

ART AND THE HIGHLINE COMMUNITY

Sculpture in Public Places

Background: Here is a chance to combine art and architecture right in downtown Burien. This is a two part lesson: the first is a field trip to the Burien Library and the second is the follow up art creation in the class room. The main focus is sculpture and how it can enhance a public space.

The Burien Library, part of the King County Library System, has a beautiful small courtyard, visible when you enter the doors. It is open to the sky and has attractive plantings. The focal piece is a 6 foot tall fountain which drips water downward in a delicate and continual fashion.

This fountain was designed by the Seattle artist, **George Tsutakawa** in 1972. Tsutakawa was born in Seattle in 1910 and moved to Japan for 10 years. He returned to Seattle at the age of 17 and studied art at the University of Washington. George Tsutakawa was a sumi painter but he is most famous for his fountains that are sculptures combining the permanence of metal with nature's delicate yet vital life force, water. He created his first fountain at age 50 and now the Seattle area has many of his fountains on display. His son, also grew up to be a sculptor too, if you have seen the big mitt outside SAFECO Field, then you have seen ---- most famous work!

The other sculptures at the Burien Library are playful little heads attached to the brick right by the book drops.

Lesson Ideas

- Have the children observe the fountain and describe it. Be sure they use their ears as well as their eyes. Ask them what it does for the library, why is it nice to have a fountain here? How about the plants and courtyard? How does that add the attractiveness of the library? Does it make them feel welcome? Should a public library pay for art or should it only buy books and computers? Have students sketch the fountain in their field trip notebooks.
- Now go outside in small groups and have the kids look at and touch the little carved critters by the book drop. Why are they there?

How do they add to the library building? Has everyone been respectful of this art? Why not?

- After returning to school a fun art lesson could be created with modeling clay or better yet, clay for the kiln. Have each child design a creature to display in the school library. Encourage fanciful yet appealing critters that could help make a building more interesting.

Materials

Sketchbook, pencil

Clay, kiln and glazes optional

Websites

<http://www.washington.edu/research/showcase/1947a.html>

Biography of George Tsutakawa

<http://www.jetcitymaven.com/9908aug/histgates.html>

Article about the gates created by Tsukawawa in Lake City

<http://www.usc.edu/isd/archives/la/pubart/UCLAArt/obos.html>

Photo of Obos 69 waterfall sculpture by Tsutakawawa

<http://www.usc.edu/isd/archives/la/pubart/UCLAArt/>

A long list of Public Art found at the University of California, Los Angeles.