

Yoshio Taylor

Article

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Times Correspondent**

In the spotlight *Arts & entertainment move*

Artwork Taylor-made for the Plaza Escuela

By Diana Leonard
TIMES CORRESPONDENT

SOMETIMES WHEN a city commissions artwork, the results can be inspiring. Such is the case with the sculptures by artist Yoshio Taylor, who was awarded a commission for the Plaza Escuela shopping center in Walnut Creek.

The new plaza provides retail and office space for businesses such as Andronico's, Starbucks and other shops, restaurants and businesses. His work can be viewed at the entrance of Locust Street and Olympic Boulevard in Walnut Creek.

Varied media contribute to the uniqueness of Taylor's work. He has mastered drawing, painting and ceramics, and applies this to his sculpture. Taylor's imagery is poetic and surreal. Yet his work is grounded in nature, encompassing nature's elements and life force. Taylor's range of ability enables him to go beyond traditional uses of ceramics and sculpture to combine the plasticity, flow, color and design of fine art.

Taylor has worked in clay for more than two decades, and is a master potter and ceramics sculptor. He has received several awards. Presently, he's a full-time teacher at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento.

What was your source for the images within the Plaza Escuela sculptures?

"The idea for these pieces came about when I was presented with the project proposal, and I looked into the surrounding environment: the name of the plaza, Escuela; the immediate location, Walnut Creek; and the surrounding area, beautiful Mount Diablo, are all important to these pieces.

"When I researched the flora and fauna of the area, I found that some are disappearing. I wanted to emphasize some of these endangered species and the specific frogs, birds and foxes that are native to this region.

"The male and female figures emerged out of love for the figurative work. I combined them with columns, giving them a place, presence and power. They are serene, and invoke a quiet restfulness. An interactive quality brings waterfalls, sounds and coolness. It provides a place to relax and refresh you."

The male and female forms are each holding a book. What do the books signify?

"The word *escuela* is the Spanish word for school. This is the historic site of one of the first schools in the area. To me, this signifies a place for gathering together and learning, and a preparation and hope for the future. Therefore, the books emerged as a symbol."

What are the names of these sculptures?

"They are named 'Echo.'"

Would you describe a little about the process of designing and creating the sculptures?

"It took a little over a year to design and install these pieces. The process was elaborate since it integrated so many different materials.

"Using bronze is quite involved and includes creating the original in clay, then wax, and then lost-wax processes, and finally, the bronze. Overseeing this demands many hours and many trips to the foundry. I am still adding bronze pieces. The water feature demanded a lot of planning and precision. Fortunately, it worked perfectly the first time I tested — that was wonderful!"



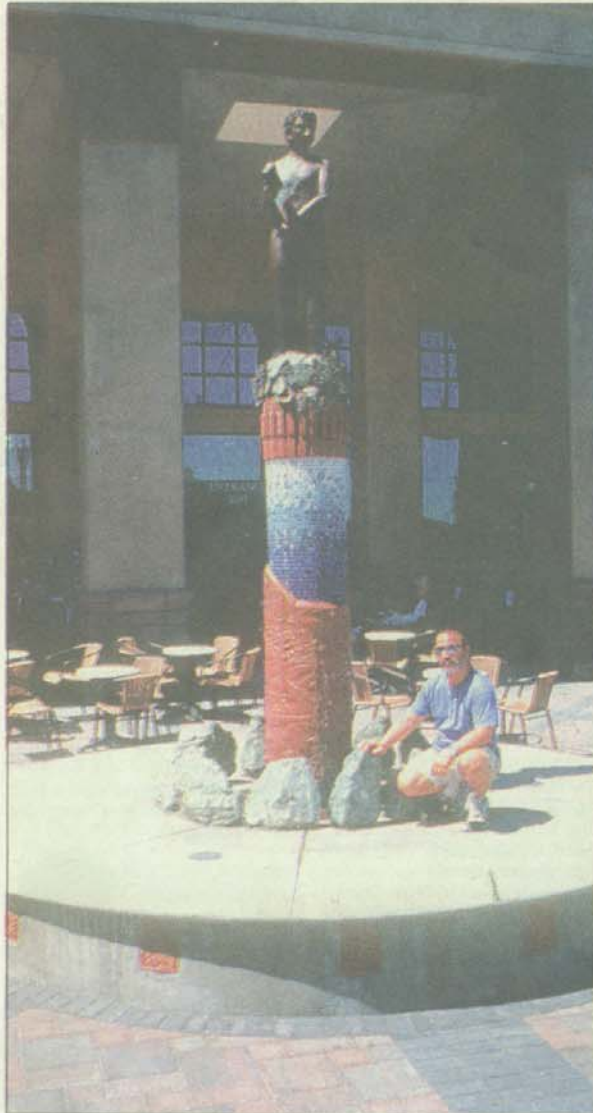
It sounds like you are extremely motivated and disciplined, and that you put in long hours every day.

"I start each day very early and work late into the night. I work on the average of 16 hours a day when I'm involved in projects. I was teaching full time, plus working on another intricate commissioned sculpture for the city of Roseville while I was creating these pieces. During that time, I often had to drive from Sacramento to the foundry, and to Walnut Creek and back to Roseville."

Can you share some of your philosophy as an artist?

"I set my own goal in life as an artist. I set it high, at the very top. I keep trying to reach my goal and never stop. Completing these public art projects will serve as a foundation for

ers and shakers of the future



BOB LARSON/TIMES

YOSHIO TAYLOR used the surrounding environment — the plaza's name, the location and Mount Diablo — as inspiration for his commissioned artwork now on display at Plaza Escuela in Walnut Creek.

greater projects in the future — artwork that affects the viewers in a positive way.

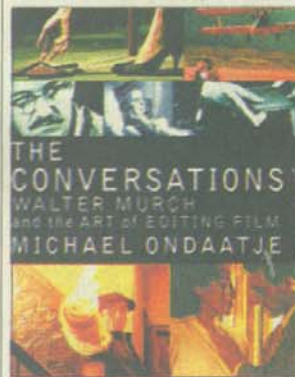
"This particular work, 'Echo,' is interactive. Perhaps the carvings on the terra-cotta relief draw people closer to look and see what it is about, ask questions, wonder what this is for. They might have a

dialogue about it. Maybe they gain a further appreciation of Mount Diablo and this region, and a greater awareness of their connection to the environment."

What is your next project?

"I am working on a similar project for the city of Dublin."

WHAT WE LIKE ...



The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film," by Michael Ondaatje (Knopf, \$35, 339 pages). With this book, Ondaatje hopes to demystify film editing, or what he describes as "an unknown, mysterious skill — some smoke and mirrors, some touching up, some old black magic." He offers us a rare opportunity to understand the craft through a series of conversations with Marin resident Walter Murch, the famed Oscar-winning editor of such films as "The Godfather" trilogy and "Apocalypse Now." The two men met and became friends during the filming of "The English Patient," based on Ondaatje's book. The book covers topics from editing "The Conversation" to Marlon Brando and the art of bringing novels to film.

— Mary F. Pols

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