students of color such as Dreamers in the State of California. Such a course of action can only be brokered with the assistance of large Latinx, Xicanx, and Hispanic organizations such as foundations, associations, and government entities.
- **Consultation:** It is a colonial practice to assume that one individual speaks for or represents entire races of people. One individual—whether an artist, student, expert, or person of a particular cultural background—cannot speak for or represent entire races of people in justifying a large cultural decision. Any determinations concerning the stewardship of the mural can only be ethically accomplished through the involvement of powerful organizations that best represent the people whose heritages are embedded within the mural, and organized communities of the people themselves. In this case Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, Xicanx, and Indigenous Americans that are in relationship to the mural. Furthermore, the context of international relations between the United States and Mexico must be accounted for.
- **Commodification of culture:** By selling the mural, SFAI would be commodifying and erasing a vital history of the institution. The power of mural art is derivative of the collective and co-determined, publicly-imbued, meanings. Removing such an iconic generator of imagination from SFAI without public input constitutes another example of disaster capitalism at the expense of people of color.
 - The mural is the property of the People at large, including but not limited to the people of The United States, Mexico, and the city of San Francisco. Removing the mural from its original context is equal to defacing a historical asset, and while the board may not view its protection in place as a legal obligation, any plan to remove or sell it should be approved by diverse publics at large.
- **Impact for SFAI:** Selling the mural places people of color who are adamantly opposed to its sale in a vulnerable political position. Internally speaking, the conversation about the mural has to engage the shared governance bylaws at SFAI. From the students' perspective, having the opportunity to share their work with Diego Rivera is unmatched.

- **Theme:** Diego Rivera's gesture at SFAI is in opposition to the nature of its sale. A communist Mexican artist made a painting about the building of San Francisco, while the SFAI Board of Trustees may authorize its sale to be removed and relocated to another city. To destroy the place-specific semiotic power (or the site-specific meaning) of the mural is akin to reducing it to a necrotized anthropological artifact (a dead cultural object whose meaning is no longer determined by practice, but through the colonial gaze of western science, art theory, and tourism). Currently the Diego Rivera Mural is one of SFAI's most valuable teaching tools. It's alive because it is practiced in pedagogy for the transference, recovery, and creation of knowledge within an environment of praxis.

CURRENT FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

- It is our understanding that the board has been proceeding without a multi-year financial forecast. We also note that the board lacks a treasurer, in violation of California non-profit law, and does not have a standing finance committee, which is a violation of its own bylaws. We urge the board not to make weighty financial decisions without more careful research into their likely implications.
- Every financial model we have seen for SFAI includes millions of dollars of deficit spending every year. Our financial model derived from current financial data anticipates on the order of \$20 million in deficit spending over the next four years, even with significant enrollment growth. This deficit spending does not include buying back our rights to Chestnut Street, and is in addition to any debt service obligations the board might take on in the meantime.
- Every plan we have heard for SFAI operations involves paying for those operating deficits by selling or borrowing against the mural. When this multi-million dollar line of credit comes due in 2-3 years it seemingly would trigger the sale of the mural for repayment, so it is not clear there is a meaningful difference between selling the mural now or using it as the basis for a loan.
- According to Reimagine team financial forecasts, a sale of the mural for \$50 million dollars would not guarantee SFAI's financial future. Between debt obligations, operating deficits, and infrastructure spending needs, SFAI would likely spend all of that money on the Chestnut Street real estate. The best case scenario we can see is that SFAI will be unable to cut tuition, raise salaries, improve acceptance rates, or invest in new physical or intellectual infrastructure.
- The worst case scenario we can see is that SFAI would sell the mural and then run out of money before it can get to break-even operations. We ask whether SFAI wants to begin a headlong multi-year drive towards enrollment of 600 knowing that it might fail on the way there. Will our recruiting materials include a warning that we might fail to make payroll before students are able to complete their degree program?

- We are not prepared to assume that SFAI would realize \$50 million from a sale of the mural. It is our understanding that no prospective buyer has committed to a price, and we don't feel that we understand what SFAI's costs might be associated with the sale, such as legal representation, financial fees, permitting requirements, PR expenses, and the cost of removal and delivery.
- We have no reason to believe that a capital campaign would be able to bring in substantial funding to offset these financial challenges. We urge the board to base its fundraising expectations on SFAI's track record over the past five years.
- We have heard mentioned that a benefactor might wish to endow the mural in place. If this is a possibility, it bears further discussion. We caution the board not to assume that a line of credit secured against the mural will be paid off by such a donor. Furthermore, before the board imagines new artwork or programs that could be funded in this way, it must take a realistic look at the existing expenses it will have to cover with those funds.

PRACTICAL REASONS

- Representative cultural foundations and organizations may suggest that any proceeds earned from the mural should include a plan to allocate a largely significant portion of those funds to support the community in which this work originates, namely Lantinx and Indigenous communities. The goal of leveraging the labor and vision of a Mexican artist to save a historically and currently white institution does not serve our communal goals to bring anti-racist practices to the operations across the institution.
- The sale could potentially damage the reputation of SFAI as having committed an unforgivable act. This damage may be reflected throughout the art world, and with publics throughout San Francisco, the State of California, the United States, and Mexico.
- The sale of the mural is a short term financial situation and does not guarantee the long term engagement of the Mexican and Latinx Indigenous stewardship of the mural. The root of the problem is the school's unsustainable business model and underdeveloped fundraising pathways.
- SFAI did not shut down in March 2020. We are still standing, and there are other alternatives that can be explored financially before relying on what some might perceive the "easy way out." There are numerous alternatives that have not yet been explored or exhausted, including expanding online public ed; new degrees that may generate revenue; external sponsorships; partnerships with other institutions; making the Chestnut campus more of a cultural and tourist destination.
- The SFAI Board has not exhausted all avenues to funding the mural by consulting with the Bay Area art community and/or consulting with city and state officials to help find or contribute funds to keep the mural in place. It would be a profound loss if the Bay Area

art community did not prioritize securing the mural. Losing our iconic fresco would diminish the significance of San Francisco's culture locally to globally.

