



100 THE COMMITTEE OF ONE HUNDRED

Dedicated to the Preservation of Spanish Colonial Architecture in Balboa Park

FALL 2010

www.C100.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Plaza de Panama

Several members of The Committee of One Hundred were present among the gathering on the sidewalk outside the Timken Museum. TV news cameras and reporters awaited the arrival of Mayor Jerry Sanders and Dr. Irwin Jacobs to make the public announcement of a dramatic plan that had been in the works for months—the

restoration of the Plaza de Panama. Mayor Sanders kicked off the event by reiterating his goal to return the Plaza de Panama to pedestrians before 2015. Dr. Jacobs told the appreciative crowd what we had come to hear. He confirmed that he has taken a lead role in this project, that he intends to donate money of his own and will encourage other philanthropists to follow his lead. Demonstrating a good grasp of the proposal and its history, he outlined plans for a two-level, park-topped parking structure to replace the Organ Pavilion surface lot; Cabrillo Bridge traffic would be eastbound-only, turning off the bridge to enter the Alcazar parking lot for drop-offs, handicap parking, and access to the new parking structure; and a pedestrian-only Plaza de Panama, west El Prado, and Esplanade from the Plaza de Panama to the Spreckels Organ Pavilion. The proposal presented by Dr. Jacobs is expected to cost over \$30 million.

Plans to reclaim parkland from roads and parking lots have been on the books for more than 20 years—since the approval of the Balboa Park Master Plan in 1989 and the Central Mesa Precise Plan in 1992. The Committee of One Hundred is excited about the momentum that Dr. Irwin Jacobs has brought to the table. The support of the institutions that will be affected by these changes has been remarkable. Park and Recreation, the Balboa Park Committee, and the Mayor's office have each demonstrated their commitment.



Map shows proposal for diversion of eastbound traffic from Cabrillo Bridge through Alcazar parking lot

Panama-California Sculpture Court

Inside this newsletter board member Ross Porter tells the story of an often overlooked collection of sculptures in the courtyard of the Casa del Prado, created in 1974 through the efforts of The Committee of One Hundred. Covered with grime and jet exhaust, many of these “staff” plaster pieces are damaged; wooden stands are peeling and some are rotting; and there is no interpretive signage to convey the fascinating stories of these statues and sculptures.

— Michael Kelly

**Help us restore the Sculpture Court.
Write a check to**

The Committee of One Hundred and mail it to:

THE COMMITTEE OF ONE HUNDRED
Balboa Park Administration Building
2125 Park Boulevard
San Diego, CA 92103-4753

Panama-California Sculpture Court —

By Ross Porter

Tucked away in a quiet section of Balboa Park's Casa del Prado courtyard is a cluster of original, three-dimensional sculptures and decorative motifs. Now they rest, mysterious and unexplained, awaiting the touch of the restorer's hand and the curator's spotlight.

The "staff" material used to create ornamentation for the "temporary" buildings at Balboa Park's 1915 Panama-California Exposition was invented in France about 1876. Staff is made from gypsum plaster mixed with hide glue. For strength coconut fibers called "coir" or hemp or jute were added.

Most of the elements now on display in the Casa del Prado courtyard were designed by architect Carleton Monroe Winslow for the "temporary" 1915 building known widely as the Food and Beverage Building. Its reconstruction as the Casa del Prado in 1971 was the first success for The Committee of One Hundred. Fourteen staff pieces and two concrete reproductions were joined by three original models for Spanish artists Velázquez, Murillo, and Zurbarán, designed for the façade of William Templeton Johnson's Fine Arts Gallery (now the San Diego Museum of Art) and executed in New York by sculptor Furio Piccirilli (1868-1949).



Furio Piccirilli created these full-size plaster models of three Spanish painters for the entrance to what is now the San Diego Museum of Art.

Among the garlands, columns, and cherubs are references to California history, including Franciscan missionary Junípero Serra. A man with a plumed hat, Native Americans, a Madonna, and a European queen (Isabella?) were chosen to depict some of the cultural threads that came together to form twentieth century California—all can be seen on an elaborate altar-like "retablo" that was recreated on the Casa del Prado's eastern façade. The visitor to the Panama-California Sculpture Court has the opportunity to appreciate this architectural ornamentation up-close as nowhere else in Balboa Park.



Beribboned shoes on the plaster figure of Velázquez

In designing the Food and Beverage Building, Winslow was following the creative lead established by Bertram Goodhue in the ornamentation of the California Building, then envisioned as one of the handful of permanent structures of the Panama-California Exposition. C. Matlack Price wrote in 1915 that the San Diego Exposition was:

... intended to express and typify the history, resources, prosperity, industries and products, as well as the golden-lined future promise of the Southwest. "It is an attempt to embody the romance of old Spanish civilization, with its mixture of the spirit of adventure and the spirit of devotion, to build such a city as would have fulfilled the visions of Fray Junipero Serra..."

Original Sculpture in Mute Display at Casa del Prado



Memorial to Fray Junípero Serra (1713-1794) on display in the Sculpture Court

Thus did romantic vision give birth to an entire revival of stucco-clad homes throughout Southern California. In Balboa Park the ornamentation offered a focal point to visitors seeking the quiet of sun-dappled patios. This “Dream City” became for San Diegans not a temporary display but a permanent monument to civic vision and architectural beauty.

The Committee of One Hundred is developing a plan for professional cleaning, modest restoration, enhanced display, and the creation of new interpretive graphics that will help de-mystify these nineteen sculptures, while safeguarding their historic and artistic value for the appreciation of future generations. A renewed Panama-California Sculpture Court will help visitors learn about Balboa Park’s historic buildings and the importance of preserving them.

Sculpture photographs by Ross Porter

Amero, Richard. “The Making of the Panama-California Exposition 1909-1915. *The Journal of San Diego History*” Vol.; XXXVI (Winter 1990). www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/90winter/expo.htm

The following can be read in full on our website: www.C100.org/resources.htm

Baxter, Sylvester, with Bertram Goodhue and Henry Peabody. “*The Spanish Colonial Architecture of Mexico*” (1902)

Goodhue, Bertram Grosvenor, and Winslow, Carleton Monroe. “*The Architecture and the Gardens of the San Diego Exposition*” Paul Elder & Co., San Francisco (1916)

Johnson, William Templeton. “*From Aztec Cave to Conqueror’s Castle*” *The California Outlook* (Dec 26, 1914)

Price, C. Matlack. “*The Panama-California Exposition, San Diego. Bertram Goodhue and the Renaissance of Spanish-Colonial Architecture*” *The Architectural Record* (1915)



Sculpture Court pieces in this “retablo” group were reconstructed on the east side of Casa del Prado



West apse of the Food & Beverage Building and Serra Memorial were omitted from the 1971 reconstruction.

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Three Spanish artists ensconced above entrance to San Diego Museum of Art