San Francisco Planning

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ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK DESIGNATION
FACT SHEET

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City, 2016
Source: SFAI National Register Nomination[1]

Historic Name:	*The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*
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:	San Francisco Landmark No. 85, Ordinance No. 208-77 (June 9, 1977). San Francisco Planning Department, "San Francisco Art Institute, Final Case Report" for Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (December 17, 1975). 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.
Prior HPC Actions:	Made recommendation for SFAI as Landmark No. 85 in 1975. Review and Comment on National Register Nomination of San Francisco Art Institute (800 Chestnut Street), Case No. 2015-011315FED (October 1, 2015).

Significance Criteria:	*Events:* Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. *Architecture/Design:* Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, and/or represents the work of a master.
Period of Significance:	The period of significance for *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*" 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 *Homage to Siqueiros,* by Jesús "Chuy" Campusano, Luis Cortázar and Michael Rios, was painted at Bank of America branch at Mission and 16th street.
Statement of Significance:	*The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City,* painted by artist Diego Rivera and assistants Viscount John Hastings (Lord 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.

Assessment of Integrity:	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] *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City*, 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. Overall, the Department has determined that *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* fresco in Diego Rivera Gallery at San Francisco Art Institute retains integrity to convey its historical and cultural significance.
Character-Defining Features:	The character-defining features of *The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City* 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: • 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 *buon fresco* artwork; • The size, shape, form, and materials of the Fresco inclusive of the *trompe l'oeil* painting of scaffolding 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 Viscount John Hastings (Lord 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

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

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.

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 Institute[3] 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 a 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 Viscount John 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]

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[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, a designated 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 undertook major cleaning and restorative treatments of Rivera frescoes at SFAI as well as the Detroit Institute of Arts. According to a 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 giornate 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 plasterer 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, who noted 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, 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 invited Rivera to San Francisco, but again the artist 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 for the SFAI project were still being worked out. As with his commission at the Stock Exchange, SFAI made clear to Rivera 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, included in *Diego Rivera: The Complete Murals,* 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 Palacío 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

> …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

[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).

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, photograph, 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 mural[46] – 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/Simpson, and Barrows – were friends, colleagues, or persons of note in fields of design and architecture.

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

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

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 be 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 labor…"[55] that could be specifically associated with the organized labor movements of the period. Further, by

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[48] Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros* (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/.
[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.

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 possibly as late as the 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 who had assisted Rivera on his *Pan-American Unity* fresco at Treasure Island, documented condition and retouched several locations at the lower left section and 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

[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.

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. Drescher, 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 Siqueiros* (1974) 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

[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. Drescher, *San Francisco Bay Area Murals: Communities Create Their Muses: 1904-1997* (St. Paul: Pogo Press, 1998), 10.
[65] "National Historic Landmark Nomination: The *Detroit Industry* Murals," 13.

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 Siqueiros*; Luis Cervantes and Precita Eyes Muralists; Galería de la Raza and one of its initial co-directors René Yañez; Los Muejeres Muralistas and its three founders, Patricia Rodriguez, Graciela Carrillo, Irene Perez, and Consuelo Mendez.

The National Historic Landmark nomination for Rivera's *Detroit Industry* murals 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 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,

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[66] Anna Indych-López, *Muralism Without Walls: Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros 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.
[70] SFAI NR Nomination (2016), Section 8, page 12.

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-guarde 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 nominated for listing 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, the only exposure to mural painting for many San Franciscans 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.

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

[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.

> …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-Frausto, author of "A Panorama of Latino Arts," published in American Latinos and the Making of the

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[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.

> 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. 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 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. Arnatoff, 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 Palacío 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. Drescher, *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

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[87] Timothy W. Drescher, *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 Palamino, and Joe White (Cervantes and Palamino both studied as 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 to workshops and tours, Precita Eyes has coordinated the creation of many collaborative works in San Francisco and 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 be became widespread until during the Chicano movement of the 1960s and

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[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 *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 (Draft) 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),

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[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 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 Drescher, 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]

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.

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[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: 1904-1947* (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.

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:

> … 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

[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.

> 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-Inclan 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 postrevolutionarly 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] Siqueiros and painter Xavier Guerrero to create *El Sindicato de Pintores y Escultores* (The Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors). The manifesto of this group stated, "We repudiate the so-called easel painting and all the art

[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.

> 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 Bolivar (1922), Secretaría de Educacíon Pública/Ministry of Public Education Building (1923-1928), Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo (1924, 1926-1927), Palacio Nacional/National Palace (1929-1930, 1935), Secretaría de Salubriadad 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 Educacíon 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.

> decedent 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, Siqueiros, 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

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[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. In contrast to even the smallest mural from

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[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.

