

Groundwork

Artist: Amy Trachtenberg

January 2007

Hillview Branch Library / 1600 Hopkins Drive, San Jose, CA 95122 / Council District 5

ABOUT THE PROJECT

With its location directly in the middle of the “Valley of Heart’s Delight,” a reference to the agricultural richness of San Jose’s earlier eras, artist Amy Trachtenberg imagined that the new Hillview Branch Library would resonate with a resourceful sense of sanctuary for the East San Jose community. In her conversations with the community, she was particularly struck by the stories of the many long-term community members who, as young teens, had cleaned and prepared the fields,



Above: view of columns and rotunda.



Above: View of frieze.

planted, picked and packed the produce, and worked in the canneries. This living link to such a vital aspect of the history of the area around the library and the tough, arduous work of agricultural labor during the early and mid twentieth century, the artist felt was missing in accessible graphic representation to the community.

From early in the project, Trachtenberg envisioned a bold circular entry rotunda supported by eight freestanding columns. Collaborating with the architectural team, she was able to influence inclusion of this feature in the building’s design and it is this element on which she centered one of the key elements of *Groundwork*. Each of the eight columns is composed of a stack of tractor tires; curved staves milled from recycled old-growth redwood, which are evocative of a harvest basket; the stainless steel can that pays homage to the canneries; and madrone branches, an indigenous tree revered by the local Ohlone Indians. She was also captivated by the intrinsic beauty of the farmed landscape, inspiration which she captured and reflected in the other component of *Groundwork*: a series of twenty-six paintings called *The Shadow Frieze*. The paintings that encircle the rotunda below the window openings evoke the aerial views of tilled earth, orchards, and crop rows.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Amy Trachtenberg's practice as a painter expands to explore specific contexts of space, light, materials and history. Projects and collaborations with poets, architects, and composers include public artworks along Market Street in San Francisco, Children's Hospital in Oakland, Pixar Studios in Emeryville and numerous designs for theater performed at venues such as ODC, The LAB, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. She is represented locally by Brian Gross Fine Art. She lives and works in San Francisco. More about her work may be found at www.amytrachtenberg.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. 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 Office of 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.

