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November 27, 2018

Los Angeles City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attention: PLUM Committee

Dear Honorable Members:

1110-1116 SOUTH ABBOT KINNEY BOULEVARD; CHC-2018-5071-HCM, ENV-2018-5072-CE

At its meeting of **November 15, 2018**, the Cultural Heritage Commission took the actions below to include the 1110-1116 South Abbot Kinney Boulevard in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments, subject to adoption by the City Council:

1. **Determined** that the proposed designation is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 of the State CEQA Guidelines;
2. **Determined** that the property conforms with the definition of a Monument pursuant to Section 22.171.7 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code;
3. **Recommended** that the City Council consider 1110-1116 South Abbot Kinney Boulevard for inclusion in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments; and
4. **Adopted** the attached findings as modified by the Commission.

The Commission vote was as follows:

Moved: Kanner
Seconded: Kennard
Ayes: Barron, Milofsky
Absent: Buelna

Vote:

Etta Armstrong, Commission Executive Assistant I
Cultural Heritage Commission

The Cultural Heritage Commission would appreciate your inclusion of the subject property to the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

Time for Council to Act: The Commission action is hereby transmitted to the City Council for consideration. Pursuant to Section 22.171.10(f) of the Los Angeles Administrative Code, the Council may approve or disapprove in whole or in part an application or initiation for a proposed designation of a Monument. The Council shall act in 90-days of the public hearing held before the Commission on the proposed designation. The City Council may unilaterally extend the 90-day time limit to act for a maximum of 15 days for good cause. With written consent of the owner, the time for the City Council to act may be extended by up to an additional 60 days. If the Council does not act on the application or initiation within this specified time limit, the application or initiation to designate a Monument shall be deemed to have been denied.

Enclosures: Amended Findings

1110-1116 SOUTH ABBOT KINNEY BOULEVARD

FINDINGS

(As Amended by the Cultural Heritage Commission on November 15, 2018)

- 1110-1116 South Abbot Kinney Boulevard “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, state, city or community” as a rare, intact example of early commercial development located along the former Venice Short Line, and for its association with postwar musical and visual arts in Venice, especially the emergence of West Coast Minimalism and the Light and Space movements.
- The property is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city or local history for the artists associated with the emergence of West Coast Minimalism and the Light and Space Movements including John McCracken, Harry Partch, John Altoon and Frederick Eversley.

CRITERIA

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon), building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles if it meets at least one of the following criteria:

1. Is identified with important events of national, state, or local history, or exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community;
2. Is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history; or
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction; or represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age.

SUMMARY

The subject property is a one-story commercial building located at 1110-1116 South Abbot Kinney Boulevard, formerly Washington Boulevard, between Westminster Avenue and Aragon Court in Venice. Built in 1923, the property is constructed in a commercial vernacular architectural style and is attributed to owner Herbert H. Hertel, an early developer of Venice. Starting in the 1960s, the building was occupied by various post-war period artists and musicians, including John McCracken (1934-2011), Harry Partch (1901-1974), and John Altoon (1925-1969). In 1967, architect Frank Gehry designed a live/work plan for 1110 which has continuously served as the studio and residence of artist Frederick Eversley (1941-) since 1969.

On July 4th, 1905, entrepreneur Abbot Kinney opened Venice of America, a seaside resort that featured a canal system and a business district lined with Venetian-style colonnades that led to a pleasure pier. Kinney’s initial development of Venice was wildly popular, drawing over 40,000 visitors during opening weekend, many of whom traveled to the seaside resort by streetcar. The extension of rail and streetcar lines to Venice, such as the Venice Short Line that ran along Electric Avenue, provided inexpensive, reliable, and direct access to the oceanfront community. Over the following decades, streetcar-oriented commercial buildings like the subject property were constructed in the neighborhood to serve residents and tourists.

By the 1950s, a counterculture of beatniks, artists, and hippies surfaced in Venice and the area became a creative nexus where poets, musicians, artists, and intellectuals came together to create their work, and discuss the underpinnings of their intellectual and philosophical approaches. During this period, the artists Robert Irwin, John Altoon, Bill Al Bengston, Larry

Bell, Fred Eversley, John McCracken, Ed Moses, and James Turrell, among others, lived and worked in Venice studios throughout the 1960s.

Rectangular in plan, the subject property is of brick construction with a flat roof. The primary, north-facing elevation features six distinct storefronts with divided-lite transoms and mostly off-centered entries. All of the storefronts are wood, with the exception of a replacement steel frame storefront at 1116. The façade has buff-colored fluted brick with white-glazed brick window surrounds and a geometric motif in buff glazed brick along the roofline.

The subject property has undergone multiple alterations over the years that include the replacement of entry doors, bulkheads, one storefront system, and various interior tenant improvements.

The citywide historic resources survey, SurveyLA, identified the subject property as individually eligible for listing under the national, state, and local designation programs as a rare, intact example of early commercial development located along the former Venice Short Line.

DISCUSSION

The property at 1110-1116 South Abbot Kinney Boulevard meets one of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria.

