



COSACOSA art at large, Inc.

# Telling Time, Telling Place

a Healing Garden grows  
in North Philadelphia

established 2007

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a Healing Garden grows in North Philadelphia

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Promoting the creative power  
in people with disabilities

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## Art, Place, & Public Life by Penny Balkin Bach

The powerful, instinctive desire to give meaning and identity to a place connects the individual and the community through art. Our prehistoric ancestors incised, carved, and painted vivid images on rocks and in the dark recesses of caves from France to Zimbabwe - our earliest example of a public art. Similarly, our longing for spaces where we can gather and celebrate the mysteries of nature is rooted in the world's ancient sites, as in Stonehenge in England, the vast Angkor Wat observatory complex in Cambodia, and the ruins at Chichén Itzá in Mexico.

While today we can only speculate about the cave paintings and monumental sites, and what they meant to the people who created them, we are nonetheless fundamentally connected over centuries by the human impulse to make our mark, find our place, and reflect upon our society.

Public art is part of our public history, part of our evolving culture, and part of our collective memory. As artists share their inner vision with the outside world, they give shape to our dreams. One thinks of the unique and unforgettable Guell Park by Antonio Gaudi in Barcelona, Simon Rodia's Watts Towers in Los Angeles, and Nek Chand's Rock Garden in Chandigarh, India.

Public art combines the artists' imagination, creativity and skill with the knowledge, experience and commitment of communities; and public participation reinforces community values, identity and reciprocity. The bioanthro-

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pologist Ellen Dissanayeke reflects, "Everyone agrees on the importance to our personal lives of such human verities as the giving, finding, and keeping of love, the inescapability of moral choice, sacrifice, human suffering and redemption, longing and loss, life and death. These are what life is, and they are the primary subject matter of the arts, today as well as in the past." The particular challenge of public art is how to promote authentic community engagement and reflection, and at the same time create a meaningful framework for the most creative artistic outcome.

COSACOSA's *Telling Time*, *Telling Place* project and its resulting North Philadelphia Healing Garden reflect and influence the spirit of a special place - the "genius loci." While ultimately optimistic in approach, the project emerges from the raw truths of urban life and the potent desire for community spiritual and physical health, transformation and revitalization.

*Telling Time*, *Telling Place* shares the ethos of its community; it is fundamentally unique to its time and place. Public art can serve as a symbol or sign of our times, create or enhance a sense of place, embody social beliefs or personal values, or engage public participation. The very best place-making projects accomplish all of these ambitions.

Penny Balkin Bach is Executive Director of Fairmount Park Art Association. She is the author of *Public Art in Philadelphia*, editor of *New•Land•Marks*, and has written numerous essays on public art.

*Pillars of Community in the Healing Garden*

## About the Project

**T**elling Time, Telling Place was created by COSACOSA's Youth Council members to explore the strengths and needs of their neighborhoods. As part of our work with the National Learn and Serve America-funded Youth Visions for Stronger Neighborhoods program, COSACOSA youth surveyed residents of North Philadelphia's Nicetown-Tioga neighborhood about their concerns and hopes for the future.

Joining forces with the Nicetown-Tioga Improvement Team, a local coalition of residents and community-serving organizations, the teens then began work on a plan for the neighborhood's future. Motivated by their community organizing experiences, the group collaborated with COSACOSA artists to design a large-scale mosaic as a visual representation of key aspects of the plan. An outside location for the artwork was selected, and neighbors expressed interest in greening the surrounding space. Thus, the Garden project began, transforming a vacant lot in one of our city's most challenged neighborhoods into a small-scale green space and sculpture garden.

A giant (50' x 30') *Compass of Community* mosaic forms the centerpiece of the garden. The *Compass* points are ten symbols representing the community's enduring resources and deepest aspirations: history, faith, wisdom, strength, unity, healing, growth, transformation, vitality, and prosperity.

At the entrance to the Garden, four *Pillars of Community* impart the neighborhood's ultimate goals to the community at large with the words "Peace, Power, Prosperity and Possibility!" entwined with flowers. A meditational

area with an oversized, child-conceived and created mosaic bench provides a place to think and view the garden as a whole. A perpendicular extension of the *Compass* mosaic into the Garden proper affords a performance space and a place for community gatherings.