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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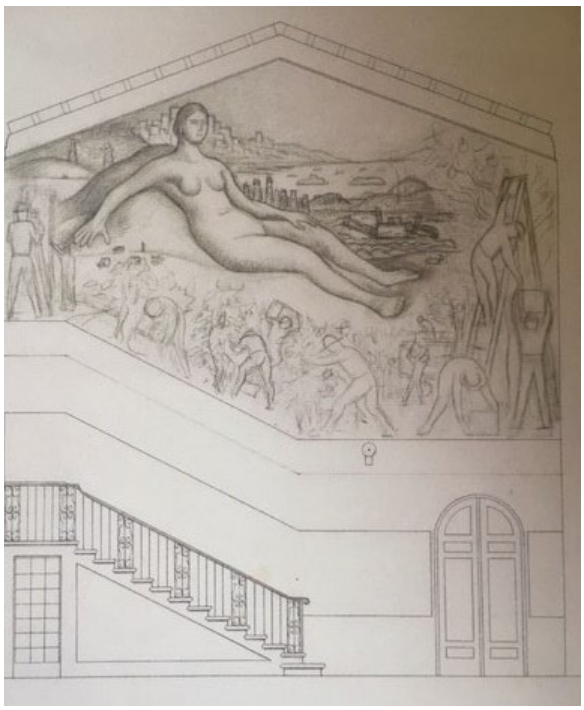
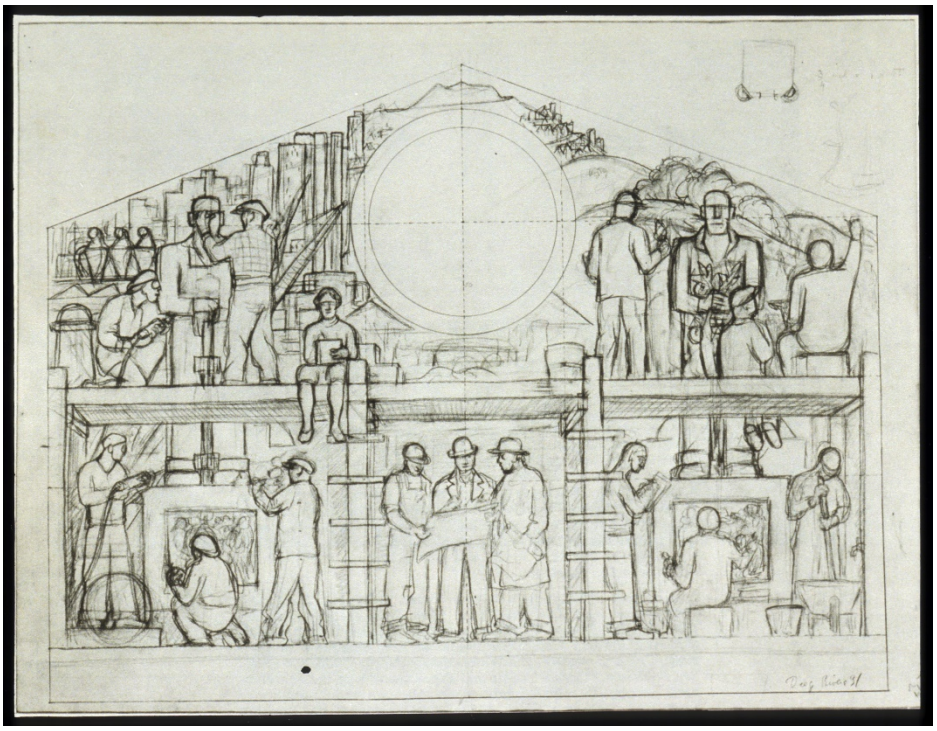
San Francisco Art Institute, 1953.
Source: San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection (AAD-7799)

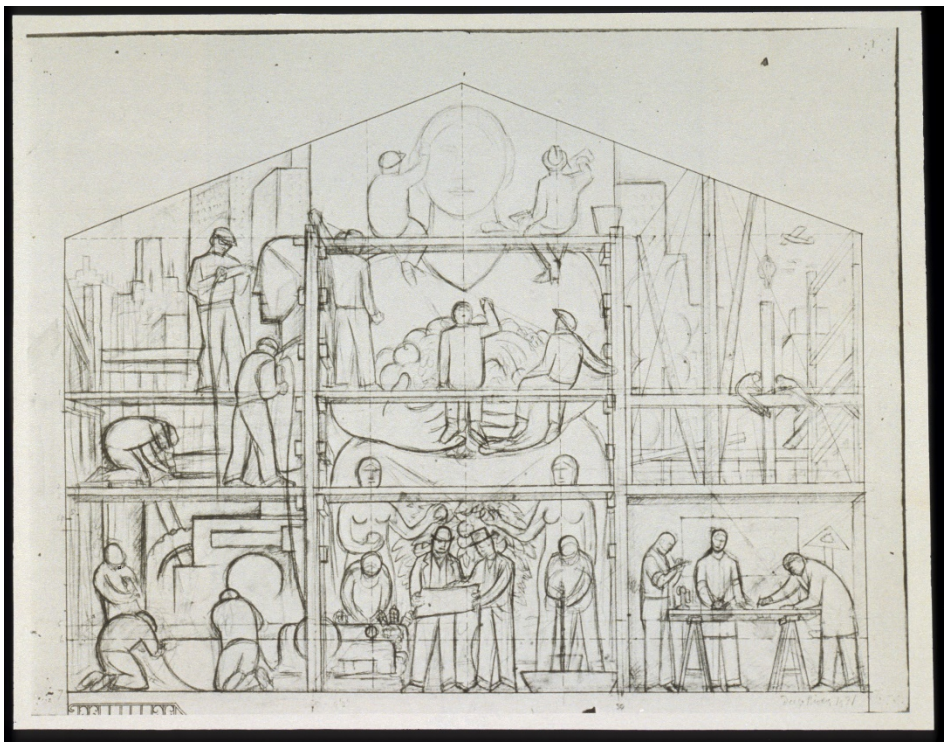
Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Timothy Pflueger, and Ralph Stackpole, November 10, 1930.
Source: San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection (AAK-0311)

