

Enriching Lives



Civic Art

PRESS RELEASE

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MEDIA PLEASE NOTE: More information and photos for download may be found at
http://lacountyarts.org/civcart/04_Fourth_District/civic_Kim_Emerson.htm

**“Water Henge: H2O = Life” SCULPTURES
UNVEILED IN CERRITOS REGIONAL COUNTY PARK**

The grouping, which recalls England’s Stonehenge, functions as a sundial

County of Los Angeles and City of Cerritos officials today dedicated a group of five mosaic sculptures at the northwest corner of Cerritos Regional County Park where Bloomfield Avenue meets 195th Street. The sculptures, called “Water Henge: H2O = Life” and arranged in a circle 20 feet in diameter, bring to mind England’s Stonehenge with their strikingly dramatic, bold shapes. They also echo the deep history of their setting but, unlike Stonehenge, they were created over the past year by mosaic artist Kim Emerson.

Each sculpture tells the story of how the Los Angeles Basin was once affected by large amounts of water. Engraved tiles with written facts about the history and the future of water conservation are integrated into the sculptures. The tallest one – 13 feet high - represents ocean and the prehistoric life forms found under water millions of years ago and is crowned with a gold painted metal sun with a hole in the center. The second sculpture reflects the era when the ocean receded and dinosaurs roamed the resulting marshlands and the third mirrors the next period of flat fields bearing animal paw prints and human footprints. The fourth – only 2 feet high – appears to melt into the earth and invites visitors to climb and sit. The fifth and smallest sculpture, at the exact center of the circle, symbolizes the minimal amount of water available today and incorporates the four points of the compass. All five together operate as a sundial: a shadow is always cast from the “sun catcher” atop the tallest sculpture and the little sculpture is used to read the time and season.

The 56-acre Cerritos Regional County Park is operated jointly by Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation and the City of Cerritos. “Water Henge: H2O = Life” is the first Civic Art collaboration between the County and a municipality. The City of Cerritos and the County each contributed half of the \$172,000 project cost and had equal representation on the project coordination committee, which selected the artist and approved the design.

"Kim Emerson has created a very unique piece of art, and we are thrilled to have it at Cerritos Regional Park. In addition, Kim's Water Henge gives us a glimpse into the history of water in the region," said Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. "It is not only visually stunning, but it is also quite intricate in how it works with the sun. I look forward to the Vernal Equinox in March."

City of Cerritos Mayor Jim Edwards said: "The City of Cerritos is proud to partner with Los Angeles County on this delightful new civic art project. Kim Emerson's colorful, thought-provoking sculptures are a fitting celebration of Cerritos' efforts to conserve water through the use of a recycled water system. The pieces are a beautiful addition to our community's collection of artwork in public places and will be enjoyed by Cerritos residents for many generations to come."

Kim Emerson's inspiration for "Water Henge: H2O = Life" came after visiting the project site. "Water has had and continues to have such a strong influence on the landscape," says Emerson. "One of the most impressive features of the park was the use of reclaimed water for irrigation since it was built 20 years ago. I also found that the City of Cerritos has been very progressive in the conservation of resources and sensitivity to the environment. It was the first city in the country to build a city hall powered by solar technology."

"This artwork tells the story of water in a way that makes us aware of time using the sun's shadows to express that idea," says Emerson. "I want people to gather here, watch the shadows and realize what once was."

Kim Emerson specializes in mosaic design and in 2004 established Kim Emerson Mosaics, LLC. Her public commissions include a fountain at the Sun Harbor Marina in San Diego and a mural at the entrance to the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts. She designs her work to be site-specific and often uses motifs from nature and ancient cultures. She has received recognition for her mosaic work, such as Best of Show for Architectural Category at the Society of American Mosaic Artists annual conference exhibit in 2005. She was also awarded the Orchid Award presented for excellence in landscape design and public art for "Carley's Magical Gardens" at the Children's Hospital of San Diego in 2000. In addition she joined with artist Harold Balazs and local at risk youth to create "Playspace," located at the Harding Family Center in Idaho. Emerson's ability to collaborate with other artists, landscapers and members from the local community distinguishes her work. She received her Master of Science degree in Historic Preservation of Architecture at the University of Oregon and maintains a studio in San Diego, CA.

The artwork was commissioned under Los Angeles County's Civic Art Program, administered by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. Carrie Brown of the Arts Commission was project manager for "Water Henge: H2O = Life." Under the Civic Art Program, one percent of construction costs of all County capital projects over \$500,000 is set aside for the incorporation of civic art.

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The **Los Angeles County Arts Commission**, Laura Zucker, Executive Director, provides leadership in cultural services of all disciplines for the largest county in the United States, encompassing 88 municipalities. The Arts Commission, in addition to overseeing the County's Civic Art Program for capital projects, provides leadership and staffing to support the regional blueprint for arts education, *Arts for All*; administers a grants program that funds more than 300 nonprofit arts organizations annually; funds the largest arts internship program in the country in conjunction with the Getty Foundation, programs the John Anson Ford Theatres and supports the Los Angeles County Cultural Calendar on ExperienceLA.com. The Commission also produces free community programs, including the L.A. Holiday Celebration broadcast nationally, and a year-round music program that funds more than 50 free concerts each year in public sites. The 2008-09 President of the Arts Commission is Betty Haagen.