



**CITY OF CALISTOGA
PLANNING COMMISSION**

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1	Correspondence from George Caloyannidis, Rcvd 8/22/11	Item H.1. Carmel Art Gallery, 1329 Lincoln Ave.– APN 011-221-023
2	Correspondence from Darlene Brissard, Rcvd 8/23/11	Item H.1. Carmel Art Gallery, 1329 Lincoln Ave.– APN 011-221-023
3	Correspondence from Craig Threshie, Rcvd 8/23/11	Item H.1. Carmel Art Gallery, 1329 Lincoln Ave.– APN 011-221-023

Mr. Eric Lundquist
Calistoga Planning Commission

RE: Proposed Carmel Gallery, 1329 Lincoln Avenue

August 22, 2011

George Caloyannidis
2202 Diamond Mountain Road
Calistoga, CA 94515



I have reviewed the file and following are my comments solely related to the proposed design of the building:

This application is one which will have the most impact of any project of the past few decades on the architectural landscape of Calistoga. The City needs to approach it with the utmost sensitivity because the integrity of its very sole is at stake.

Both Staff and the applicant maintain that there are several buildings along Lincoln Avenue of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. In my opinion this architectural style is completely absent from Lincoln Avenue. On the other hand, the Mission Revival style which combines elements of Spanish Colonial Revival with the Arts and Crafts movement is the one which is prevalent.

The Spanish Colonial Revival architecture is typically characterized by individual massing, articulation of functions such as turrets, multiple mission tile roofs with roll-over tile eaves, cantilevered balconies, exposed timbers, and forged iron elements, all resulting in layered rather than flat facades. It is abundantly displayed from San Diego to Santa Barbara – a quite different language than Calistoga's - and the architecture of Arthur Kelly, Paul Williams, Wallace Neef and other noted architects.

The Spanish Mission Revival architecture is typically characterized by more uniformed massing, more restrained, flat facades with repetitive elements such as windows, arches and occasional recessed, not cantilevered, balconies.

Though both styles – late 19th and early 20th century - at times flow into each other in sharing several stylistic elements, the one Mission style element which does *not* occur in the Colonial style and is predominant in Calistoga's architectural vocabulary is the often use of a flat façade which extends above the roof line in an ornamental top configuration reminiscent of the much more ornate Cape Dutch and the much simpler Western Frontier styles.

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However, as important as the above comment may be for establishing the proper stylistic vocabulary, it is only marginally relevant to my fundamental critique of the proposed Carmel Gallery design because mimicking *any* of the historic styles in the design of a new building is a practice fraught with the danger of being contrived and not genuine. We must remember that Calistoga is, and is being projected as, a “real” town. Calistoga can not afford the fate of the plaza in the town of Windsor.

Among the relevant Urban Design Plan’s Historic District Objectives (pg 75) is that: *All development within the Historic District shall respect and draw inspiration from the architectural language of the Historic District.* Note that it says; *draw inspiration* rather than *mimic*, which begs for contemporary interpretations of the architectural heritage language. An excellent such example in Calistoga is the Catoga Gallery which features a Mission Revival façade combined with Neoclassical elements and a sensitively iconoclastic cut-out-corner entrance; all resulting in an unmistakable contemporary whole, properly anchored in the Calistoga architectural heritage.

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Some of my more specific comments on the rationale presented by the applicants and the associated Staff Report are:

In my view, the new building must be significantly taller than the adjoining Sugar Daddy building so that it separates itself from it and creates a massing counter-point to the Seiberlich building. The fact that the new building would be narrow and tall is helpful in this regard rather than detrimental.

The applicant has placed inordinate significance to the height of the metal canopy of the Sugar Daddy building – a trivial, rather ephemeral architectural element - in determining the height of the proposed ground floor and balcony. One prevailing element of the Calistoga downtown architecture is the fact that it is comprised of markedly individualistic buildings which have nothing to do with their adjoining ones. I believe that any continuation of lines or other architectural elements across adjoining buildings is inconsistent with the heritage language.

The applicants have chosen a 10’-6” plate line not only in order to achieve this kind of alignment but also because they maintain that additional ceiling height to 15’ – which is much more in line with the old buildings – poses problems for interior lighting (“hanging from unsightly poles”) and because of heating and cooling issues.

