

World Class Murals Designed, Created, and Installed by Preeminent Muralist Artists of the A.B. Heinsbergen Company

The Fourth Avenue Theatre is also historically and culturally important because of the extraordinary and unique murals decorating its walls that were designed, created, and installed by world-class muralists A.B. Heinsbergen and his protégé, Frank Bouman who, according to Heinsbergen, “worked on the murals extensively ... installed them and supervised the entire decorative scheme.”²²

Heinsbergen was born in The Netherlands in 1894. At an early age, he quit school and apprenticed to a master Dutch muralist renowned for his ability to create murals on concave and convex walls and ceilings that maintained their proper perspective and scale in spite of the curvature of the surfaces. He kept his technique a secret. As a result, he was in great demand. The young Heinsbergen asked the master for his secret, but to no avail.

When Heinsbergen was about 13 years old, he emigrated with his family to the United States. The story is that the master muralist went to the dock to see his young apprentice off. Just before the departure, he handed Heinsbergen a sealed envelope and made him promise he would not open it until he reached the United States. Upon arrival, Heinsbergen opened the envelope. Inside were instructions from the master how to create murals on curved surfaces.²³

Heinsbergen went on to become one of the leading muralists in the world, founding the A.B. Heinsbergen Company in Los Angeles around 1922. His work was so important that the Smithsonian Institution created an exhibit of his murals that traveled the country for two years, from 1972 to 1974.²⁴ Heinsbergen died in 1981. His son, Tony Heinsbergen, took over the company after his death and much of his work thereafter was devoted to restoring murals that had been created by his father and associate Frank Bouman. The company closed after Tony died in 2004.

22 Excerpt of letter of Anthony B. Heinsbergen to Michael E. Carberry dated January 6, 1978, quoted in Michael E.

Carberry, *Patterns of the Past: An Inventory of Anchorage’s Heritage Resources*, (Municipality of Anchorage, Historical Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1979), 64.

23 Davis, *op. cit.* <http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/orpheum3.htm> (accessed February 27, 2017).

24 Reported in *Orinda Assn v. Bd. of Supervisors*, 182 Cal. App 3d 1145, 1152-53, 227 Cal. Rptr. 688, 692 (Cal. App. 1986)

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