COSACOSA youth not only designed and created the Garden artwork, but honed their research skills selecting the perennial, medicinal plants, herbs, and flowers for the naturally arid space. Neighborhood children are in charge of Garden maintenance: watering, weekly clean-ups, and weeding.

Officially named the Lillian Gibson and Margaret Hargrave Memorial Healing Garden, the resulting community green space is dedicated to two neighborhood women who kept a garden at the site during the 1950's and 1960's. Small plaques lining the fence honor past and current community leaders, while inspiring new leaders among local youth.

Nearly 200 neighborhood residents attended the Healing Garden's opening block party. Our youth dedicated the space with a Native American smudging and prayer ceremony. Urban Africa Music and Dance Collective led young and old alike in a communal dance session. State Representative Curtis Thomas was the keynote speaker.

The Garden is one of the most visible representations of COSACOSA's civic engagement work with Philadelphia residents. As one community leader described, "The Garden contains all the hopes and dreams of all our city neighborhoods: peace of mind and body, and the unity and strength to build up our communities together."



## Healing Plants - A Sampling of Community Favorites

**Aster** roots are used to stop inflammation, coughing and bleeding, and to purify the blood.

**Chocolate Mint** is a hybrid mint plant that smells and tastes like a combination of mint and chocolate. It alleviates upset stomach, inhibits the growth of certain bacteria, and soothes and relaxes muscles when inhaled or applied to the skin.

**Crape Myrtle** roots are used to ease intestinal problems. Tea from the leaves is therapeutic against diabetes and kidney disorders. Crape Myrtle tea is also used for weight loss; in Asia it is known as "slimming tea."

**Lamb's Ears** foliage bandages wounds and is said to reduce the pain of bee stings.

**Lilac** can substitute for aloes. It also is used to treat intestinal parasites and to reduce fever.

**Rose** leaves and petals have a cooling effect and can be used in tea to combat fevers. Rose also enhances immunity; an infusion of rose petals can relieve cold and flu symptoms. Rose petals and seeds have a diuretic action, relieving fluid retention and enhancing kidney function. Fresh rose hips contain sixty times as much vitamin C as oranges.

**Rudbeckia "Herbstsonne"** root wash is used to treat sores, snakebites, and swelling. Its root juice is used for earaches. This giant coneflower has been found to have immuno-stimulant activity similar to Echinacea.

**Tickseed** is used in pediatric practice for soothing baths and for prevention of skin rashes.

**Yarrow** is one of a small number of plants referred to as "all heal" in the English herbal tradition. The Navajo looked upon it as a panacea – "a life medicine." The Micmac drank it with warm milk to treat upper respiratory infections. Current research finds good experimental evidence for yarrow's use as an anti-inflammatory agent and an astringent.

These statements are for educational purposes only and are not intended to diagnose, cure, treat or prevent disease. Medicinal descriptions refer to the use of prepared supplements, not plant parts from the garden. It is always best to consult with your own healthcare provider.

COSACOSA art at large, Inc.

# Telling Time, Telling Place

## The Lillian Gibson & Margaret Hargrave Memorial Healing Garden

Marvine & Venango Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
created in collaboration with  
the Nicetown-Tioga Improvement Team



the Garden site "before"



clearing and mulching



first community planting day



artwork prep and installation



community mosaic-making



performance space creation

Essential Elements



Pillars of Community at the Garden entrance

Remembering Bench and meditational area



Compass of Community and performance space

Compass key and inspirational poem



Dedication Portraits and project descriptions

Our dedicated volunteers!

The Garden Grows



Healing Garden 2010

A prosperity symbol points to the community.

## About the Artists

**Rosita Kamihira** specializes in large-scale, site-specific mural and mixed-media installations. Her work as an artist explores melding of traditions, customs and mores in a global society. Born in mainland China, Kamihira fled with her family to Taiwan during the Chinese Civil War. With her subsequent emigration to the United States, she was further uprooted from the social, aesthetic, and spiritual world of her youth. Her works are often visual dialogues, subtly and seamlessly mixing Eastern and Western metaphors. Kamihira was seminal to the development of COSACOSA's Healing Art Project initiative. Ms. Kamihira received a M.F.A. in Painting from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Public works from her over thirty-year career are incorporated into such varied settings as St. Christopher's Hospital, the Atlantic City boardwalk, and Philadelphia area businesses.

