



RUTH ASAWA ART PANELS

ART IN PUBLIC PLACES COMMITTEE | AUGUST 2, 2021

Tara Thompson, Arts & Culture Manager

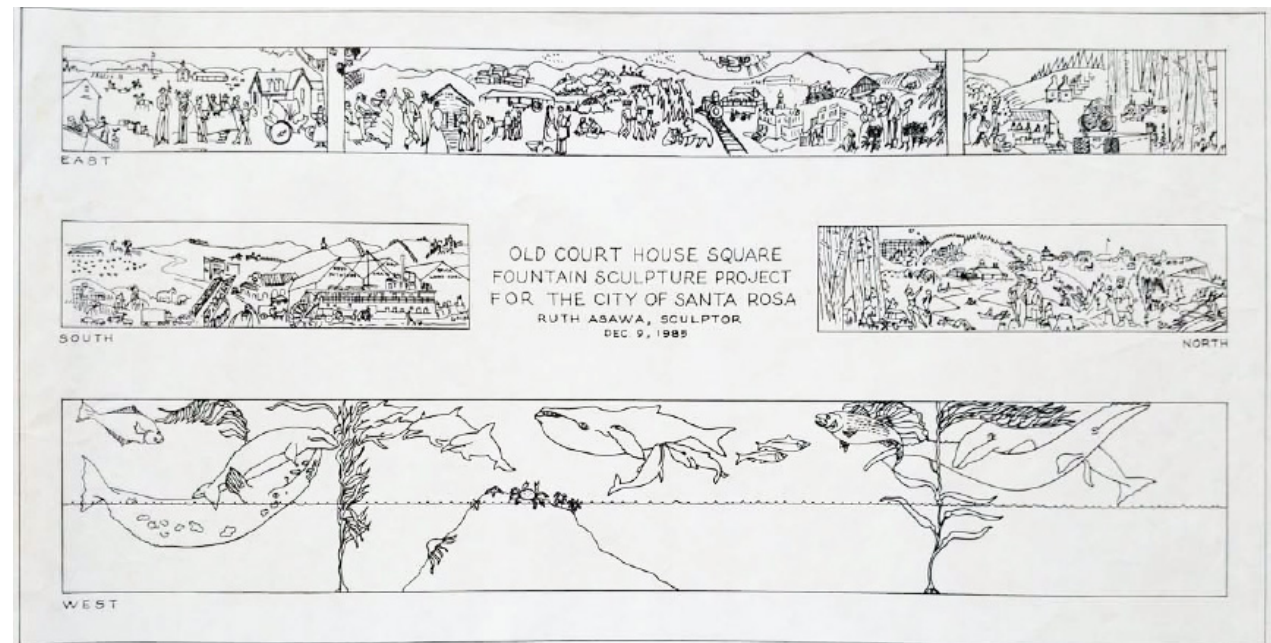


BACKGROUND

- 1985: Ruth Asawa contracted by the Redevelopment Agency of the City of Santa Rosa
- 1987: Ruth Asawa completes and installs art panels on the fountain in Courthouse Square

