

Chain Reaction
Santa Monica, California
City Landmark Assessment Report

Evaluation Report
Photographs



Prepared for:
City of Santa Monica
Planning Division

Prepared by:
ICF International
Los Angeles, California

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Description

This object has not been previously identified in the City’s Historic Resources Inventory (1983, 2010), California Historical Resources Inventory System (2010), or documented in any known historic resource assessment reports.

Chain Reaction is a 26-foot tall sculpture depicting the rising, irregular stem and expanding toroidal shaped mushroom cloud of a nuclear bomb detonation. The artwork has a non-visible steel frame substructure encased in a fiberglass mold that gives the sculpture its bomb-blast shape. Affixed by tack screws and copper wire to the fiberglass are hundreds of continuous chain links sometimes double and triple draped in continuous, irregular bunching. The layered links are welded together. Small sections of fiberglass, particularly at the base’s edge, are visible between the links and their layers. The chain links are of a large diameter but are actually hollow brass tubing. At the bottom portion of the sculpture the chains appear to be randomly draped in a rising pile, from which rises the “stem” of the blast. The stem portion of the piece is depicted in a shifting, asymmetrical manner as it rises and tapers, with bulging masses appearing toward its upper portions. The mushroom cloud portion of the piece is perfectly symmetrical, and seems somewhat smaller in scale to the height of the stem below it. Where stem meets cloud there is a recessed vortex ring surrounding the stem.

As a whole, the sculpture has a disheveled quality akin to the sketch-like markings and distorted proportions Paul Conrad’s political cartoons. In *Chain Reaction* this quality is conveyed by the previously-mentioned treatment of the stem, the irregular placement of the links, and a subtle distortion of scale between the tall stem, its pronounced bulges, and a relatively small mushroom cloud. The ability of the large brass links to catch light and define pockets of random shadow in the small spaces between them is similar in effect to the stark treatment of light and dark that Conrad often employed in his political cartoons.

Context Statement

In the late 1960s, Santa Monica began to transform toward a municipality with highly progressive values for which it has become widely known. Douglas Aircraft, the city’s largest employer merged with McDonnell Aircraft Corporation to form McDonnell-Douglas in 1967, and moved its headquarters out of Santa Monica to Long Beach the following year.¹ This resulted in layoffs from what was once Santa Monica’s largest employer and a conservative, defense-minded military presence. In 1975 Douglas closed its doors for good in Santa Monica.² In the late 1960s, there appears to have been an ambitious span of development and proposed

¹ Louise B. Gabriel, Santa Monica Historical Society. Santa Monica:1950-2010 Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2011: 7

² Scott, Paula A. Santa Monica: A History on the Edge. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2004: 141

new development in the City. Among these was a proposal to build a causeway in the Pacific Ocean from the present location of the Santa Monica Pier to Topanga Canyon that would have purportedly been the largest earth moving project in the world.³ A second development of 1972 for “Santa Monica Island” proposed a manmade 25-acre island that was essentially an offshore resort with boat docks, a fishing lagoon, and a 29-story 1500-room hotel.⁴ One earlier version of it, designed by noted Late-Modernist architect Anthony J. Lumsden of the firm Daniel, Mann, Johnson, Mendenhall features a striking, standalone tower in the water with additional amenities onshore.



Carlos Diniz (artist) for Daniel, Mann, Johnson, Mendenhall. Santa Monica Bay Village. Unbuilt, 1968.
<http://www.archinnovations.com/events/exhibitions/visualizing-a-new-los-angeles-architectural-renderings-of-carlos-diniz/>

For either the proposed causeway or the resort proposal in its various manifestations, the Santa Monica Municipal and Pleasure Piers (both referred to as simply the Pier) would have been demolished. The effort to block the resort development and save the pier resulted in the formation of a coalition called “Save the Santa Monica Bay” that was successful enough in raising community support to permanently block the development. Other advocacy coalitions in the early 1970s further succeeded in preventing the demolition of the Pier.

