

Tree of Life Public Art Project Fact Sheet



City of Tempe
Cultural Services
3340 South Rural Road
Tempe, AZ 85282
480-350-5287
480-350-5161 FAX
www.tempe.gov/arts



Title: Tree of Life

Location: Tempe Town Lake north bank, just west of the Mill Avenue Railroad Bridge

Artist: Marilyn Zwak

Completion: 2000

Medium: Concrete, adobe and rock

Description: Six concrete tree-of-life uprights, formed in adobe molds and toned with integral color and placed within a canopied patio on the north bank of Tempe Town Lake, feature reliefs depicting the Tree of Life legend. Recessed areas in the tree canopies are, and continue to be, filled with adobe leaves, carved with the names of donors to the Adopt-A-Tree program.

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

Artist biography: Marilyn Zwak is a self-taught artist whose background involves design of environmentally related sculptures, painting exhibitions, book illustration and film production in conjunction with environmental support groups. Her numerous public works include an award winning three-bridge design project for the Squaw Peak Parkway in Phoenix and a Navajo bridge project in Marble Canyon. Zwak has served as a panelist for the Arizona State Commission on the Arts and the Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture. She has facilitated lectures and workshops for the general public, artists, engineers and other design professionals interested in public art.

Artist statement: The foundation of my work is in painting, which, over years of experimentation, I developed highly worked surfaces. The etched surfaces in my paintings found their way into hand-sculpted adobe sculptures. My underlying belief – that all people have potential to express creatively – involved me in public art. I am committed to using my art to humanize city environments. My concept is based on a myth known as “The Tree of Life,” in which three goddesses - representing the past, present and future of mankind - attend and nourish the “tree of life” from a well of perpetual wisdom. This powerful image of universality and connection unites all people and links us to the center of our world.