- A decision like this shouldn't be made before the Reimagine Committee has shared their report. A decision like this is harmful to the reimagine process. While we are all clear that time is short, and finances are pressing, this action can be detrimental to the validity of SFAI to exist as a cultural institution.

Signed by the Reimagine Committee:

Tom Loughlin
Karen Topakian
Cristóbal Martínez
Lindsey White
Matt Borruso
Jennifer Locke
Orit Ben-Shitrit
Irene Carvajal

Ana Suek
Zeina Barakeh
Kat Trataris
Kavenamua Hambira
Oscar Lopez Guerrero
Annie Reiniger
Emily Reynolds
Rye Purvis

From: [Chris Manfield](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Diego Rivera mural at the San Francisco Art Institute a landmark
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 3:33:15 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

To whom it may concern,

This mural is a fresco, painted for the specific space, and for the city and workers of San Francisco. This mural holds the legacy of Diego Rivera's presence in San Francisco and a direct line, through Coit Tower to muralists today, especially in the community of artists in the Mission. The importance of Diego Rivera for the community has been enormous. Latinx artists have fought for recognition for generations, and Diego Rivera's murals and the history of his presence in the city with Frida Kahlo has been an inspiration on that long history. An artwork's value is not limited to its market price. The mural "**The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City**" should therefore be recognized as a historical landmark.

Sincerely,
Christian Tan

From: [Juana Alicia Araiza](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Diego Rivera Mural Preservation at the San Francisco Art Institute Site
Date: Sunday, January 10, 2021 6:55:26 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

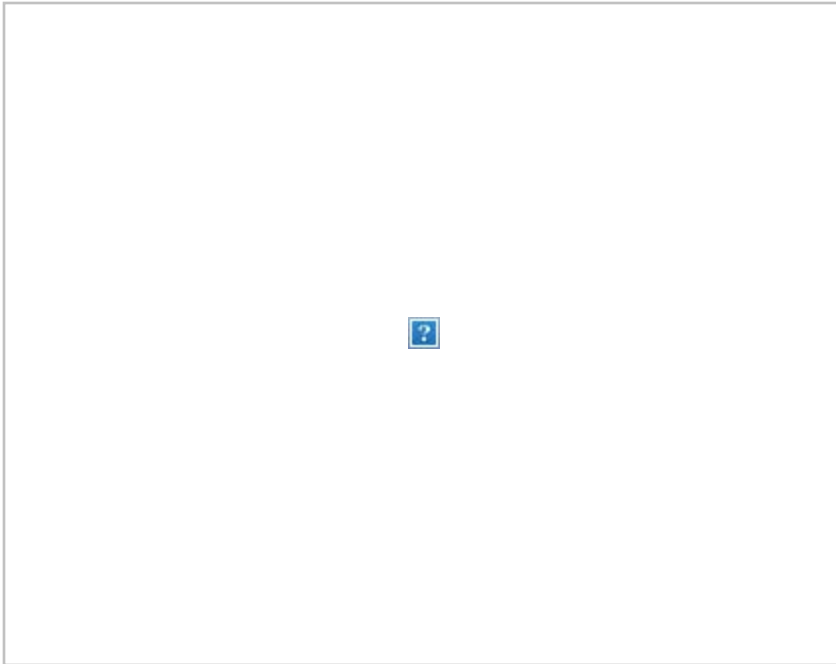
Dear Ms. Major and Other Concerned Parties,

I am writing to express my opposition to the removal of Diego Rivera's fresco, **The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City**, currently located at the San Francisco Art Institute, where it was created as a site-specific work of art. The disgraceful proposition by SFAI to sell the iconic San Francisco legacy work in order to pay for the art school's financial bungling, is unacceptable to me, as a public artist and beneficiary of the legacy of that mural. As a Masters of Fine Art graduate of SFAI, I did my thesis in fresco painting under the tutelage of Rivera's painting assistants and restorers of that fresco, Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Dimitroff. These two artists trained a generation or two of Bay Area muralists in the fresco technique, which the Dimitroffs had mastered while assisting Rivera in Detroit, New York and San Francisco. They widened the circle of politically aware artists who learned from the Mexican Mural Movement, and these generations went on to create a potent and internationally recognized mural movement in the Bay Area. The Rivera mural played a key role in the formation of many artists that attended or taught at the Art Institute over many generations. Among those artists were members of Las Mujeres Muralistas, Dewey Crumpler, Luis and Susan Cervantes, Lucia Ippolito and many more. **The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City** is part of our community's cultural heritage and an important signifier for the history of San Francisco's labor movement as well.

As a muralist and art professor, I have taken many students to draw, critique and reinterpret the mural. It is one of the several fresco jewels in the City's crown of WPA and [Public Works of Art Project](#), and part of a tour that includes the San Francisco Stock Exchange and Coit Tower. Rivera and his colleagues' murals in Mexico were the inspiration for putting artists to work on the government payroll during the Great Depression, and could not be more relevant than they are today, as we face another catastrophic economic and social depression in the United States, complicated by the

corona virus pandemic. I urge the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to exercise their leadership in favor of preserving this monumental testimony to the power of an artist's vision to shape their world. San Francisco has traditionally been a beacon for human rights and progressive voices, and a vanguard in the arts. It is essential that the Rivera fresco at the SFAI be made a permanent part of the City's history landmarks for the benefit of future generations.

Thank you for your consideration,



GET OUT!•¡FUERA! Drawing on scratchboard, Juana Alicia ©2020

[Juana Alicia](https://www.juanaalicia.com)

<https://www.juanaalicia.com>

From: [Adrian Card](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Diego Rivera Mural
Date: Tuesday, January 12, 2021 10:49:28 AM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Ms. Major,

I'm writing to you as an alumnus of the San Francisco Art Institute, and I wanted to voice my support for landmarking the Diego Rivera mural at 800 Chestnut Street.

