



O will be an iconic sculpture sited by Lake Merritt that invites public interaction, dramatically framing the lake and providing a fresh perspective on the “Jewel of Oakland”.

Measuring approximately 9’ high x 12.5’ wide, this glowing, curvilinear bronze sculpture will be sited in a curved plaza area directly adjacent to the trail circling the lake. The lake will be viewed through the sculpture, becoming part of the visual composition. The sculpture will also frame the people who frequent the lake; as members of the public pass by on the trail they will briefly become part of a dynamic, ever-changing composition.

The organic circular sculpture is emblematic of Oakland on multiple levels: The sculpture can be seen as the letter O, symbolic of Oakland. The form is also a symbol of unity and diversity – like the city, it is dynamic, changing shape and size along its course, yet ultimately completing a full circle, strong and whole. We see this form as a vital metaphor for the diversity and unity of the city. Finally, the ovoid form references nature, evoking a bird’s egg; as the nation’s first wildlife sanctuary, Lake Merritt is beloved for its varied bird population. On a more abstract level, the undulating O also references the cyclical nature of the tides; since Lake Merritt is a tidal body of water, this reference is also germane.

The sculpture will be sited in an approximately 30’ x 60’ semi-circular plaza adjacent to the trail that rims the lake; the public will move from 20th and Harrison streets along a new promenade, crossing to descend through a stepped area with grasses designed for seating. The sculpture will anchor the plaza at the base of this stepped area; viewers will thus be able to view the sculpture from slightly above, from the steps, as well as at ground level at the plaza and trail.

If we can secure additional funding, the sculpture could also be lit at night; we envision a dynamic aquatic lighting affect, mimicking the ripple effect created when light hits the water. This technique, which is common in theater and museum settings, can be achieved via a durable exterior grade permanent light fixture. This animated lighting affect would play off the curvilinear form of the sculpture, drawing people to the site at night. A mirrored bronze finish could be created in the inner arc of the sculpture, further enhancing the lighting affect. Finally, we have the opportunity to create the piece in mirrored stainless steel, should an effective public/private partnership funding arrangement be possible. In either material, the sculpture will be highly effective, becoming a landmark in the city of Oakland.

Submitted by Wowhaus (Scott Constable and Ene Osteras-Constable) for the Measure DD: Lakeside Green Streets Oakland Public Art Project review by the Public Art Advisory Committee on October 1, 2012.

