

1 [Initiating Landmark Designation - Zakheim's History of Medicine in California Frescoes]

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3 **Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for**
4 **the History of Medicine in California frescoes at the University of California San**
5 **Francisco, Parnassus Campus, painted by Jewish artist Bernard Zakheim.**

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7 WHEREAS, Under Planning Code, Section 1004.1, the Board of Supervisors (Board)
8 may by Resolution initiate landmark designation; and

9 WHEREAS, Started in 1935 and completed in 1938, the "History of Medicine in
10 California" frescoes at the University of California, San Francisco's (UCSF) Toland Hall are
11 significant pieces of public art painted by renowned 20th Century Jewish artist Bernard
12 Zakheim; and

13 WHEREAS, The ten panel series was commissioned by UCSF and funded through the
14 Works Project Administration's Federal Art Project, a New Deal program designed to employ
15 artists and fund visual art in the United States; and

16 WHEREAS, The frescoes depict vivid images of doctors, lab scientists, suffering and
17 recovered patients throughout California's medical history, and include several UCSF faculty
18 members; and

19 WHEREAS, Zakheim was a major artist of his era who had immigrated to San
20 Francisco from Poland via New York in 1920 and studied fresco painting technique with
21 Mexican artist Diego Rivera; and

22 WHEREAS, In addition to artistic skill, Zakheim was regarded for his left-wing political
23 convictions, and the History of Medicine in California murals were at one point deemed
24 controversial and papered over for a period of 20 years that coincided with a period of
25 American history tainted by right wing anticommunist hysteria; and

1 WHEREAS, The History of Medicine in California frescoes were referred to by UCSF
2 archivist Polina Ilieva in 2015 as the “jewel of the University’s Art Collection” and, in a 1996
3 presentation by Dr. Robert Schindler, as “the product of an extraordinary individual;” and

4 WHEREAS, Zakheim is also well known for founding the San Francisco Artists and
5 Writers Union, a group of activist artists who lobbied for a federally funded arts program that
6 became the Public Works of Art Project, which funded Zakheim’s famed work on Coit Tower;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, Among all of Zakheim’s work, the History of Medicine in California
9 frescoes are Zakheim’s largest single work; now, therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, That the Board hereby initiates landmark designation of Zakheim’s
11 History of Medicine in California frescoes, located at the University of California, San
12 Francisco, Parnassus Campus, in Toland Hall; and, be it

13 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Planning Department
14 prepare a Landmark Designation Report to submit to the Historic Preservation Commission
15 for its consideration of the special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value of
16 Zakheim’s History of Medicine in California frescoes; and, be it

17 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Historic Preservation
18 Commission consider whether Zakheim’s History of Medicine in California frescoes warrant
19 landmark designation, and submit its recommendation to the Board according to Article 10 of
20 the Planning Code.