Thank you,
Adrian Card

--

Adrian Card
Harpsichord decoration, murals
& historically-based decorative painting
www.adriancard.com
707-894-9210
www.artisticlicense.org

From: [Christopher Sabre](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: sfartistsalumni@gmail.com
Subject: 210016[Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 12:25:30 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Members of the Committee:

Please consider designating the Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City" a landmark. It would not be an exaggeration to call the mural part of the soul of the San Francisco Art Institute and City's North Beach neighborhood. My mother, Marjorie Eakin, and other fresco artists of the 1930's whose work can still be seen at the Institute were inspired by Diego's mural. The Rivera mural must remain in place under the ownership of the San Francisco Art Institute.

Sincerely,

Christopher Sabre

From: [Maggie Bradley](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: 210016- [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"]
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 12:29:43 PM
Attachments: [Diego Mural 210016.pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

To The City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors,

I think Diego's mural is very clear about who he sees himself, the artist, wanting to highlight. We artists are workers among workers, those who have a long history building the foundation of this city. The importance of the gigantic laborer in the middle cannot be overlooked. Imagine the image without the figure in the middle and without all the laborers depicted. You would be left with business men and a group of what appears to be architects. In fact, Diego himself, or his backside, would not be part of the narrative either. This story of erasure will be the same for the city of San Francisco if we continue to allow art to be sold off and artists to be priced out. I came to this city because I believed in its willingness to put progressive ideas to the test. I come from a town in Georgia where strict religious views and conservatism reigned supreme. There was little room for trying alternative methods and supporting diversity in many forms, so I rebelled. Following this upbringing, I experienced years of addiction and poverty which lead me to see the value of structure, handwork and discipline. When I made it to San Francisco to attend SFAI, I thought I had been given a chance of a lifetime. I worked extremely hard to make ends meet all while attending this school and maintaining a 3.8 GPA. I am not unique. Many artists who worked at the school as teachers and staff, as well as the students, worked extremely hard to be there. Since March 2020 when the consequences of the SFAI Board of Trustees members and administration's gross mismanagement combined with the high cost of living/operating in San Francisco, came to an impasse, I went to every "agency" in place to protect students. This includes, calling the DA's office, WASC the accreditation agency, The BPPE, The Department of Education, Private Lawyers and finally local media. Not one agency stepped in and removed this Board and the people responsible. This left students scrambling, teachers out of work, staff losing healthcare and much more damage created all during a global pandemic. I hear once you hit the top, class/power wise, there is a lot of hand shaking and deals made between friends of friends of friends. Seems Diego was able to represent those as well, featured in well dressed clothes, backs facing the laborers, looking at new plans they have, ignoring the laborers building the city. I cannot help but feel the magnitude of the expression on this lone giant laborers face. Diego was trying to show you, I am trying to tell you and the community who showed up today are trying to speak up for the forgotten community of diverse artists who are workers. May San Francisco use the WPA model as an example of funding artists who are workers directly, so that as we all recover from this pandemic and the consequences of poor financial decisions and oversight, we may progress forward with change and preserve a core part of The City of San Francisco's foundation built by everyday artists and workers.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Marguerite Bradley, Maggie Bacon
Artist, In favor of Landmark Status
SFAI 2020

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Maggie Bacon

Artist/Oil Painter

Typos are common errors and sure signs of a human touch.

210016- [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"] Sponsor: Peskin
Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut Street.

To The City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors,

I think Diego's mural is very clear about who he sees himself, the artist, wanting to highlight. We artists are workers among workers, those who have a long history building the foundation of this city. The importance of the gigantic laborer in the middle cannot be overlooked. Imagine the image without the figure in the middle and without all the laborers depicted. You would be left with business men and a group of what appears to be architects. In fact, Diego himself, or his backside, would not be part of the narrative either. This story of erasure will be the same for the city of San Francisco if we continue to allow art to be sold off and artists to be priced out.

I came to this city because I believed in its willingness to put progressive ideas to the test. I come from a town in Georgia where strict religious views and conservatism reigned supreme. There was little room for trying alternative methods and supporting diversity in many forms, so I rebelled. Following this upbringing, I experienced years of addiction and poverty which lead me to see the value of structure, handwork and discipline. When I made it to San Francisco to attend SFAI, I thought I had been given a chance of a lifetime. I worked extremely hard to make ends meet all while attending this school and maintaining a 3.8 GPA. I am not unique. Many artists who worked at the school as teachers and staff, as well as the students, worked extremely hard to be there.

Since March 2020 when the consequences of the SFAI Board of Trustees members and administration's gross mismanagement combined with the high cost of living/operating in San Francisco, came to an impasse, I went to every "agency" in place to protect students. This includes, calling the DA's office, WASC the accreditation agency, The BPPE, The Department of Education, Private Lawyers and finally local media. Not one agency stepped in and removed this Board and the people responsible. This left students scrambling, teachers out of work, staff losing healthcare and much more damage created all during a global pandemic. I hear once you hit the top, class/power wise, there is a lot of hand shaking and deals made between friends of friends of friends. Seems Diego was able to represent those as well, featured in well dressed clothes, backs facing the laborers, looking at new plans they have, ignoring the laborers building the city.

I cannot help but feel the magnitude of the expression on this lone giant laborers face. Diego was trying to show you, I am trying to tell you and the community who showed up today are trying to speak up for the forgotten community of diverse artists who are workers. May San Francisco use the WPA model as an example of funding artists who are workers directly, so that as we all recover from this pandemic and the consequences of poor financial decisions and oversight, we may progress forward with change and preserve a core part of The City of San Francisco's foundation built by everyday artists and workers.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Marguerite Bradley, Maggie Bacon
Artist, In favor of Landmark Status
SFAI 2020

From: [Monica Bravo](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Statement for meeting of 1-11-21
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:07:40 PM
Attachments: [Bravo BoS meeting 1-11-21.pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Erica Major,

Please find attached my remarks pursuant to agenda number 210016: Initiating Landmark Designation—800 Chestnut Street—Diego Rivera's Mural *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of the City*," sponsored by Aaron Peskin.

Best,

Monica Bravo, PhD
Assistant Professor
History of Art and Visual Culture
California College of the Arts

--

CCA is situated on the unceded territories of the Ohlone peoples.

