

## **Steward**

**Artist - Thomas Sayre**

*Steward* is a public art project located around the exterior of the Water Centre building, Manchester Centre, near the intersection of Spiller Road and 25th Avenue S.E. Calgary. The artwork is in Ward 9.

### **The Title**

The artist was commissioned to create public art for the building's exterior that illustrated the water harvest cycle on the Water Centre site. The artist created four cone-shaped vessels ranging in height from two-and-a-half to eight metres. One is located near the Water Centre's west doors and the other three are in the south garden.

The vessels are earth cast, meaning they are created by carving immense funnel shapes into the ground and pouring concrete carefully into the holes. The resulting shape is reminiscent of ancient vessels people used throughout history to carry water. Thomas Sayre stated the vessels are "representative of how humans have managed water through time."

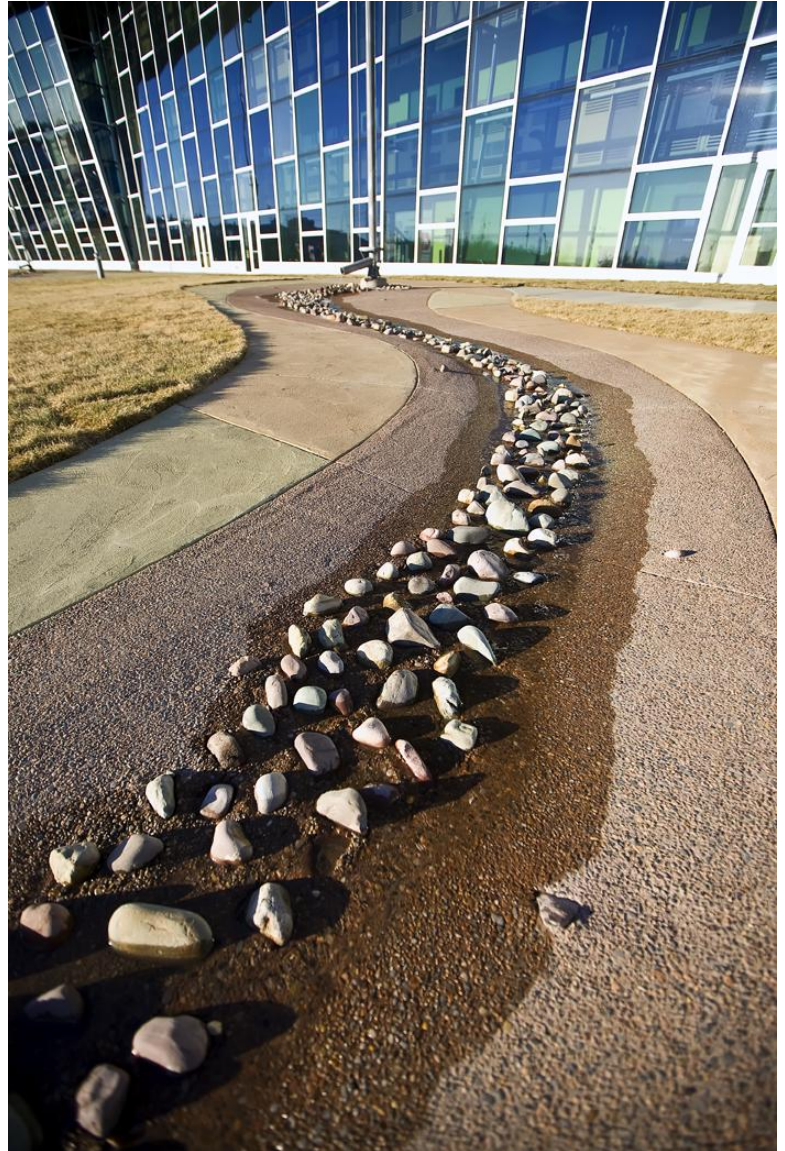
The artist was also asked to create tree planters and benches for the south garden.

### **Connection to site**

The garden became a successful collaborative project between the artist and landscape architect, Doug Carlyle of Carlyle and Associates.

*Steward* helps illustrate the cycle of storm water management at the Water Centre by being closely integrated with the building's structure as well as the garden. Rainwater is directed from the Water Centre's roof to the garden; the building's leaders (downspouts) funnel the water onto three runnels (constructed riverbeds containing river rocks) leading to Sayre's vessels. The garden collects and filters water in above-ground bio-swales (retention ponds) before being naturally transferred to underground cisterns for future irrigation use.

The overall result of the collaborative garden project is a compelling and inviting opportunity to interact with the water harvest cycle at work and expresses The City's commitment to manage our water resources carefully.



## The Artist

Thomas Sayre has been a practicing public artist for more than 25 years. In 1980, soon after his Masters Degree in Fine Arts, Thomas co-founded Clearscapes, a multi-disciplinary design firm. Functioning as a sculptor, he has been involved in the design and construction of numerous projects ranging from children's museums, historic renovations, art museums, and performing arts centers, as well as numerous public and private commissions.

