

Art AWAKENS



SPIRAL DANCE: Decorative grates, left, surround the base of trees along Charter Way in Stockton. A pedestrian, below, jogs past a sculpture of Charter Way and El Dorado Street.

Record photos by CLIFFORD GHO



STREET SCENES: Bicyclists, left, intersect with geometric forms along the pedestrian walkway at the March Lane Union Pacific Railroad underpass in Stockton. Jelani Addison, far left, of Stockton strides past inlaid shapes at the Hammer Lane railroad underpass near Lorraine Avenue in Stockton.

New signs of life for Stockton's cityscape

By Paula Shell
 Record Staff Writer

On Charter Way, small businesses hunker down on what once was the main Stockton route between Interstate 5 and Highway 99. Trucks now thunder in the distance along the Crossstown Express.

Charter Way is a street that time left behind. As Stockton expanded north, the street withered. But corneries, liquor stores,

discount shoe sellers, doughnut fryers and florists are witnessing a rebirth.

"It's happening," said Jaime Hill, cupping his hands in the cold wind to light a cigarette at the corner of Charter Way and Stanislaus Street.

The innovation started with art. It's happening there and everywhere in Stockton. Public art made of steel, concrete, tile, bronze and glass skillfully crafted into tree grates, lighting, seating and interactive

sculpture is being born all over the city.

On Charter Way, city planners installed median strips and planted them, adding a measure of safety and making the wide street friendlier.

"Now, when people jaywalk — and they do — they have a place to stand in the middle of traffic," Hill said.

There also are two pieces of sculpture growing from the concrete divide. Around

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each tree and in the sidewalk are dance spirals — the shape of change.

The spiral "is the process of coming to the same point again and again, but at a different level, so that everything is seen in a new light," writes anthropologist Angeles Arrien in "Signs of Life."

In fact, cultures the world over and throughout time communicate with the spiral, square, circle, cross and triangle. These are taking shape in sidewalks, pedestrian walkways, in retaining walls and overpass handrails. They say growth, stability, unity, relationship and vision.

Art speaks a language that the listener intuits.

Hill has lived on Charter Way all his life, mostly in a small house next to a tire shop. Now he's a plumber working on muddy jobs at a couple of condemned properties.

Charter Way is on the upswing of a life cycle, he said.

Created by Glen Rogers, the sculptural buds are poised to unfurl. When her next art piece, *Three Wings*, is installed this winter near the interstate, Charter Way will experience symbolic "lift off."

"Any art that's worth a damn should be based on archetypal images," said Stockton native Scott Runion, the artist who built *The Boat* at Maya Angelou Library. It was the first public art project installed in the city in 1996.

Runion, 40, also recently completed projects for Weber Avenue — tree grates where fish flirt underneath lily pads and guards that swath the trunks in cattails.

"All great art speaks to people from all nations. It transcends regional and cultural vision," said Runion, a psychologist with Stockton Unified School District.

Paul Her, 20, provided evidence to support Runion's statement. He took a break from his Internet research at the south-side library ranch and wandered into the foyer with its soaring atrium and "The Boat" moored in golden light.

He gazed up at a hand-built replica of an African *dashur*, a vessel in use in 1800 B.C. Runion carved the names of 97 authors into its planks — writers span-



Record photos by CLIFFORD OTO

PLAY BALL: When the season opens, fans will walk into Billy Hebert Field through a colorful interactive archway designed by East Los Streetscapers.

ning centuries and continents, and Her recognized C.S. Lewis from his reading of "The Chronicles of Narnia."

Runion selected a boat to make his statement because it represents "the voyage of knowledge."

Some art translates fluently.

Though phase one of Charter Way was cobbled together from several funds, the Stockton City Council approved a public art ordinance in 2000. For every capital project involving public money, 2 percent of the budget is devoted to art in its immediate environment. Currently, there are 16 public art projects underway, totaling \$704,000, said Rebekah Burr-Siegel, the city's public art manager.

Public art is accessible art — art for those who might not venture into a museum or a gallery, she said.

Architect Tom Bowe, 47, passionately agreed.

A Stockton native, Bowe sits on the city's Public Art Advisory

Committee, a post he welcomed after completing a term on the Stockton Arts Commission. There he helped craft a public art master plan.

Well-planned design makes otherwise boring, but utilitarian, objects artistic. It doesn't take much to turn a lamppost into a work of art — something that does for Bowe what a good vintage does for the wine connoisseur.

The committee utilizes a different selection panel for all of its projects that will be sensitive to matters of age, race, gender, culture, history — any aspect that might affect the art's impact.

The kinetic metal "found-object" sculptures at Stockton's Skatepark, located in Anderson Park — executed by Bryan Tedrick and installed in April — appeal to young people.

The street speak that engages

drivers and pedestrians at the newly completed overpasses on March and Hammer lanes creates a similar energy.

Multiple triangles and diamond shapes, embedded in the walkways by Roger Berry of Clarksburg and John DiStefano, a New York resident, and featured in the pedestals that boost the skaters into the air, represent goals and vision.

By spring, the inside and outside of the Fox Theatre will have been touched by artists. When baseball fever strikes, so will Billy Hebert Field.

Wayne Healy, a long-time member of the Chicano muralist movement in Los Angeles, was chosen to do the ballpark honors.

For 23 years, Healy was an aerospace engineer, but his roots run deep in art. While he was drawing a steady paycheck checking turbines, he and another painter opened East Los Streetscapers in Rosemead.

Sometimes, there are two people working in the studio. Sometimes, it's eight if there's a project that's got to go out the door, Healy said. Currently, he's working on four Southern California installations, but he's brain-deep into a cinder block and glass tile archway for the mid-Stockton stadium.

Three 10-foot steel columns that bisect a circle at 120 degrees, will be joined at the top by metal cutouts of baseball action.

Lighting at the center will throw shadows about as people walk through.

Six square feet of tile on each side of the columns will reflect photos from bygone baseball days, contemporary shots of the Ports, Little Leaguers and a multitude of images that will have children playing "Where's Waldo?"

"It's a simple maze," said Healy, 56. "You'll walk over the lights and your shadows are going to dance."

No one, he added, will be able to ignore it.

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