

Window to the Past Public Art Project Fact Sheet



City of Tempe
Cultural Services
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Photo: Craig Smith

Title: Window to the Past

Location: Tempe Historical Museum lobby in the Community Services Complex (Southwest corner of Rural Road and Southern Avenue)

Artist: Laurie Nessel

Completion: 1995

Medium: Leaded glass including: float glass, handblown glass and photo-silkscreened glass.

Description: Using 120 square feet of glass, 45 pounds of lead and six pounds of solder, Tempe glass artist Laurie Nessel created "Window to the Past," a 10 by 11-foot leaded glass window which commemorates Tempe's past. This artwork features 11 historical images from the Tempe Historical Museum's archives which are photo-silkscreened onto clear glass panels. Along with the photographs, Nessel incorporated clear antique glass, hand blown glass and stained glass in a design of flowing blue lines representing Tempe's Salt River and flowing brown lines referring to Hayden Butte. Within this matrix, Nessel scattered cast opalescent glass jewels to visually bind the composition. The imagery includes historical photographs of Ash Avenue Bridge (1914), City Hall (1914), Territorial Normal School (1886), Tempe Commercial Company (1918), Hayden Flour Mill (1874), Horse and Buggy at Hayden Butte (1900), Pafford House (1910), Arizona Mercantile (1900), Hayden's Ferry (1887), Threshers (1920) and the Train Depot (1915).

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

Artist biography: Laurie Nessel received her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1978 from University of Wisconsin-River Falls where she studied glassblowing and fibers. She studied under Roger Darricariere in Chartres, France, before opening her Tempe studio in 1983. Through her business, Gecko Glass, Nessel creates artworks primarily through commissions for use in residential construction, making quatrefoil windows, kitchen cabinets, doors, transoms and skylights. "Window of the Past" was Nessel's first public art commission.

Artist statement: Nessel strives to create glass pieces that will modulate light in a variety of beautiful ways. She says about her work at the Historical Museum, "I am drawn to historical photographs. By incorporating them into my glass windows, it creates layers of memory and meaning as we look outside and view our current world through images of the past."