



Tempe Public Art



Tilted Landscape

Carl Cheng

River rocks, stone, concrete,
flagstone, wood

Phase I: 1994, Phase II: 1999,
Phase III: 2008

Location: Tempe Library Complex
3500 S. Rural Road

Artist Website: www.johndoecompany.com

Description: Upon reading the Tempe 2000 General Plan and visiting the Municipal Complex underground garden, Cheng began thinking of the possibility of Tempe as a city of Subterranean Gardens. “What if the city of Tempe could link up its many water ponds, gardens, streams and rivers into one continuous system that meandered in and out of municipal buildings and parks?” he thought. With these ideas, Cheng decided to contribute to this concept by proposing this comprehensive project for the library site.

The first phase of Cheng’s work is encircled by the passenger drop-off driveway in front of the library. The design featured a gently up-sloping water-filled trough, whose surface gradually tipped out of the water, emerging as an up-thrusting topographic map of Tempe. In 2001, the artwork suffered a major leak and no longer contains water. Instead, the artwork now contains rocks and desert plants. The second part of Cheng’s design scheme features several art walls, artifact rocks and imbedded pavers in the courtyard. It originates at the existing fountain west of the Edna Vihel Activity Center and meanders south toward the parking lot through a loosely landscaped streambed. It is bordered by colorful cross-sections of laminated cut concrete. Similar walls are located south of the Tempe History Museum at the east and west ends of the sidewalk.

Artist biography: Cheng was born in San Francisco and raised in Los Angeles. He received his BA and MA degrees from UCLA and currently lives and works in Santa Monica, Calif. His artworks, which attempt to demystify the human/nature relationship, have been exhibited throughout the United States and abroad. Cheng's numerous other public commissions include Santa Monica Art Tool, which imprints the map of L.A. on the sand along Santa Monica Beach, a sheriff's facility in San Francisco, as well as projects in New York City, Tempe and Seattle.

Funding: This project was funded through the city of Tempe Municipal Arts Fund and administered through the Tempe Municipal Arts Commission.