

Guardians of the Garden City

Artists: Kipp Kobayashi and Marta Perlas

2010

Fire Station 19 / 3292 Sierra Road, San Jose, CA 95132 / Council District 4

ABOUT THE PROJECT

In response to the research the artists did with the community, Fire Department, and the design team, they developed an artwork that creates iconic columns at the entrance to the Fire Station. The concept for the columns was influenced by the multi-functional role each firefighter plays on the team. Also it was influenced by the community and its diversity, as well as how the community relates to and perceives the firefighters (and vice versa). The project is an opportunity for the community,



Above: Guardians of the Garden City Columns



Above: Detail showing the Knight of Malta figure mixed with the head section of a contemporary firefighter

particularly the numerous middle and high school students that pass by the fire station on a daily basis, to have an exchange with the fire fighters at the station. Additionally, the artwork and the fire station serve as a gateway corner to the community.

The 8' tall columns bases are articulated like the equipment fittings found on the rigs and hydrants. On the stainless steel columns are etched images of firefighters and historic firefighters from cultures from throughout history: 1) Wildland firefighter, 2) Explorers (youth firefighter program), 3) Vigiles Urbani (the first organized fire brigade of Europe), 4) Knight of Malta (where the current Maltese cross on firefighters emblem originated), 5) Edo Firefighter (early Japanese firefighter) 6) Sapeurs-Pompiers (the first professional firefighters from the French Army of the 19th century). Each column is divided into three parts that can be turned individually, like a section of a mix 'n match puzzle so that the figures can be morphed into any number of combinations.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kipp Kobayashi is an environmental designer and artist focused on the creation of public places. His work explores the human dynamics that occur within these spaces and how they merge with the physical characteristics of the environment, transforming them into living entities composed of our collective thoughts, actions and experiences. More of his work may be seen at www.kippkobayashi.com.

Marta Perlas, AIA, is an architect, whose accomplishments include many significant civic and institutional projects. Her design work has been awarded numerous honors and awards.

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.

