

Recollections, Topiary and Topiary Quilts

Artists - Jim Hirschfield and Sonya Ishii

Recollections, Topiary and Topiary Quilts is a three-part public artwork integrated into the McKnight/Westwinds CTrain light rail transit (LRT) station in northeast Calgary (Ward 3).

This public art project includes components in three locations - the platform and glass shelters (*Recollections*), the plaza (*Topiary*) and the parking area (*Topiary Quilts*). While each work of art has the capacity to stand alone, the pieces are also visually and conceptually linked to one another.

Recollections

From a distance, these images engage the viewer through a spectacle of colour. Once engaged, the viewer who moves closer will discover the circles are more than just splashes of colour but that each circle of colour hosts a photographic image. The images are both historical and contemporary photographs provided by the citizens of the surrounding communities, as well as some garnered from the Glenbow Museum's archives.

Platform Columns

Images from Calgary's past are also placed on the surface of six platform columns. The images are etched in metal and mounted to both sides of the columns. From one direction, viewers discover images of the farming tradition. From the other direction, viewers see images from Calgary's ranching history.

Conceptually, the images address the pride and free spirit of Calgary's population. The images are physically placed to ensure a different experience for viewers depending on whether they see the public art from close up or far away. When standing adjacent to any one column, viewers only see a section or slice of the total portrait. From the ends of the platform, however, viewers are able to experience the image in its totality.

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Topiary

A distinctly contemporary sculpture on the LRT station plaza pays homage to Calgary being a city on the edge of nature and a part of nature. The sculpture is reminiscent of topiary forms that reference cultivation and civilization, and alludes to the fact that nature and civilization go hand in hand in Calgary.

The sculptural forms not only reference gardens and cultivation, but also stand in relationship with the station's architecture, and its own homage to the flow of nature.

The circular forms of the sculpture foreshadow and echo the colourful circles of glass on the platform's glass shelters.

Topiary Quilts

7' x 8' "quilts" are placed near the parking entrance along the border of the station, adding colour and elegance to the area.

The quilts were created through the layering of painted perforated metal shapes on top of painted expanded metal. This component of the public art provides a direct visual link to the freestanding sculpture in the plaza and also echoes the designs within the glass shelters.

The Artists: Jim Hirschfield and Sonya Ishii

The collaborative team of Jim Hirschfield and Sonya Ishii designed the public art at the McKnight/Westwinds LRT station.

Jim and Sonya have more than sixty years of combined experience and have each worked on many dozen commissions, exhibits and special projects. Jim and Sonya "believe that good public art functions as an invitation to dialogue and is not an inaccessible monologue." The artists believe their work succeeds because it begins with a strong aesthetic design which engages the viewer. Once engaged, the viewer discovers hidden layers of information, mystery and poetry.

The strength of the artwork is the ability to define the essence of a place. Hirschfield and Ishii capitalize on the strengths and opportunities that a site offers and infuse it with their sensitivity to dialogue with the viewer.

The Public Art Project

- The artists were chosen through an "invitational call" using the Public Art Program's Artist Roster. This public art process is derived from the Council-approved Public Art Policy, which reads: "Proposals shall be solicited through open competition, invited competition or direct award."
- The standard process used by The City of Calgary to commission artists is by an "open call," but is not always possible due to compressed timelines or specific project requirements -- this is when a limited call/invitation or single sourcing is more appropriate.
- The budget for these public artworks was \$308,000.
- The project was a collaborative initiative by the Public Art Program and City of Calgary Transportation Infrastructure, the business unit sponsor.