



HOWARD COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL

25th ANNIVERSARY BENCHMARK PROJECT

The Howard County Arts Council (HCAC) marked its 25th Anniversary in 2006. The Arts Council has been the cornerstone of the arts in the county by providing seed money and operating funds in the form of grants, raising awareness through advocacy and promotion, providing opportunities in the arts for people of all ages and abilities, and connecting the arts and community through pARTnerships.

In honor of this benchmark year, the Arts Council set out in July 2005 to commission an artist to create a public sculpture in the form of a bench to be permanently displayed outdoors in the HCCA courtyard. Nearly 400 artists from Maryland and Washington DC were invited to submit a proposal. A Benchmark Sculpture Selection Panel, made up of HCAC representatives Coleen West, Executive Director and Amy Poff, Deputy Director; public art professionals Becky Bafford, Executive Director of the Columbia Arts Center, Jennifer Mange, Executive Director of the Station North Arts & Entertainment District in Baltimore and Bob Marietta, Health and Safety Coordinator for Howard Community College; and Dan Burdette, representative for Normandy Woods Community Association, convened this fall to review the applications and ultimately selected Ginger Peloquin out of two finalists.

Artist Ginger Peloquin began installing the permanent Benchmark sculpture in May of 2006 in the courtyard of the Howard County Center for the Arts. The first step in the process was creating a life-sized mock-up of the piece in order to build a wooden form in which to cast the concrete base.





Next, the concrete was poured. Once it was dried, the outer form was removed to reveal the sculpture, which was then touched up and prepared for the application of the glass mosaic.



For the mosaic portion, Ms. Peloquin created specific designs for each portion of the concrete base and hand cut the glass based on the design. The individual glass pieces were painstakingly cut, the edges were ground, and then the pieces were glued to sheets of paper so that they could be applied in large sections.

Once the tiles were applied to the concrete base and the glue was dry, the excess adhesive was chipped out of the gaps between the glass pieces in preparation for the grouting.



Finally, once the mosaic was complete, she constructed the bench portion of the Benchmark sculpture. Before the bench could be installed, however, the landscape maintenance crew from Howard County Recreation and Parks paved the courtyard using the artist's design which replicates the shapes in the sculpture



The sculpture was unveiled during a ceremony on Friday, September 15, 2006 at HCCA, in conjunction with the Howard County Arts Council's (HCAC) Annual Meeting and Grant Awards Ceremony and opening of Road to the Arts weekend. Intermingled throughout the evening were 25th Anniversary presentations by state and local officials celebrating the Arts Council's first 25 years.



The paving in the courtyard permanently honors our many supporters. Arts Council members and friends had the opportunity to support and become a permanent part of the Benchmark Campaign by purchasing individual bricks that were used to form the walkway to the sculpture. Additional proceeds from the sponsorships went towards education and outreach activities surrounding the Benchmark Project, such as the Head Start artist

residencies to create one-of-a-kind ceramic self-portrait pavers and public parent and child workshops to create mosaic tiles for the walkway.

