



Amber J Smith, Mixed Media Mosaic Artist
AS Meraki Art
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Artist Statement

I am a Mixed Media Mosaic Artist exploring the themes of endangered animals, disadvantaged people, and at-risk habitats often using materials that can be unfriendly to our environment. I aim to raise awareness and create dialogue about how our contemporary lifestyle adversely affects the environment, social fabric, and personal well-being. As a socially engaged art practitioner, I often involve the community in producing artwork, using art as a call to action and encouraging people to develop their own creativity. I see art as a tool to spark conversations about difficult social issues and as a means to spread joy and positivity.

Exhibitions/ Installations/ Awards

- Commission - City of Sunnyvale - *Dusk & Dawn: The Grey Wolf's Elegy* - Jan 2025
- Elected Public Art Commissioner for Palo Alto, CA, 2024-2027
- Juried Exhibit - Sanchez Art Center 50/50 Show - *"Ribbiting Crisis: A Global Response to the Frog Pandemic"* - August - September 2024
- Commission - Skyway Center, San Carlos, CA - *Endangered Inhabitants: Aerocycle* - July 2024
- Exhibition - Our Hearts Valentine Art Gallery at BACC - February 2024
- Exhibition - Atherton Art Foundation at Jennings Pavilion - Atherton Earth Day Festival - April 2024
- Silicon Valley Open Studios - May 2024
- Exhibit - ShockBoxx Gallery - Hermosa Beach, CA - *Empire vs. Shalom* - September - October 2023
- Selection by Jury - Art Studio Space #219 at Art Bias, San Carlos - May 2023
- Grant Award - Palo Alto ArtLift Microgrant in 2022 - *Cuppa Joe*
- Installation - Hoover Park, Palo Alto, CA - *Cuppa Joe* - July - October 2022

Publications / Press

- Art Bias and One Step Beyond partner to foster inclusivity in the arts for adults with intellectual disabilities, InMenlo, Sept. 21, 2024
- Artbias.1700, Instagram post May 16, 2024, and April 26, 2024
- Sheep vs. Robot mow off at Earth Day event highlights, The Almanac - April 24, 2024
- Atherton Earth Day Festival, Almanac Newspaper - April 23, 2024
- AAF Art Exhibit, Earth Day Press Release - April 16, 2024
- SVOS Catalog Cover, Silicon Valley Open Studios 2024 - April 2024
- Community Comes Out in Full Force for 99th Annual Palo Alto May Fete Parade, Palo Alto Online - May 8, 2023
- Recycled Coffee Art, Palo Alto Online Express - October 3, 2022
- Artlift Projects Invite Community's Contributions, Palo Alto Online Express - August 4, 2022
- Art in My Yard, Barron Park Association Newsletter - October 21, 2021

Community Events

- Cuppa Joe Neighborhood Art Project Installed at Hoover Park, Palo Alto, CA - July - October 2022 – 3x/week I worked on installation while interacting with the community. Community members were encouraged to collect their used Keurig cups for the making of Cuppa Joe - a 4ft tall coffee cup on an 8ft diameter saucer made from over 4000 Keurig Cups.

- Midtown Residents Ice Cream Social: Led the art activity of making sea turtles using recycled materials and educated participants on endangered animals and the importance of recycling.
- Ventura Residents Ice Cream Social: Art activity same as above.
- May Fete Parade 2023 - Community participants were encouraged to contribute to the making of a mural by affixing recycled bottle caps to an image of an endangered humpback whale; participants were encouraged to collect bottle caps for the project, and all participants signed an artist page.
- Atherton Earth Day Festival - Led the community art activity of having kids and adults “protest our plastic use” by affixing plastic bottle caps to “Penguins in Peril” - an artwork highlighting the endangered Emperor Penguins. All participants signed an artist page.

