

From: [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Fwd: TODAY'S HEARING
Date: Monday, February 14, 2022 11:46:40 AM

From: Anne Cervantes, RA <cdastudios@aol.com>
Sent: Monday, February 14, 2022 11:37:30 AM
To: Peskin, Aaron (BOS) <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>; Melgar, Myrna (BOS) <myrna.melgar@sfgov.org>
Cc: LaValley, Pilar (CPC) <pilar.lavalley@sfgov.org>
Subject: TODAY'S HEARING

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Supervisors

I reached out to Judy Baca's (since she changed her cell) attorney, to Lorraine Garcia-Nakata-not available, and Dr. Amalia Mesa-Bains- not available she is traveling. She wrote the following and asked me to read at today's hearing.

DR. AMALIA MESA-BAINS

Diego Rivera is a giant of the art world and San Francisco has been fortunate to have the most public murals in one city as well as some in private hands. His visits to San Francisco accompanied by his wife, the artist Frida Kahlo are part of his history and that of the city. From his visits to the Ralph Stackpole studio to his work on the Pan American Unity Mural painted during the Golden Gate International Exposition 1939-1940 is now on display at SFMOMA, he has marked the city with murals depicting continental, state and municipal history.

Rivera also painted the Building of a City, a fresco mural specific to San Francisco and is a fresco within a fresco as the artist shows himself and other labor figures making a fresco of the building of a city. This magnificent piece is housed and preserved in the San Francisco Art Institute.

The incredibly significant Allegory of California done in 1931 at the City Club deserves historical status because Rivera's presents Calafia the legendary black Amazon who has been depicted in literature as the spirit of California and holding the riches of California as an agricultural treasure. The mural is peopled with historical figures in California at that time.

That Rivera continues the labor intensive practice of fresco makes his murals even more valuable and so much in need of preservation. This particular mural is part of a trio of unique cultural sites in San Francisco and must be preserved.

Dr Amalia Mesa-Bains
Former SF Arts Commissioner
Mac Arthur Fellow

Anne Cervantes
CERVANTES DESIGN ASSOCIATES, INC.

415-695-1751

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From: [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Fwd: SFLHS LETTER OF SUPPORT DIEGO RIVERA's "ALLEGORY OF CALIFORNIA" LANDMARK
Date: Sunday, February 13, 2022 4:36:33 PM
Attachments: [22.0214_SFLHS, RIVERA'S"ALLEGORY OF CALIFORNIA".pdf](#)

FYI

From: Anne Cervantes, RA <cdastudios@aol.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 13, 2022 4:34:37 PM
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Subject: SFLHS LETTER OF SUPPORT DIEGO RIVERA's "ALLEGORY OF CALIFORNIA" LANDMARK

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Attached is the letter of support from the San Francisco Latino Historical Society's to landmark Diego Rivera's "Allegory of California"

Anne Cervantes
CERVANTES DESIGN ASSOCIATES, INC.
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February 14, 2022

San Francisco Board of Supervisor's
Land Use & Transportation Committee
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
City Hall, Room 244
San Francisco, Ca 94102

Regarding: Item 2, 220037, Planning Code-Landmark Designation "Allegory of California," The City Club of San Francisco (formerly Pacific Stock Exchange Luncheon Club,

Supervisors Aaron Peskin, Myrna Melgar, Dean Preston:

Diego Rivera's "Allegory of California" mural located in the San Francisco Stock Exchange City Club is an important mural to the Pan-Latino Community of San Francisco and California and we recommend that this mural be designated as a Landmark in place as a Article 10 Landmark as an important Latino Historic Asset for the following reasons:

I. CHICANO MURAL MOVEMENT

The Chicano Mural Movement, in the state of California, was influenced by Mexican mural masters Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. These historic and consequential Mexican Muralists utilized their visual art work as a vehicle for communicating social injustices experienced by communities of highly scare economic means, lack of power, or voice. Diego Rivera introduced this Mexican public art movement, and related ideas to San Francisco by painting three, now internationally historic, murals in this city. Of note, is his mural, "Allegory of California," at the San Francisco Stock Exchange City Club ("allegory:" reveals a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one).

