Arroyo Seco Watershed Sculptures

created by Daniel McCormick

In the Winter and Spring of 2005 three erosion control sculptures were designed and created by environmental installation artist Daniel McCormick under the 134 Freeway Bridge in Pasadena, California. The three sculptures were installed adjacent to a dirt footpath, in a highly traveled public area that affords multi-use pedestrian and equestrian access to the Arroyo.

McCormick's Arroyo Seco Watershed Sculptures are woven from natural materials and native species plants found in the Arroyo Seco—California Sycamore, Black and Arroyo Willow, Alder and Cottonwood. They are intended to take on remedial qualities and function effectively as an erosion control devices. The materials used in all three sculptures in time, will disintegrate or develop into living sculptures and, as the restoration process is established, the artist presence will not be felt

Daniel McCormick, a California artist worked with the master plan for the Arroyo Seco, Pasadena Department Public Works Arroyo Seco Supervisor, Rosa LaVeaga and Landscape Architect and Arroyo Seco Restoration Project Manager Lynn Dwyer, to create the three site-specific sculpture installations in the Central Arroyo area, near downtown Pasadena. McCormick's woven sculptures are designed to give an ecological advantage to the Arroyo Seco watershed.

Flood Plane Wall, Erosion Sculpture and Urban Run-Off Basket were installed by Daniel

McCormick and his partner Mary O'Brien with funding and assistance from the City of Pasadena, Department of Public Works Parks and Natural Resources Division, and under the guidance of Rosa Laveaga, Arroyo Seco Park Supervisor and Lynn Dwyer, Landscape Architect and Arroyo Seco Restoration Project Manager

Flood Plane Wall


4'H x 3'W x 50'L

A curving wall woven of native Willow, California Sycamore, Alder and Cottonwood. Living Willow and Cottonwood saplings were woven into the wall, and will reinforce the recovery action.

"You can't replicate what was there in the historic flood plane, but you can recreate parts of the environment. The good thing about McCormick's sculpture is that it doesn't change nature, it just helps it along. In this case he created a small structure that replicates the function of a natural stream bank levee encouraging gradual deposition of sediments behind it. When the wall develops new growth from the riparian plants woven in, it will sustain itself for years to come and it will produce a lasting floodplain behind it that is structurally identical to a natural one."
- Martin Kammerer Environmental Scientist
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

Erosion Sculpture


18" H x 32"W x 50'L

A low wall of woven California Sycamore surrounded by large Arroyo stone boulders defines the public footpath and directs and diverts urban run-off from the freeway above.

Urban Run-off Basket & Collection Basket

 8” H x 6’-2’W x 43’L

A teardrop shaped weaving, tapering to rounded collection basket for trapping urban debris from storm drains before it enters the Arroyo Seco. The weaving also serves to define the public footpath.

"Daniel McCormick, a California artist with national recognition, invented and installed one long, continuous sculptural form in the Arroyo, shaping it to the contours of eroded stream banks. Pasadena and Arroyo Seco officials studied erosion patterns at the site and helped McCormick to design a sculpture that would assist the flow of water and serve as a mechanism of erosion control. Eventually, native plant species will take root in the sculpture, effectively making the art a part of the earth."

- Jennifer Gay Summers
Whole Life Times, February 2005