

Mural #10: The Biltmore Hotel

Location: 1229 Hermosa Avenue, West Facing Wall (backside of old Bijou Theater)



ABOUT THE ARTIST

John Pugh

I am a trompe l'oeil artist focusing primarily on mural painting. I have found that the "language" of life-size illusions allow me to communicate with a very large audience. It seems almost universal that people take delight in being visually tricked. Once captivated by the illusion, the viewer is lured to cross an artistic threshold and thus seduced into exploring the concept of the piece. I have also found that by creating architectural illusion that integrates with the existing environment both optically and aesthetically, the art transcends the "separateness" that public art sometimes produces. To read John's bio, Visit: <http://www.artofjohnpugh.com/bio.asp>

HOTEL HISTORY : Built as the Surf and Sand Club and known as THE HERMOSA BILTMORE HOTEL

In 1926 a group of South Bay Businessmen sold memberships for construction and operation of an exclusive professional men's club. It was named THE SURF AND SAND BEACH CLUB. A few years after its construction, in 1929, it was sold to the Los Angeles Athletic Association, but was again sold, this time to private interests, when the City Fathers could not agree on giving the Association private beach rights. At the beginning of World War II the now-named Hermosa Biltmore Hotel was converted into a 120-room hotel. Each room contained a toilet and wash bowl, over half the rooms a private bath, several with connecting baths. Every room completely renovated and new bed, springs, mattress and furniture and numerous new rugs in the first half of 1955

CONSTRUCTION

This 6-story reinforced concrete building is Class A construction and was built at a cost of \$840,000.00; with furnishings of \$286,000.00. Its foundation is of concrete piling which goes into blue clay and averages forty-two (42) feet in depth. The Hermosa Biltmore Hotel can never be washed out by the ocean, so strong and deep its foundation.

THE ROOF

Sun bathing is enjoyed on the spacious and unencumbered roof of the Hotel, and there are unlimited possibilities for remodeling this roof for Starlight Dancing and daytime lounging. The restful view takes in a panorama encompassing Catalina Island to the Southwest, the lovely Palos Verdes Hills to the South, Los Angeles and environs due East, Hollywood Hills to the North, Malibu and Ventura Coastline to the Northwest. Completing the panorama, and giving it ever new hues, are the brilliant ever-changing sunsets on the blue Pacific.

THE SECOND FLOOR

The entire second floor has been equipped for recreation. Three large rooms are used for dancing and banquets. The ballroom extends across the entire front of the building and is 198' long, and faces the ocean and beach. It is two stories high and the acoustics are excellent. The floor is hardwood laid in cement slab, and is highly finished for dancing. This area can be used entire or can be divided into two separate rooms by means of soundproof folding doors, making one ballroom or banquet room, an area of approximately 138' X 40' with raised bandstand and walk-in fireplace at the south end, and a 40' set-in bar. This space will accommodate about 1500 guests. The north ballroom space is 50' X 40' and will accommodate approximately 1000 guests, and similarly has a raised bandstand and a 40' bar. The thick-carpeted foyer, well-ventilated men's and ladies' restrooms, and a checkroom immediately adjoin the ballrooms. For cabaret style dancing, chairs and tables for 1000 guests and service for 2500 are available.

THE MEZZANINE

This floor is composed of two large offices for the hotel, what was once a health studio, a large completely equipped kitchen and clubroom presently named the KEY ROOM.

The room which used to have the health studio is equipped with Howard steam cabinets, Gyro-Wave chair, massage tables, slenderizing tables, Finnish style steam rooms, dressing rooms, showers, approximately 20 booths, and weights and cycles for reducing and exercising.

The KEY ROOM has its own scroll-shaped bar, seating 15 persons. The room is completely carpeted except for a small dancing space which can be converted into dining space when needed. The tables and booths will seat 50 diners-and-dancers. This room has been decorated in the past by an outstanding Hollywood Cocktail and Lounge designer and decorator. The overhead indirect lighting fixtures are especially designed to carry out the Key Motif, and are attractions in themselves. This room faces the spacious beach and blue Pacific.