Simultaneously during this time, the anti-war movement was developing and Santa Monica later became the Congressional and State Senate District overseen by Tom Hayden: a nationally significant figure in leftist politics and peace activism. As a student in his native Michigan, Hayden drafted the “Port Huron Statement” the manifesto for “Students for a Democratic Society;” a group that was the forefront of anti- Vietnam War protests on college campuses.⁵ In 1976 he founded the Campaign for Economic Democracy (CED) which in the late 1970s and early 1980s was California’s largest force for left-leaning politics.⁶

Also during the 1960s, *Ramparts Magazine*, which began as a progressive Catholic magazine transformed into a countercultural beacon with numerous articles related to the anti-war

³ Scott, Santa Monica: 137-138

⁴ Scott, Santa Monica: 138-139

⁵ Pekar, Harvey, Paul Buhle, Gary Dumm. *Students for a Democratic Society: A Graphic History*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2008: 3

⁶ Jon Wiener. *Professors, Politics and Pop*. London: Verso, 1991: 325

movement. Many of its primary figures would soon inform the City's political course including Derek Shearer who had strong roots in Santa Monica and who would later become a Santa Monica Planning Commissioner.

Through the 1970s, Santa Monica was evolving into an activist, politically progressive community unique to Southern California. The culmination of this sentiment appears to have occurred in the late 1970s when real estate values and associated rents rose to a level that many found unacceptable. Just as the Ocean Park community did for Save the Santa Monica Bay coalition, various community activists, including Dennis Zane, Ruth Yannatta Goldway, Derek Shearer (writer for *Ramparts* Magazine) and others formed Santa Monicans for Renter's Rights (SMRR) in 1978.⁷ The local passage of SMRR-supported ordinances and the election of several SMRR-supported candidates in 1979, many of which were written by Attorney Robert M. Myers, who would later become City Attorney, gave the city some of the tightest rent control restrictions in the U.S.

Once many of these same individuals became councilmembers, the City became openly politically liberal on a variety of fronts. SMRR-friendly advocates became a majority of the City Council in 1981, shepherding in a new era of progressivism on a variety of issues including homelessness advocacy, slow growth development, environmental protection, and anti-war positions, along with renter's rights.⁸ The combination of these positions garnered Santa Monica a variety of national press in virtually every major news outlet. The progressive experiment, conducted in the heart of the Reagan era, was mocked as the "People's Republic of Santa Monica" by conservatives in the City and beyond. Nonetheless during this period, Santa Monica was compared in the national press to other major cities with liberal leanings: Berkeley, San Francisco, Burlington, and Madison, among others. Of all of these, Santa Monica was the only city in Southern California to endorse such a variety of openly liberal positions. Such fealty to progressivism surely set the context in which the sculpture *Chain Reaction* was accepted and installed by the City in the heart of its civic center.

Chain Reaction

Originally proposed to the City's Arts Commission in 1988, Conrad presented a two-foot mock up model of the piece. The work was not designed specifically for Santa Monica's civic center, where it eventually would be placed, or for Santa Monica in particular. Rather, the piece had already been conceived. In deciding whether to accept the sculpture, a scale model and ballot box were placed in City Hall. Over 1100 ballots were cast with the no votes beating the yes votes almost two to one.⁹ Nonetheless, the City's Arts Commission voted unanimously four times to accept the piece. The City Council finally agreed in a 4 to 3 vote in favor in 1990.

⁷ Scott, 145

⁸ Roderick, Kevin. Civic Unrest in Santa Monica. www.kevinroderick.com. June, 2003.

<http://www.kevinroderick.com/sm.html>; Scott, 146

⁹ Pool, Bob. Paul Conrad's controversial 'Chain reaction' may need repair. Los Angeles Times, June 29, 2011

A \$250,000 contribution by an anonymous donor paid for the construction of *Chain Reaction*, which was installed adjacent to the Santa Monica Civic Center near Main Street in 1991. According to the nearby plaque with an artist statement, Conrad described *Chain Reaction* as representing “a statement of peace.”

The 1990s were a time of change in Santa Monica. In 1995, certain aspects of SMRR’s 1979 rent control policy were overturned by the Costa-Hawkins bill, which rendered a rental unit no longer subject to rent control once it was vacant. Many SMRR policies in the City— slow growth, sensitive environmentalism, an emphasis on public services—rendered the community extraordinarily attractive, making the community an even more moneyed community than before. Additionally, by the mid-1990s the arrival of numerous entertainment and media industry offices to Santa Monica appears to have accelerated gentrification of the City. As a result, it seems that the peak period of the SMRR association with Santa Monica when the City was characterized as being especially progressive, appears to be have faded. Further, increased gentrification has in many ways softened the liberal identity with which the city was once associated and historically identified during the period in which *Chain Reaction* was accepted for display by the City Council.