Rivera's selection as a commissioned artist created tension with some of the noted San Francisco artists of that period (male of Euro-decent), who would have preferred that this commission be given to one of them, rather than a Méxican "foreign artist" who shed light upon and called to question the comprehensive inequities of a blind and untethered capitalist system. It was **Timothy Pflueger**, the stock exchange architect and **Ralph Stackpole**, one of the Stock Exchange artists that spoke to the greatness of Diego Rivera as an artist. Stackpole spoke in support of his selection

During the 1960's through early 1970's Chicano artists, throughout California, were inspired and creatively ignited by the work and cultural compass of the Mexican muralist movement. Many California artists incorporated and referenced these social justice themes in their own creative pieces. San Francisco's Mission District muralists, and their Chicano/Latino artistry in general, were integrally included in this overall cultural effort. The communication and organized social justice efforts (between southern, central and northern California organizations of that cultural period) were highly fluid, agile, and produced justice-grounded events and artistry across discipline (visual, literary, and performing arts in particular). The close collaboration between Sacramento's Royal Chicano Air Force artist collective (noted for poster, mural and literary work) and the San Francisco artist community organizations was strongly linked in the creation of murals, other visual arts genres, literary and performing arts production via cultural organizations such as Mission Gráfica, Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts, Galería de la Raza/Studio, and more. While mural work was key to the "Movement," the social justice poster artform



offered an additional, more immediate, and highly transit vehicle for the communication of urgent cultural ideas and messaging. In short, murals of the Mexican Mural Masters were key to informing, clarifying and setting in motion “truth-telling” creative production via many artists throughout California and those in San Francisco such as René Yáñez, Graciella Carillo, Consuelo Lopez, Patricia Rodriguez, Ray Patlán, Juana Alicia, Irene Perez, Luis Cervantes, Michael Rios and later Cristianne Dugan-Cuadra and Manuel Sanchez.

Murals: San Francisco’s Mission District now has over 600 hundred murals created by this generation of artists, some of whom studied at the San Francisco Art Institute. These artists reference the “Social Realism” movement by addressing social injustice aspects of the Pan-Latino historic period “Economic, Political and Cultural Empowerment 1960-1999”

As the recent show at the Whitney Museum “Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925-1945” demonstrates, the estimation of the importance and influence of the Mexican Mural Movement has only increased over the last few decades. This particular Whitney show delineates the influence of Mexican art on U. S. artists, but Mexican art was influential throughout Latin America.

2. COMMUNITY ACCESS

The mural, “Allegory of California,” at The City Club of San Francisco, has a long history as a landmark and place of gathering for broad sectors of the San Francisco community (cultural, business, educational, etc.) because it hosts Diego Rivera’s historic mural. **Lorraine García-Nakata**, an artist/cultural specialist, former San Francisco Arts Commissioner, Deputy Director of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts during its inaugural years, founding member Royal Chicano Air Force, and federally appointed Commissioner to the National Museum of the American Latino, brought her colleague and friend Guadalupe Rivera Marin to visit and view her father’s (Diego Rivera) mural at the Stock Exchange City Club during one of her visits. Also invited to present to the Common Wealth Club, Guadalupe Rivera Marin and Lorraine addressed the historic nature of Diego Rivera’s work. **García-Nakata states**, “The parsing of words or positioning of justifications of control, does not change the internationally known fact that Diego Rivera is a historic artist. By extension, his work and where it was painted is also historic. His murals were known for their critique of the imbalances of a capitalist framework, thus a painting at the stock exchange “club” is inherent to the intention of his piece. His mural and its location are integral to each other and literally constitute a historic asset and site. Thus, the mural should be designated as such ensuring continued vehicles of public access.”