The subject property “exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, state, city or community” as a rare, intact example of early commercial development located along the former Venice Short Line. With the annexation of Venice to the City of Los Angeles in 1925, the neighborhood faced increasing pressure to fill in its canals in favor of roads to satisfy the region’s burgeoning automobile culture. Annexation also brought the enforcement of Los Angeles’ “Blue Laws” and other ordinances that banned gambling and dancing on Sundays, which led to the closure of many of the activities that drew people to the community and provided revenue to business owners. The Venice Short Line closed in 1950, and a slow, steady economic decline of the region set in. This was preceded by the demolition of many pre-annexation structures viewed as blight in the 1960s. 1110-1116 South Abbot Kinney Boulevard is one of the few extant examples of streetcar commercial development from this period in Venice that retains integrity.

Additionally, the subject property is significant for its association with post-war musical and visual arts in Venice, especially the emergence of West Coast Minimalism and the Light and Space movements. Starting in the 1960s Los Angeles saw the formation of a new art form that echoed the minimalist experiments being carried out in New York, but had distinctive traits specific to artists working within the greater Los Angeles area. This burgeoning new style, known as the LA Look or West Coast Minimalism, emerged from pioneering experimentations that utilized industrial materials and processes, and was characterized by clean lines, smooth, pristine, and uninflected surfaces, and, bright and sensuous colors. This new aesthetic was set apart from New York Minimalism by its attention to craft and the incorporation of materials and techniques derived from subcultures such as surf and car culture. In this vein, the Light and Space movement, heavily influenced by the rapid advancements in science and technology throughout the 1960s, was characterized by the cross-pollination between fine art and industrial processes. At the epicenter of these movements that changed the face of visual art in America were artists living and working in Venice, including John McCracken, Harry Partch, John Altoon, and Fred Eversley, who used the subject property as their studio spaces.

John McCracken, who worked at 1114-1116 South Abbot Kinney Boulevard from 1965-1972, is widely considered one of the most prominent figures of the Minimalist movement. Born in Oakland, California in 1934, his work that incorporated simple geometric forms and highly polished surfaces, marrying painting and sculpture, embodied West Coast Minimalism. In particular, McCracken was profoundly influenced by Southern California's car and surf culture, which can be seen in his infamous "planks" that he created using automotive lacquers and, later, polyester resin on plywood. McCracken's works have been featured in exhibitions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, as well as in the permanent collections of museums including the Museum of Modern Art, the Salomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. McCracken died in 2011 in New York.

Harry Partch, born in Oakland, California in 1901, worked at 1110 South Abbot Kinney Boulevard from 1965-1967. He was among the first American composers to work exclusively in the creation of pieces using microtonal scales in an effort to move away from the traditions of Western intonation. Over his career, Partch handmade many of his own instruments from salvaged materials, such as airplane fuel cones, and produced epic productions that combined music, text, dance, and theatre. In 1967, Partch relocated to San Diego, and passed away several years later, in 1974.

John Altoon worked at 1110 South Abbot Kinney Boulevard from 1967-1969. Initially trained as a fine artist, Altoon began his career as a commercial illustrator before developing a style heavily influenced by Abstract Expressionism. Despite his brief career, he left a lasting impression on the art scene in Los Angeles and across the country. Altoon experienced an untimely death in 1969 at the age of 43.

Fred Eversley has continuously lived and worked at 1110 South Abbot Kinney Boulevard since 1969. Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1941, Eversley is part of a second generation of artists that emerged during the post-war period in Los Angeles who are notable for their use of plastics, especially polyester resin. These artists are affiliated with the Light and Space movement because they capitalized on the material's aptitude to be cast, colored, and polished. Eversley's work has been featured in over 200 solo and group exhibitions worldwide and is included in the permanent collections of 35 museums, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Although the applicant argues that the subject property "is associated with the lives of historic personages important to nation, state, city or local history" as the live/work studios of significant post-war artists John McCracken, John Altoon, and Fred Eversley, as well as musician Harry Partch, staff finds that the property does not meet this criterion. While it appears that McCracken, Altoon, and Partch are accomplished artists and may rise to the level of historic personages, they were only associated with the subject property for a brief period of time, and not during the productive periods of their careers. With regards to Eversley, since he is still living, he cannot be considered an historic personage and given that he is still a productive artist, the significance of his studio on Abbott Kinney Boulevard cannot be evaluated within the context of his entire career.

Despite interior and minor exterior alterations, the subject property retains sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (“CEQA”) FINDINGS

State of California CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 *“consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment.”*

State of California CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 *“consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic buildings.”*

The designation of 1110-1116 South Abbot Kinney Boulevard as an Historic-Cultural Monument in accordance with Chapter 9, Article 1, of The City of Los Angeles Administrative Code (“LAAC”) will ensure that future construction activities involving the subject property are regulated in accordance with Section 22.171.14 of the LAAC. The purpose of the designation is to prevent significant impacts to a Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of an irreplaceable historic site/open space. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are expressly incorporated into the LAAC and provide standards concerning the historically appropriate construction activities which will ensure the continued preservation of the subject property.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals of maintaining, restoring, enhancing, and protecting the environment through the imposition of regulations designed to prevent the degradation of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 31 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals relating to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings and sites in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Categorical Exemption ENV-2018-5072-CE was prepared on October 26, 2018.

BACKGROUND

On September 20, 2018, the Cultural Heritage Commission voted to take the property under consideration. On October 25, 2018, a subcommittee of the Commission consisting of Commissioners Kennard and Kanner visited the property, accompanied by staff from the Office of Historic Resources.