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City

Board of Supervisors meeting, 1-11-21

Agenda number 210016

Initiating Landmark Designation—800 Chestnut Street—Diego Rivera's Mural *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of the City*

Sponsored by Aaron Peskin

Statement:

Hello, I'm Dr. Monica Bravo, I am an art historian and assistant professor at California College of the Arts. I'm a specialist in the modern art of the Americas, having written a book on U.S. photographers in dialog with modern Mexican artists including Diego Rivera forthcoming from Yale University Press, as well as teaching courses on the Mexican Cultural Renaissance at Yale University and Mexican Modernism and Murals from Museums to the Street at CCA.

My concern is that the mural will be removed from its site. Although I understand that Rivera made this fresco on a steel framework, such that it may physically be removed from the site without damage to the painting, the imagery of this work is so entirely self-referential to the dimensions and context of the site that to remove it, in my professional opinion, would be to destroy it.

First, many do not realize that what looks like wooden scaffolding, upon which Rivera's bottom is perched, is actually a painted part of the mural, which then three-dimensionally extends below the fresco. Rivera has depicted himself and his assistants as artists, yes, but more importantly as workers contributing to the building of the city, as are the other individuals you see in the various sections of the mural. This is an invaluable message for art students, that they have a crucial function in society, and was one of the reasons why Rivera chose this subject for this site.

Second, Rivera has organized the composition such that it is legible from any position within what is now known as the Rivera gallery. There is one source of natural overhead light in the gallery's skylight, with another set of clerestory windows facing the courtyard, and Rivera *designed* the work such that areas of more detail and brighter color are closer to our eye levels. The upper regions are allowed to fall off, giving the impression of those areas receding into space. The space itself is chapel-like, and with his mural Rivera, consecrates its sacred use to one of active art making; the area's current use as a student gallery is entirely consistent with this.

Third, this mural, more than the *Allegory of California* at the Stock Exchange or private residential paintings he made in San Francisco and at Berkeley in 1930, launched the mural movement in the Bay Area. The Mexican Cultural Renaissance was the basis for the New Deal Works Progress Administration; many of SF's muralists trained or worked with Rivera at the SFAI site. Their works could once be seen across the city, and many still are, including at the nearby Coit Tower. These developments further paved the way for the Chicana mural movement that began in the Mission in the 1970s. Both for its historical significance and continued social utility to a next generation of artmakers, the mural should receive landmark designation.

Finally, many of you will be familiar with the destruction of Rivera's mural *Man at the Crossroads* at Rockefeller Center in 1934, primarily for the artist's inclusion of a portrait of Vladimir Lenin. Fortunately, he was able to re-create the mural according to his personal vision in Mexico City at the Museo de Bellas Artes. On other occasions, Rivera made relatively small frescos on steel frames which were specifically designed to travel as portable frescoes. This was not the case in *Making of a Fresco*. This is a site-specific work that depends on its current (permanent) site and function—as a student gallery at an art school, within the architectural space, and location at 800 Chestnut Street in North Beach—for its meaning. To remove the mural would be to destroy the work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Monica Bravo', with a stylized, cursive script.

Monica Bravo, PhD
Assistant Professor
History of Art and Visual Culture
California College of the Arts

From: [Elizabeth Travelslight](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Public comment: Agenda Item 210016 [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City"]
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:49:46 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

My name is Elizabeth Travelslight, I'm a lifelong San Francisco resident and the proud parent of an SFUSD 2nd grader. I am an artist, an adjunct professor of mathematics and science, former president of SFAI's Adjunct Faculty Union, and I have taught courses that examine SFAI's history and the economics of art. Since 2014, I witnessed first-hand how the board of trustees' arrogance and incompetence caused SFAI to become a fiscally-unsafe organization that created precarious teaching and learning conditions for students and faculty of color.

We are here because of careless philanthropists who failed to follow through on a public promise to raise **\$19M** for SFAI's campus expansion to Fort Mason Center. These trustees gambled ambitious fundraising goals on a loan leveraged against the school's Chestnut Street campus—the buildings, the artworks, the livelihoods of its community members, and the future of the school itself. Their failure to follow through on this promise first left students and faculty to shoulder the burden, now they want to remove and sell a landmark work of art to compensate for their shortfall. This reckless so called "philanthropy" needs to be stopped and this site-specific mural must be protected from their negligence.

Rivera's mural makes a very simple point: The role of the artist in the building of San Francisco is to center and uplift our city's workers. To remind us of who actually brings our great city to life. Persistent race and wealth inequalities have allowed death and disease to rain down upon our most vulnerable communities and our essential workers. If our city is going to recover from this devastating pandemic, we need to heed Rivera's message—not let incompetent "philanthropists" cart it off to cover for their broken promises or take further risks with additional loans against it.

Students paid the price for this debt by covering high tuition and costs of living with student loans and their facilities suffered from inadequate investment. Faculty paid the price by enduring stagnant salaries and the indignity of part-time, precarious adjunct positions year after year. SFAI's inability to support and retain significant representation of faculty and staff of color has been an unacknowledged loss for San Francisco's entire arts community and for students of color in particular who need mentors to help them navigate an art world shaped by colonialism, Eurocentrism, and white privilege.

These so called "trustees" left a gaping multi-million-dollar hole in a deeply important institution of learning—gutting a community that has served San Francisco and the creation of art around the world for 150 years. Only they know why they abandoned and now try to obscure this fiduciary-responsibilities. Mistake? Malfeasance? I don't know. Someone should really investigate that. 70 adjuncts laid-off, 300 students forced out. And now the removal and sale of this monumental work of art? These are considerable costs for philanthropic hubris.

The Making of a Fresco showing the Building of a City is a testament to the purpose of art by one of the world's most celebrated artist of color—to use it to cover and compensate for ongoing derelictions of duty by SFAI's trustees is unethical and an unforgiveable slap in the face to every artist of color that has ever called San Francisco home. We cannot allow the incompetent wealthy to run roughshod over our city's cultural legacy. Now more than ever we need to remember who

we really are.

