

"The Elders"

The Grass Valley traffic circle Sculpture at East Main St. and Idaho Maryland Rd.

Symbols depicting the native Maidu the Chinese the Cornish and Lyman Gilmore set within portals of Douglas fir timbers depicting the four directions. The sculpture is intended to carry the spirit of the areas past, present as well as our future. The Elders is intended to hold the essence of the hard working people that work towards making our community a bountiful sustainable place to live. This sculpture is built to last many generations and to become a landmark for the good people of Grass Valley.

The building of "The Elders" was completely created in my Grass Valley studio adjacent to the Empire mine. My studio assistant Justin Coyle worked on every aspect of the project. Structural engineer and consultant John Payne, concrete experts Ben Shepard and Barry Jones, Steel fabricator and historic mining consultant, Mike Nevios. Crane operator Joe Justice, photo journalist Linda Savitz all gave there enthusiastic expertise to the project. All the materials and labor where cycled back into the local economy.

The symbols I chose include the symbol of the acorn that represents the native peoples, their deep spiritual connection and reverence of the land, these people that for generations existed here in a sustainable way. The symbol of the Cornish people and for all the European immigrants that came with the spirit of discovery a spirit that can serve us well if used compassionately and intelligently. The Chinese symbol that means beauty is to remind us that much of this area was developed on labor of those that courageously came from far around world. These people brought with them an eastern aesthetic and wisdom that we still can learn much from. The stylized symbol of Lyman Gilmore's airplane is meant to characterize the innovative spirit of this area. The entrepreneurial spirited individuals that are drawn here to pursue and share their brilliance. Like in the past this spirit will alter our future, if done intelligently we will reap positive rewards.

The architecture of the sculpture is inspired by the gold rush and the life style of the past. The work here was hard, it was the beginning of the industrial revolution, heavy materials and equipment, four hundred miles of mineshafts dug into hard rock, water pumped out of mine shafts 24/7 for decades on end. Miners that went underground before sunrise and back out after sunset never seeing the light of day. Massive concrete foundations and structures, portals of timbers supporting the mine shaft entrances. Tons of steel, cast iron, steel rope, pulleys, gears and wheels. This sculpture is intended to carry the robust spirit of strength, courage and tenacity that it took to follow the western dream.

"The Elders" is intended to be a generator of healing. Scrawled into the concrete foundation are the words, Love, Kindness, Forgive and Joy, the counter clockwise or feminine direction of people in motion around the circle 24 hours a day seven days a week is set with a prayer to exude the essence of these words into the community. "The Elders" is imbued with intention to bring healing to a dark past, the environmental destruction the poisoning of the waters the clear cutting of the forests the greed and violence that this land witnessed. Foremost of all the intention is to create healing and forgiveness for the genocide of the indigenous peoples those that were killed for land, resources, greed and profit. This must be acknowledged, apologized for and forgiven before we can fully move forward as a unified community.

As an artist it is my passion to work and to work hard to create my vision. Like those that came before me I take great pride in things well built. My want is for this work to become more beautiful with age, I imagine over time that moss and lichen will develop, rust streaks, rock aggregate will show through as concrete deteriorates, the timbers will continue to weather all this becomes the patina enhancing the sculpture for generations to come. I am deeply honored as well as humbled to have been trusted by the great city of Grass Valley to create this vision and set it in such a prominent location.

Signed with Gratitude
Kurt Ernest Steger
5-25-2010

Artist
Statement

Acorn
Symbol
Photo

Chinese
Symbol
Photo

The
Elders

Lyman Gilmore
Airplane

Cornish
Symbol
Photo

Symbol
Photo

Symbol
meanings