

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



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## MEMORANDUM

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Date: May 13, 2021  
To: Rich Hillis, Director, Planning Department  
Jonas Ionin, Commission Secretary, Historic Preservation Commission  
From: *ACC* Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board  
Subject: Initiating Landmark Designation - Diego Rivera Mural "The Allegory of California" (File No. 210352)

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On April 27, 2021, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 187-21, sponsored by Supervisors Peskin, Preston, Melgar, Chan, Mandelman, and Safai and approved by Mayor London N. Breed on May 7, 2021.

A copy of the Resolution is being forwarded to you, pursuant to Planning Code, Section 1004.2(b).

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Erica Major, Assistant Clerk, at (415) 554-4441 or by email at: [Erica.Major@sfgov.org](mailto:Erica.Major@sfgov.org).

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

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1 [Initiating Landmark Designation - Diego Rivera Mural “The Allegory of California”]

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3 **Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for**  
4 **Diego Rivera’s fresco, titled “The Allegory of California,” painted in 1931 and located at**  
5 **155 Sansome Street.**

6

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

11 WHEREAS, San Francisco is home to three of Rivera’s masterpieces, including the  
12 first fresco Diego Rivera completed in the United States entitled “The Allegory of California,”  
13 which was painted in 1931 and is located within the grand stairwell inside of the former Pacific  
14 Stock Exchange building at 155 Sansome Street in downtown San Francisco, now home of  
15 The City Club; and

16 WHEREAS, The fresco depicts classic themes and motifs found in Rivera  
17 compositions, namely harmony between nature and machine, a glorification of the past while  
18 looking toward the future, and a panorama of historical figures; and

19 WHEREAS, According to Rivera’s autobiography, the large, looming female figure  
20 represents Calafia, the Spirit of California, with her right hand mining the earth for hidden  
21 treasures of the State of California, and her left hand holding the treasures that grow on its  
22 surface; and

23 WHEREAS, The background of the fresco mural shows industries of the Bay Area: the  
24 oil refineries of Richmond, the shipping yards facing the Pacific Ocean, and dredging  
25 equipment then used in search of gold; and

1           WHEREAS, The forefront of the fresco depicts specific historical figures important to  
2 the development of California as a state: James Marshall, who discovered gold at Sutter’s  
3 Creek in 1948, famous horticulturist Luther Burbank, sculptor Peter Stackpole, and fellow  
4 muralist Victor Arnautoff; and

5           WHEREAS, The Allegory of California fresco attracted immediate criticism and harsh  
6 reactions, principally to Rivera’s nationality and Marxist political leanings, and quickly became  
7 one Rivera’s most significant and well-known works; and

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

14           RESOLVED, That the Board hereby initiates a separate landmark designation of Diego  
15 Rivera’s masterpiece fresco “The Allegory of California,” created in 1931 at its sole and  
16 current location at 155 Sansome Street; and, be it

17           FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Planning Department  
18 prepare a Landmark Designation Report to submit to the Historic Preservation Commission  
19 for its consideration of the special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value of  
20 the fresco; and, be it

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

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**City and County of San Francisco**  
**Tails**  
**Resolution**

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San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

**File Number:** 210352

**Date Passed:** April 27, 2021

Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Allegory of California," painted in 1931 and located at 155 Sansome Street.

April 19, 2021 Land Use and Transportation Committee - RECOMMENDED

April 27, 2021 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

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

File No. 210352

I hereby certify that the foregoing  
Resolution was ADOPTED on 4/27/2021 by  
the Board of Supervisors of the City and  
County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo  
Clerk of the Board

London N. Breed  
Mayor

5.7.21

Date Approved