


BOARD of SUPERVISORS



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MEMORANDUM

Date: February 17, 2021
To: Jonas Ionin, Commission Secretary, Historic Preservation Commission
Rich Hillis, Director, Planning Department
From:  Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board
Subject: Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City" (File No. 210016)

On January 12, 2021, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 012-21, sponsored by Supervisors Peskin, Melgar, and Ronen; and approved by Mayor London N. Breed on January 22, 2021.

A copy of the Resolution is being forwarded to you, pursuant to the directive found in Resolution No. 012-21.

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.

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

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1 [Initiating Landmark Designation - 800 Chestnut Street - Diego Rivera Mural “The Making of a
2 Fresco Showing the Building of a City”]

3 **Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for**
4 **Diego Rivera’s fresco, titled “The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City,”**
5 **painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut 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 second Diego Rivera fresco completed in the United States entitled “The Making of a Fresco
13 Showing the Building of a City” (the “Mural”), which was painted in 1931 and remains in its
14 original home at the Diego Rivera Gallery inside the San Francisco Art Institute at 800
15 Chestnut Street; and

16 WHEREAS, The mural was commissioned by then-San Francisco Art Institute
17 President William Gerstle and took a month to complete, and depicts a fresco within a fresco
18 in which various real life figures, including Rivera himself, general designers, builders,
19 painters, architects and laborers construct a building, and, at its center, a gigantic worker –
20 the colossal proletarian – symbolizing the entire international working class, powerfully
21 demonstrating a familiar theme in Rivera’s work of the critical importance of labor in the
22 artistic and creative process; and

23 WHEREAS, The mural also includes depictions of real-life figures including Timothy
24 Pfleuger (designer of the San Francisco Stock Exchange), William Gerstle (banker,
25 philanthropist, and president of the San Francisco Art Institute who commissioned the mural),

1 Arthur Brown (architect who designed Coit Tower, the San Francisco Opera House, and San
2 Francisco City Hall), and Marion Simpson (mosaic artist in Berkeley who designed murals for
3 the Alameda County courthouse); and

4 WHEREAS, As with his immediately-preceding fresco in San Francisco, the Allegory of
5 California, the Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City attracted immediate criticism
6 and harsh reactions to Rivera’s Marxist political leanings, and quickly became one Rivera’s
7 most significant and well-known works; and

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

13 WHEREAS, In 1977, the City and County of San Francisco designated pursuant to
14 Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code the San Francisco Art Institute at 800 Chestnut
15 Street as Landmark Number 85; and

16 WHEREAS, The official case report for Landmark No. 85 makes extensive reference to
17 and describes the Rivera Mural, and can be read as intending that Article 10 protections
18 extend to any alteration, removal, or demolition of the Mural itself; and

19 WHEREAS, Since its creation, the Mural has been made available for free, public
20 viewing, has inspired generations of artists, including alumni of the San Francisco Art Institute,
21 and countless members of the public, alike; now, therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, That the Board hereby initiates separate landmark designation of Diego
23 Rivera’s masterpiece fresco “The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City,” created
24 in 1931 at its sole and current location at the San Francisco Art Institute building at 800
25 Chestnut Street (Landmark No. 85); and, be it

1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Planning Department
2 prepare a Landmark Designation Report to submit to the Historic Preservation Commission
3 for its consideration of the special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value of
4 the Mural; and, be it

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

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City and County of San Francisco
Tails
Resolution

City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

File Number: 210016

Date Passed: January 12, 2021

Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut Street.

January 11, 2021 Land Use and Transportation Committee - RECOMMENDED AS COMMITTEE REPORT

January 12, 2021 Board of Supervisors - AMENDED, AN AMENDMENT OF THE WHOLE BEARING SAME TITLE

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

January 12, 2021 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED AS AMENDED

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

File No. 210016

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED AS AMENDED on 1/12/2021 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

London N. Breed
Mayor

1/22/21

Date Approved