Importance of Siting

Located in the heart of the Santa Monica Civic Center, the sculpture is set in the middle of a circular concrete pad on a wedge of lawn between Main Street, a paved Civic Center parking lot, and the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. The County Courthouse is immediately north of the work. Affixed to the pad near the sculpture’s base are two small bronze plaques, one with an artist’s statement and the other providing basic information about the piece. A temporary chain link fence surrounds the concrete pad. Presently three sections of the work have been temporarily removed for testing purposes, and these sections are covered with duct tape and blue plastic tarp. Small chain lengths hang downward near the two sections at the eastern portion of the mushroom cloud removed for testing. As previously mentioned, the Santa Monica Civic Center was not the intended location of *Chain Reaction* given that Conrad presented the concept of the sculpture to other cities prior to its acceptance by the City of Santa Monica.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the installation of *Chain Reaction*, chosen by City Leaders to be placed in the heart of the civic center, is a symbol with contextual accuracy to the highly progressive recent past politics of Santa Monica.

Precedents for Public Art as Designated Landmarks

Landmarked or Determined Eligible Post-1967 Public Art:

Chicago Picasso:

A new movement of public art as contemporary standalone objects that are not classical monuments is believed to have begun with “Chicago Picasso,” which was installed in Chicago’s Daley Plaza 1967. The work was installed in conjunction with the construction of the 1965 Richard J. Daley Center, a civic center also known Daley Plaza designed by the well-known architecture firm of Skidmore Owings and Merrill (SOM). Daley Plaza, including the sculpture,

¹⁰ Conrad, David. Telephone conversation with Daniel Paul, Senior Architectural Historian with ICF International, June 25, 2011. Mr. Paul is the lead researcher and author of this Landmark Assessment Report.

is a City of Chicago Landmark.

La Grande Vitesse

The second major work of contemporary public art from this period is *La Grande Vitesse* by Alexander Calder. The sculpture, installed in 1969, is located on the large concrete plaza surrounding City Hall and the Kent County Building in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Calder piece is large-scale and abstract, and was, like the Chicago Picasso, installed in a courtyard designed by SOM. *La Grande Vitesse* is a City of Grand Rapids historic landmark listed in 1991 and has been formally determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The work was the first public art funded by the National Endowment of the Arts.

Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks

Aside from the *Chicago Picasso* and *La Grande Vitesse*, there do not appear to be an abundance of listed or determined eligible recent past public art landmarks. One exception is a large piece titled *Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks* by the Bauhaus trained artist Herbert Bayer. Completed in 1982, the artwork was deemed “exceptionally significant” and became the city of Kent, Washington’s first historic landmark in April 2008.

Select Landmarked Classical and Beaux-Arts Public Monuments in the United States:

Outdoor Sculpture of Rhode Island, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission. <http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/64500748.pdf>

Public sculpture in Newark, NJ on NRHP:
<http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/64500405.pdf>

George Rogers Clark Sculpture in Virginia, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form
http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/Cities/Charlottesville/104-0252_George_Rogers_Clark_Sculpture_1997_Final_Nomination.pdf

Lewis and Clark Sculpture in Charlottesville Virginia, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form.
http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/Cities/Charlottesville/104-0273_TheirFirstViewofthePacific_1997_Final_Nomination.pdf

Civil War commemorative sculpture in Arkansas, National register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form.
<http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/64500015.pdf>

Victory Monument, Chicago, National Register of Historic Places:
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_Monument_\(Chicago\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_Monument_(Chicago))

National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Database:

126 entries “monument” and “object”

3 entries “sculpture” and “object”

0 entries “art” and “object”

Select Landmarked Folk Art Sculpture:

Landmarked sculpture garden: NRHP: Emile Brunel Studio and Sculpture Garden, Boiceville New York, 1929-1944.

“Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas” multiple locations, 1920s to the 1950s. Texas. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission. <http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/64500904.pdf> 1920s to the 1950s.

Old Trappers Lodge Sculpture Grouping: State of California Cultural Historic Landmark #939: <http://www.weirdca.com/location.php?location=140>

Other Cities with Public Arts Preservation Programs or acknowledgement of public art as worth of evaluation:

Las Vegas, NV

Sacramento, CA (pending)

New Haven, Connecticut

Philadelphia, PA: Association for Public Art

Federal and California State Protection of Public Art:

[Note: Statements that appear relevant to *Chain Reaction* are in bold]

Federal Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA) or the California Art Preservation Act (CAPA). VARA and CAPA forbid desecration, alteration, or destruction of certain public works of art without prior notice to the artist to allow for removal.