I affirm Supervisor Peskin's resolution and respectfully ask that you do the same.

Thank you.

Best wishes,
Elizabeth

*** ** *

Elizabeth Travelslight

elizabethtravelslight.com
i-a-f-s.org
artandactivism.org

From: [SoCaliForeign](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: DIEGO RIVERA IS SACRED
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:12:40 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

MAKE IT A HISTORICAL LANDMARK
I STUDIED AT SFAI AND THAT MURAL HELPED ME SEE MYSELF WHEN I WASNT
REPRESENTED IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA
I REFUSE TO LET GEORGE LUCAS HAVE PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF THIS
MASTERPIECE

WITH CONVICTION,

IZZY DIER

From: [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: [Hepner, Lee \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Fwd: Professional support from an art historian regarding Landmark Designation of Rivera mural
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 7:03:22 PM

Please include in the file for today's item no. 3.
Aaron

From: Peskin, Aaron (BOS) <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>
Sent: Monday, January 11, 2021 7:02:19 PM
To: Monica Bravo <bravo@cca.edu>
Subject: Re: Professional support from an art historian regarding Landmark Designation of Rivera mural

Thanks so much!
Aaron

From: Monica Bravo <bravo@cca.edu>
Sent: Monday, January 11, 2021 2:17:19 PM
To: Peskin, Aaron (BOS) <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>
Subject: Professional support from an art historian regarding Landmark Designation of Rivera mural

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Supervisor Peskin,

I am an art historian and assistant professor at California College of the Arts, as well as an expert on the work of the Mexican muralists, especially Diego Rivera. I have attached a statement I wrote in support of your landmark designation proposal, which I planned to potentially remark upon at today's Board of Supervisors meeting (I submitted the document to Erica Major as well). I would like to simply emphasize my support and offer my expertise on the issue. I could offer testimony as to the site's importance or write an op-ed for the *SF Chronicle*, for example, if this would be of use in securing landmark designation.

Best,

Monica Bravo, PhD
Assistant Professor
History of Art and Visual Culture
California College of the Arts

<https://www.monica bravo.info/>

--

CCA is situated on the unceded territories of the Ohlone peoples.

From: [Lindsey White](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#); [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: A message from SFAI Faculty about Initiating Landmark Designation 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 5:17:02 PM
Attachments: [Catherine Opie Letter.pdf](#)
[Faculty Senate Diego Rivera Mural.pdf](#)
[Reimagine Committee Letter to the Board on the Diego Mural 12.16.20 \(2\).pdf](#)

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Supervisor Aaron Peskin and Erica Major,

I'm writing to share three documents for your records that oppose the sale or removal of Diego Rivera's mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City".

1. A letter is from a well respected artist and SFAI Alumni, Catherine Opie to the SFAI Board
2. A letter from SFAI's Faculty Senate to the SFAI Board
3. A letter from SFAI's Reimagine Committee.

Thank you,
Lindsey White

--

Lindsey White

Assistant Professor // Photography Department Chair

SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE

800 Chestnut Street, San Francisco, CA 94133

www.sfai.edu

My open letter to the trustees of SFAI.

January 7, 2021

An Open Letter to the Board of Trustees of the San Francisco Art Institute:

I am writing this letter with a great amount of sadness, not only during what has been happening throughout our country; a global pandemic, a coup by the president, but for the uncertainty for the future of art for educators and students.

These are not normal times and a great amount of reflection and action is needed among all of us. I am shocked and saddened that SFAI has put Diego Rivera's 1931 mural, The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City, up for sale.

This is an incredibly unconscionable decision. Solely the fact that the Diego Rivera mural has become a monetary asset in the minds of the trustees; an asset thought to help the institution survive. Of course, I want SFAI to survive, but not by gutting one of the most important artworks in the history of the institution. The Diego Rivera mural has lived and inspired many generations of artists at 800 Chestnut. Quite frankly this is sickening and I am profoundly against the sale of the Diego Rivera mural, thus making my letter public.

I am a proud SFAI alum, BFA, Class of 1985. My teachers were the best of the best - instilling the drive and passion I needed to be an artist, especially an artist who bears witness with a camera documenting America. I have continued on with their inspiration in teaching for the past 30 years, 24 of them at UCLA. I have also had the honor of serving as a trustee and board member at The Hammer Museum, MOCA, The Andy Warhol Foundation, and The Mike Kelley Foundation. With this experience of being a trustee, I understand how hard decisions are to make when an institution free falls into financial crisis after financial crisis.

It is the Board of Trustees responsibility for the fiscal health of the institution. In other situations, I have seen board members reach deep into their pockets to fulfill the health of the institution and their responsibilities as trustees. It is not something that I have heard or I am aware of among the trustees of SFAI and there have been no news articles declaring the generosity of a large gift to stabilize the institution.

The strategic plan of selling the Rivera is unacceptable and this has led me to the decision to pull my piece from the upcoming auction for SFAI of Alumni artist works. The piece is a unique Surfer photograph that I was proud to give to help the institution. I can no longer be a part of a legacy that will sell off an essential unique piece of history, especially one of the importance of the site specific of a Diego Rivera mural. Artists are asked to be philanthropists; it is truly important that my work can create an ability of helping organizations with their future. The Board of Trustees has abused this in not making the gesture of donations themselves. The time is now, generosity is met with generosity. The fact that UC Regents has stepped in to pay the note and we have lost 800 Chestnut Street is a travesty. San Francisco has more millionaires and billionaires geographically than most cities in America.

I ask the board to reconsider their decision to sell the Diego Rivera mural. I also ask the board to dig deep in your own pockets in raising an endowment for the preservation of SFAI that is

truly reflective of the community of philanthropists of the Bay Area. This cannot be figured out by selling such an important site-specific artwork such as Diego Rivera's mural.

Sincerely, Catherine Opie

From: Faculty Senate of the San Francisco Art Institute
To: The San Francisco Art Institute Board of Trustees
Subject: Sale of the Diego Rivera mural

12/16/2020

Dear Board of Trustees:

The Faculty Senate has voted against the sale and removal of the Diego Rivera mural. There has been a lack of serious deliberations with the faculty and staff over such a consequential decision.