The KITCHEN adjoining is large, and completely equipped with a deep freeze, 10' square walk-in refrigerator, gas, steam, dishwasher, Rainier 3-tier oven, Hobart mixer, Timkin vegetable peeler, Cass charcoal broiler, French fryer, double unit steam table, 4-urn McKie coffee maker, Hobart meat slicing machine and complete dinner and silver service for 2500 guests.

THE LOBBY

The first floor lobby has been recently remodeled and redecorated. One feels the tranquility of lush tropical quiet as one enters this coral and jungle-green lounge. The decor, so skillfully planned and executed, actually creates a three-dimensional effect by reason of the lavish tropical colors blended and balanced by true artistic skill. Coral lamp shades and brown and coral upholstered lounges and chairs complete this inviting atmosphere.

Leading off the lobby is a cocktail room and a cocktail bar, Coffee Shop with complete kitchen and a room where a cigar and magazine stand was at one time. Also on the first floor is a large swimming pool with men's and ladies' dressing rooms.

THE COFFEE SHOP KITCHEN is equipped with 2 reach-in refrigerators, 14' steam table, range and grill, French fryer, meat slicer (Hobart), ice cream cabinet and miscellaneous work tables. There is feeding space for employees in the kitchen. Seating capacity in the Coffee Shop: 15 at the counter and 35 at the tables. It is carpeted and decorated in Marine motif and has copper lighting fixtures. The kitchen can be closed off and steam table and grill, the 2-urn coffee-maker and refrigerator can take care of the lighter trade.

The COCKTAIL ROOM is by name the CITY ROOM. It is finished in light natural wood and decorated in natural-wood-framed enlarged sepia photographs of city scenes. The luxurious lounge chairs are upholstered in antique imitation leather. There is seating accommodation for 200 guests. A dance floor and baby grand piano and deep carpeting complete this beautiful, cozy, relaxing fun room.

The COCKTAIL BAR adjoins the CITY ROOM and is decorated in sport plaid with natural wood finish. The bar stools and upholstered chairs here are of antique imitation leather also, and will accommodate 100 guests. It opens directly onto the beach and is a highly popular place for strollers and bathers. Television and juke box are for the pleasure of the guests. The bar has 2 stations and 2 cash registers with 3 work keys on each. There are 3 large beer boxes and unlimited glass service.

The SWIMMING POOL is 60' X 25' and water is chlorinated and heated. Men's and women's dressing rooms are immediately adjoining the plunge which opens onto the Strand and beach. In summer it clears \$1,000.00 net and enjoys an even better take during the winter months.

LOCATION

Please notice that this Hotel is but 12 minutes from the Los Angeles International Airport and is the nearest hotel to it. The Pacific Coast Highway (101) runs but four blocks east of the ocean front, making the HERMOSA BILTMORE HOTEL an ideal resting and stopping point for travelers.

BUILDING HISTORY

The Pasadena architectural firm of Hunt and Chambers designed the Surf and Sand Club for a site on the Strand between 14th and 15th Streets in 1923. Construction commenced by 12/1923, and the eight-story edifice, equipped with overnight accommodations, meeting rooms, a grill, and dining room in addition to such recreational amenities as an indoor pool, bowling alley, and rooms dedicated to card play and billiards, had a cornerstone-laying ceremony on 05/17/1924. The building opened in 06/1925 but was still not complete, as some interior appointments and furniture had not yet arrived. Completion occurred by 03/1926.

The Surf and Sand Club formed an affiliation with several other Los Angeles-area athletic clubs by 1929, including Santa Monica Athletic Club, Hollywood Athletic Club, Los Angeles Athletic Club (LAAC), Riviera Country Club (owned by the LAAC, but having a separate membership), California Yacht Club (Wilmington, Los Angeles) and the Pacific Coast Club (Long Beach). The Depression sunk the fortunes of the Surf and Sand Club, and the Biltmore Hotel chain acquired the property. The name "Surf and Sand Club" remained into the 1930s, but was later replaced with "Hermosa Biltmore."