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Letter in support of preservation of 1110-1116 S. Abbot Kinney in Venice, California

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Posted in group: **Clerk-PLUM-Committee**

Dear Councilmembers:

I am writing as an art historian of American art to express my support for the preservation of 1110-1116 S. Abbot Kinney in Venice, California. I am concerned that this valuable piece of twentieth-century cultural history will be lost for future generations. In particular, I respect the important legacy of the vanguard composer Harry Partch and the visual artists, John McCracken, John Altoon, and Fred Eversley, all of whom had studios in this building. Eversley still lives and works in this building, so his historic studio with its amazing archaic mechanical devices he uses to create sculptures of cast resin and other materials remains intact and should also be preserved. Someone should approach a foundation like the Getty to achieve this goal. Eversley's sculptures evoke mid-century California art with its attention to the effects of light.

This historic building should ultimately join other artist-homes (from the residences of Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico to Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner in New York and Don Judd in New York and Texas) and become a museum that visitors could tour. It would document a way of artistic production that has all but vanished, at least in Venice, where the cheap rents that once attracted artists no longer exist. Eversley's studio alone remains to document this great period of Southern California creativity.

Eversley's work became known on the East Coast too with an early show in 1970 at New York's Whitney Museum. This was followed up with singular honors, when he became the first artist-in-residence at the Smithsonian Institution's Air and Space Museum. Eversley's was trained as an engineer, a field in which he initially worked after his education at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. His unique contributions to modern sculpture also distinguish him in the history of African-American artists, as one of those who was early to receive deserved recognition in a much larger context.

Like Eversley, the late John McCracken and John Altoon also made important contributions to American art. McCracken, like Eversley, was a sculptor, whose work emphasized the aesthetics associated with the Minimalist movement and the California Light and Space movement. A figurative painter, Altoon was part of the "Ferus Group" of vanguard artists showing at the important Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles.

I could go on for a long time emphasizing how sad it would be if Venice does not intervene to preserve its own distinguished history. Its future as a cultural center would be much reduced. I write as someone who has spent a half a century working on American art, including serving as a curator at the Whitney Museum in New York. I

teach art history in New York and I want future generations to be able to visit the place in Venice where this historic art was produced. As a part of West Coast culture, this building is an essential document that must not be leveled for some new and banal use. It would erase a major and valuable site of cultural production that cannot be reproduced. This building has value to create revenue for Venice by attracting art and cultural tourism. I hope that Venice decides to do the right thing for its future!

Sincerely yours,

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