- The cultural significance of the Diego Rivera mural requires that it remain in place, given its subject matter and site specificity, its inestimable place in the history of SFAI and art history, as well as its status as a San Francisco city landmark.
- A decision to proceed with a sale will be on an accelerated timetable without substantial input from SFAI's community stakeholders, leading arts professionals, and San Francisco city leaders.
- Deliberations related to the future of the mural must include BIPOC scholars in addition to organizations recommended by the faculty:

Chon Noriega, Director UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center
<https://www.chicano.ucla.edu/about/director>

C. Ondine Chavoya, Ph.D, Chair of Latina/o Studies Program, Associate Professor of Contemporary Art, Williams College
<https://latino-studies.williams.edu/profile/ochavoya/>

Tatiana Flores, Ph.D. Professor Art History and LCS(Latino, Caribbean art; contemporary art; socially conscious art forms)
<https://latcar.rutgers.edu/people/core-faculty/48-tatiana-flores>

Barbara Haskell, Art historian and museum curator, curator Whitney Museum of American Art.
Currently on view- Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925-1945
<https://whitney.org/exhibitions/vida-americana>

Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager of the City of Oakland
rbedoya@oaklandca.gov

National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures
nalac.org

The National Hispanic Cultural Center Foundation.
nhccfoundation.org

The Consulate General of Mexico in San Francisco and San Jose
consulmex.sre.gob.mx/sanfrancisco/
consulmex.sre.gob.mx/sanjose/

Coalition to Protect Public Art
<https://www.protectpublicart.org/>

- Faculty Senate has been given neither an accounting of SFAI's current financials nor a financial plan concerning the future.
- There haven't been sufficient explorations into creative alternatives to an outright sale/removal of the mural that may also enable SFAI to continue under a sustainable model.

The Faculty Senate welcomes an expanded discussion with the Board about the Diego Rivera mural. As we enter our 150th year, the mural represents the iconic, symbolic heart of SFAI. It signifies the fundamental bridge between our historic past and collective goals for the future.

Sincerely,

Brett Reichman, Faculty Senate President
Lindsey White, Faculty Senate Vice President
Claire Daigle, Faculty Senate Secretary

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Brett Reichman, Faculty Senate President
Lindsey White, Faculty Senate Vice President
Claire Daigle, Faculty Senate Secretary

LETTER OF APPEAL TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AT SFAI

DECEMBER 15, 2020

As SFAI prepares to celebrate its 150th anniversary, we, the Reimagine Committee, are tasked by the SFAI Board of Trustees to recommend a comprehensive vision that renews our ability and commitment to prepare emerging artists to meet the increasing challenges they will undoubtedly face in the future. The Reimagine Committee is organized to include the wider SFAI community, experts in related fields, and most importantly a wide range of alumni across the world. As promised, the Reimagine Committee has developed a comprehensive and innovative proposal for the relaunching of SFAI by: setting aside the assumptions that have driven our institutional decision making for the last several decades; taking a fresh look at our mission and values; producing and analyzing a comprehensive set of financial models; proposing a dynamic system of pedagogy; refocusing our efforts to champion racial, social, and environmental justice; and establishing a non-hierarchical structure of governance.

We appreciate the board dialoguing with us and taking a first step in extending the conversation to the community about our joint responsibilities at SFAI, like the Diego Rivera Mural.

In alignment with our models for re-imagining SFAI, the Reimagine Committee strongly disagrees with the idea that the sale and removal of the Diego Rivera mural will save SFAI. Contrary to our knowledge and recommendations, such actions by the SFAI Board of Trustees will cause irreparable harm to the ethical, moral, cultural, social, political, civic, domestic, and international standing of our institution. We are confident that SFAI will cease to exist as the public memory we all wish to be our legacy should the institution fail to understand the power of art in this particular context and matter. Considering all that we have imagined together as a Re-imagine Committee, we feel it is our duty to advise the SFAI Board of Trustees in good faith and partnership. We present this letter to you with the intention to collaboratively promote the success of our beloved institution. Together we must seek to better maintain Rivera's scaffold, and jointly use it for depicting a more desirable future for SFAI and citizens of San Francisco.

ETHICAL REASONS

- **Place:** We urge the Board to move away from its ideas to sell and remove the Diego Rivera mural to a private donor since it is a work in which place matters.
 - To pursue such a sale constitutes and evokes forced removal, and the ongoing displacement, erasure and ghosting of BIPOC narratives and histories. As art institutions, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, work diligently to acquire works by people of color, SFAI is considering the sale and removal of its mural by Diego Rivera.
 - Unless proven otherwise, nowhere within the study of Diego Rivera's work is there evidence that his portable mural technology signifies his intention or

permission for the mural to be relocated away from the San Francisco Art Institute or the City of San Francisco.

- **Labor:** The implications of SFAI's proposal to sell the Diego Rivera Mural suggest that, at this moment, it must rely on the labor of an artist of color to lift it from its financial crisis. The labor, depicted in the mural by a Mexican Artist, leads us to reflect on what was once made public by the Chicano movement led by the late and honorable Cesar Chavez with regards to the U.S. exploitation of indigenous labor from south of the U.S. Mexico Border. For example, in light of a sale, the public may inquire about whether SFAI is offering a large number of scholarships to prospective students of color such as Dreamers in the State of California. Such a course of action can only be brokered with the assistance of large Latinx, Xicanx, and Hispanic organizations such as foundations, associations, and government entities.
- **Consultation:** It is a colonial practice to assume that one individual speaks for or represents entire races of people. One individual—whether an artist, student, expert, or person of a particular cultural background—cannot speak for or represent entire races of people in justifying a large cultural decision. Any determinations concerning the stewardship of the mural can only be ethically accomplished through the involvement of powerful organizations that best represent the people whose heritages are embedded within the mural, and organized communities of the people themselves. In this case Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, Xicanx, and Indigenous Americans that are in relationship to the mural. Furthermore, the context of international relations between the United States and Mexico must be accounted for.
- **Commodification of culture:** By selling the mural, SFAI would be commodifying and erasing a vital history of the institution. The power of mural art is derivative of the collective and co-determined, publicly-imbued, meanings. Removing such an iconic generator of imagination from SFAI without public input constitutes another example of disaster capitalism at the expense of people of color.
 - The mural is the property of the People at large, including but not limited to the people of The United States, Mexico, and the city of San Francisco. Removing the mural from its original context is equal to defacing a historical asset, and while the board may not view its protection in place as a legal obligation, any plan to remove or sell it should be approved by diverse publics at large.
- **Impact for SFAI:** Selling the mural places people of color who are adamantly opposed to its sale in a vulnerable political position. Internally speaking, the conversation about the mural has to engage the shared governance bylaws at SFAI. From the students' perspective, having the opportunity to share their work with Diego Rivera is unmatched.

