

Artist's statement of intent regarding the proposed monumental sculpture for Theodore Roosevelt in Mitchell Park.

A memorial for Theodore Roosevelt needs to be a bit larger than life sized. It must be alive, hearty, engaging, a contemporary tribute to the memory of a national figure who was loved by many, who tried his best to leave the world in a better condition than he found it.

TR actually visited and spoke in San Luis Obispo on his tour of many towns in the west, in 1903, many long years ago. The sculpture would invoke his lively presence, and his concerns, his accomplishments and how they benefit us today. His core ideas are still fresh, positive and desirable.

In my life I've written many a letter about Theodore Roosevelt's legacy in support of protecting our natural lands and wildlife from persons and corporations that would seek to harm them for their own profit. He defended the people from the giant trusts, the wild lands and wonders from "destructive, reckless industrial capitalism", and spoke out for treating all life with respect and dignity. He was the first North American to win a Nobel Peace prize, for negotiating a truce between Russia and Japan and averting what could of been a destructive war.

Theodore Roosevelt understood the importance of preserving the wilderness for future generations, as necessary for the web of life, and good for our human souls. On his tour of the West Coast in 1903 Roosevelt repeatedly emphasized the character of the men and women across the country as the most important part of making this preservation a reality. In other words, it is up to the people to watchdog what is valuable to us about our country. He is quoted as saying "Patriotism means to stand by the country. It does not mean to stand by the president or any other any other public official".

I am honored to be asked to create a compelling sculpture in tribute to him.

The sculpture and it's setting I see as inspiring conversations. Conversations that center on pulling people together, finding common ground; creating peaceful understanding between diverse or opposing viewpoints; working together to solve common problems. With the focus on the value of preserving the natural lands and waterways of our beautiful country and planet for future generations.

The sculpture of Theodore Roosevelt will be cast in bronze for longevity, slightly stylized, with simple clean lines for a contemporary look, seated on a block of granite from a local source, inviting people to come sit and talk about current issues.

I'd like to have as much information about TR as possible in this one place. On signage or plaques, a bit of history and specifically his accomplishments in conservation, preserving the wild lands, wildlife and antiquities of the United States of America.

Any artwork imposed upon the public as a permanent addition I believe, needs to fit in harmoniously with the existing surroundings. I will do my best to make certain this one is an enhancement to the site, and that people from all walks of life will enjoy being near it.

- Paula Zima