Teaching and Volunteer

- Pacific Art Center, Encaustic teacher's aide, 2019-2020
- One Step Beyond, mosaic class for special needs adults, July 2024
- HIP Housing, mosaic class for senior citizens, April 2024
- As Meraki Mixed Media Art, one-on-one art instruction - August 2023 - Present

Education and Further Study

- Bachelor of Fine Arts at UC Berkeley, 1995
- Palo Alto Art Center, ceramics, hand-building 2018-2020
- Pacific Art Center, Encaustic Intermediate Studies, 2019-2020
- Deanna Montero, Mentor and One-on-One Anatomical Sculpture instruction, Nov 2020 - August 2022

Artwork Descriptions:

Image: Hip Hop Dancer

Date: 2023

Location: Private Collection

Materials: Recycled Tin Foil, Wire, Plastic and Pal Tiya

Budget: \$250

Description: A maquette for a proposed large, outdoor, patio sculpture - private collection. This work celebrates culture, the love of dance, and motion.

Image: Endangered Inhabitants: Aerocycle

Date: 2024

Location: The Skyway Center, San Carlos

Recycled Materials: denim, upholstery fabric, packaging materials, plastic lids, straws, wire, soda cans, and bikini foam

Budget: \$3500

Description: Commissioned for The Skyway Center to hang above their new recycling system, this work pays tribute to historic female aviators and encourages recycling for a sustainable future.

Image: Penguins in Peril

Date: 2024

Location: On loan to the Atherton Arts Foundation

Materials: recycled bottle caps and found objects in parks (via metal detection)

Budget: \$700

Description: An interactive artwork that was created during the Atherton Earth Day Festival where community attendees were offered the opportunity to protest our excessive plastic use by applying bottle caps to this mural. The work has been refined with the addition of discarded/lost items found in parks.

Image: Baby Panda

Date: 2023

Location: Art Bias

Materials: The inner core features a discarded teddy bear reconstructed using plastic bags and cups; enveloped in tinfoil, cement, and recycled bathroom tiles.

Budget: \$5200

Description: This panda bear is crafted entirely from repurposed materials echoing a powerful message about conservation. This artwork celebrates the panda's beauty and the conservation efforts that have brought the Giant Panda from the brink of extinction to the Vulnerable Status.

Image: Empire Vs. Shalom

Date: 2023

Location: Art Bias

Materials: Recycled Credit Cards, Gouache on Recycled Canvas

Budget: \$4250

Description: The artwork "Empire vs. Shalom" addresses social injustice and the wealth gap that results in a fast-growing homeless population. The mosaic presents a cityscape made of recycled credit cards inhabited by homeless people, painted in grey-scale, creating visual glitches on the colorful background.

Image: Cuppa Joe

Date: 2022

Location: Hoover Park, Palo Alto

Materials: Recycled Keurig Cups, Wire, Wood and Cement

Budget: \$4000

Description: Awarded the ARTLIFT Microgrant, "Cuppa Joe" is a community-based project amid the pandemic that worked to raise awareness and encourage recycling while strengthening the social fabric of our city and bringing the community together. The artwork is a large-scale sculpture of a coffee cup made of repurposed Keurig Cups and was a Temporary Public Art Installation at Hoover Park in Palo Alto, CA.

Image: Whale Watching

Date: 2024

Location: Art Bias

Materials: Recycled bottle caps and other recycled objects

Budget: \$6500

Description: "Whale Watching" is an interactive artwork where children of the community are encouraged to apply bottle caps and other discarded household items to an endangered whale swimming near Pt. Reyes.

Image: Dusk and Dawn- The Grey Wolfs Elegy

Date: 2024

Location: City of Sunnyvale

Materials: Glass tiles on Fiberglass Armature finished with colored grout

Budget: \$1000

Description: "Dusk and Dawn: The Grey Wolf's Elegy" is a tribute to the majestic grey wolf, a species that once thrived in California's wilds but was driven to extinction in 1924. The artwork, crafted from thousands of small pieces of glass, brings to life a solitary grey wolf howling at dusk on one side and at dawn on the other.

