

# Garden of Strength

Artist: Fernanda D'Agostino

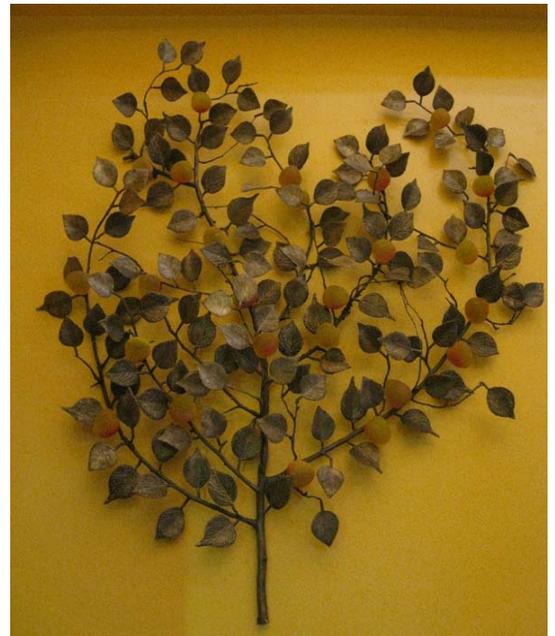
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Mayfair Community Center / 2039 Kammerer Ave., San Jose, CA 95116 / Council District 5

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Fernanda D'Agostino created *Garden of Strength* a suite of three distinct artwork elements entitled *Bienvenidos*, *Garden of Life*, and *The Three Sisters*. D'Agostino was inspired by the diversity and the rich cultural history of the Mayfair area and by the spirit of growth and renewal embodied in the flourishing Mayfair Community Garden adjacent to the site, one of the City's oldest community gardens. The garden is a metaphor for community and a unifying motif through the three major elements in the project.

*Bienvenidos* is an installation of art glass windows that form an archway in the Center's entrance. Photographic images that depict lush stalks of corn raising their leaves to the sun, swirling folkloric dancers and inspirational quotations are fused into the glass panes. The images, drawn from local subjects, symbolize welcome, aspiration and growth. By day the windows filter golden light into the Center's lobby; after dark the light from inside the Center glows out warmly through the windows.



Left: a section of *Bienvenidos* windows. Middle and top right: elements from *Garden of Life*. Right: Squash Blossom from *The Three Sisters*

*Garden of Life* is a richly textured group of elements in the Center's tower and utilizes *nichos* (small spaces that are used to present ceremonial or honorific items) to present a series of objects. The elements include a glass mosaic niche patterned in celestial designs – referencing stars as navigation tools, in recognition of the journeys made by many people to come to this community; a bronze apricot branch with glass apricots in homage to the community heritage linked to farm labor, agriculture, and the widespread fruit orchards; a timeline of Mayfair historic images on glass; and a video installation featuring images of local history and culture. One *nicho* was intentionally left empty, to be filled over

time with changing expressions from the community. The *Garden of Life* artworks invite visitors to explore, and to pause and reflect on the cultural significance of this locale.

*The Three Sisters* are three stone sculptures that depict the trilogy of squash, beans and corn, fundamental and sustaining food elements in many cultures. These were carved under D'Agostino's direction from models that she created using actual plants grown by farmers in the Mayfair Community Garden. *The Three Sisters* are located in what D'Agostino calls the Discovery Courtyard, a reference to the central courtyard in many homes worldwide and the beautiful sense of discovery one has when emerging from a dark interior into a hidden courtyard full of light and life.

D'Agostino worked in close collaboration on key parts of the project with other artists who created elements under her direction: Jaime Guerrero created the handmade glass elements in the *Garden of Life* installations; Mauricio Saldaña of Saldaña Stone Sculptures carved *The Three Sisters* sculptures. Many of the still photographs included in the artwork were taken by Brian Foulkes.

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Fernanda D'Agostino is an experienced public artist based in Portland, Oregon. A native of Trenton, New Jersey, D'Agostino studied at the University of Montana, where she obtained her M.F.A. in 1984. She has created works in a wide range of public settings throughout the United States and has received numerous honors and awards. D'Agostino's installations and public artworks engage viewers by evoking personal memories and local histories. Many works include glass that is layered with photographic images relevant to the locale of the artwork. Her works are often rich in imagery and objects drawn from the local culture and related site-specific features. More about her work may be found at [www.fernandadagostino.com](http://www.fernandadagostino.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.

