

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Color of the Balboa Theatre



1. *What is the issue?*

The Balboa Theatre will be celebrating its 100th Birthday in March 2024. In preparation, San Diego Theatres is doing a variety of upgrades to ensure the venue is ready. Changes are being made to the color and signage on the exterior, and interior upgrades include new carpet. The changes will enhance the venue and are necessary to maintain the quality and service levels provided to attendees and clients using the venue.

2. *Why are people expressing opposition to the new paint color of the Balboa Theatre?*

The Balboa Theatre is a beloved and historic part of our city's history and the performing arts in San Diego. It is also architecturally significant and is on the Registrar of Historic Places. The feedback has focused on the choice of the colors, white and burgundy, which was used on the exterior façade. It replaced the "ochre" color that was used when the restoration was completed in 2008.

3. *When was the Balboa Theatre painted white?*

The project was started on July 1, 2023, and finished within a few days. The color, while not the original color the Balboa was painted, is consistent with the historic period and architectural style. It is important to understand that the color does not have to be identical to the original color the venue was painted to be consistent with the architectural style or historically accurate. The debate then becomes one of color and preference. San Diego Theatres stands by the decision and respects those who disagree with the choice made.

4. *Why was the Balboa Theatre painted?*

As operators of the Balboa Theatre, San Diego Theatres has been aware for several years that the prior color of the theatre impacted the visibility of the theatre and created challenges to drawing attention to, and promoting events in, the venue. San Diego Theatres contracted with Kenn Lubin to help evaluate and make recommendations on the building signage and color in preparation for the 100th Anniversary of the theatre.

5. *Who was involved in reviewing the paint color?*

In preparation for the 100th Anniversary of the Balboa, San Diego Theatres contracted renowned NYC-based theatre designer Kenn Lubin and his team who presented various color palettes that were then reviewed and the final decision on the color selected was made by San Diego Theatres.

6. *Who is Kenn Lubin?*

Kenn Lubin has a diverse portfolio of theatrical design and fabrication. Kenn has extensive knowledge in this field and obtained a BFA from Pratt Institute, as well as studies at the New School for Social Research. He has shared his enormous expertise by lecturing at New York University, Pratt Institute, and Columbia University and teaching at the School of Visual Arts.

7. *Did the City of San Diego review this paint color?*

As part of the process, San Diego Theatres alerted and provided information about plans to paint the Balboa Theatre white to Civic Communities, the City of San Diego Office of Economic Development, and San Diego Historic Resources Board.

8. *Did any of these agencies oppose or support this decision?*

No objections to the color scheme were raised by the three organizations.

9. *What process was followed to ensure the color chosen was correct from both a historical and architectural style perspective?*

In their recommendation, Kenn Lubin and his team wrote: “The 1920s witnessed the Spanish Colonial Revival, an influential architectural style inspired by early Spanish missions and haciendas. In Southern California, the standout feature was unmistakable—white stucco walls adorned with ornate elements like arches, balconies, and decorative tiles. This captivating fusion created a striking contrast, radiating warmth and charm. While colors varied, white took centerstage, symbolizing the region's climate and cultural aspirations. The recommendation added, “The dominance of the color white throughout this area accentuated the buildings' intricate forms, forging a harmonious bond with the surrounding landscape. Purposefully chosen, white mirrored Southern California's bright and sunny climate, instilling a sense of lightness and airiness. Moreover, it served the practical function of naturally cooling interiors in the absence of modern air conditioning.”

10. *What is San Diego Theatres role?*

San Diego Theatres is the non-profit arts organization that has contracts with the City of San Diego to manage and operate the Balboa and Civic Theatres. Maintaining and ensuring the venues are operated with the highest professional standards is a cornerstone of their work.