

# Title: Mare Undarum – Sea of Waves

## Public Art Project Fact Sheet



City of Tempe  
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Photo by Craig Smith

**Title:** Mare Undarum – Sea of Waves

**Location:** Tempe Center of the Arts Entry

**Artist:** Ned Kahn

**Completion:** 2007

**Medium:** Corrugated sheet metal and marbles

**Description:** Thousands of one-inch diameter glass marbles were placed into the corrugated sheet metal decking of the marquee above the Tempe Center for the Arts' main entrance. The marbles are mounted into holes that are spaced four-inches on center and sealed with water-clear silicone sealant. An array of small mirrors mounted on stainless steel cables so that they move in the wind and project patterns of moving light onto the marbles. The marbles light up like bulbs when these spots of sunlight hit them. The effect is like waves of electrical energy traveling through the marquee revealing the complex and beautiful patterns of the wind. At night, spotlights integrated into the design of the marquee illuminate the marbles.

**Funding:** The project was funded through city of Tempe Capital Improvement Project Percent for Art Funds.

**Artist biography:** Ned Kahn's creative impetus began in the San Francisco Bay Area, where soon after graduating from the University of Connecticut he became an apprentice to the late Frank Oppenheimer, legendary founder of the San Francisco Exploratorium. Kahn continued working at the Exploratorium as an exhibit designer for 10 years, where numerous works of his are still on display. Other art installations by Kahn can be found around the Bay Area, including 14 exhibits at the Chabot Space and Science and "Wind Portal" at the San Francisco International Airport BART station.

**Artist statement:** I was inspired by the image of rain in the desert or the discovery of a pool, hidden in the rocks of a seemingly dry stream with ripples of light reflecting onto the stone above...the incongruity of water in the desert. The title was inspired by the recent discovery that there are vast amounts of water on the Moon in the form of ice buried under the surface. In recent years, I have complete a series of artworks that reveal forces in the environment by converting natural flow patterns, such as wind, into the pixilated motion of thousands of small metal parts. I have been calling these artworks "detectors" for they are analogous to the detectors on telescopes and other scientific devices that reveal the effects of the invisible.