The California Art Preservation Act is a 1979 California law that provides legal protection for artists' moral rights. The law is currently codified at California Civil Code §987. The law has since been amended in part. The California Art Preservation Act was the first major law to specifically address artists' rights in the United States.

Portions of the law may overlap with the provisions of the Visual Artists Rights Act, in which case the California law is preempted.

The Art Preservation Act provides for civil penalties and injunctive relief for the intentional or grossly negligent destruction or mutilation of a work of fine art, defined in the statute as any original painting, sculpture, or drawing that is of "of recognized quality." Fine art, as used in the law, does not include works prepared for commercial use by the purchaser.

The Act also provides artists the right to claim authorship and disavow modifications to works of fine art.

The rights granted under the act subsist for the life of the author plus 50 years.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Art_Preservation_Act

The Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 (VARA), 17 U.S.C. § 106A, is a United States law protecting artist rights.

VARA was the first federal copyright legislation to grant protection to *moral rights*. Under VARA, works of art that meet certain requirements afford their authors additional rights in the works, regardless of any subsequent physical ownership of the work itself, or regardless of who holds the copyright to the work. For instance, a painter may insist on proper attribution of his painting and in some instances may sue the owner of the physical painting for destroying the painting even if the owner of the painting lawfully owned it.

While federal law had not acknowledged moral rights prior to this act, some state legislatures and judicial decisions created limited moral rights protection. The Berne Convention required protection of these rights by signatory states, and it was in response that the U.S. Congress passed the VARA.

VARA exclusively grants authors of works that fall under the protection of the Act the following rights

- right to claim authorship
- right to prevent the use of one's name on any work the author did not create
- right to prevent use of one's name on any work that has been distorted, mutilated, or modified in a way that would be prejudicial to the author's honor or reputation
- right to prevent distortion, mutilation, or modification that would prejudice the author's honor or reputation

Additionally, authors of works of "recognized stature" may prohibit intentional or grossly negligent destruction of a work. Exceptions to VARA require a waiver from the author in writing. To date, "recognized stature" has managed to elude a precise definition. VARA allows authors to waive their rights, something generally not permitted in France and many European countries whose laws were the originators of the moral rights of artists concept.¹¹

In most instances, the rights granted under VARA persist for the life of the author (or the last surviving author, for creators of joint works).

[Comment: The Santa Monica City Attorney should be consulted as to the applicability of VARA to the removal of *Chain Reaction*.]

Covered works:

VARA provides its protection only to paintings, drawings, prints, **sculptures**, still photographic images produced for exhibition only, and existing in single copies or in limited editions of 200 or

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_Artists_Rights_Act#cite_note-0

fewer copies, signed and numbered by the artist. The requirements for protection do not implicate aesthetic taste or value.

Application and effect:

VARA's application is limited to visual works that fall within a narrowly defined category. However, for works that do fall within the category of protected works, VARA imposes substantial restrictions on any modification or removal of those works. Purchasers of the works must obtain written waivers from the author if they wish to exercise any of the exclusive rights under VARA.

This has particularly been an issue for those that commission public sculptures. Absent a waiver, artists could effectively veto decisions to remove their structures from their benefactor's land. In a 2006 decision involving public sculptures that were removed from the park for which they were created, the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit ruled that VARA does not protect location as a component of site-specific work. VARA covered works can be moved as long as the move does not constitute "destruction, distortion, or mutilation."

Person(s) of Historical Importance

The property appears to meet criteria for associations with the lives of persons significant in our past as it is defined in the *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. In determining whether a property is significant for its associative values under these criteria several steps are involved. First, the importance of the individual must be established. Second, the length and nature of the person's association with the property must be determined. Third, a property associated with an important individual should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person's productive life. Paul Conrad, as one of the most honored and recognized political cartoonists of the last century meets the first two criteria, although how his sculpture *Chain Reaction* compares with his other public artworks remains to be evaluated by art historians and other experts.

Paul Conrad

Paul Conrad had a similar progressive political viewpoint to that of Santa Monica during the time that *Chain Reaction* was conceived and offered to the City. "No one's ever accused me of being objective" is a well-known saying of Paul Conrad's.¹² Conrad was a devout Catholic and his earlier public artworks include numerous bronze crucifixes located at area churches, at a Catholic hospital, and a Catholic school. None of these are nearly the 28 foot tall scale of *Chain Reaction*. All of them are more religious than political in their imagery. *Chain Reaction* is the only one of Conrad's located in a space readily accessible to the public at any time.