**Kimberly Niemela**, COSACOSA Founder and Director, serves as an advisor to numerous community-based programs, including National Learn and Serve's Youth Visions for Stronger Neighborhoods initiative. As an artist, her work in film and sound explores multisensory memory and has been performed/exhibited in a variety of venues, including, in New York, Central Park and El Museo del Barrio and, in Philadelphia, the Painted Bride Art Center and Taller Puertorriqueño. She has received grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the NEA/AFI Media Arts Fellowship. Her public art designs have been widely acclaimed and featured in the international award book *Designing the World's Best Children's Hospitals*. Niemela graduated summa cum laude in music theory from the University of Pennsylvania. She also holds a degree in chemistry from Carnegie Mellon University.

**Pedro Ospina** is an interdisciplinary artist elucidating the human search for identity and assimilation in the face of societal barriers and cultural change. He is co-founder of the Casa de Cultura Santa Teresa in Sao Paolo, Brazil, and Semilla Arts in Philadelphia. Trained as a printmaker, Ospina's visual vocabulary has grown to include photography, painting, sculpture, and multi-media installation. A recipient of grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Ospina's work has been featured in Philadelphia venues including the African-American Museum, Nexus, and the Painted Bride Art Center. As an arts educator, he has taught at the American School in Brazil, and locally at COSACOSA and Taller Puertorriqueño. Ospina holds a B.F.A. in Printmaking from SUNY Purchase and an M.F.A. from Maryland Institute College of Art.

**Rana Sindhikara** focuses on the visual interpretation of cultural histories through digitally manipulated media. Sindhikara has been a new media artist in residence at the Asian Arts Initiative, Mural Arts, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and previously with COSACOSA as part of our Connection Studios and Healing Art Project initiatives. Her work has been featured in venues and publications including those of the Leeway Foundation, the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival, ARTforms Gallery, the Painted Bride Art Center, Presidents Hall, and Tyler Galleries in Philadelphia. She is the recipient of grants from the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation and the Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership. Sindhikara graduated magna cum laude in photography and visual anthropology from Temple University and holds a certificate in elementary education from Eastern University.

### Community Participants

Briana Adams	Tina Brown	Jared Dove	Russell Goss	Delores Jackson
Margaret Adams	Delores Bryant	Ernestine Dunlap	Vera Goss	Cathy Jackson
Lestine S. Adderley	Tykee Burkett	Johanna Dunn	Thomas Graham	Elsie Jackson
Kahlil Allen	Arthure Burton	Adina Ekwenke	Henry Gray, Sr.	Charles Johnson, Jr.
Tina Amaro	Marion Bussey	Sally Eldridge	Yvette Green	Sheila E. Johnson
Ronald Amos	Cora Byrd	Loretta Ely	Rodney Greene	Roslynn Johnson
Abdul Aziz El	Arlene Caesar	Virginia Estrada	Alberta Hall	Ruby Johnson
Geneva Backsdale	Meia Chadwick	Bernice Evans	Sara Hall	Tierra Johnson
Cynthia Barnes	Melvin Chappell	Laquan Everett	Freddie W. Hargrave	Tyanna Johnson
Deion Barnes	Pauline Clarke	Audrey Fisher	Jacqueline Hargrave	Gregory Jones
Robert M. Barnes	Barbara Coleman	Nashir Fisher	Marlene Hargrave	Marion Jones
Sue J. Batts	Betty Coney	Semaj Fisher	Samuel Hodge	Robin Jordan
Pearlee Beaman	Bernice Cooper	Lee Fogel	Judith Holder	Patricia Kidd
Charles Bentley	Annette Chatmon	Ethan Fogel	Chavar Hollinger	Joshua Kurr
Maude Bonham	John Cobb	Sari Fogel	Darryl Hollinger	Shaliah Kurr
Marie Bowie	Jason Dave	Ed Franklin	Richard Holmes	Zahira Kurr
Rickie Brawer	Richard Debrest	Janera Franklin	Kayla Hood	Barbara Landers
Coty Braxton	Maggie Donoghue	Michelle Freeman	Mary Houser	Debbie Lee
Terquin Briscoe	Ned Donoghue	Dorothy Frye	Sadie Hubbard	Lena Lloyd
Vivian Brooks	Demetria Dove	Kaleeda Gary	Harold Hutchinson	Viola Lovett
Khadijah Brown-Ali	Edna Dove	Almando Gonzalez	Linda Isaac	Sheryl Mallard