- **Theme:** Diego Rivera's gesture at SFAI is in opposition to the nature of its sale. A communist Mexican artist made a painting about the building of San Francisco, while the SFAI Board of Trustees may authorize its sale to be removed and relocated to another city. To destroy the place-specific semiotic power (or the site-specific meaning) of the mural is akin to reducing it to a necrotized anthropological artifact (a dead cultural object whose meaning is no longer determined by practice, but through the colonial gaze of western science, art theory, and tourism). Currently the Diego Rivera Mural is one of SFAI's most valuable teaching tools. It's alive because it is practiced in pedagogy for the transference, recovery, and creation of knowledge within an environment of praxis.

CURRENT FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

- It is our understanding that the board has been proceeding without a multi-year financial forecast. We also note that the board lacks a treasurer, in violation of California non-profit law, and does not have a standing finance committee, which is a violation of its own bylaws. We urge the board not to make weighty financial decisions without more careful research into their likely implications.
- Every financial model we have seen for SFAI includes millions of dollars of deficit spending every year. Our financial model derived from current financial data anticipates on the order of \$20 million in deficit spending over the next four years, even with significant enrollment growth. This deficit spending does not include buying back our rights to Chestnut Street, and is in addition to any debt service obligations the board might take on in the meantime.
- Every plan we have heard for SFAI operations involves paying for those operating deficits by selling or borrowing against the mural. When this multi-million dollar line of credit comes due in 2-3 years it seemingly would trigger the sale of the mural for repayment, so it is not clear there is a meaningful difference between selling the mural now or using it as the basis for a loan.
- According to Reimagine team financial forecasts, a sale of the mural for \$50 million dollars would not guarantee SFAI's financial future. Between debt obligations, operating deficits, and infrastructure spending needs, SFAI would likely spend all of that money on the Chestnut Street real estate. The best case scenario we can see is that SFAI will be unable to cut tuition, raise salaries, improve acceptance rates, or invest in new physical or intellectual infrastructure.
- The worst case scenario we can see is that SFAI would sell the mural and then run out of money before it can get to break-even operations. We ask whether SFAI wants to begin a headlong multi-year drive towards enrollment of 600 knowing that it might fail on the way there. Will our recruiting materials include a warning that we might fail to make payroll before students are able to complete their degree program?

- We are not prepared to assume that SFAI would realize \$50 million from a sale of the mural. It is our understanding that no prospective buyer has committed to a price, and we don't feel that we understand what SFAI's costs might be associated with the sale, such as legal representation, financial fees, permitting requirements, PR expenses, and the cost of removal and delivery.
- We have no reason to believe that a capital campaign would be able to bring in substantial funding to offset these financial challenges. We urge the board to base its fundraising expectations on SFAI's track record over the past five years.
- We have heard mentioned that a benefactor might wish to endow the mural in place. If this is a possibility, it bears further discussion. We caution the board not to assume that a line of credit secured against the mural will be paid off by such a donor. Furthermore, before the board imagines new artwork or programs that could be funded in this way, it must take a realistic look at the existing expenses it will have to cover with those funds.

PRACTICAL REASONS

- Representative cultural foundations and organizations may suggest that any proceeds earned from the mural should include a plan to allocate a largely significant portion of those funds to support the community in which this work originates, namely Lantinx and Indigenous communities. The goal of leveraging the labor and vision of a Mexican artist to save a historically and currently white institution does not serve our communal goals to bring anti-racist practices to the operations across the institution.
- The sale could potentially damage the reputation of SFAI as having committed an unforgivable act. This damage may be reflected throughout the art world, and with publics throughout San Francisco, the State of California, the United States, and Mexico.
- The sale of the mural is a short term financial situation and does not guarantee the long term engagement of the Mexican and Latinx Indigenous stewardship of the mural. The root of the problem is the school's unsustainable business model and underdeveloped fundraising pathways.
- SFAI did not shut down in March 2020. We are still standing, and there are other alternatives that can be explored financially before relying on what some might perceive the "easy way out." There are numerous alternatives that have not yet been explored or exhausted, including expanding online public ed; new degrees that may generate revenue; external sponsorships; partnerships with other institutions; making the Chestnut campus more of a cultural and tourist destination.
- The SFAI Board has not exhausted all avenues to funding the mural by consulting with the Bay Area art community and/or consulting with city and state officials to help find or contribute funds to keep the mural in place. It would be a profound loss if the Bay Area

art community did not prioritize securing the mural. Losing our iconic fresco would diminish the significance of San Francisco's culture locally to globally.

- A decision like this shouldn't be made before the Reimagine Committee has shared their report. A decision like this is harmful to the reimagine process. While we are all clear that time is short, and finances are pressing, this action can be detrimental to the validity of SFAI to exist as a cultural institution.