The low ground-floor ceiling height combined with the general architecture convey a residential rather than commercial character to the building

Modern spot light systems in refurbished old high ceiling buildings can be very elegant, easily repositioned and unobtrusive. Cooling in high ceiling buildings is much more energy efficient and so is radiant floor heating (the Catoga Gallery has a ceiling height of approximately 20 feet).

The applicants' discussion sheds a negative light on the aesthetics of the "blank" south wall of the Sugar Daddy building, characterizing it as an "eyesore". However, the proposed building replaces one blank wall with another!

I need to point out that in historic towns, blank side walls of old buildings – employing the proper materials - are one of their charms; they are the treasured billboards of our past. Calistoga can witness their positive effect on the Seiberlich building. Rather than shunning such walls, we may want to consider picking up on that theme in imaginative ways. Absent that, my recommendation would be to use brick facing rather than stucco on the new wall.

Recessed balconies are very much in line with Mission Revival architecture and there are some on Lincoln Avenue (Mount View Hotel, Flatiron Grill); not so with the cantilevered and corbelled balconies, such as the one proposed, which are a typical Spanish Colonial Revival element.

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On balance, I find the proposed design foreign in its language and not "genuine" in the context of Calistoga's Historic District architecture.

I would urge the applicants to be more imaginative.

Perhaps they can draw inspiration from Frank Lloyd Wright's Xanado Gallery (140 Maiden Lane, San Francisco), itself an infill building, inspired by Mission Revival architecture without mimicking it.

I am of the opinion that the design could be even more daring if the building were to be set back by about 15' with an outdoor sculpture exhibit and fountain. One could also envision an attractive glass-enclosed courtyard around the Bank Of The West tree.

I also urge the applicants to consider the envisioned redevelopment of the Police Station Plaza which begs taking advantage of a dual front which will eventually make this and the adjoining buildings infinitely more valuable and an asset to the town. While at this point the adjoining rear space is a dilapidated parking lot, a 6' wall (awaiting the eventual development of the plaza) which screens the cars would allow a possible rear patio to feature the view of the magnificent tree canopy beyond.



August 23, 2011

Eric Lundquist
City of Calistoga
Planning Commission

Chairman, Jeff Manfredi
Vice Chairman, Paul Coates
Commissioner, Nicholas Kite
Commissioner, Matthew Noye
Commissioner, Carol Bush

Re: 1329 Lincoln Ave. Proposed Carmel Gallery

Dear Eric and Planning Commissioners,

We would like to add our support to the Spanish Colonial Revival design submitted by Olof and Elizabeth Carmel. The conceptual elevations show a well thought out and an artistic design that would enhance the historical downtown area. We feel that this design compliments the neighboring buildings, provides visual interest to the locals and visitors and serves to maximize the use of the property.

The Gallery and the owners will be a welcome addition to the Downtown area and the Business Community.

Sincerely,

Darlene Brissard

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darlene Brissard".

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Durnian".

Brian Durnian



Response from Craig Threshie Architect to George's Letter
August 23, 2011

One point he makes I would agree with, and that is that there are no true Spanish Colonial Revival designs in immediate view of our building. All of the Spanish influenced architecture that we see nearby on Lincoln are really Mission Revivals, which is a strength in our proposal as I pointed out in my response to the Completeness Letter. There are plenty of Spanish Colonial Revival designs in Calistoga, just not in the immediate vicinity.

Otherwise, this is just an age old argument (debate) that has never and will never end in architecture. In order to integrate a new building into a historic context, do you create a modern looking building (as I had stated the Bank of the West building tried to do) to make it very distinct from the old buildings or do you integrate a more sensitively designed and massed composition such as we have proposed that does not attempt to overpower the local historic designs of the period, but to compliment them while obviously being unique and original. I personally feel that more often than not the community appreciates designs like we are proposing while some architects, artists and art/architecture critics prefer the "envelope to be pushed" with contemporary design that might have a bit of reflection of a historic period, like the FLW gallery in SF that he refers to, but that are obviously contemporary. I enjoy both perspectives when they are carried out successfully. When however the contemporary path is taken and it is not executed with great respect and humility for the historic context of the place, then it becomes a detriment to the community. When the path we have taken is not executed with care not to replicate other buildings and the original historic style, it also fails because it looks artificial, like a movie set or Disneyland. I know our proposal avoids all of these pitfalls and will be seen as a cherished element in the historic downtown by the community and visitors alike, as an original composition that "feels right" in it's context.

Have a GREAT meeting tomorrow,

Craig Threshie
Architect

Photo of Xanadu Gallery in SF

