



January 13, 2021

Dr. David Ready, City Manager
City of Palm Springs
3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Dear Dr. Ready,

While the city's Public Arts Commission is certainly qualified to render judgments about civic art on trash receptacles and benches in the downtown tourist area, they seem insensitive to the negative impact such art can have on our historic buildings. Cultural tourists, some traveling from thousands of miles away, flock to Palm Springs expecting to see the city's renowned architecture in its pristine state as captured in the iconic photographs of Julius Shulman and others. As evidenced by the continuing success and growth of Modernism Week, they have become an important part of our local economy.

It is within that context that we must object to the recent painting of the Palm Springs city hall's trash receptacles and benches. These are utilitarian objects and to decorate them is a visual distraction, especially to a building lauded for its sublime architecture. It detracts from the sophisticated Palm Springs "brand" that we have all labored so long and hard to create.

We understand that the decision to "decorate" city hall was cleared by the Public Arts Commission and approved by the city leadership. We also understand that this art installation was not reviewed by the city's Historic Site Preservation Board because it is "only temporary."

From August of 2009 to March of 2012, PSPF fought a lengthy advocacy battle to have the site of the Albert Frey-designed city hall designated a Class 1 historic resource. PSPF ultimately prevailed and on March 11, 2012 the city council amended the Class 1 designation to include the site and not just the building. This city council action should have made clear the city staff's obligation to be especially sensitive to any proposed changes to the site.

While this unfortunate civic art installation is a *fait accompli*, we ask that in the future you take advantage of input from the city's HSPB and the citizens who closely follow that board's deliberations. Also, we ask that you quantify the length of this "temporary" art installation.

If you require any additional information, please contact PSPF board member Ron Marshall at (760) 837-7117 or info@pspreservationfoundation.org.

Sincerely,

Gary Johns
President

Copy to: Chair, Historic Site Preservation Board & Director, Planning Services Department