Image: Isolation

Date: 2022

Location: Art Bias

Materials: Packaging Materials collected during the Pandemic

Budget: \$850

Description: "Endangered Psyche: Isolation" mirrors the mental distress many endured during the stay-at-home orders enforced from 2020 to 2023. This work also serves as a protest against the inefficiency of plastic recycling/ mail-order packaging.











Corn Palace Park Bench Proposal

Proposal Summary:

I envision my park bench design as an iconic landmark—one that leaves a lasting impression, brings joy, and sparks laughter. I want it to be a whimsical, lighthearted piece that also honors the past. The Corn Palace Farmer's Market was a beloved community staple, where families gathered on Saturday mornings, creating cherished memories. The market's cornfield was an unforgettable feature, and many in the community were saddened when it closed due to the owners' aging and health challenges. This bench will pay tribute to that cherished past while bringing fun and character to the park.

Design Concept:

The bench will take the shape of a large corn on the cob, much like one found on a dinner plate. On one side, an animated face will welcome visitors to the park with a playful expression. Sprinkled throughout are charming details: a curious ladybug, a vibrant hawk moth caterpillar, and a cleverly placed book titled *The Cobbit*. See Figure 1. The opposite side will feature a mosaic mural of the Corn Palace Farmer's Market in its prime—depicting a bustling scene filled with customers, live music, and the market's lively atmosphere. See Figure 3.



Figure 1.

In a whimsical twist, the Corn Place customers will be anthropomorphized fruits and vegetables:

- A banana on roller skates and a cherry on a skateboard, both carrying bags full of fresh produce.
- A vegetable family made up of a celery mother, a carrot father, and their baby tomato in a stroller, enjoying a day at the market.

- A lively seven-piece band consisting of the cucumber on trumpet, the squash on guitar, the eggplant on tuba, the onion on keyboard, the strawberry on drums, the leek on electric guitar, and the asparagus on harmonica. See Figure 2.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

The Corn Palace itself will be beautifully rendered in mosaic, capturing its distinctive architecture and significance to the community.

Fabrication Process:

To construct the bench, I will use the metal frame of a pre-made bench sourced from Amazon as a foundation to ensure structural stability. Around this, I will build an armature using styrofoam, sculpting it to form the shape of a corn cob. The structure will then be covered with Pal Tiya (<https://www.paltiya.com/>), a durable, weather-resistant, UV-protected sculpting material. After curing for 28 days, the bench will be adorned with ceramic tiles to replicate the texture of corn kernels and stained glass to bring the Corn Palace mural to life.