The destruction Conrad saw as a World War II serviceman had a lasting impact on him, and honed his liberal viewpoints. Conrad's primary targets were two California-based politicians: Richard Nixon—Conrad called being placed on Nixon's enemies list his greatest honor, and Ronald Reagan—who was president during the rise of SMRR, and whose former Vice President, George H.W. Bush, launched

¹² Robert D. McFadden. "Paul Conrad, cartoonist, dies at 86." *New York Times*, September 4, 2010.

Operation Desert Storm in 1991.¹³ The acceptance of *Chain Reaction* by the City in the latter half of 1990 and its 1991 installation ran parallel to the run-up to and U.S. involvement in Operation Desert Storm.

Paul Conrad was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1924. After serving in World War II, he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Art from the University of Iowa in 1950, where he had his first cartoonist job working for the school newspaper. The following year he moved to Denver, Colorado and became a cartoonist for the *Denver Post* where he remained until 1964, when he took a position as with the *Los Angeles Times* eventually becoming the newspaper's chief editorial cartoonist. Conrad would continue at the *Times* until 1993, and continued producing political cartoons until his 2010 passing.

Though he has a distinct style such that there is a clear visual and philosophical connection between his political cartoons and *Chain Reaction*, no previous documentation of his work has been found that identifies Conrad as a master artist. Further, his work does not appear to fall into that category on its aesthetic merits. Though seemingly not in their aesthetic pantheon, Conrad handles the powerful in a spirit akin to Francisco Goya (Spanish, 1746-1828) mockingly portraying the Spanish royal family in *Charles the IV and His Family* (c.1800), or how Honore Daumier (French, 1808-1879) produced a long series of political cartoons and sculptures distorting images of those in the French legal profession and others in power.



An unflatteringly real portrait of the Spanish royal family.
Francisco Goya. Charles IV and his Family. 1800. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Painting, Oil on canvas, 280 x 336 cm.

¹³ James Rainey. "Paul Conrad dies at 86; Pulitzer Prize-winning political cartoonist helped bring *The Times* to national prominence." *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 2010. <http://www.latimes.com/news/obituaries/la-me-paul-conrad-20100905,0,6995178.story?page=2>

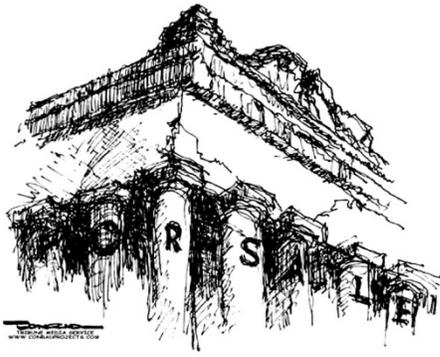


Honoré Daumier (French, 1808–1879)
Jean-Marie Fruchard: Disgust Personified, ca. 1832–35
Bronze, 4 3/4 x 5 1/8 x 4 in. (12.1 x 13 x 10.2 cm)

Conrad also created a series of smaller-scale bronze works of various political figures he revered, such as Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln, and Robert F. Kennedy. Once Conrad arrived at the *Los Angeles Times* and his work became syndicated, he would go on to garner three Pulitzer Prizes and two overseas awards, among others. Since World War II, Conrad is one of only two other political cartoonists to garner three Pulitzer Prizes.¹⁴

Conrad's line is loose, sketchy, and vibrant, if not somewhat disheveled. His caricature and distortion add a great degree of impact to his message, as the contorted faces and features of his subjects turn grotesque. Conrad often applies a generous use of black for an effect of stark contrast or to heighten his message. Stylistically, *Chain Reaction* is remarkably consistent to his drawings. In this instance Conrad uses a bomb-blast: a powerful political image. Its proportions are distorted through a slight asymmetry, and a smaller than expected scale of the mushroom cloud itself. In the sunlight, hundreds of large-scale metal copper chain links read as a culmination of smaller hatchings, not unlike the drawn lines in many of his cartoons. Furthermore, the large chain links readily seen in the mushroom cloud itself have the effect of creating a sharp contrast between light and shade—light and dark. The design significance of *Chain Reaction* lies in Conrad's ability to communicate a political position, and to do so unequivocally, in part through the distortion, caricature and other stylistic features of the image itself. It is a design approach contiguous with that of his hugely significant political cartoons.

