

PUBLIC SCULPTURES



Karen Yank



GRIP I-40/Coors Freeway Interchange

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Art Critic*

National award winning sculptor Karen Yank utilized her lifetime art experience to embrace the cyclical nature of New Mexico's enchanted landscape including its flora, fauna and desert climate in more than 500 linear feet of Corten and stainless steel sculpture at the interchange and pedestrian overpasses at Coors Boulevard and Interstate 40 in Albuquerque.

Her sweeping curvilinear designs are juxtaposed to the majesty of the Sandia Mountain Range for east-bound travelers and the volcanic cone accented almost flat horizon for west bound traffic. Though far from literal depictions of the rising and setting sun and moon Yank's awe inspired abstractions with open arcs, circles, undulating rhythms and structural

patterns echo the solar and lunar discs as they open our morning skies with radiant sunrises and fill our evening skies with surrealistically stunning sunsets and painfully beautiful moonrises. Yank's expressions also act as metaphors that mirror the dramatically dynamic geological formations, ever changing atmosphere and stellar movements of this unique place.

The point-counterpoint ebb and flow designs in contrasting radiant red orange and scintillating silver metals on the pedestrian walkways and free-standing sculpture on site not only echo the apparent movement of the undulating mountaintops nearby and the cosmic bodies beyond but reflect the actual movements of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.



PHOTO - ROBERT RECK

These beautifully emblematic and well crafted works are not just products of Yank's fertile imagination and lifelong production of high quality sculpture. Yank is blessed with diplomatic grace and disarming humility enabling her to work effectively with highway construction engineers, landscape architects, members of the community and political representatives including Mayor Martin Chavez and Governor William Richardson to achieve final design concepts that are not only acceptable to, but are widely applauded by the general public. Her success with the two pedestrian overpasses and overall design of the GRIP project led to a City of Albuquerque commission for two additional 20 foot freestanding sculptures at the Coors and I-40 interchange.

Yank's entire Coors I-40 Overpass Sculpture Project has been selected for inclusion in the City of Albuquerque's Permanent Art Collection.

Yank grew up with a welding torch in her hand in her father Paul Yank's sculpture studio. A successful Wisconsin artist in his own right Yank's father also introduced her to his friends including Alexander Calder whose working philosophy is a continuous source of inspiration.

Through their work together at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture Yank and the late Agnes Martin became close friends. Martin who lived in Taos became an uplifting source of advice on how to live as a successful artist. As a pioneer in winning recognition for women artists Martin's suggestions and personal insights were invaluable sources of wisdom for Yank.



ALL PHOTOS : ROBERT RECK

Karen Yank's pedestrian overpass design incorporates the cyclical nature of the seasons, sunrise and sunset, moonrise and moonset, the striking mountain views and the symbolic river of traffic on the highway as well as the actual flow of the Rio Grande. Rendered in Corten steel with Stainless steel accents her circular forms harmonize with the various movements surrounding them.



At night the silhouette of Yank's glowing sculpture is illuminated by ambient lighting. Its radiance seems to be energized by the traffic below.

The syncopated rhythms of Yank's sculpture create visual music echoing among the clouds, mountains and Rio Grande Bosque land forms. The stainless steel elements animate the design with dancing blades of light that seem to move through the ebb and flow of the overall scene.



Close-up of bridge. 12' x 77'





Shadows mirror the movement of sunlight through the design enhancing the visual and felt connections between visiting pedestrians and the surrounding landscape.





PHOTOS - ROBERT RECK



Due to the resounding success of Yank's GRIP project design the City of Albuquerque commissioned two twenty foot high free standing sculptures that are now part of the overall site.



These free standing works have been included
in the City of Albuquerque's permanent art collection.

PHOTO : ROBERT RECK



KAREN YANK (ALL PHOTOS)



Both Twin Mountain Construction and CMY Incorporated participated in the installation of Yank's sculptures.



CMY Inc. art fabricators also worked directly with Yank in the engineering and fabrication of the entire project.

PHOTO : MARTI NIMAN



Karen Yank

Yank began her art making studies working in her father Paul Yank's Wisconsin sculpture studio before pursuing her formal education at the University of Wisconsin where she earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree and at Rutgers University where she earned a Master of Fine Arts degree.

Yank began exhibiting her artwork while in college and has continued a successful exhibition career with solo and group shows in public and private venues throughout the country. Yank is currently represented by Lemmons Contemporary Gallery in New York and the Gebert Contemporary Galleries in Santa Fe and Scottsdale.

Yank also is represented by public works at the Coors and Interstate 40 Interchange where she was lead artist, the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center where she has five sculptures, the New Mexico Highway and Transportation Department, New Mexico State Library, New Mexico Junior College, New Mexico State University, Hurley Community Center

and is included in numerous private collections throughout the United States.

Works in permanent public collections include but are not limited to the New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts, Albuquerque Museum of Art and History, New Mexico Capitol Art Collection, University of New Mexico Hospital, Rutgers University, Sandia National Laboratories, Silver City Museum, Ozaukee Art Center and the University of Wisconsin.



PHOTO : HERBERT LOTZ

Text: Wesley Pulkka PhD :: Photos: Herbert Lotz, Marti Niman, Robert Reck and Karen Yank.



A steel and stained glass mobile by Karen Yank hangs in the four story atrium of the New Mexico State Library Records and Archives Building in Santa Fe, NM.

PHOTOS : HERB LOTZ (LEFT & RIGHT)



PHOTO : KAREN YANK

Above left: City of Loveland, CO :: Above right: Sandia National Labs, in collaboration with Pace VanDevender
Below: New Mexico State University, Alamogordo, NM



PHOTO : KAREN YANK



COVER PHOTOS : ROBERT RECK

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KAREN YANK ARTIST

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