



Visiting Queen Califia

Goals: By the end of this tour, you will be able to describe who Niki de Saint Phalle was and what materials she used in this garden.

Art Vocabulary:

Mosaics: are small pieces of colored glass, stone, or ceramic tile called tesserae embedded in a background material such as plaster or mortar. Niki sourced her mosaic tiles from all around the world with different varieties of glass in different shapes, colors, hue, translucency, and degrees of reflection.

Sculpture: an artistic form in which hard or plastic materials are worked into 3D art objects.

Site-specific art: any work made for a specific place, which cannot be separated or exhibited apart from its intended environment.

Stucco: cement or concrete used to cover a wall or building. Also, a type of plaster used for architectural ornamentation such as reliefs, cornices, and others.

About the Artist:

After being ill with hyperthyroidism and tachycardia from the liquid polyester used to make her *Nanas*, in 1993 Niki de Saint Phalle moved to La Jolla to start a new life for herself. Breathing in the fresh, seaside air that California provided, she began creating inventive sculptural work. Her final sculptural project was *The Magical Garden of Queen Califia* (2003) here in Escondido. She strategically chose Kit Carson Park as her location with the help of her business manager from Escondido who jogged the park, told Niki about it, and they both agreed it was the perfect location. She went to the city with her plans, they embraced her and her proposal, gave her the land, and she paid for the rest.

Niki loved fairy tales, fantasies, and dreams, believing that the part of her that stayed a child was the artist in her. As with all of her projects, she wanted her artwork to be fun and interactive, shaping the way people viewed the role of art in their lives. Her sculptures have a timeless quality, reminiscing ancient civilizations and her imaginative dreams.

Activity:

With the information we went over together, walk around the garden and choose a totem pole that sparks your interest. Spend 10 minutes analyzing what you see and explore how each element works together. How do the figures of your totem pole interact with each other? What does it represent to you? Create meaning in the totem pole of your choice based on what you see and how it makes you feel.