

LOCAL GIFTS

Outdoor Sculpture in Marin County

BY ARIEL ENGLANDER PHOTO TIM PORTER





Public art has triumphed in Tiburon. The victory was long in coming and not gained without hurdles, but perhaps it marks the beginning of a trend for Marin County. A town center anchored by sculpture is a centuries-old tradition throughout the world. A plaza, with benches to gather and reflect and art to inspire, is at the heart of most charming towns and cities. Whether it's Venice or New York, St. Petersburg or Prague, most travelers can name a place where they felt a magical connection to the community while resting in the town square and looking at a statue, a monument or a fountain.

Tiburon joined in this tradition in October with the dedication of *Coming About*, a kinetic sculpture and fountain by wife-and-husband artists Jennifer Madden and Jeffrey Reed. Long on natural beauty, Tiburon nonetheless lacked a true gathering spot or much public art. Solitary, seaward-facing benches along the bay serve as popular and pleasant spots to reflect, but are not oriented to the notion of gathering. With the revamped plaza (designed by Pederson Associates) at Main Street and Tiburon Boulevard encasing the new fountain, Tiburon now has its center.

Coming About contains five stainless-steel sails that rotate slowly over an infinity-edged pool of cascading water. Meant to evoke various icons of the bay, the sculpture elicits different imagery with each movement—here a shark fin, there a wave. Sand-colored concrete etched with a wave pattern and studded with pebbles surrounds the fountain, which punctuates one end of the plaza. Benches occupy the other. Madden and Reed have created numerous public sculpture projects, but she says this one was different. “It is such a special site,” she says. “We will never be able to match it.”

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—JENNIFER MADDEN

Coming About is a serene and elegant work. The juxtaposition of the stainless steel, the reflecting softness of the pool and the sound of the cascading water create a pleasing aesthetic. The fountain's contemporary look and traditional plaza setting add a great deal to the streetscape of Tiburon. The scene was anything but serene, though, when the sculpture was christened with a bottle of champagne by Laleh Zelinsky, one of Tiburon's leading ladies. Zelinsky underwrote the \$250,000 project in honor of her late husband, Edward. As Zelinsky “launched” the sailing sculpture on its journey over a gardenia-filled pool, more than 500 people gathered around, serenaded by bagpipes and the gurgling water of their new town fountain.

Every small town in the Bay Area should have outdoor public art, and most do in some humble form. But of course, there are not many Laleh Zelinskys around to fund it. Sometimes, even when an artist is willing to donate a public work, bureaucracy stands in the way. Jennie Wasser created a bronze mermaid sculpture that many people have seen next to the Shell station on Bridgeway in Sausalito. She wanted to give it to the town so it could be placed near the waterfront. That was more five years and many city council meetings ago. The mermaid remains beached near the gas pumps.

Sometimes an artist's generosity is welcomed. In 2004, renowned sculptor Archie Held donated a bronze fountain to honor Dedication to Special Education, a volunteer parent organization that helps Marin children with special needs. The fountain stands in Town Center in Corte Madera; perhaps, as malls have replaced Main Streets in many lo-

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cales, this is the perfect location for a work titled *Community*.

Organizations like Art Works Downtown continue the push for public art. Assisting the city of San Rafael in its revitalization plan, the group has placed art all over town in prominent locations like the Community Center, the public library, the Falkirk Community Center lawn, and the Promenade at A Street and Anderson Drive. On Fourth Street, *Beautiful*, an abstract steel sculpture by Dennis Patton, has landed right on the San Rafael City Plaza near popular lunch spots. Patton is the same artist who gave us the 30-foot-tall *Sir Francis Drake* on East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard in Larkspur and *Tamalpais*, the lovely maiden at the entrance to Bon Air Shopping Center.

Meanwhile, the Marin Community Foundation has partnered with other local, state and national foundations to form Fund for Artists, a \$1 million initiative to fuel the endeavors of Bay Area artists through commissions, awards, and support. And the Marin Center Renaissance Partnership works to fulfill Frank Lloyd Wright's 42-year-old vision for Marin Center as a distinctive destination for social gatherings, cultural events, commercial activities and personal solace. When complete, the site will become a civic and cultural landmark incorporating the Civic Center, Marin Veterans' Memorial Auditorium, outdoor public art, an exhibit hall, lagoon, gardens, walking paths and outdoor gathering spaces.

Many of us have a favorite public sculpture—whether it's Benjamin Bufano's *Bear* in Ross, Al Guibara's bronze *Blackie* on the pasture in Tiburon, conceptual artist Tom Marion's *Observatory Bird* in the Marin Center's Lagoon Park, or Heather Wilcoxon's whimsical *Art Car* in Sausalito. As beautiful as Marin's natural attributes are, these works—and the newest addition in Tiburon—enhance the equally vital cultural landscape.

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