



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

Fountainhead Corp. Park, Park Plaza Art in Private Development Fact Sheet



Photo: Craig Smith

Artwork

Elemental Ascension

Development

Fountainhead Corp. Park, Park Plaza

Address

1440 W. Alameda Dr.

Artist

John Richen

Completion

2000

Material

Bronze

Description: This 20-foot sculpture is the focal point of the entry circular driveway and interprets the theme of sun worship, earth, water and fire. The sculpture is dynamic from all angles and is variegated in the bronze facing so that the light plays dramatically along the surfaces

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

Artist biography: While studying architecture at Oregon State University, Richen enrolled in a class on sculpture. After discovering that he had a talent for the medium and that the "hands on" feeling of sculpting a design he had created held a special appeal for him, Richen decided to study art. Richen has exhibited his works in major shows throughout the country, and in Amsterdam and Montreal. A partial list of those collections where Richen's works are displayed includes the Weyerhaeuser Corporation, the Raffles Hotel Corporation, Bowater Computers, the University of Chicago Medical School and collections in Saudi Arabia and Switzerland. In addition to his large scale, one-of-a-kind commissioned sculptures and fountains, Richen designs smaller sculptures for both residential and corporate audiences. Many of these latter works are created in a numbered series, not to exceed 10 of any one design.

Artist statement: Richen works in bronze and steel, creating abstract pieces that are strong and graceful. "Metal has such strength that it can be airy and light. I look at the surfaces I am creating and see that they are soft, gentle and delicate – they're not hard at all. This strength gives you light, openness and freedom of motion like no other material does," he said. Although drawing an idea for a piece of sculpture can sometimes take mere minutes, the work required to make that design a reality often can take months of hard labor. "After the drawings are done," he said "a piece is laid out and shaped. Most of my work now is done in bronze or steels that produce a glossy polish for that crisp light refraction. Normally I work with a fabrication technique: I start with a flat sheet, cut it manipulate it, and put it back together. I use color in all my works – not by painting, but by using different alloys." Richen goes to great lengths to achieve a high sheen on his pieces, giving each a shimmering quality that resembles the reflective characteristics of water. "What I want is for a piece to stay alive in many different lights, so there is a real changing mood and effect. Basically, the philosophy of all the works I do is that moment in time – that moment of change."

Tempe's Art in Private Development program is managed by city of Tempe Cultural Services staff with input from the Tempe Municipal Arts Commission, a 15-member, mayor-appointed advisory board.