

TampaPublicArt



Project Title: *The cenotaph, and Ceremonial Space (dedicated in 2009)*
Artist: Bob Haozous
Commissioning Agencies: City of Tampa, Seminole Tribe of Florida
Location: On the Riverwalk in Cotanchobee / Fort Brooke Park

American Indians throughout the Western Hemisphere have a unique and rightful connection to place. The cenotaph¹ and Ceremonial Space in Cotanchobee² / Fort Brooke, marks such a place. Once a thriving center for ancient indigenous chiefdoms until invasions in the 1500s by Spanish explorers, and as an early 1800s refuge for Creek (now Seminole) peoples in fleeing south from Alabama and Georgia from invasion by a federal government, this space has been a nexus of alternating peace and struggle. Heavy with the memories of federal wars on the Seminole to force their 1824 removal out of Florida to territories west, this place becomes a meaningful place ground. The cenotaph and Ceremonial Space mark a time of peace and reconciliation with the land as an indigenous place. In breaking the ground, Florida Seminole Tribal member Bobby Henry spoke for ancestors buried there and for his people today saying, "... [although painful] our history should not be erased, rather we should remember, and learn from it, and move forward."

¹Literally, cenotaph means "remains buried elsewhere" and is appropriate for this site as it recognizes the collective and diverse experiences of the past as well as new beginnings.
²Cotanchobee means where the big water meets the land.



Site Description

Sixteen text panels that recount aspects of complex history at the area around the former Fort Brooke form a serpentine path to Ceremonial Space. The panels include historic texts, eye-witness accounts to the history, the Seminole Song of Removal, maps, a muster roll, and statements by contemporary historians.

The Foundation

A circle formed of bricks is separated into four quadrants, each corresponding to one of the four cardinal directions and possessing a culturally-appropriate color; yellow for the East, red for the North, black for the West, and white for the South. These colors are also found prominently in the flags of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. It is a Miccosukee belief that life spins in a circle starting in the east and moving to the north, west, and south. Native peoples almost universally understand the directional colors.

The mission of the City of Tampa's public art program is to promote the involvement of artists in projects throughout the city that enhance the physical environment and celebrate Tampa's unique character and identity. The public art program falls under Art Programs, a division of the Department of Arts & Cultural Affairs.

Artist Concept and Statement for Ceremonial Space

Bob Haozous (Warm Springs Chiricahua Apache Tribe of Oklahoma)



“ With my people, as with other Native Nations, the traditional method of honoring is with an object or image respectfully acknowledging the involved participants and their history. Sited near the original trading and funeral grounds of Fort Brooke, Ceremonial Space is not simply a place for reflection of the peoples of the past who lived, fought and died here, but intended to provide a place for present and future generations to contemplate our responsibilities to and for all things that make up our own life experience.

Canopied in stainless steel representations of branches of separate cypress trees stationed at the four cardinal directions, the space reminds us of the use of cypress trunk foundations for Seminole chickee home, and the close ties that the Seminole people and those animals and birds of the wetlands have historically had to the cypress tree. Just as the wetlands cypress, the branches allow the sun to shine through to those underneath while at the same time the protective layer of the cypress roots provide a protection from its full powers. The structure reminds us of the wonders of our technology while at the same time allows us to look outward to the immensity of the natural beauty that surrounds the structure.



The sacred circle unifies each of us to each other in a continuum of responsibility. In the center is the traditional sacred fire mound known to those indigenous peoples who both remain here and at relocations elsewhere, as a place into which the past can be cast and a renewal can be ignited (in this case, plants indigenous to Seminole livelihood have been placed). It represents a place of balance and harmony. The whole community becomes keepers of the flame of continued renewal from the past and commitment to a better future. The fire is guarded by “grandfather rocks” positioned as persons at the four directions.



My intent is to present a unifying space that offers a place to contemplate this wisdom and responsibility of a more meaningful relationship to nature and place and each other. Native Americans hold that their responsibility is to a long-range or seventh -generational understanding of responsibility. Not ignoring the past, but learning from it. This continual relationship demands intentional maintenance and continual preparation of that place for the future.”

Photos by George Cott