

REVISED FINDINGS AND DETERMINATION
OF THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF SANTA MONICA IN THE MATTER OF
THE DESIGNATION OF A LANDMARK

DESIGNATION OF THE 'CHAIN REACTION' SCULPTURE
LOCATED ON MAIN STREET IN THE CIVIC CENTER AREA
AS A CITY LANDMARK

12LM-010

SECTION I. An application was filed by the City of Santa Monica Landmarks Commission on May 14, 2012 to designate the 'Chain Reaction' sculpture located on Main Street in the Civic Center area as a City Landmark. The Landmarks Commission, having held a Public Hearing on July 9, 2012 and on November 12, 2012, to describe a landmark parcel associated with the landmark, hereby designates the 'Chain Reaction' sculpture as a City Landmark based on the following findings:

- (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 in the Civic Center by the City, Santa Monica was nationally known for its activism and strongly progressive politics. Chain Reaction, with its potent anti-nuclear message, is a contextually accurate symbol of the progressive chapter in the political history of Santa Monica. For this reason, 'Chain Reaction' satisfies this criteria.

- (2) *It has aesthetic or artistic interest or value, or other noteworthy interest or value.*

The sculpture is a large scale, powerful image of a mushroom cloud using heavy chain to construct the work with both literal and metaphorical meaning. Its design significance lies in Paul Conrad's ability to communicate a political message. 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. 'Chain Reaction', through distortion, caricature and other stylistic features of the image itself reflects a design approach that is analogous with his political cartoons. At its base is a plaque with the inscription "Chain Reaction – This is a statement of peace. May it never be an epitaph".

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

Renowned Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist Paul Conrad, editorial staff cartoonist for the Los Angeles Times from 1964 to 1993, known for his vigorous commentary on issues of local, state, national and international significance, created 'Chain Reaction' as commentary relating to nuclear proliferation and disarmament.

- (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 is a significant example of his work as a sculptor and meets this criterion.

- (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.*

Chain Reaction has an especially prominent placement, selected by the City Arts Commission and supported by the City Council in the seat of government adjacent to the County Courthouse, City Hall, the Rand Corporation and Civic Auditorium, with its prominent location along Main Street at the curve in the road makes it highly visible to motorists and pedestrians travelling through the Civic Center along Main Street in both directions.

SECTION II. The real property, encompassing the triangular area generally bound by the street curb along the east side of Main Street, the northern curb line of the Civic Center parking lot entry off of Main Street, and the western curb line of the Civic Center parking lot, and as depicted on the attached map (Exhibit A), is designated as a Landmark Parcel to preserve, maintain, protect and safeguard the Landmark sculpture.

SECTION III. I hereby certify that the above Findings and Determination accurately reflect the final determination of the Landmarks Commission of the City of Santa Monica on November 12, 2012 as determined by the following vote:

AYES: Berley, Bach, Fresco, Genser, Kaplan, Lehrer, Chair Shari
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None
NAYES: None

Each and all of the findings and determinations are based on the competent and substantial evidence, both oral and written, contained in the entire record relating to the Project. All summaries of information contained herein or in the findings are based on the substantial evidence in the record. The absence of any particular fact from any such summary is not an indication that a particular finding is not based in part on that fact.

Respectfully Submitted
December 10, 2012

Ruth Shari, Chairperson

Attest:

Scott Albright, AICP
Landmarks Commission Secretary