Jaqueline Margraze	Mr. Raymond
Monica Moses	James Rhone
Angel Motalvo	Chester Richardson
Rakia Moye	Marc Riley
Vera McFadden	Delores E. Robinson
Alicia McGougan	Timonthy Robinson
Josephine Menzel	Marsha Salmon
Habibah Muhammad	Betty Scakbrough
Jeremiah Neely	Barbara Scott
Wesley Norton	Evangelist E. Scott
Peggy O'Donnell	Linda Simmons
Delphine Parker	Tymere Simms
Ronald Payne, Jr.	Mildred Singleton
Ronald Payne, Sr.	Janis Smith
Doris Phillips	Krystal Smith
Esther Pittman	Shirley Smith
Jean Pitts	Jessica Story
Briana Poteat	Charmaine
Tanya Presley	Sudler-Milligan
Mary Propot	Andrea Swan
Melvin Pugh	Grace Tang

State Representative
Curtis Thomas
Shakira Thomas
Loretta Thompson
Ruth Thompson
Joan Tomlinson
Tyreek Turner
Colleen Walker
Syberia Ward
Carolyn Washington
Delores White
Eva Whitley
Marilyn Wilkins
Bobby Williams
Cindy Williams
James Williams
Crystal Wilson
Kara Womak-Williams
James Woodson
Alexus Wright
Richay Wright

### Organizational Participants

H.E.R.O. Community Center
H.U.G.S. CDC
The Kenderton School
Nazarene Baptist Church and CDC
Nicetown-Tioga Improvement Team
The Shipley School
To Our Children's Future With Health
Zion Baptist Church

community youth maintain the Garden



**COSACOSA** art at large  
Art creates cultural change.

Founded in 1990, COSACOSA art at large, Inc. creates new art specific to Philadelphia neighborhoods and public spaces. Through collaborative art workshops, artist residencies, and media projects, we enable dialogues among our city's disparate cultures and communities. COSACOSA projects assure a sense of equality among people of diverse backgrounds and differing abilities, while building participation in local communities as well as in society-at-large.

COSACOSA engages people of differing backgrounds to work for a common goal. In the past twenty years, COSACOSA has brought together thousands of citizens from over thirty Philadelphia neighborhoods to learn about art, about each other, and about how to work together. Each project identifies a community theme to explore through one of many possible artistic disciplines -- from tile mosaics for a school to interactive sculpture for a hospital, from audio work examining changing city neighborhoods to theatrical journeys through Philadelphia's public monuments filmed for the Smithsonian Institution. COSACOSA provokes accessible, insightful dialogues, while building collaborative forums in which to address the common and uncommon challenges of living together.

COSACOSA continues to design and apply new models to deliver innovative and interactive "dialogues through art" directly into Philadelphia neighborhoods. For more information about COSACOSA, and to learn how to participate in our programs, please visit our website at [www.cosacosa.org](http://www.cosacosa.org).

## Telling Time, Telling Place Staff

Director/Artist in Residence  
Artists in Residence

Kimberly Niemela  
Rosita Kamihira  
Pedro Ospina  
Rana Sindhikara

Program Manager  
Operations Manager

Sharnae Mask  
Vickie Fenton

Technical Managers

Dan Hee  
Robert Hee  
George Muller

Educational Coordinators

Jessica Nichols  
Robyn Wilkins

Youth Coordinators

Alicia McGougan  
Marc Riley

Youth Leaders, Gardening Corps

Ronald Payne, Jr.  
Joshua Kurr  
Coty Braxton  
Tykee Burkett

Co-Directors, Nicetown-Tioga  
Improvement Team

Cynthia Barnes  
Charmaine Sudler-Milligan

Project Advisor

John Fenton

Publication Design Development

Smart Cookie Design

The image features a stylized tree with brown branches and a dense canopy of small circles in white, light green, and grey. The background is a solid teal color. In the upper left, the word 'COSACOSA' is written in a large, black, sans-serif font. Below it, the tagline 'Art creates cultural change.' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. To the right of the tagline, there is a dark grey rectangular box containing the text 'art at large' in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font.

COSACOSA

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