

DANZIGER STUDIO AND RESIDENCE

7001 W. Melrose Avenue
CHC-2020-1835-HCM
ENV-2020-1836-CE

FINDINGS

The Danziger Studio and Residence “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction; [and] represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as the first example of Postmodern architecture in Los Angeles and as a notable and early work by master architect Frank Gehry.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Danziger Studio and Residence meets one of the Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: it “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction; [and] represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age” as the first example of Postmodern architecture in Los Angeles and as a notable and early work by master architect Frank Gehry.

Built in 1965, the Danziger Studio and Residence is considered the earliest example of Postmodern architecture in Los Angeles. Postmodernism was an internationally significant architectural movement that eschewed the principles of Orthodox Modernism through the conscious application of irony, ornament, play, symbolism, and historic or vernacular references. The Los Angeles School of Postmodernism, which developed between 1965 and 1991, further reflected an eclectic, unanticipated, and ephemeral mix of forms, details, materials, and implied perspectives, though it did not reference the past, classical or otherwise. The subject property is recognized as the catalyst for this distinctly Los Angeles-born approach to the Postmodern architectural style because it employs vernacular design elements in an ironic way: first reading as a basic stucco box but revealing minimalist sculptural qualities at closer inspection. Visually unassuming, the property is designed with simple rectangular forms, heavily textured stucco, and exposed structural framing, which are artistically composed to create punched-out openings and shifting spaces.

The subject property is also considered a key step in the evolution of Frank Gehry’s renowned architectural career. Frank Gehry is internationally considered to be one of the most important architects of the last 50 years, and the subject property was his first work to garner a degree of press. The design built on Gehry’s early exploration of the simple stucco cube but included many additional elements that would become Gehry trademarks such as exposed wood framing and ventilation ducts and the inclusion of multiple functions on a site. The design reflects Gehry’s early departure from traditional Modernist practices, cementing his legacy as a leading figure in the Postmodernism movement in Los Angeles.

Despite interior remodels in 1994 and 2010, the interior volumes and open floor plans have been retained, and the exterior remains largely intact. Further, modifications made during the later remodel, which was designed in collaboration with Walsh, are in keeping with the original design intent. Therefore, the subject property retains a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, 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 the Danziger Studio and Residence 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 City of Los Angeles has determined based on the whole of the administrative record, that substantial evidence supports that the Project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 and Class 31, and none of the exceptions to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. The project was found to be exempt based on the following:

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-2020-1836-CE was prepared on July 26, 2021.