

# Grains of Thought

Artists: Susan Dannenfels & Kirk Beck

Public Art Update: Work-in-progress for completion in early 2016

Southeast Branch Library / 4001 Evergreen Village Square San Jose, 95135 / Council District 8

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

*Grains of Thought* is a site-specific sculptural environmental artwork designed as a seating area; it will be the center piece on the facility's exterior plaza at the rear of the building, adjacent to the Library's community room. It is intended as an inviting destination for visitors to the Library.

The installation features three columns encased in high-fired glazed ceramic, slate, marble, and glass tile: the columns will support a plant-covered trellis that will create shade for the curved concrete benches beneath; a decorative medallion will be inset in the center of the plaza area. This design is a result of collaboration between the artists and the architectural design team.



Artist's rendering of the *Grains of Thought* artwork concept, showing the columns with trellis, seating installation and plaza medallion inset.

Each of the columns feature imagery of large "books" at their base, fashioned with slate covers and ceramic deckled-edged pages. The book imagery will travel up the columns in a mirrored pattern of alternating flat and fan shaped open books. Closed books in alternating colors will form a chevron staff of wheat design, with a few of the pages that will appear to be beginning to "grow", a suggestion of growth through exploration of books. The grains of wheat and other imagery on the columns suggest the "grains of thought" theme of the artwork. Imagery on the columns will include other agricultural references, including grape images in recognition that the Library is located on land that was part of the historic Mirassou Winery. Each column will have similar imagery but will be unique.

Patterns on each of the three columns will culminate in a glowing, round sun form near the top. These sun forms are intended to resonate with the large circular dome of the Library building's architecture and will use a similar pallet of brilliant orange and crimson colors. One column will reflect the idea of morning, another will suggest noon and the third, evening. This solar theme will also be reflected in the concrete of the plaza, with colorful radius lines that will draw attention to the central focal medallion inset in the center of the plaza surface.

#### **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

Artist Susan Dannenfelser is a bay area sculptor who, with her contractor husband Kirk Beck, creates primarily site-specific architectural tile installations. Their works are included in many public and private collections. Large scale public commissions include the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center, the lobby of the Disney Grand Californian Hotel, City of Lodi Vintner's Square, Stanford University's Children's Hospital, City of Brentwood Rose Garden, City of Palo Alto Children's Library, and the Stockton Products complex in Livermore, CA.

In addition to exhibitions and her commissioned artworks Susan has taught sculpture at the University of California, Davis, San Jose State University, University of California at Berkeley, and at St. Mary's College in Moraga. Susan is active in the arts community and has served on the board of Pro Arts Oakland and the Hearst Art Museum Advisory Board; she is currently on the Lafayette Public Art Committee. Kirk has served on the Tile Heritage Foundation Board. Both are members of the Northern Californian Tile Artisans.

More of their work may be seen at [www.dannenbeck.com](http://www.dannenbeck.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 1992 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.