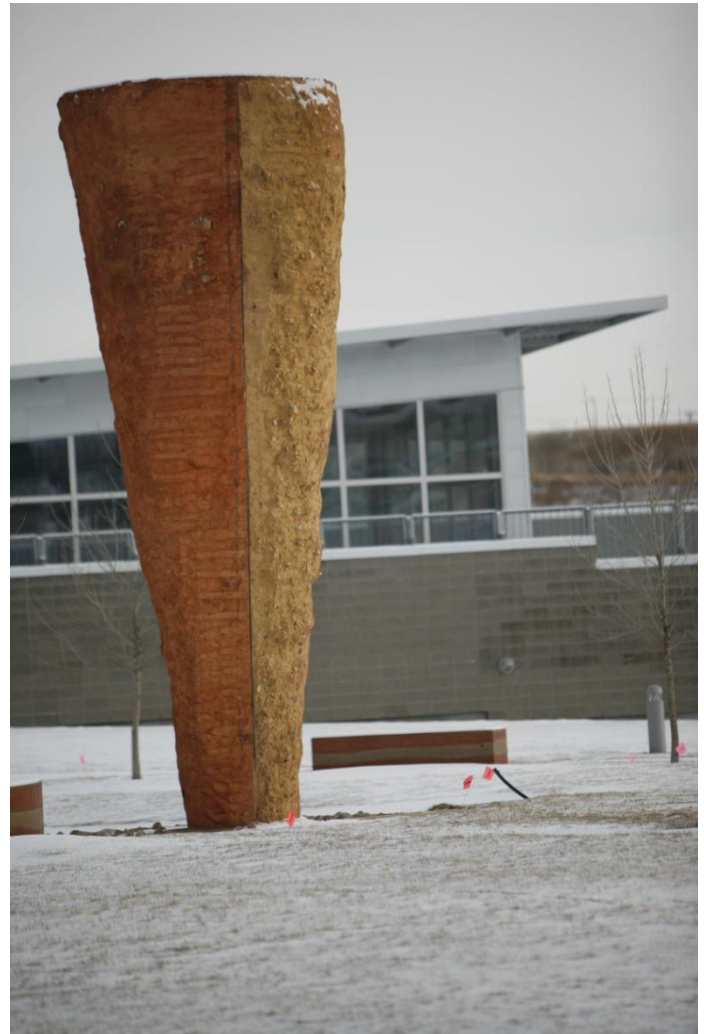
Much of Thomas' work deals with the use of earth, land and geology to create molds for large concrete forms. In his statement of interest for this project, Sayre wrote, "There is, in the act of earthcasting, an intrinsic relationship between art and nature, between human intention and natural structure -- there is a balancing of person-made and nature-made."

[www.thomassayre.com](http://www.thomassayre.com)

## The Public Art Project

### Artist Selection

- The artist was commissioned through an "invitational call" using the Public Art Program's Artist Roster. This public art process is derived from the Council-approved Public Art Policy, which reads: "Proposals shall be solicited through open competition, invited competition or direct award."
- The Artist Roster is a list of pre-approved artists who can quickly be shortlisted for projects with limited/invitational calls or direct awards. All artists are invited to submit an application for inclusion on the artist roster. These artists are evaluated by an independent jury before being added to the roster.
- The standard process used by The City of Calgary to commission artists is by an "open call," but is not always possible due to compressed timelines or specific project requirements -- this is when a limited call/invitation or single sourcing is more appropriate.
- Artists from the Artist Roster shortlisted for this project were evaluated by an independent jury based on the factors listed in the call.



## Funding

- The budget for *Steward's* vessel commission was \$250,000.
- The project is a collaborative initiative by the Public Art Program and City of Calgary Utilities & Environmental Protection (UEP) department, the sponsor.
- Funding for this project was made available through the "percent for art" strategy approved by Council in the Public Art Policy (2004), where eligible capital projects over \$1 million set aside one percent of their budget for the creation of public art.
- Expenditures for *Steward* are part of the "UEP Public Art Plan" - Utilities & Environmental Protection's [Public Art Plan for the Expressive Potential of Utility Infrastructure](#) an initiative believed to be the first of its kind in North America. The art plan was a collaborative initiative between the Public Art Program and UEP, the sponsor department. See Initiatives for more details.
- There is no single capital project that is the funding source for *Steward*. As described in the art plan, "UEP opted to pool their percent for public art funds for the 2006-2010 capital infrastructure cycle, generating nearly \$6.9 million for public art, design, and related educational programming." This funding practice is one of three expenditure options listed in the Council-approved [Public Art Policy](#).



## Reporting

- This project began in 2006 after being approved by the Council-appointed Public Art Board.
- *Steward* was one of nine projects included in the 2005/2006 Annual Report to the Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services.