

# The Creative Edge Public Art Project Fact Sheet



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Photo by Craig Smith

**Title:** The Creative Edge

**Location:** Rio Salado South Bank Path;  
Tempe Center for the Arts to Priest Drive

**Artist:** Thomas Strich  
**Landscape Architect:** Ruben Valenzuela  
**Architect:** Virginia Senior

**Completion:** January 2009

**Medium:** Steel, Concrete, Fiberglass, Recycled materials and River Rock

**Description:** *The Creative Edge* infuses public art into the western segment of the Rio Salado South Bank Path. The design team integrated sculptures and architectural structures with the landscape design along the path and at its nodes. Project elements include an entrance landmark (composed of art panels made from recycled street signs), four view-window sculptures, an alley of sky windows, four architectural shade structures, four sculptural cast-concrete seats and landscape design features. The sculptural windows focus on views of mountain parks and buttes. At the central node, a large window sculpture represents the synthesis of the organic and the structured.

The node is framed by an alley of sky windows mounted on old street signal mast arms. The shade structures at two of the nodes, created from translucent fiberglass and steel, were inspired by the curved roof of the former Tempe Art Center, a past feature of Tempe Beach Park. The sculptural seats reference rock outcroppings in the riverbed and include river rock medallions, while the flowing shape of the path was inspired by Hohokam water patterns.

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

**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. Since 1995 he has been applying his skills as a mixed media artist and photographer toward urban planning processes and public art projects. In his studio work, Strich has explored the mentality and perception that underscores the relationships humans develop with their natural environment. He has completed public art and private development projects for Tempe, Phoenix and Queen Creek.

**Artist statement:** The South Bank Path marks the boundary between the city of Tempe and the Salt River. *The Creative Edge* distinguishes the river side with organic patterns of nature; the urban side is defined by the grid patterns of the city. This project celebrates the creative diversity that abounds at "the edge" which is the frontier, the limit, of conventional knowledge and the realm of discovery. *The Creative Edge* focuses on viewing, surveying and reassessing vistas in order to see new possibilities. This focus is embodied by sculptural windows that symbolize the achievements of artists and thinkers whose discoveries opened up new ways of seeing and understanding the world. Other elements of the project use pieces of the city's past infrastructure, which is reconfigured and reinterpreted in unorthodox ways. *The Creative Edge* points the way toward an environmentally-based culture where solutions to issues are generated by new perspectives and creative problem solving.