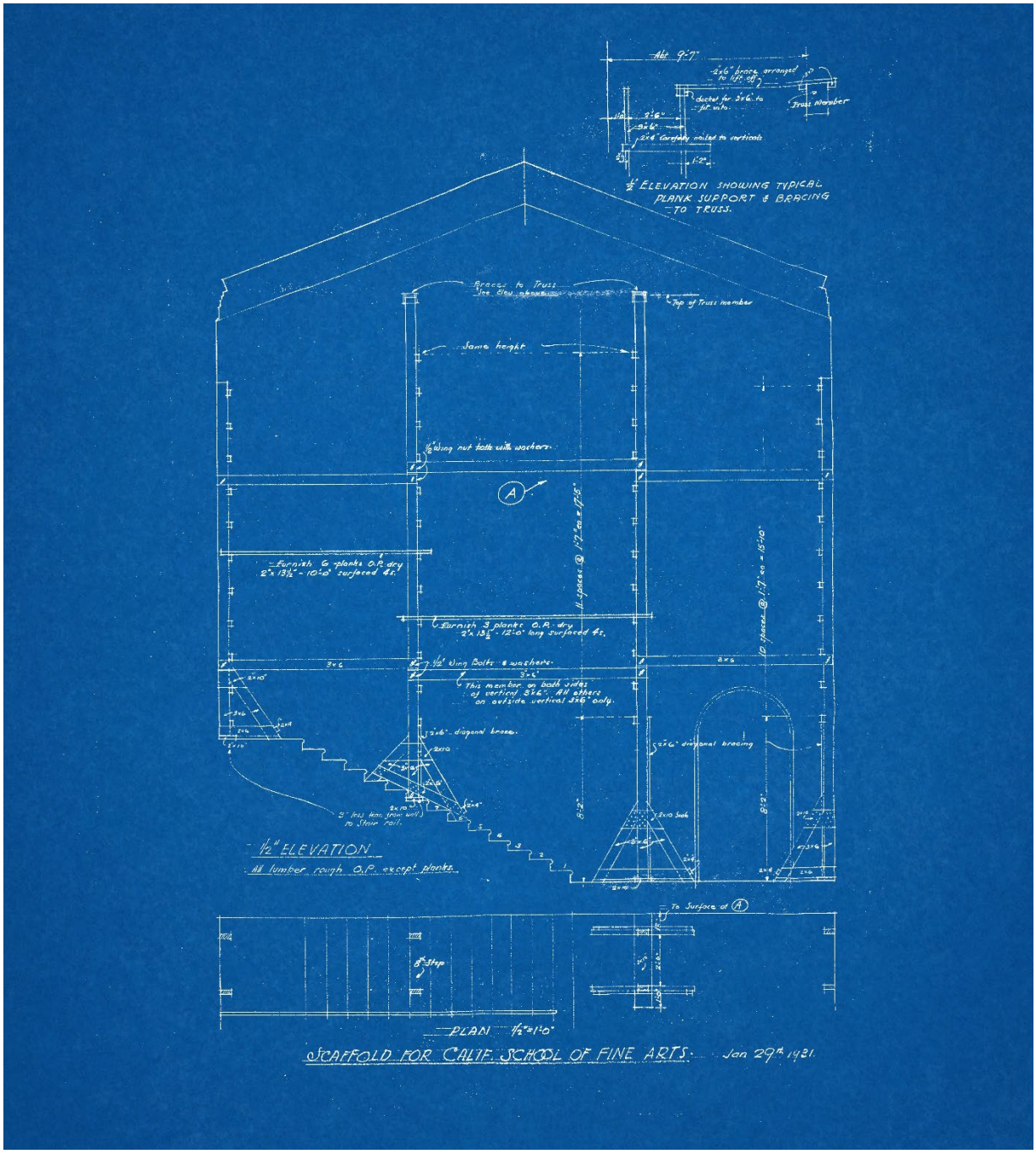
Studies for San Francisco Art Institute Mural, 1930-1931.
Source: Luis-Martín Lozano, "1929-1931 V. Revolutions and Allegories: Mexico and San Francisco," in *Diego Rivera: The Complete Murals,* Luis-Martín Lozano and Juan Rafael Coronel Rivera, ed. Benedikt Taschen (Los Angeles: Taschen, c2008), 267.





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).





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).

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).

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).

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).

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).

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