



Explore & Learn about Queen Califia's Magical Circle

In October 2003, Niki de Saint Phalle's Queen Califia's Magical Circle opened in Escondido, California. The garden promised to become an instantaneous cultural landmark for the region, a special and enchanted place where families can play, discover and interact with large, brilliantly-colored mosaic sculptures that represent stories and symbols from the state's mythic and historic past.

Project Description	The only American sculpture garden and the last major international project created by Niki de Saint Phalle (born France, 1930-2002). Inspired by California's mythic, historic and cultural roots, the garden consists of nine large-scale sculptures, a circular "snake wall" and maze entry way, sculpturally integrated bench seating, and native shrub and trees planted within the interior plaza and along the outer perimeter.
Completion	October 2003
Cost	The garden was entirely financed by Niki de Saint Phalle, with land acquisition, site grading, landscaping, maintenance, and operations donated by the City of Escondido.
Total Square Feet	120 feet in diameter
Key Architectural Features	<p>Snake Wall and Maze: An undulating circular wall measuring 400 feet in length (with varying heights from 4 to 9 feet) surrounds the garden. Monumental sculpted serpents writhe along the top of the wall, their curved bodies forming a pattern of solids and voids that allows visitors to see landscape vistas beyond the garden. The "snake wall" opens into a maze whose walls and floors are covered with black, white, and mirrored tiles. Once through the maze, visitors enter into the central courtyard.</p> <p>Surface Materials: The wall is largely faced in natural-colored Mexican pebble stones while the snakes (as well as the other sculptures) feature tens of thousands of individually hand-cut glass, ceramic, and stone mosaics. Several sections of the wall are also decorated with high-fired ceramic plaques, each incised with Native American rock art symbols, and planetary forms and hearts as well as the hand imprints and signatures of the artist's team and family members.</p> <p>Construction: Built from polystyrene encased in urethane skin with applied fiberglass coating over a steel armature. Designed from the artist's original maquettes with computer-assisted modeling and prototyping.</p>

Fabrication: La Paloma, Sun Valley, CA; Ron McPherson, owner

Mosaic Installation: Art Mosaic Inc., El Cajon, CA; Lech Juretko, owner

Bench Seating:

Three benches faced in travertine marble and river rocks are situated along the eastern, northern and southern sections of the snake wall. Each one measures approximately 13 to 20 feet in length (with varying heights).

Designer: Pierre Marie LeJeune, an artist and designer based in Les Andelys, France

Major Sculptural Features

There are nine freestanding sculptures in the garden, with symbols and forms freely drawn from Native American, Pre-Columbian, and Mexican art as well as the artist's own fantastic imagery.

Queen Califia and Eagle Throne: Dimensions: 24 x 22 x 20 feet

Construction: Built of polystyrene encased in urethane skin with applied fiberglass coating over a steel armature. Designed from the artist's original maquettes with computer-assisted modeling.

Fabrication: La Paloma, Sun Valley, CA

Mosaic Installation: Art Mosaic Inc., El Cajon, CA

Totem Figures (8):

Cathead Totem, 11.6 x 6 x 4 feet

Birdhead Totem, 13.4 x 7 x 2.9 feet Yelling Man Totem, 16.x 5 x 2.8 feet Bullhead Totem, 17 x 6 x 3 feet

Untitled Totem [Bird on a Square], 21 x 6 x 4 feet

Kingfisher Totem, 14 x 5 x 4 feet

Step Totem, 13 x 3 x 8.6 feet

Snake Totem, 16 feet high x 4 feet in diameter

Construction: Working from original clay maquettes, totems are made of polystyrene encased in urethane skin with applied fiberglass coating over a steel armature.

Fabrication and Mosaic Installation: Art Mosaic Inc., El Cajon, CA

Landscape Design

Native trees and plantings are sited along the garden's perimeter and behind each of the three benches in the interior. Plant materials include:

Trees – Coastal Live Oak, Valley Oak, Canyon Oak Shrubs – California Sagebrush, Brush Poppy, White Sage Cactus and Aloes – Prickly Pear, San Pedro Cactus
Ground Cover– Dwarf Coyote Bush, Natural California Lilac

Landscape Architects: Deneen Powell Atelier, San Diego, CA; Jeri Deneen and Jon Powell, principals

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