¹⁴ James Rainey. "Paul Conrad dies at 86; Pulitzer Prize-winning political cartoonist helped bring The Times to national prominence." *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 2010. <http://www.latimes.com/news/obituaries/la-me-paul-conrad-20100905,0,6995178.story?page=2>



The cumulative effect of the numerous links in *Chain Reaction* is similar to the numerous hatch lines often seen in Conrad's political cartoons. Similarly, the effect of the links starkly defining light and dark and creating defined pockets of shadow is also highly similar to Conrad's use of shadow and black as seen in his drawn works.

Saving Public Art:

From the work request:

“Discussion on the relationship between landmarks and public art”

“Public Art” exists in a variety of manifestations in various communities. Regarding landmarked examples, by and large in the U.S. most of these are traditional, figurative monuments that developed out of a 19th century *Ecole des Beaux Arts* sentiment that readily integrated public art, the landscape, and architecture into one integrated plan. The vast majority of the landmarked examples are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and depict human figures with heroic, classically inspired motifs.

Beginning in 1967 with the installation of an untitled Pablo Picasso COR-TEN steel piece (commonly called the *Chicago Picasso*) in Chicago's 1965 Daley Plaza, this ushered forth a new generation of public art with a decidedly contemporary feel. Preliminary research revealed that relatively few of these are listed landmarks at any level, though others may exist. The examples found in our research include the *Chicago Picasso* (listed as part of Daley Plaza City landmark); Alexander Calder's *La Grande Vitesse* (1969), listed as a Grand Rapids, MI city landmark in 1991, and the 1982 *Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks* in Kent Washington Herbert Bayer, listed as that city's first historic landmark in April, 2008, all noted above. In all three instances the pieces were not fifty years old that time of their listing.

None of this new wave of contemporary public art is yet 50 years old—the traditional benchmark used in most landmark regulations that triggers historic assessment. As the 50 year mark approaches, there is an increased awareness of the potential historic significance of this new phase of public art. The City of Sacramento is currently adding the historic review of public art to their policy and governance documents. The City of Las Vegas Arts Commission proactively oversees the maintenance of a recently created *Southern Nevada Law Enforcement Memorial*, and city staff is putting together a public board/non-profit to assist in fundraising endeavors for that piece. The City of New Haven, Connecticut has an extremely proactive program of raising awareness of public art within the city, though none of its works are locally designated. Finally,

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within the City of Philadelphia is the Fairmount Park Art Association, now called the Association for Public Art, which dates back to 1872. This is the nation’s first non-profit organization devoted to integrating public art and urban planning. The Association has historically worked very close with the City. This includes advocating for Philadelphia’s first “Art Jury,” which became the City’s first Art Commission. According to their website the Association for Public Art provides “annual maintenance for many of the city’s most beloved sculptures, as well as taking on special preservation and advocacy projects as needed”¹⁵

“...any known cases in which a public art piece was saved (which may not have occurred through landmark designation).”

Perhaps the most appropriate example is *The Sphere* by the Sculptor Fritz Koenig. This piece was located within Austin J. Tobin Plaza between the World Trade Center towers in Manhattan. *The Sphere* was originally intended as a peace monument of sorts; of expressing peace through world trade. The artwork was the only remaining element of the World Trade Center to survive the attacks. In early 2002, the work was relocated from storage to nearby Battery Park. Presently there is a petition drive in place, supported by many families of those lost in 9/11, to reinstall the work at the new Ground Zero 9/11 Memorial site.



Fritz Koenig. *The Sphere*, 1973. Bronze. Photo: <http://www.voanews.com/content/ground-zero-then-and-now-129347043/174847.html>

¹⁵ <http://associationforpublicart.org/gallery/preserving/>



The Sphere being installed in Battery Park, Manhattan, 2002.

Photo: http://www.percyadlon.com/film_and_stage/koenigssphere_2.html

Other than this case, current research did not reveal other examples of public art pieces that were threatened and saved.

“Are there any other cases in which a public art piece may have been threatened ultimately leading to a local landmark designation as a means to save it?”

Current research uncovered no examples of a threatened public art piece that was saved by its designation as a local landmark.

