
BUILDING NAME:

Earle C. Anthony Packard Showroom

OWNER: Kjell Qvale, British Motors

BUILDING ADDRESS: 901 Van Ness Avenue

BLOCK & LOT: 719/2

ZONING: C-2

ORIGINAL USE:

NO. OF STORIES: 4

LPAB VOTE: 7-0

Automobile sales, repairs, regional

CURRENT USE: Disbributorship

EXTERIOR MATERIALS: Concrete, marble & glass

Auto sales and repair (British Motors)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

(Describe special CHARACTER, or special HISTORICAL, ARCHITECTURAL or AESTHETIC interest or value:) Here is an example of the auto showroom designed as a stage set where automobiles in the metaphor of "magic carpets" were sold to transport one to far away places.¹ Like the Palace of Fine Arts, this is a romantic temple, as opulent as the Packards garaged within; a fantasy for those who dreamed of owning a product not yet considered a necessity purchase.

Prominent features include two sets of paired columns, single columns at the front corners of the building and a deeply recessed glass curtain wall. The columns of red Nubedian marble (around a steel core) are topped with elaborate Corinthian capitals. Horizontal elements, such as the frieze and cornice, are light-colored and heavily molded with foliate designs. The double door entrances are articulated by elaborately carved stone moldings. The rear of the building contains a functional, discliplaned design for garage and service.

¹Cardwell, Kenneth K. - Bernard Maybeck, p. 220.

(may be continued on back)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

A. ARCHITECTURE

1. Style: Neo-classical with Sullivanesque influence foliate detailing
2. Construction Type: Reinforced concrete
3. Construction Date: 1926-1927
4. Design Quality: (LPAB ONLY)
5. Architect: Bernard Maybeck, (Palace of Fine Arts, Christian Science Church, Berkeley) Powers and Ahnden Associates
6. Interior Quality: (LPAB ONLY) Original lighting fixtures removed but leather, cypress, travertine, grill work create rich and ornate interior on view through showroom.

B. HISTORY

(as building is significantly associated with specific)

7. Persons: Earle C. Anthony-purveyor of Packards and owner of Station KFI. The building for years carried dummy radio towers with the station call letters. Bernard Maybeck: developed Bay Area shingle style, nationally noted architect.
8. Events: Showroom opened with gala array of motion picture actresses and special broadcast.
9. Patterns of History: (cultural, social, political, military, economic or industrial) Peak in number of auto showrooms on Van Ness in use of rich materials--leather, marble, exotic woods, and in romantic imagery.

C. ENVIRONMENT

(relation to surroundings, specifically in terms of:)

10. Continuity: For most of this century, Van Ness Avenue has had the greatest concentration of auto showrooms of any city on the west coast, perhaps in the country.
11. Setting: This is one of the three most luxurious car showrooms (at corner locations for exposure and access) on the two blocks of Van Ness bisected by O'Farrell.
12. Importance as a Visual Landmark: All these auto showrooms were designed to attract attention and start the sales pitch at the curb. This towering red, black, and white "classic temple" on a major intersection is difficult to ignore.

D. INTEGRITY

(cite alterations and physical condition) Exterior (without radio towers) essentially intact.

RATINGS

DCP: 4

HERE TODAY: Not listed

SPLENDID SURV.: Listed in secondary survey area

NAT'L REGISTER: -

NAT'L LANDMARK: -

STATE LANDMARK: -

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

(list sources on back)

PREPARED BY: D. Hartley & P. McGrew

ADDRESS: 100 Larkin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

PHONE: 558-3055

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References:

Architect and Engineer; July, 1927, pages. 60-61

Cardwell, Kenneth; Bernard Maybeck; Santa Barbara,
Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1977.