

## NATURA PUBLIC ART ACQUISITION PROJECT

*Natura* is a hand-carved limestone sculpture created by [Fort Worth based artist Alice Bateman](#) during the 1999 Sculpture Symposium held at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden. With proportions and shapes referencing budding plant forms, the sculpture's elegant verticality and wheat-colored hue speak to the artist's lifelong exploration and admiration of the force of nature. Carving alongside three other local sculptors in the August heat, Bateman's adeptness in transforming the hard-edged stone into an organic figurative form is testament to her years of study in the shadow of masters in Carrara and Pietrasanta, Italy.



Photography by Tom Vanderzyl

A partnership of cultural leaders steered by the Arts Council of Fort Worth and the City of Fort Worth Park & Recreation Department hosted the symposium to explore public support for a municipal public art program. The event allowed the visitors to view the processes and techniques of carving monumental pieces of limestone into works of art at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden. Artists received modest honoraria and sites across the city were selected to host the finished sculptures for a period of two years. The Sculpture Symposium was wildly popular with hundreds of visitors and near daily press coverage. Fort Worth City Council approved an ordinance to establish the Fort Worth Public Art program in 2001. *Natura* will be the final artwork created in the 1999 Symposium to be acquired for the Fort Worth Public Art Collection.<sup>1</sup>

**SITE SELECTION PROCESS** In 2014, the Fort Worth Art Commission's Artwork Acquisition Review Panel<sup>2</sup> recommended the acquisition of *Natura* and a process to identify a suitable site on city-owned property. Subsequently, the Art Commission recommended the project to Council as a part of the Public Art Fiscal Year 2015 Annual Work Plan. It was approved on October 14, 2014 (M&C C-27031). The Fort Worth Art Commission approved a two-phased curatorial process in 2016 to identify potential sites for permanent placement of the sculpture. Arts Council and Park & Recreation Department staff reviewed over 300 park properties before identifying four that met project requirements in that they were: 1) city-owned, 2) aesthetically compatible, and 3) locations offering proven and broad public engagement.



Photography by Don Young

In February 2017, the Site Selection Panel<sup>1</sup> composed of three Art Commissioners and two community members, advised by City staff, recommended three sites as thematically compatible with the native materials and organic form expressed in the artwork. Mallard Cove Park and Tandy Hills Natural Area (THNA) were both recommended as preferred options, although the panel recognized unique challenges at each site. Ultimately, the panel recommended, and the Art Commission approved, Mallard Cove Park. Following a robust three-year planning process, siting the sculpture at Mallard Cove was ultimately unsuccessful<sup>3</sup>. In the meantime, in 2020, the City purchased 52 acres of additional prairieland through the new

[Open Space Conservation Program](#). Staff met with stakeholders at Tandy Hills Natural Area to explore potential locations at the View Street entrance, but existing and [planned infrastructure](#)<sup>4</sup> limited a suitable artwork location.

In 2022, the City of Fort Worth was awarded a North Texas Community Foundation grant to build trails connecting Broadcast Hill to Tandy Hills Natural Area and Stratford Park and at that time, staff representing the Park & Recreation Department, Open Space and Public Art programs began to discuss a potential partnership tying the sculpture to a trailhead as a gateway opportunity from an asphalt service road onto new trails.

**ART COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION** On September 16, 2024, the Fort Worth Art Commission unanimously recommended to acquire a limestone sculpture titled *Natura* by Alice Bateman for the Fort Worth Public Art Community Legacy Collection, noting that the heirloom artwork is an important part of Fort Worth's cultural history, and that the City enter into a Proposal Agreement with Bateman to explore possible placement at a future trailhead at Broadcast Hill for Art Commission review and community input.

<sup>1</sup> Stein's *Solar Dial* is sited at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden, Powell's *to be alongside her* at Capps Park, and Schoepp's *Hats* at the Fort Worth Community Arts Center.

<sup>2</sup> The Artwork Acquisition Review and Site Selection Panels were ad hoc committees of the Fort Worth Art Commission.

<sup>3</sup> Mallard Cove is in a flood plain and the site identified as suitable for the artwork was above a natural gas transmission line.

<sup>4</sup> A large play area on the entrance and a planned architect-designed pavilion limited suitable locations.