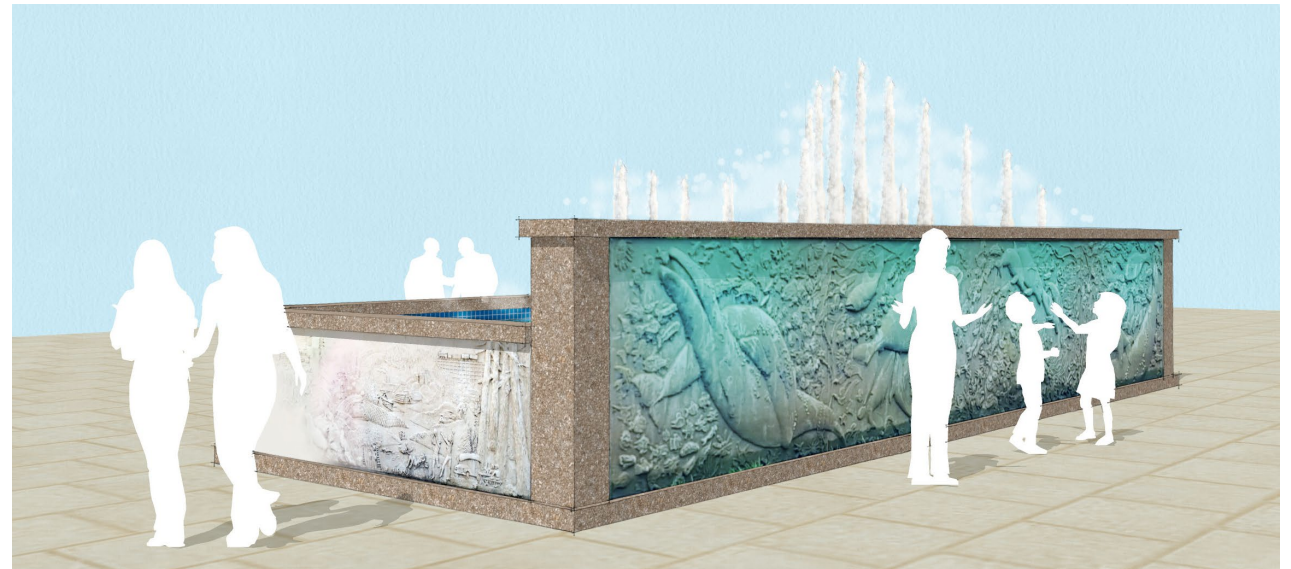


Picture Credit: Ruth Asawa expresses ideas to Development Commission while touring fountain area in Santa Rosa's Courthouse Square. (6/27/1984, Otto Greule)



BACKGROUND

- 2016: Council approved design for reunified Courthouse Square, including the Asawa Fountain relocated to the south end of the square
- 2016: art panels removed and transported to a storage facility prior to the Courthouse Square reunification project
- 2019: Hugh Futrell Corp announces plan to construct new fountain



CONSERVATOR'S ASSESSMENT

- Katharine Untch, MA, CAS Principal Conservator with Conservation Strategies consulting on the project since 2016
- Pre-removal conditions:
 - Water damage on panels
 - Discoloration, algae growth, staining
 - Increase porosity
 - Cracks, crackle net patterns
 - Vertical cracks



ASSESSMENT, CONT.

- Post-removal conditions:
 - Water damage, discoloration, staining
 - Cracks in panels
 - Breakage
 - Surface loss
 - Hole blowout
 - Previous repairs
 - Bottom edge losses
 - Rust from previous fasteners



CONSERVATOR'S OPINION

- Due to the deteriorating material, structural instability and ongoing needs of the original panels, Conservation Strategies supports casting the panels in bronze and installing the bronze casts on the Courthouse Square Fountain
- Letter dated 7/27/21 provides additional detail



INPUT FROM ARTISTS FAMILY

- Ruth Asawa Lanier, Inc. is a foundation formed to preserve Ruth Asawa's artwork and legacy, led by Asawa's children
- Letter dated 6/1/2021 provides strong support for the refabrication of the panels in bronze
- "We believe that [the panels] have become a beloved and important work for the local community and any plan should aim to create a durable solution so the work can remain in its outdoor setting. Since concrete has degraded over the years, particularly on the panel that had contact with water, we believe a replacement in bronze would create the most lasting and durable option."



WHY BRONZE?

- Asawa originally envisioned the artwork panels in bronze, but due to budget constraints, the GFRC material was selected
- Bronze is a very durable material requiring very little maintenance and preferred for outdoor conditions
- Bronze allows for precise surface detail and patinas can achieve various appearances

Artwork Credit: Ruth Asawa, *Japanese American Internment Memorial (detail)*, 1994, Bronze



COST COMPARISON

	Panels	Engineering	Conservation	TOTAL
Re-Install Original Panels	\$142,585	\$2,600	\$66,483	\$211,668
Install Cast Bronze Panels	\$271,500	\$5,200	\$5,305	\$282,005



SUMMARY

- Original panels have a limited life expectancy in their current material
- Over the 34 years since the original panels were installed, they have suffered from exposure to weather and show wear, pitting, and loss of surfaces, exposure of the underlying woven fiberglass, micro fissure cracking from expansion and contraction and staining that is difficult to impossible to remove
- Treatment, repair and installation options for the original panels will be expensive due to the additional measures required to protect the deteriorating material and will require extensive ongoing maintenance
- Strong support for bronze casts from the conservator and Ruth Asawa Lanier, Inc



RECOMMENDATION

- It is recommended that the Art in Public Places Committee approve installing bronze casts of the Ruth Asawa panels on the fountain in Courthouse Square



QUESTIONS

