



100 THE COMMITTEE OF ONE HUNDRED

Dedicated to the Preservation of Spanish Colonial Architecture in Balboa Park

WINTER 2009

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NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Another Restoration

The year 2015 will be a grand opportunity to celebrate Balboa Park's Spanish Colonial "Dream City," created for the Panama-California Exposition of 1915. Architect Bertram Grosvenor



Goodhue, the man who brought us its unique architecture, died suddenly on April 23, 1924, at the age of 54. The following month construction began on a new fine arts museum, to be located at the north end of the Plaza de Panama, on the site of the 1915 Exposition's Sacramento Valley Building. The new building was a gift to the people of San Diego by Mr. and Mrs. Appleton S. Bridges. It was designed by local architect William

Templeton Johnson to complement the original buildings in style. Statues and bas-reliefs for the new museum's façade were modeled by the Piccirilli Brothers of New York City, who had previously created the ornamentation on the El Prado entrance to the California Quadrangle and on the magnificent California Building. The new museum opened in early 1926 with Reginald Poland as director of what was then called the Fine Arts Gallery.

During World War II the museum building would serve as a hospital ward for the United States Navy. In 1964 the Science and Education Building, known then as the Medical Arts Building from the second exposition, was demolished to make way for the modern and incongruous west wing of the Fine Arts Gallery, which opened in 1966. An east wing was added in 1974. In 1978 the name of the Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego was changed to the San Diego Museum of Art.

Previous restorations of the ornamentation in 1978 and 1992 were inadequate to stop the gradual deterioration of the façade. The current restoration is meant to last. All ten window surrounds were reconstructed; 70% of the frontispiece was replaced, the rest restored; and a new structural wall was installed to support the ornamentation. Construction was completed in October, 2008. The original building's façade looks just as good as it did 80 years ago. This has been another important restoration that will prepare Balboa Park for the 2015 Centennial Celebration.

Michael Kelly

A YEAR-END APPEAL

Your tax-deductible gift to The Committee of One Hundred helps to preserve Balboa Park's Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. This newsletter presents historical and preservation information about these buildings we have come to love. Expenses for printing and mailing our newsletter come out of our limited general fund, which needs to be replenished regularly. That's why we depend on you to contribute to our year-end appeal. Your gift supports our newsletter and our Mission.

Please give whatever you can. Write your check to The Committee of One Hundred and send your contribution to:

THE COMMITTEE OF ONE HUNDRED
Balboa Park Administration Building
2125 Park Boulevard
San Diego, CA 92101-4753
Thank you for your continued support!

The Restoration of the Museum of Art Entry

Curtis Drake

Perhaps there were some recent visitors to the San Diego Museum of Art that thought the wood-framed tunnel and barriers were permanent construction. After all, they have been masking the entry many years—for as long as I have been visiting

Balboa Park. After several attempts at patching the ornate frontispiece (the decorative stone framing the entry) in the mid 1980s and the early 1990s, it became evident that the problem was more than skin



Early view of the Fine Arts Gallery.

deep. Barricades were needed to protect visitors from falling debris until a long-term solution was found. Problems with ongoing cracking and spalling of the cast-stone were persistent and the reasons needed to be understood. The "cast-stone" ornamentation was made of a fine concrete mixture poured into molds rather than carving the ornament from pieces of

Museum of Art Restoration



Detail of Cornice showing elaborate figures and an example of cracking.

stone. This was a common method of creating economical ornamentation in the early 20th century. The investigation began at the San Diego Historical Society Research Library and at the California Room of the downtown San Diego Public Library. Some construction photos and a set of 1924 drawings from architect William Templeton Johnson were reviewed. The drawings

lacked details and structural diagrams, and specifications were not available. From the historic data, the architectural and engineering team of Heritage Architecture; Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates; and Curry Price Court had only a general idea of the wall construction. As with many projects, historic or modern, changes in construction often vary from the plans. There was no room for guessing when dealing with such an elaborate and irreplaceable frontispiece, so a detailed investigation was needed.

