

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Rich Hillis, Director, Planning Department  
Jonas Ionin, Commission Secretary, Historic Preservation Commission

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

DATE: July 2, 2020

SUBJECT: LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

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The Board of Supervisors' Land Use and Transportation Committee has received the following proposed legislation, introduced by Supervisor Peskin on June 23, 2020:

**File No. 200677**

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

If you have comments or reports to be included with the file, please forward them to me at the Board of Supervisors, City Hall, Room 244, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102 or by email at: [erica.major@sfgov.org](mailto:erica.major@sfgov.org).

cc: Scott Sanchez, Acting Deputy Zoning Administrator  
Corey Teague, Zoning Administrator  
Lisa Gibson, Environmental Review Officer  
Devyani Jain, Deputy Environmental Review Officer  
Adam Varat, Acting Director of Citywide Planning  
AnMarie Rodgers, Legislative Affairs  
Dan Sider, Director of Executive Programs  
Aaron Starr, Manager of Legislative Affairs  
Joy Navarrete, Environmental Planning  
Laura Lynch, Environmental Planning  
Andrea Ruiz-Esquide, Deputy City Attorney

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.**

6

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.