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Teaming Up to Save Historic Downtown Mural and Preserve Building's Historic Features

Developer David L. Gray teams up with SPARC, Councilmember Huizar's Bringing Back Broadway Initiative & artist Johanna Poethig to preserve "Calle de la Eternidad" mural before wall comes down

LOS ANGELES (June 15, 2012) – In an agreement brokered by Councilmember José Huizar, David L. Gray, a prominent Los Angeles' developer and architect, has teamed up with SPARC, one of the Southland's premier mural preservation organizations, to digitally preserve the historic *Calle de la Eternidad* (Eternity Street) mural on a building Gray owns on Broadway. This as the developer begins renovations to restore some of the 1911 building's historic features by removing a façade added to the building in the 1950s. In the 1990s, the *Calle de la Eternidad* mural was painted onto that façade.

As part of the mural preservation plan, SPARC, under the leadership of artist Judy Baca, used high-tech equipment to digitally scan and document the entire mural, with plans to reproduce the iconic piece on the building's south facing wall at 83 percent of its original size at a later date. The developer Gray graciously incurred the costs of the digital scanning procedure and flew in artist Johanna Poethig so she could attend Friday's announcement before removal of the façade and the mural begins in the coming days.

"This effort highlights two things I am extremely passionate about – the historic preservation of our iconic buildings and our beautiful murals," said Councilmember José Huizar. "I want to thank David L. Gray for reaching out to my office and going above and beyond his legal obligations because he wanted to do the right thing. He is setting a high bar for others in the City. And thank you to Judy Baca, SPARC and Johanna Poethig for their talent, dedication and work in restoring the iconic *Calle de la Eternidad* mural."

Originally known as the Zobel Building, the property is located at 351-353 Broadway. The original façade was built with windows overlooking Broadway. In the 1950s, a "modern" solid façade with the name of the Department Store "Graysons" in large letters was erected, completely covering the windows of the building from the second floor to the roof. While the building's upper-floors currently are empty, Gray intends on restoring and rehabilitating the building with creative office uses and ground-floor retail.

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In order to restore the original underlying façade and expose the windows, which are necessary for reactivation, the 1950s solid façade must be removed along with the mural.

“Through Councilmember Huizar's Bringing Back Broadway initiative, I see an exciting restoration movement on Broadway bringing hi-tech digital and post production offices, as well as entertainment venues, restaurants and bars to Broadway. Historic preservation is a key component of this movement and through the restoration of the Zoebel building, along with the preservation of the *Calle de la Eternidad* mural, I am proud to be part of the latest chapter in Broadway's rich history.”

The digital file of the mural assembled by SPARC will be restored by the original artist, Johanna Poethig, and then put on a canvas retouched again by hand before being relocated to the south side of the building. The method is called *mirafraje*, a painting technique traced back to the renaissance, wherein the canvas is adhered to a site-specific wall, giving the work an appearance of being directly painted onto the surface.

“This iconic mural painted by the great artist Johanna Poethig, means so much to the citizens of Los Angeles and over the years has become a key jewel and cultural marker for historic Broadway,” said Judy Baca, Founder and Executive Director of SPARC. “SPARC is pleased to be partnering with Councilmember Huizar and Mr. Gray to make sure this mural stays part of the visual landscape of Broadway. With my latest digital innovation in fine art mural production, a technique I recently utilized for the RFK School and the Miguel Contreras Learning Complex murals, SPARC will work with Johanna in our UCLA@SPARC Cesar Chavez Digital/Mural Lab to bring back *Calle de la Eternidad* almost at full scale. Of course, this can only happen once funding is secured.”

In 1993, a one-inch thick plaster/stucco slab was added to the building's façade before Poethig painted the *Calle de la Eternidad* mural. *Calle de la Eternidad* was Broadway's original name. The mural was originally produced through SPARC.

“*Calle de la Eternidad* is one of the most important murals of my over three-decade career,” said artist Johanna Poethig. “Painting this mural on Broadway in the early 1990s was an amazing experience as I swung in the scaffolding above this vibrant street in Downtown Los Angeles. The view of the finished red and gold mural against the steel and mirror towers is a classic image of art in the urban landscape. SPARC's dedication to the mural movement, innovative approach to preserving this mural and all the parties involved in this effort, are a testament to the importance of monumental murals as landmarks in our cities. I want to express my gratitude to everyone who is working to save this mural.”

For more information on Bringing Back Broadway, please visit BringingBackBroadway.com.

For more information on artist Johanna Poethig, please visit JohannaPoethig.com

For more information on SPARC, please visit sparcmurals.org.

For more information on architect David L. Gray, please visit davidgrayarchitects.com.

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