



Trace Elements and Variable Order, PHX Sky Train Public Art, by Daniel Mayer
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Phoenix Sky Train opened to the public, linking light-rail to Terminal-4, at noon on April 8, 2013. I designed two public works of art for this important project: Two large-scale glass murals for the connector bridges and the terrazzo platform at Terminal-4. The Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture Public Art Program commissioned both projects with Aviation percent-for-art funds. These projects were integrated into PHX Sky Train from an early onset ensuring a seamless transition between art and architecture in these highly visible spaces.

The importance of public art in these spaces is to welcome travelers for a first impression, providing a memory of place, a sense wonderment and beauty. I'm honored to have been selected from a highly competitive field and to welcome travellers with artwork that is accessible. Public Art shows a commitment from the City of Phoenix and indicates that these projects are important for building a dynamic community. The glass murals and terrazzo platform required different approaches for design and fabrication that included tremendous coordination and oversight between myself, public art program managers, engineers, architects, installationists, lighting specialists, contractors, sub-contractors and an international team of specialists.

Trace Elements was inspired by the intricacies and beauty of Arizona leaves and designed in a rhythmic book-page sequence for two large-scale murals. Integrated into the design and construction of the pedestrian bridges, each mural consists of 28

individual laminated glass panels. Each connector bridge mural is 9' tall by 115' long and is artificially backlit. Balanced lighting illuminates the richness of hand-applied ceramic glazes, highlighting my studio approach to layering of visual information.

To begin the creative design process, I collected leaf samples and pressed them into a metal foil through an etching press, then inked the images by hand to capture the subtle and tactile details of highlights, darks and patterns. The original 8" x 12" images were digitally scaled up to 8' x 12'. Fourteen master images were



screenprinted with ceramic glazes on glass and fired in industrial kilns. I collaborated with Franz Mayer of Munich (no relation), one of the world's leading fabricators of architectural glass and mosaics to produce the murals.

After several years of work and many creative and technical decisions, fourteen tons of glass were completed and shipped from the Munich studio to Phoenix Sky Harbor International

Airport.

My design for *Variable Order* includes subtle changes of eight terrazzo colors, aggregates of recycled crushed mirror, blue and clear glass, stone, and Abalone shell. Over 1000 water-jet cut aluminum letterforms are randomly placed and layered with my own handwriting as pattern spanning the 40' x 500' platform. I worked closely with fabricators Advance Terrazzo of Phoenix and Marzee Water Jet Services. The PHX Sky Train terrazzo projects recently received the "2013 Job of the Year" award, juried by the National Terrazzo and Mosaic Association and announced in Milan, Italy.

On a human scale, one can see about 15 feet in any one direction on the highly polished terrazzo surface and I took advantage of this factor in my design. The underlying background for the master design has five shades of blue terrazzo that repeats across the entire platform. This patterning allows the different elements to fade in and out providing a changeable experience. The challenge of working in the terrazzo process was the infinite color range and aggregate choices.

An important element in the overall design and reflecting my interest in letterpress printing and book arts was the inclusion of individual letters. The letterforms I selected are Garamond lower-case italic, a typeface designed in the 16th century that has a calligraphic elegance. The randomly placed letters and large handwritten script turn the platform into an open book for new experiences and stories. The large-scale phrases reference the timelessness of open spaces and limitless possibilities.

Both projects took five years from conception to completion and pushed my small-scale studio works into large-scale installations. The creative and technical process has been a rewarding experience collaborating with the whole team who went the extra distance. It's great to know thousands of people will see the artwork weekly, providing them with a gateway to Arizona.