3. MURAL INTEGRATION INTO THE ARCHITECTURE

Maynard Dixon thought that Diego Rivera was the “greatest living artist in the world” but “not the man for the Stock Exchange Building”¹ because of Rivera’s political beliefs. The Architect of the Stock Exchange Timothy Pflueger apparently thought differently. Pflueger knew that Rivera was not only a great artist but a muralist, a fresco painter who had studied and learned from Italian fresco painting. Rivera had learned not only the technique of fresco, but about how architecture and paintings on the grand scale could be integrated into one unit that was something more than either alone. And this is what Rivera accomplishes his *Allegory of California*. It is not just integrated into the architectural setting, it exploits and heightens the setting, making the ascension of the stairway an event, not just a passage

¹ Masha Zakheim, Diego Rivera in San Francisco, Historical Essay, 1998, Circulo De Arte



through space. Rivera accomplishes this integration of architecture and painting through form, color and the painting's rhythmic structure.

The painting is in two sections – the wall section and the ceiling section, the ceiling being a seamless continuation of the wall portion. The wall portion is a tall rectangle except at the bottom where the shape conforms to the stepped shape of the staircase. The composition on the wall is dominated by the giant figure representing California, who if drawn out completely, would be standing on the lower floor with her head reaching the clear sky, almost touching the ceiling just as her width almost fills the frame. She is scaled to the room, not to the painted area. Because of her size, her scale dominates, unifies and fills the space, even though not fully visible. Her giant right and left hands are at different levels, echoing the upward movement of the staircase. The subsidiary figures meet the landing with the figure of the kneeling farmworker and then step up stepwise in a movement in the opposite direction complementing the staircase creating a swirling sense of movement in the space. Equally the giant female figure on the ceiling fills and unites the space of the ceiling panel while echoing the diagonal movement of the staircase.

In color, Rivera has chosen colors that both echo and complement the warm color of the veined stone of the walls and ceiling. The yellows, flesh colors and warm whites are carefully balanced throughout the painting and echo the colors of the stone. The blues and oranges are also well balanced and vividly complement the color of the stone, especially the jewellike blue color of the sky.

The formal rhythms of Rivera's composition also echo and complement the setting. The composition moves from crowdedness and complexity at the bottom towards greater formal simplicity as you move upwards, ending in the giant figure of the woman soaring across the clear and sunny sky. The composition moves from closeness to distance as the eye travels upwards, opening the space. When there are people on the staircase, rhythmically walking up the staircase, they become part of the composition when seen against the somewhat larger scaled figures on the wall behind them.

Although Pflueger loved ornament, he tellingly did not add anything else to the space aside from the details of the baluster and the color and veining of the stone. He knew that with the way this mural filled up the space of this staircase with color and movement, any other ornament would be too much.

The "Allegory of California", Diego Rivera's first in the United States, is an important Pan-Latino and the City & County of San Francisco's historical asset. It documents the Pan-Latino contributions to the development of the City & County of San Francisco. Rivera influence on artists has span several generations, starting with the Public Art Movement, WPA Works Project Administration (1935-1942), the Chicano Art Movement (1960-1970's), and current mural artist in the Mission District and the City & County of San Francisco. The San Francisco Latino Historical Society recommends approval of the Diego Rivera's "Allegory of California" as a City & County of San Francisco (historical resource) Landmark.

Sincerely
SAN FRANCISCO LATINO HISTORICAL SOCIETY-FOUNDING MEMBER

Anne Cervantes, *Architect, former City Hall Preservation Commissioner*
Alan Martinez, *Architect, former Preservation Commissioner*
Lorraine Garcia-Nakata, *Artist, Arts/Cultural Specialist, Commissioner, National Museum of the American Latino, former Director, The Mexican Museum, former San Francisco Arts Commissioner, and Chair, SF Public Arts Program, Founding Member-Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF) artist collective.*



Dr. Carlos Cordova, Historian, Professor of History-San Francisco State University, Latino Context Statement Historian