

SMITH RANCH HOMES

Clubhouse Mural



Ultimately Face to Face
(Bronze, Aluminum and Copper; cast and fabricated, patinated, anodized and painted)

Artist Statement

June 4, 1991

When I came to see the wall in question, I had the pleasure of also visiting the Napa Valley. The hills, fields and the special light are very compelling to a new visitor. Row upon row of grape vines - dusty hidden colors.

A wall piece with a two dimensional view point or vantage point with a three dimensional actualization began to take shape in my mind. (i.e., If you stand back from the wall in a fixed position and look at it as a flat picture plane. The metal shapes are drawn marks or paint strokes. The fact that some of the individual units are three dimensional and have volume increases the attention to the wall itself, by adding the cast shadow shapes.)

I selected the actual shapes from a visual vocabulary specific to my work through the years. The piece fits in as part of my body of work and would be called my style. I used this visual vocabulary and informed it by my impression of the Napa Valley.

I thought of how the rows lined up and how at the ends of each row there is often an extra post at an angle to the rest to hold the wires taut. In several instances, I use a quantity of three to signify a lot.

There are rolling hills - one disappearing off to the left. The tight tendrils of the plants gripping the support wires or just feeling the air. A lattice structure, an archway or Victorian Veranda - leading to a lovely view...

This was all fine and comfortable; I started to make drawings and playful maquettes in order to envision the finished wall.

A formal proposal date was set in New York in January; a successful afternoon became in just a few hours the night of that interminable wait, the eve of the Persian Gulf War. Over the next months the light and airy forms became infused with an uneasiness and a discomfort. Once rhythmic and flowing; there became breaks, separations.

I no longer referred to the large aluminum piece (upper left) as a sail nor thought of a receding hill in a silent dusk, reflecting the last glimmer of light. Now it thrust forward and was sharp. There were great cuts and marks - a mass of activity and confusion. What I sent to the foundry was a shield.

The rhythmic repetition of the rope/net piece was broken. Parts went askew, separated and cut off, restrained. Reaching out and calling. The discomfort is seeping in.

Did we know what we were doing? A country is one thing but hurting someone else's child? I certainly didn't mean to. Changing a life forever.

Formal considerations kept the work on track and the piece is definitely influenced by the wine country.

But we were living the war when it was made.

Jerry Speyer, Tishman Speyer president, commissioned art for the public spaces at Smith Ranch Homes including the mural over the stairwell in the Clubhouse.

The artist, Czashka Ross, was born in Canada and came to the US in 1970 to study. She received a BFA from Syracuse University and an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan.

She has exhibited nationally and internationally since the 1980s and lectured and taught at numerous art schools.



Czashka Ross



General Manager John Lombardo introducing Czashka Ross at the unveiling of the mural in June 1991.



The mural unveiled.