The process of determining the causes and remedies involved coring several holes through the cast-stone in discrete locations. This allowed the team to obtain samples and get a look behind the wall to determine how pieces were attached. A fibrescope, a camera on a long flexible stem, enabled the engineers to get a good look at what was hidden inside the wall cavity. The Museum of Art remained a functioning museum, so making large holes from the inside to get a look at the wall construction was not desired or beneficial because the cast-stone was attached to the opposite side of a double wall. The wall behind the cast-stone was constructed of hollow clay tile that would not provide much support in an earthquake. A better supporting wall would be needed to permanently support a new cast-stone ornamentation

The laboratory results were equally distressing. The concrete was deteriorating and the steel bars in the cast-stone were rusting at exposed locations. As the embedded bars rusted, they expanded and cracked the cast-stone allowing even more moisture to enter into the wall. Sometimes the cracking resulted in pieces becoming loose and falling. The team considered that

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties recommends that the repair of historic fabric should always be preferred over replacement unless the severity of deterioration requires replacement. The internal causes



Drilling cast-stone for samples and investigating hidden construction

for the cracking and the poor support were severe and led to the decision to recommend removal and replacement of most of the frontispiece—not an easy decision when proposing such a difficult replacement. The more protected center portion above the entry doors and statue alcoves was in significantly better condition and retained in accordance with the *Standards*. Special stainless steel reinforcing for the new cast-stone pieces would never rust or damage the panels.



New cast-stone pieces laid out before installation.

The new cast-stone pieces were created from molds made from the original pieces. Replacing cast-stone was a delicate process that required skilled workmen to remove the old cast-stone without further damage and artists to prepare molds and recast the new pieces. The new pieces matched the historic pieces exactly. If the originals were warped or crooked, the new



Setting new cast-stone pieces in place.

castings were also warped and crooked. Matching the color to the remaining portion of the frontispiece was challenging because several shades of color existed even in individual pieces and a waterproofing treatment slightly altered the colors. The new concrete back-up wall and a steel support system firmly support both the weight of the wall and resists lateral earthquake movement. The center historic portion with

the statues that remain has been tied back to the new wall and structural frame with stainless steel anchors.

Funding for the project was provided by a grant from the State of California and supplemental funding from the City of San Diego. The barriers have now been removed and the ornate frontispiece is stabilized to grace the front entry of the Museum of Art for another century or more. Once again visitors to the Museum can view the majestic frontispiece, uncluttered with protective barriers, and can fully appreciate the feeling of the original 1926 facade.

Curtis Drake is an architect and principal in the San Diego firm Heritage Architecture and Planning. Curt has a Bachelor's Degree in Architectural Studies from the University of Wisconsin and attended the Masters of Architecture program at USC. He was recently elected president of Save Our Heritage Organisation (SOHO).

Photos: compliments of Heritage Architecture & Planning.

Our Current Fundraising Projects



Administration Building Façade

The original ornamentation around and above the entrance to this building has been long missing. The Committee of One Hundred intends to restore the entrance to its original condition as shown in the photo simulation above.

Cost estimate: \$700,000

Please contribute to one or both of these deserving projects.
Make your check to The Committee of
One Hundred and mail it to:

THE COMMITTEE OF ONE HUNDRED
Balboa Park Administration Building
2125 Park Blvd.
San Diego, CA 92101-4753

California Tower Earthquake Retrofit

There is nothing more important to our mission than the preservation of the California Tower. What a tragedy it would be if an earthquake were to topple this San Diego landmark!

Work will be done in two stages:

- 1) assessment and development of the earthquake retrofit plan, and
- 2) implementation of the earthquake retrofit.

The Committee of One Hundred contributed \$10,000 in matching funds for the planning stage. Additional funds will go toward stage 2.

Cost estimate: \$600,000 for planning, \$6 million for the earthquake retrofit itself.

THE COMMITTEE OF ONE HUNDRED

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Ribbon Cutting Ceremony—October, 2008
San Diego Museum of Art Façade Restoration