

The Resilient City

Artist: Johanna Poethig

Completed March, 2023

Office of Emergency Management & Fire Department Training Center /
1591 Senter Road, San José, CA / Council District 7

ABOUT THE PROJECT



The Resilient City, artist Johanna Poethig's cut steel artwork, is a captivating focal point on the façade of the new facility in which the City's Office of Emergency Management and Fire Department Training Center (OEM/FDTC) are co-located. The artwork pays homage to the work of these two departments, each so critical in handling a diverse range of emergency scenarios and restoring vibrancy and wellbeing across the city.

Poethig's inspiration for the design and imagery was the result of in-depth interaction with both Emergency Management and Fire Department personnel and community members. The imagery suggests a vertical "narrative," with the suggestion of the chaotic sense of emergency and engaged emergency responders in the lower portion of the artwork, a scenario that resolves upwards into a radiant city at the top, suggesting resilience.

There were several key goals instrumental in the artwork design. One is that it is highly viewable to vehicular traffic as well as pedestrians and cyclists along the Senter Road corridor. Importantly, a very key goal is for the artwork to provide a visual connection to the public so that the work done within these walls becomes more tangible and relatable, and to convey a sense of the services provided by the OEM and SJFD and their role in the community's well-being.

The artwork is made of layered cut metal. It measures approx. 25' tall at its highest point and 23' wide.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Johanna Poethig is a visual, public and performance artist who has exhibited internationally and has been actively creating public art works, murals, paintings, sculpture and multimedia installations for over 40 years. Her practice plays between realism and abstract forms, architectural and intimate scales, historic and present day politics, futurist musings, humor and satire, a feminist point of view, collaborative processes and cultural critique. In her current work, in the midst of climate crisis, the mathematical patterns in nature's terrestrial and extraterrestrial life systems are expressed by creating experiential landscapes, surrealistic portraits and texts that come together in a speculative storytelling.

Her work is in a number of collections across the region. She recently completed a major project for Alameda County Transit Authority as the lead artist of a team that designed and fabricated more than 32 bus transit stops and shelters along a 9-mile stretch of urban roadway through many varied cultural neighborhoods in east Oakland. Ms. Poethig designed, fabricated and installed the public art at the Starbird Teen Center in San José. Recipient of many awards, in 2021 she was honored by the State of California with one of California's 20 Legacy Artist Awards, selected out of more than 1,000 contenders.

Poethig is Professor Emerita of the Visual and Public Art (VPA) department at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB). As an arts educator and socially-engaged artist she deconstructs boundaries in a collaborative artistic process grounded in research, production, critique, improvisation and reciprocal learning. She was raised in the Philippines and has lived in Chicago, San Francisco, and Oakland since coming to the United States. She received her BFA at University of California, Santa Cruz and her MFA at Mills College in Oakland, California. Her interest in the dialogue between the public and personal, politics and aesthetics, the mathematical and the mystical, the ridiculous and the sublime and an inclusive cultural life inform her process and inspire her work.

Learn more about Johanna Poethig and see her work at www.johannapoethig.com

ABOUT THE PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

The City of San José Public Art Program seeks to build community identity by initiating artworks and exhibitions that enhance the civic landscape and experience. Through active community engagement, public art strives to reflect the City's diversity, historic richness, and envision its present and future.

The Public Art Program is part of the City's Cultural Affairs, a division of the Office of Economic Development. The Public Art Program was established by a 1984 municipal ordinance that provides public art through funding from City capital improvement projects and eligible private development.

For further information and photos, please contact the San José Public Art Program at publicart@sanjoseca.gov.



Office of Cultural Affairs **Public Art Program**
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