



100 THE COMMITTEE OF ONE HUNDRED

Dedicated to the Preservation of Spanish Colonial Architecture in Balboa Park

SPRING 2011

www.C100.org



Time to Close the Cabrillo Bridge to Traffic?

We've heard all sides. The Balboa Park Committee has held public hearings on the Plaza de Panama Project. Dr. Irwin Jacobs' team reviewed several prior proposals for diverting traffic and again presented their own plans to build a new

bypass bridge off the east end of Cabrillo Bridge.

- We support the goal of Mayor Sanders and Dr. Jacobs to reclaim public spaces from the automobile.
- We support a proposed underground parking structure behind the Spreckels Organ Pavilion.
- We support a new tram system to move people to and from their destinations within Balboa Park.
- We support public transportation alternatives to the automobile for visitors to Balboa Park.

Freeing Balboa Park's public spaces from the grip of the automobile is the true challenge. We must encourage the use of public transportation to Balboa Park. We need easy connections from the trolley to both the east and west sides of the Park. Public transportation must be convenient and affordable. If we don't want Balboa Park's streets and parking lots congested with cars, then we must begin to charge for parking and use those revenues to make the Park more accessible. All vehicles should enter Balboa Park from the east side. There is no reason at all to bring cars and trucks into the heart of Balboa Park from the west. Closing the Cabrillo Bridge to traffic will make the proposed bypass bridge completely unnecessary.

The Cabrillo Bridge or Puente Cabrillo is the magnificent approach to the "Dream City" that San Diego created to host the 1915 Panama-California

Exposition. We now have a unique opportunity to reclaim the Cabrillo Bridge for pedestrians, making it safer for everyone, and to enhance the old-world experience of entering the California Quadrangle and its Plaza de California, outside the Museum of Man. The extended open space will run the entire length of El Prado, through the reclaimed Plaza de Panama, and include the Esplanade, which runs between the Plaza de Panama and the Spreckels Organ Pavilion. There will be nothing like this anywhere else!

Crossing the Cabrillo Bridge by foot, bicycle, stroller, wheelchair, or tram will be a magical experience highlighted in every guidebook to San Diego. The Cabrillo Bridge itself will become a destination as San Diegans and visitors revel in Balboa Park's public spaces and squares.

Now is the time to get vehicles off the Cabrillo Bridge.

— Michael Kelly, President



Children and parents crossing Cabrillo Bridge, 1915

Restoring March of Transportation Mural

“It was one of the biggest challenges of my life, but also one of the highlights,” reminisces Thomas Parker Emery, of the grueling 1979 restoration of the March of Transportation mural in the Ford Building, which serves as the home of the San Diego Air & Space Museum. Now 88, Emery still putters daily in his Solana Beach studio, surrounded by the benevolent clutter of a prolific artist’s life work: sculptures, both completed and unfinished; paintings in various stages of undress; and shelves of notebooks filled with pencil sketches ranging from birds of prey to Balboa Park vistas. A respected painter and sculptor, Emery maintained a studio in Spanish Village from 1960-1972, and his memorials, fountains, and stained glass work are found in several U.S. cities including Solana Beach. His paintings were recently featured at a retrospective exhibition at the Poway Performing Arts Center.

Selected from 30 competitors to undertake restoration of the monumental mural by Juan Larrinaga, Emery admits, “I had never tackled anything like that in my life” and chuckles, “I was in real trouble.” Emery in fact is convinced he was awarded the contract because of his low bid on the project. Emery’s credentials, which probably impressed the selection committee, included a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the prestigious Cleveland Institute of Art and a stint as illustrator for Cleveland Graphite Bronze where he supervised a crew of 25. More than likely, he was also selected for his artistic sensibility. “A mural is a history, not a wall painting,” he explains. “A mural is part of the *muri*, an integral part of the walls and as such performs an artistic purpose as well as an aesthetic one,” Emery wrote in his meticulously-kept project journal. “We are thankful that Larrinaga...remained faithful to the traditions of



Tom Emery working on Transportation Mural, 1979

his guild. A mural is subordinate to the architectural surface it embellishes.” He later paid homage to the artist and his work, describing the mural as “a beautiful panorama” and referring to Larrinaga as “a genius.” Emery’s team also restored a smaller mural in the Air & Space Museum: National Geographic Society Explorer II, a 24-by-38-foot mural depicting a manned balloon ride that set a world record on November 11, 1935.

