

The intersection of visual art and the library

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Visitors to San Diego's new Central Library will be surrounded not only by rich collections, culturally diverse programming and dynamic architecture, but also by vibrant and inspiring visual art.

"Art is a natural fit for libraries," said City Librarian Deborah Barrow. "Art helps connect us to our humanity. Just as lifelong learning engages our hearts and minds, so does art. The library is thrilled to play such an important role in showcasing the region's artistic talent and the city of San Diego's art collection. Millions of people who come through the doors of this library will be enriched by the art they encounter here."

Four major public art installations were commissioned by the city of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture for the new Central Library as part of the city's percent-for-art program.

In 2002, the commission released a national call for artists and attracted hundreds of applications. Following a competitive review process by a panel of local visual art experts, library representatives and community members, four artists were selected to create site-specific artworks for the library.

A "book painting" titled "Hiding My Candy" by Donald Lipski can be found on the east wall of the auditorium. "Corpus Callosum," a group of ornate sculpture dioramas by Einar and Jamex de la Torre, is in the central elevator bay on the first floor.

"Triangulating Hives (for Magdalena)," an enigmatic video artwork by Gary Hill, is on the east-facing wall of the north side of the fourth floor near the fiction stacks, and Roy McMakin's 25-piece blue furniture installation, "Recreations of Furniture Found Discarded in Alleys and on Curbs While Driving Around San Diego Several Bright Summer Afternoons with David" can be found in the Helen Price Reading Room on the eighth floor.

The opening of the new Central Library will mark a major milestone in the San Diego Public Library's acclaimed Visual Arts Program. With a new 3,000-square-foot museum-quality art gallery on the ninth floor, the program now has the exhibit space to further its mission -- which is to demonstrate the library's role as a cultural institution while assisting San Diego's midcareer and older professional artists in achieving wider local, regional and national attention.

The first exhibition, from Sept. 30 to March 29, 2014, has been organized by guest curator Kathryn Kanjo, the chief curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. The exhibition, "Renewed: A Short Story About the San Diego Public Library's Visual Arts Program," features 32 artworks by Faiya Fredman, Suda House, Jeff Irwin, Philipp Scholz Rittermann, Gail Roberts, Lynn Schuette, Ernest Silva and Vicki Walsh.

Adjacent to the art gallery on the ninth floor is the Valeiras Sculpture Garden. Ten sculptures by San Diego sculptor Kenneth Capps are featured in the exhibition, which will be on view from Sept. 30 to Sept. 21, 2014.

In addition, more than 150 paintings, drawings and photographs from the city of San Diego's own Civic Art Collection have been permanently installed on all floors of the library. Of particular importance are 14 artworks by San Diego artist Russell Baldwin. Other works of significance by San Diego area artists include Sheldon Kirby, Jean Swigget, Robin Bright and Jay Johnson.

The Special Collections section of the library on the ninth floor houses some of the city's early California paintings by Alfred Mitchell and Elliot Torrey. The Hervey Family Rare Books Room will exhibit six newly conserved and rarely seen prints from the 1800s, three by William Hogarth and three by Ando Hiroshige. In addition, paintings by Alfred Mitchell, Charles Fries and Maurice Braun and sculptural works by

Donal Hord will be on display in the Rare Books Room. Another special artwork on exhibit in the Sullivan Family Baseball Research Center on the eighth floor is a contemporary sculpture by San Francisco-based artist Yoram Wolberger ("Male baseball #1") on loan to the city through an arrangement with the Mark Moore Gallery and the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego.

"Simply put, the new Central Library is a showcase for the largest display of city-owned artwork in the 100-year history of the Civic Art Collection," said Dana Springs, interim executive director of the city of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture. "I couldn't be more proud of the quality and breadth of the artworks that San Diegans will be able to experience at the library. To every artist, donor and lender who supported our exhibitions, a very big 'thank you.' "