



# Public Art Program OVERVIEW

Artwork has been a critical component of the Phoenix Convention Center since it originally opened in 1972. Building upon this civic commitment to the arts, the City, through the Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture Public Art Program, commissioned new artworks by local, regional and national artists to be incorporated into the expanded Phoenix Convention Center. These works offer a variety of perspectives on life in Phoenix, the United States, and the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and join several other pieces in the Convention Center's extensive collection.

## **Public Art Program Budget and Funding:**

The art projects are funded through the City's Public Art Program. The program, established in 1986, has involved artists in the design of every kind of city building and space, ranging from streetscapes, freeway overpasses and pedestrian bridges, to canal trails, parks and libraries. The Phoenix Public Art Program is managed by the Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture and has commissioned more than 120 public art projects in the past 20 years.

The Phoenix Convention Center's \$3.2 million public art budget comes from three capital improvement program bonds:

- Phoenix Convention Center (Civic Plaza) Capital Improvement Percent for Art Funds
- Street Transportation Capital Improvement Percent for Art Funds
- Water Department Capital Improvement Percent for Art Funds

## **Artist Selection Process:**

A "call to artists" process was issued by the Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture. A 10-member public art panel for the Phoenix Convention Center expansion project was assembled, including local artists and representatives from the Phoenix Arts and Culture Commission, the Phoenix Convention Center, and local cultural organizations.

The panel met in March 2004 to view the applications submitted by 342 local, regional and national artists. The artists recommended by the panel were reviewed and approved by:

- Phoenix Convention Center Department
- Public Art Committee, a subcommittee of the Phoenix Arts and Culture Commission
- Phoenix Arts and Culture Commission, a 28-member citizen advisory board appointed by the Mayor and City Council
- Phoenix City Council Subcommittee
- Phoenix City Council

## **Expansion Artists and Artwork:**

As part of the Phoenix Convention Center expansion, 10 artists were selected to create pieces for the new West and North Buildings. The artwork was installed in both phases of construction, with a majority of pieces being installed in Phase Two. The following pieces were created for the new Phoenix Convention Center.

### ***West Building:***

***"Art is a Guaranty of Sanity," Louise Bourgeois*** – A monumental, 90-foot mirror sculpture, located in the West Building atrium. The mirror face is highly polished steel, cut into shapes derived from a drawing of a spider web – a recurring theme in much of the artist's work. Visitors will see themselves and the atrium space dynamically reflected in the mirror's surface. The mirror also reflects one of Bourgeois's hallmark phrases, which also serves as the title for the piece: "Art is Guaranty of Sanity." The sculpture is about 90 feet tall, the elliptical face of the mirror is roughly 39 x 28 feet, weight of the mirror section alone: 17,700 lbs and weight of the yoke portion (which holds the mirror) is 10,100 lbs.

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## **PUBLIC ART OVERVIEW**

- **“Million Colors,” Tony Oursler** – Five video installations projected directly onto the architectural surfaces of the arcade space between the West Building Atrium and Monroe Street. The videos feature local theatre actors reciting poetic vignettes about Arizona.

### **North Building:**

- **“Night Blooming Garden,” Beliz Brother** – One hundred forty-four blue and green LED runway lights arranged in arcs along the sidewalks around the Phoenix Convention Center campus. The lights are designed to replicate a night-blooming cereus plant of the Sonoran Desert and gently influence pedestrian movement surrounding the Convention Center facilities.
- **“Social Invertebrates,” Tom Otterness** – Three large, whimsical bronze sculptures of desert creatures, enlarged to human scale. The creatures include a millipede with a hat and shoes; a walking stick in high heels, and a scorpion holding two small men in top hats tugging at a bag of money. Accompanying sculptural elements of people, scaled down to Lilliputian dimensions, interact with the creatures. The sculptures are set in a unique water-harvesting garden at the public plaza located near the southeast entrance of the North Building.
- **“Southern Exposure,” Jamex and Einar de la Torre** – Two large-scale sentry figures, inspired by the columnar figures at Tula, Mexico. They are constructed of metal, plate glass, blown glass and resin. The stacked glass boxes that make up with the figures contain blown glass objects, found objects and cultural artifacts reflecting the ancient and contemporary cultures of Arizona and the Southwest.
- **“Halo,” William Bennie and Kim Cridler** – A wreath-like metal sculpture suspended over the Monroe Street ballroom entry. The sculpture employs a conical ring of interwoven agave leaves, framed and supported by a grid-like structure. The form references the multiple meanings of a wreath as denoting good luck; transformation through regeneration, like the Phoenix itself; and the ring of continuity, life, and cyclic time.
- **“Arizona Handshake,” Stephen Farley** – Installation of ten 3’ x 10’ photographic tile panels depicting diverse individuals shaking hands as a symbol of welcome, economic prosperity, congratulations, assistance and community.
- **“A Moment at the Narrows,” Troy Moody** – Water and landscape-inspired terrazzo flooring designs featured at two locations along the corridor inside the Washington Street side of the North Building. The designs are inspired by the topography of Arizona and the fragmented profiles of the Grand Canyon cliff face, which follow the irregular contours of the stone up to the vast blue sky.
- **“Arizona Beach,” Hirotsume Tashima** – A series of humorous stoneware ceramic sculptures, intended to point to the power of growth and to encourage people to live fully. Located in the food court area inside the North Building, the playful group of sculptures mixes native flora and fauna and contemporary cultural references with the idea of a desert “beach.”
- **“The Earth Dreaming,” Isaiah Zagar** – A colorful mosaic of tile murals at the Third Street and Monroe Street entrance which creates Phoenix and Arizona-specific imagery within the mural.

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