Juan Larrinaga (1885-1947) was indeed a renowned Hollywood artist-designer, who, Emery maintains, was “the genius behind the making of the movie ‘King Kong,’” among other projects. Larrinaga served as art director for the entire 1935-1936 California Pacific International Exposition, working alongside architect Richard Requa. The Ford Building was funded by a U.S. Congressional allocation

of \$125,000 with an additional \$225,000 for exhibit presentation, to be completed in time for the May 1935 Exposition opening. As art director, Larrinaga designed numerous Exposition projects, including the ambitious 1936 March of Transportation mural, a 20-by-450-foot, 17,000 square-foot depiction of human transportation modes from the caveman to futuristic rockets; the mural wraps around the inside wall of the building, a massive composition of fact, fiction and fantasy no doubt fueled by Larrinaga’s Hollywood influences.

Following what a *San Diego Union* article termed “decades of misuse,” the mural was slated for restoration by the City of San Diego in 1979. Estimated to take two years, Emery completed the project in less than a year, driven no doubt by his determination, grit and prodigious energy. Emery after all had been a paratrooper in World War II,

San Diego Aerospace Museum, 1979



Damage to elephant, Transportation Mural, 1979

with 10 combat missions under his belt. At the same time he continued to teach evening art classes at City College and, in mid-restoration, took the Boy Scout troop he led on a six-day hike in the Sierra Nevada. Emery acknowledges his biggest project challenge was not technical but union resistance to his long working hours. “I had to sneak in during the weekends,” he confesses.

Another daunting challenge was the mural’s state of deterioration. According to a San Diego Union article, after the Exposition the building had been used a warehouse for packing crates and park benches; stage sets had been built there and, during World War II ship parts were welded in its interior. It was “the target of vandals and the careless,” the 1979 article stated. “Shot putters bounced steel balls off the walls,” Emery was quoted as saying.

Dressed in white coveralls, hard hats and masks, Emery and his crew daily climbed and descended thirty-foot scaffolding and coped with noxious chemical solvent odors to perform their restoration miracles. The patching and cleaning process itself took four months: “Some portions of the mural were held together by dust,” Emery recounted. Quickly finding themselves immersed in large-scale repair work as well as conservation, the team also had to mix their own paints, as Larrinaga had used specialized Hollywood scenery paint, no longer available. Emery’s assistant Gwen Pendergast

carefully ground colors from dry pigments, using mortars and electric beaters in order to replicate Larrinaga’s exact colors. Emery also discovered that roof water had leaked between the plaster walls, and thus he was forced to cut away some of the wall sections; in the process, he recalls, “An entire section of wall caved in on us, and we had to redo it.”

Restoration of The March of Transportation preserved an artistic legacy of the California Pacific International Exposition. To this day Juan Larrinaga’s mural holds steady on the main floor of the Air and Space Museum, its wide swath of iconic images outlined against a muted brown backdrop. The sheer number and detail of depictions, including ships, stagecoaches, bicycles, automobiles, trains and even a hot air balloon, a dog sled and a flying saucer are testimony to the craftsmanship of both painter and restorer and to the enduring artistic bond between them.

By Charlotte Cagan

1979 Mural Restoration

Rossi Wade ~ artist
George Fleischmann ~ consultant & planner
Angelina Tang ~ chief assistant
Renee Spiazzi ~ research & photographs
Mike Dunham ~ assistant - photographs
Gwen Pendergast ~ color-making & photographs, typing notes
Carl Hilbach ~ plaster
Blair Loughlin ~ spray painter
Sam Tedesco ~ canvas hanger
Marty Larkin ~ canvas hanger
Richard Benton ~ photographer
Gary Alden ~ consultant
Melinda Kaskins ~ student (City College)
John Hill ~ student (SDSU)
Julie Ann Cairns ~ student (SDSU)
Donna Jacobsen ~ typist
Thomas Parker Emery ~ artist in charge

Emery listed the workers and their job descriptions in his journal on September 7, 1979, in the above order and noted the following: “The above people were as much responsible for the cleaning, repairing and preservation of the mural as I have been.”



Section of restored March of Transportation Mural. Photo by Richard Benton

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2125 Park Boulevard
San Diego, CA 92101-4753

Save this date: May 27, 2011

Our Annual Luncheon Meeting
Guest Speaker: **Nancy Carol Carter**
Topic: *"A Park, If You Can Keep It"*

Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue Award:
Carleton Monroe Winslow

Gertrude Gilbert Award:
Balboa Park Protective Association

Visit C100.org for details and registration.