

# Papago Hills Retail Art in Private Development Fact Sheet



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Photo: Craig Smith

**Artwork:** Arborescent Dome and Fountain

**Development:** Papago Hills Retail Court

**Address:** 1158 N. Priest Drive  
(Priest Drive and Washington Street)

**Artist:** Thomas Strich

**Completion:** 2004

**Materials:** Painted Steel, concrete masonry unit block faced with Yavapai Coral stone and stamped concrete

**Description:** In this project, several elements are integrated into the overall site-plan of a retail development. These elements include a domed shade structure, a fountain, an enhanced path, enhanced perimeter walls, seating and extended patio. The signature feature, *Arborescent Dome*, is a shade structure situated at the intersection of Priest Drive and Washington Street. The inner supports of the green dome are vaulted and branched-like tree limbs. The surface of the dome is cut in the abstracted pattern of a tree canopy viewed in silhouette. The water feature, *Fountain of Gathered Waters*, is shaped like a gate-valve box like those used throughout the valley's canal system. The fountain is topped with an actual valve handle that free-wheels, with which children can play. The perimeter walls are configured like an ancient Indian ruin, reminiscent of the Hohokom site nearby. All the elements: dome, fountain and seating are clad in Yavapai Coral stone whose pink color makes reference to the exposed rock of the Papago Buttes.

**Funding:** This project was funded by the independent developer as a requirement of Tempe's Art in Private Development Ordinance.

**Artist biography:** Thomas Strich was born and raised in California. He received a double B.A. degree in Studio Art and Art Theory from the University of California, Santa Cruz and received an M.F.A. degree in Sculpture from Arizona State University. Strich has been an Arizona-based artist since 1990, and since 1995 he has been applying his skills as a mixed media artist and photographer toward urban planning processes and public art projects. He has completed public art and private development projects for the city of Tempe, city of Phoenix and the Town of Queen Creek. He has also been on selection panels for public art projects. Through his contributions to numerous public art projects, Strich has been dedicated to making his art input integrally shape the development, design and meaning of these projects.

**Artist statement:** "For this project, I looked to the surrounding landscape for inspiration. This project site is in close proximity to the Salt River, the Papago Buttes and the headquarters for the Salt River Project. The Papago Hills Retail Court is situated across the street from two large office complexes, providing them with restaurants, a coffee bar and a light-rail station. *Arborescent Dome* was designed as a portal for pedestrian traffic into the site and as a shaded resting place, and it also provides workers and commuters with a respite surrounded by trees that serves as a reminder of the native desert environment of Papago Park. At the other end of the path, the sound and sight of flowing water from the fountain pays homage to SRP, which has played an important role in providing water to both the rural and urban landscapes of our region."