Benefits of Designating *Chain Reaction* as a Local Landmark:

According to the City Code 9.36.270 “Preservation Incentives,” there are a variety of incentives for historic preservation in the City of Santa Monica. However, the majority of these—such as a Mills Act tax credit, expedited review, and paving considerations, appear to be geared toward the private property owner..Of the applicable benefits to the City as a property owner of *Chain Reaction*--- the fact that the City may apply the State Historic Building Code rather than the California Uniform Building Code to *Chain Reaction* appears to be one potential benefit for the City. Any treatment of the work would need to adhere to the ten standards set forth in the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

As a landmark, the piece may qualify for grant monies geared toward historic preservation from groups such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation. However, for a landmark of such recent vintage the likelihood of *Chain Reaction* receiving such monies appears slim.

Recent past resources and the lack of age criteria in the Santa Monica Historic Landmarks Ordinance

Chain Reaction is a relatively recent piece of public art. However, The City of Santa Monica ordinance does not have an age criteria, which is often 50 years. If an age criteria was present the work might not qualify as a local Landmark as it does not appear to be an exceptionally significant work of art of the kind that typically mandate such listing for less-than-50 year old

resources. Although *Chain Reaction* is a very recent work, it appears that enough time has passed that the work may be looked at in the previously discussed historic contexts.

Potential CEQA Implications

The sculpture's removal could be considered a "project" under CEQA.¹⁶ As such, were the piece listed as a local Landmark, it would be considered to be historically significant.¹⁷ Therefore, its demolition would be considered a significant adverse change in the environment¹⁸ potentially requiring an Environmental Impact Report.¹⁹

CEQA review could identify feasible alternatives to demolition and allow for a public review and comment period for a proposed project—such as the removal of the sculpture. As previously noted, CEQA, and other applicable preservation ordinances including Section 106 and local ordinances, DO NOT mandate that a given resource must remain. CEQA is a disclosure document that does mandate a public review and comment period for any proposed changes. CEQA does mandate that alternatives to demolition be considered and that an alternative be selected—if it is feasible. A statement of overriding considerations may be enacted that could hasten the removal of the sculpture if there are no feasible options.

What Landmark status of *Chain Reaction* will do for artwork in the City:

In addressing this question, one should consider the staff report prepared by the City's Cultural Affairs Division dated February 1, 2012 regarding the significance of the piece, "When the work was installed, many in the art world felt that the sculpture was more successful as a political statement than as a work of art, although others heralded its significance. Further, ... Santa Monica's were extremely divided regarding the initial acceptance of the work." A February 3rd, 2012 article in the *Santa Monica Daily Press* reported: "[Arts] Commissioners and [Public Art] committee members expressed varying degrees of appreciation for the sculpture, which the activist community prizes for its anti-nuclear message. 'On the face of it, '*Chain Reaction*' may hold most of its value for what it represents, rather than as a piece of artwork that City Hall should spend money to rehabilitate,' said Walter Meyer, vice chair of the Arts Commission. 'The sculpture is neither representative of Conrad's famous and prized work in the cartooning field, nor is it the best example of his attempts in the field of small bronze sculptures,' Meyer pointed out. 'I think the artwork is being asked to stand in for a larger political discussion,' Meyer said."

¹⁶ CEQA 21065. "Project" means an activity which may cause either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and which is any of the following: CEQA 21065(a) An activity directly undertaken by any public agency.

¹⁷ CEQA 15064.5(a)(2) A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resource Code, shall be presumed to be historically or culturally significant.

¹⁸ CEQA 15064.5(b) A project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. Under CEQA 15064.5(b)(1) Substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource means physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired.

¹⁹ CEQA 15065(a) A lead agency shall find that a project may have a significant effect on the environment and thereby require an EIR to be prepared where there is substantial evidence, in light of the whole record, that any of the following conditions may occur: 15065(a)(1) The project has the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment;...

Given the apparent lack of consensus by the current Arts Commission, Public Art Committee, recognized art experts, and community members about the importance of the piece, we cannot come to any conclusion regarding what Landmark designation of *Chain Reaction* will do for artwork in the City.

The decision to Landmark a sculpture that speaks to a key chapter in the City's history would make a strong statement regarding the historical, social and political importance of progressivism in Santa Monica.

CONCLUSION

The installation of *Chain Reaction* chosen by City Leaders in 1991 to be placed in the heart of the Civic Center is a symbol with contextual accuracy to the highly progressive recent past politics of Santa Monica. In addition, the sculpture is intimately associated with famed political cartoonist Paul Conrad. As such *Chain Reaction* meets several of the City's Landmarks criteria.

