
Teaching Stones

Artist Team: Academy of Art University Graduate Students under the direction of Professor Donna Schumacher

June 2007

Almaden Community Center and Library / 6445 Camden Ave, San Jose, CA 95120 / Council District 10

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Teaching Stones is a tribute to Doris Dillon, a beloved teacher and community member. Doris Dillon was known for her generous spirit and passion for teaching. She engaged students through games, and it was often said that she could “teach a rock to read.” This work is located in a small grove of liquid amber trees adjacent to the facility’s main entrance.

Teaching Stones consists of two primary elements. The first is a reading/sitting area. The circular shape of the area, formed by a granite bench, is inspired by one of Doris’ favorite activities: story telling. The reading area provides a place to sit and share stories in the traditional manner of gathering in a circle. Integrated within the existing contours of the landscape, it is partially embedded in the earth. The decomposed granite interior of the circle extends outward to the sidewalk forming the overall shape of a keyhole. This keyhole is a reflection of Doris’ belief that reading is a key to learning and knowledge, which she shared through teaching.

The second element is a series of nine large smooth-surfaced granite stones that are placed throughout the grove, and echo the color of the reading circle. Each retains its natural, irregular form and is inscribed with a ribbon containing words from one of the elements of language: nouns, verbs, etc. The words chosen and sandblasted into the stones were collected directly from materials about Doris Dillon’s life and work and therefore a reflection of her life. In the same spirit in which Doris fostered learning through play, the stones can serve as a playful learning tool for future



generations: rubbings can be done on the stones with pencil and paper, with students moving from stone to stone, gathering a noun from one, a verb from another and onward until a full sentence is collected.

Teaching Stones serves as a reading area, a place to daydream, a place to learn while playing, or as a favorite spot to wait for a ride from family or friends. This commemorative artwork honors Doris Dillon's legacy of mixing learning with pleasure in the form of a gift to the community she loved so well.

ABOUT THE ARTIST TEAM

Teaching Stones was created by eight Fine Art– Sculpture students from the Academy of Art University (San Francisco) as a class project of the Graduate Seminar in Site Specific Public Art, under the direction of Professor Donna Schumacher.

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.