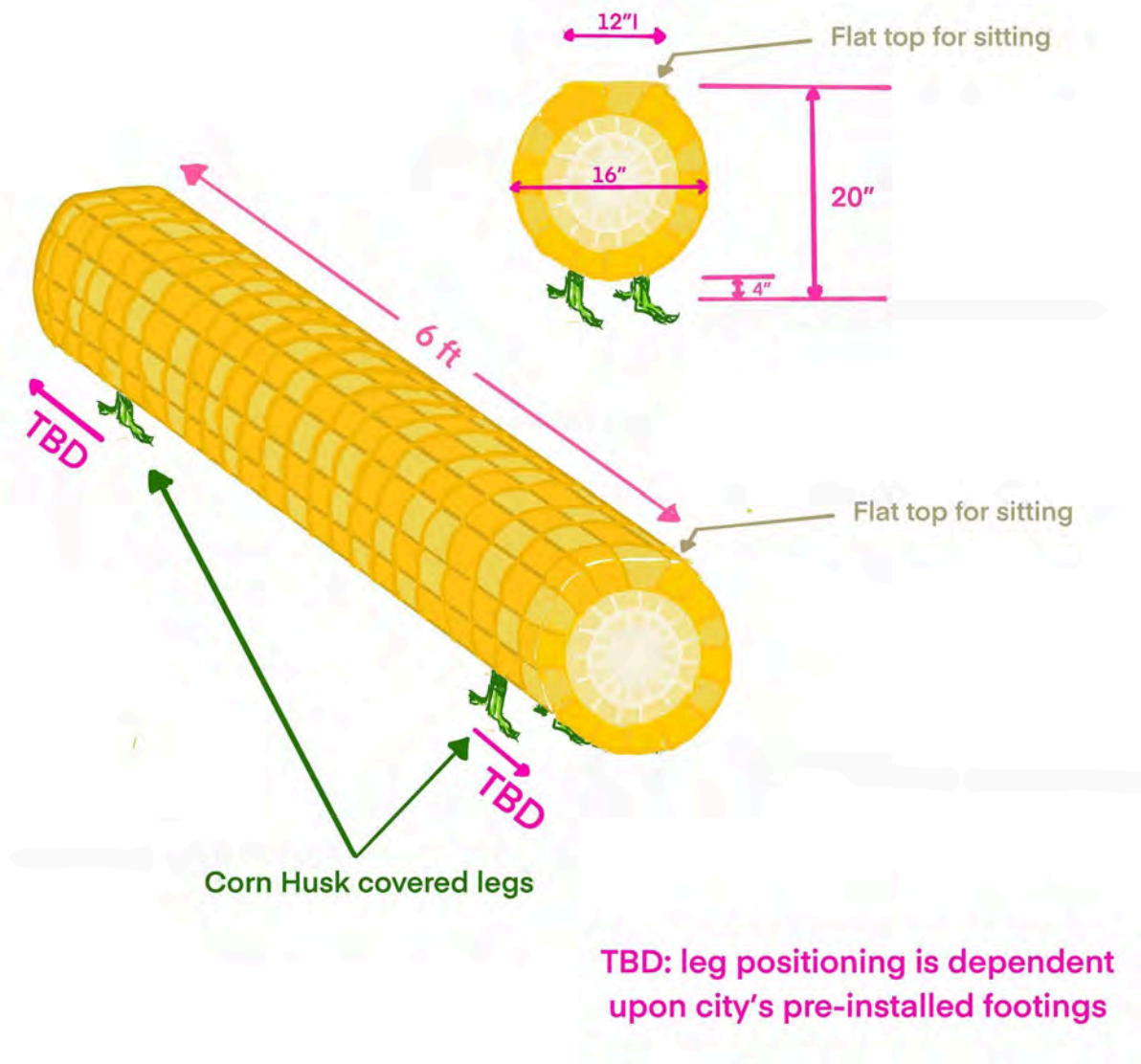


Figure 4.

The bench will be designed to accommodate and fit onto the city's preinstalled footings, along with ensuring flat bench seating that is safe and comfortable. See Figure 4 for measurements.

This Armature/ Pal Tiya/ Mosaic technique has been successfully implemented in many of my previous projects, which can be seen at www.asmerakiartstudio.com.

Artist Biography:

Amber J. Smith is a socially engaged art practitioner whose work fosters community collaboration and encourages creativity and action. Her large-scale installations, murals, and mosaics explore social and political themes, with a particular focus on endangered species, habitats, and marginalized communities. Her public art projects include:

- *Dusk and Dawn: The Grey Wolf's Elegy*, installed in Ponderosa Park, Sunnyvale (2025)

- *Penguins in Peril*, winner of the Activism Award with Wild Heart Gallery, juried exhibition: *Colorful Creatures* (2025), also featured as a community outreach project at the Atherton Earth Day Festival
- *Ribbiting Crisis: A Global Response to the Frog Pandemic*, Sanchez Art Center (2024)
- *Endangered Habitats: Aerocycle*, installed at the Skyway Center (2023)
- *Cuppa Joe* sculpture, installed in Hoover Park, Palo Alto – ARTLIFT Microgrant Recipient (2022)

Amber currently serves as an Arts Commissioner for the City of Palo Alto and holds a Fine Arts degree from UC Berkeley. More about her work can be found at www.asmerakiartstudio.com.