The property was evaluated according to statutory criteria as follows:

Landmark Criteria:

9.36.100(a)(1) It exemplifies, symbolizes, or manifests elements of the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the City.

From the late 1970s through the early 1990s when *Chain Reaction* was installed by the City in its Civic Center, Santa Monica was nationally known for its strongly progressive politics. For this reason, Santa Monica holds a unique place in Southern California. *Chain Reaction*, with its potent anti-nuclear message, satisfies this criterion because it is a contextually accurate symbol of this intensely progressive chapter in the political history of Santa Monica.

9.36.100(a)(2) It has aesthetic or artistic interest or value, or other noteworthy interest or value.

The subject sculpture satisfies this criterion because it has noteworthy interest or value as a symbol of peace in a City known for outspoken positions on progressive causes, particularly between 1979 and c.1993. Its design significance lies in Paul Conrad's ability to communicate a political position, and to do so unequivocally, in part through the distortion, caricature and other stylistic features of the image itself. It is a design approach contiguous with that of his highly significant political cartoons.

9.36.100(a)(3) It is identified with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history.

The subject sculpture meets this criterion. Famed *Los Angeles Times* political cartoonist Paul Conrad had a similar progressive political viewpoint to that of Santa Monica during the time that *Chain Reaction* was conceived and offered to the City. As a result, Santa

Monica has become closely identified with the most monumental of Pulitzer Prize winning political cartoonist Paul Conrad's sculptures bestowing a unique level of cultural import to the City.

9.36.100(a)(4) It embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics valuable to a study of a period, style, method of construction, or the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship, or is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type valuable to such a study.

The subject sculpture does not satisfy this criterion because it is a work of public art and not architecture.

9.36.100(a)(5) It is a significant or a representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect.

Given the close visual and philosophical connection between Conrad's prodigious output as a political cartoonist and the physical design of *Chain Reaction*, the sculpture could be characterized as representative of his work and meets this criterion. However, its overall significance within the context of public art in general, and within the City of Santa Monica in particular, remains undecided by the City's Arts Commission and other recognized art critics.

9.36.100(a)(6) It has a unique location, a singular physical characteristic, or is an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City.

The subject sculpture satisfies this criterion. *Chain Reaction* has an especially prominent placement, selected by the City Arts Commission and supported by the City Council adjacent to Santa Monica's Civic Auditorium with visibility to motorists and pedestrians traveling along Main Street.

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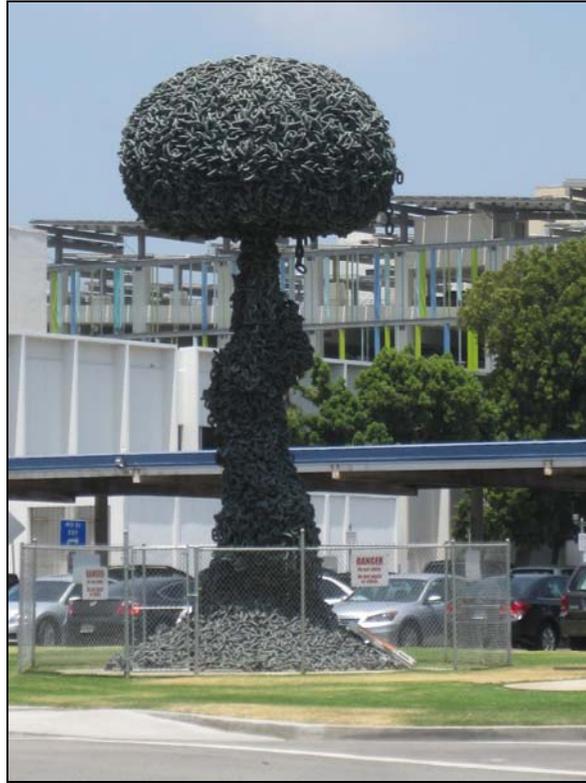
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PHOTOGRAPHS



Chain Reaction *looking northeast.*



Chain Reaction *with damaged areas visible.*



Chain Reaction *detail.*



Chain Reaction *base with damage visible.*



Chain Reaction *plaque.*



Context view, looking northeast.



Context view, looking northwest.



Context view, looking southeast.



Paul Conrad sculpture, Marymount College, circa 1990.



Paul Conrad bust, St. John Fisher Catholic Church, circa 1985.