



SEP 11 2007

GSA National Capital Region

Mr. Luis Luna
Assistant Administrator
Office of Administration
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Luna:

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has been conducting a consultation in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to consider and attempt to address the concerns that have been raised over six murals, which were created under the New Deal Era Federal art programs, at the Ariel Rios Building in Washington, DC. After considering the input received through the Section 106 consultation process and reviewing GSA's fine arts policy and its obligations under the NHPA, GSA will implement the following treatment for the murals.

Treatment:

- GSA will design and build a new screen to be placed at the mural *Dangers of the Mail* by Frank Mechau. The new screen will mask the mural from individuals passing through the lobby who do not wish to view the mural, while at the same time providing for a viewing experience for those who choose to view the mural. The screen will also incorporate revised interpretative materials to address the history of the art and the controversy associated with the mural. A comprehensive interpretive program will also be developed for all 22 murals in the building.
- The consulting parties and others will be invited to participate on an advisory panel for the development of an appropriate screen for the *Dangers of the Mail* and the interpretative materials for all 22 murals.

As a result of the consultation and the input received, GSA fully recognizes and appreciates the sensitive and complex issues and solutions that have been raised over these six murals. On the one hand, GSA is responsible for protecting, interpreting and making works of art commissioned by the Federal Government accessible to the general public. The murals in question are even more significant in that they are historic resources protected under the NHPA and were specifically commissioned to enhance the architecture of the Ariel Rios Building. Artwork should not be removed simply because it is controversial or unpopular. On the other hand, GSA believes that it should be sensitive to and respectful of individuals who may be offended by the murals.

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GSA believes, after its Section 106 consultation, that it is a reasonable compromise to provide appropriate screening for the mural *Dangers of the Mail* given the exceptional circumstances surrounding this work. GSA is taking this step in an effort to be sensitive to and respectful of individuals who may be offended by the contents of this mural, while at the same time fulfilling its historic preservation and fine arts stewardship responsibilities.

GSA also believes that a comprehensive interpretative program for the entire collection of murals in the Ariel Rios building is also required as an essential component for the edification of both employees and visitors to the building. A program of this type will help to minimize the adverse effect of the screen by presenting the history and significance of the murals as well as addressing the competing values that have been expressed over the murals.

GSA is in the process of communicating its decision to the consulting parties and will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) to address the adverse effect the long term screening of the one mural will have.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that GSA appreciates the importance of such a decision to EPA and its employees and is committed to full coordination with your office as we implement our decision for the treatment of the murals. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at (202) 708-9100, or Bart Bush, Assistant Regional Administrator, Public Buildings Service, at (202) 708-5891.

Sincerely,


Tony Reed
Regional Administrator