Signed by the Reimagine Committee:

Tom Loughlin
Karen Topakian
Cristóbal Martínez
Lindsey White
Matt Borruso
Jennifer Locke
Orit Ben-Shitrit
Irene Carvajal

Ana Suek
Zeina Barakeh
Kat Trataris
Kavenamua Hambira
Oscar Lopez Guerrero
Annie Reiniger
Emily Reynolds
Rye Purvis

From: [Chris Manfield](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Diego Rivera mural at the San Francisco Art Institute a landmark
Date: Monday, January 11, 2021 3:33:15 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

To whom it may concern,

This mural is a fresco, painted for the specific space, and for the city and workers of San Francisco. This mural holds the legacy of Diego Rivera's presence in San Francisco and a direct line, through Coit Tower to muralists today, especially in the community of artists in the Mission. The importance of Diego Rivera for the community has been enormous. Latinx artists have fought for recognition for generations, and Diego Rivera's murals and the history of his presence in the city with Frida Kahlo has been an inspiration on that long history. An artwork's value is not limited to its market price. The mural "**The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City**" should therefore be recognized as a historical landmark.

Sincerely,
Christian Tan

From: [Juana Alicia Araiza](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Diego Rivera Mural Preservation at the San Francisco Art Institute Site
Date: Sunday, January 10, 2021 6:55:26 PM

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

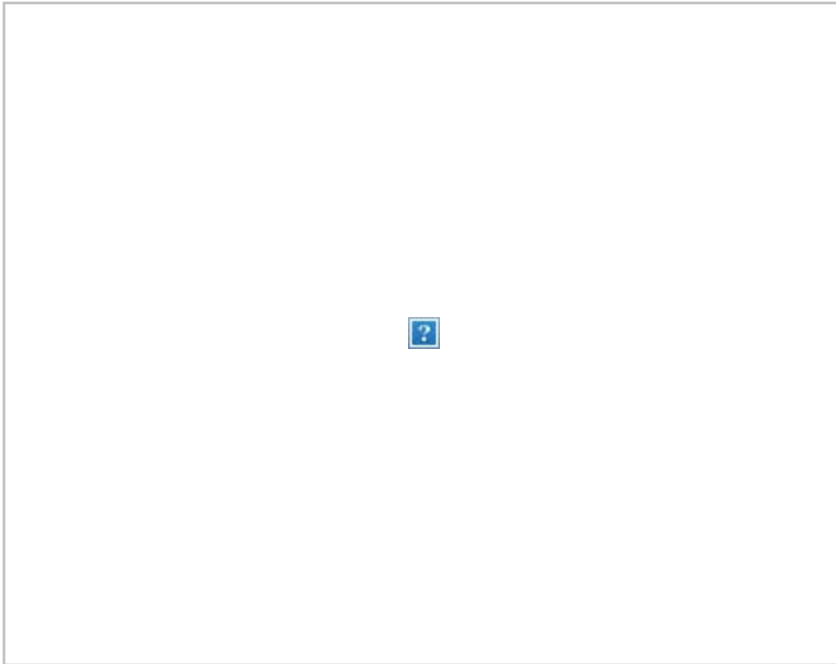
Dear Ms. Major and Other Concerned Parties,

I am writing to express my opposition to the removal of Diego Rivera's fresco, **The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City**, currently located at the San Francisco Art Institute, where it was created as a site-specific work of art. The disgraceful proposition by SFAI to sell the iconic San Francisco legacy work in order to pay for the art school's financial bungling, is unacceptable to me, as a public artist and beneficiary of the legacy of that mural. As a Masters of Fine Art graduate of SFAI, I did my thesis in fresco painting under the tutelage of Rivera's painting assistants and restorers of that fresco, Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Dimitroff. These two artists trained a generation or two of Bay Area muralists in the fresco technique, which the Dimitroffs had mastered while assisting Rivera in Detroit, New York and San Francisco. They widened the circle of politically aware artists who learned from the Mexican Mural Movement, and these generations went on to create a potent and internationally recognized mural movement in the Bay Area. The Rivera mural played a key role in the formation of many artists that attended or taught at the Art Institute over many generations. Among those artists were members of Las Mujeres Muralistas, Dewey Crumpler, Luis and Susan Cervantes, Lucia Ippolito and many more. **The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City** is part of our community's cultural heritage and an important signifier for the history of San Francisco's labor movement as well.

As a muralist and art professor, I have taken many students to draw, critique and reinterpret the mural. It is one of the several fresco jewels in the City's crown of WPA and [Public Works of Art Project](#), and part of a tour that includes the San Francisco Stock Exchange and Coit Tower. Rivera and his colleagues' murals in Mexico were the inspiration for putting artists to work on the government payroll during the Great Depression, and could not be more relevant than they are today, as we face another catastrophic economic and social depression in the United States, complicated by the

corona virus pandemic. I urge the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to exercise their leadership in favor of preserving this monumental testimony to the power of an artist's vision to shape their world. San Francisco has traditionally been a beacon for human rights and progressive voices, and a vanguard in the arts. It is essential that the Rivera fresco at the SFAI be made a permanent part of the City's history landmarks for the benefit of future generations.

Thank you for your consideration,



GET OUT!•¡FUERA! Drawing on scratchboard, Juana Alicia ©2020

[Juana Alicia](https://www.juanaalicia.com)

<https://www.juanaalicia.com>

Introduction Form

By a Member of the Board of Supervisors or Mayor

Time stamp
or meeting date

I hereby submit the following item for introduction (select only one):

- ☒ 1. For reference to Committee. (An Ordinance, Resolution, Motion or Charter Amendment).
- ☐ 2. Request for next printed agenda Without Reference to Committee.
- ☐ 3. Request for hearing on a subject matter at Committee.
- ☐ 4. Request for letter beginning : "Supervisor inquiries"
- ☐ 5. City Attorney Request.
- ☐ 6. Call File No. from Committee.
- ☐ 7. Budget Analyst request (attached written motion).
- ☐ 8. Substitute Legislation File No.
- ☐ 9. Reactivate File No.
- ☐ 10. Topic submitted for Mayoral Appearance before the BOS on

Please check the appropriate boxes. The proposed legislation should be forwarded to the following:

- ☐ Small Business Commission ☐ Youth Commission ☐ Ethics Commission
- ☐ Planning Commission ☐ Building Inspection Commission

Note: For the Imperative Agenda (a resolution not on the printed agenda), use the Imperative Form.

Sponsor(s):

Subject:

The text is listed:

Signature of Sponsoring Supervisor:

For Clerk's Use Only