

Jardin de las Granadas **Ribbon Cutting**

# JENCHI WU'S SENTIMENTAL SENTINELS

By **Kerry Methner** / CASA

**C**ERAMIC FORMS in muted earthy tones have begun making their way into the public conscious since their installation on April 26th at Jardin de las Granadas. The exhibit features the *Sentimental Sentinels*, by artist Jenchi Wu.

An official ribbon-cutting ceremony with Mayor Helene Schneider, other officials, and the general public will take place on 1st Thursday, May 6th at 5pm and the *Sentimental Sentinels* will be part of the downtown through October 22nd.

"It's an incredible honor to have been selected for this installation at the Jardin de las Granadas," Wu commented. "I have always had an affinity for the beautiful city of Santa Barbara and am continuously enriched and inspired by its culture, architecture, and art."

Wu was recently appointed to teach sculpture and ceramics full time at Ventura College. She has a Master of Arts degree from Cal State University, L.A. and has been teaching art and ceramics since 2005. "Teaching and creating art has always been my passion, Wu noted. "For me the two are interlaced. I love to inspire students to create art that expresses who they are. I also encourage students to experiment with different materials and techniques and

to think conceptually while continually exploring and pushing the limitations of whatever medium they're working in. My goal is not to limit my students' vision to my own vision but to encourage them to discover their own vision and style."

Wu's goals is to create pieces that viewers connect and react to. "When ceramics are in a museum or gallery you can't touch or feel them," she explained. "The beauty of ceramics is to feel. I want to invite the viewer to touch them, to get the feel - I want my work to be interactive."

Wu moved to the United States at the age of 25 after graduating from college in Taiwan. In Taiwan she had been tested, assigned to a school, and to a profession. When she arrived in the U.S. she was ready to explore her own interests.

"Mom said, 'Go to the United States, take a couple years of school, and see what you think,' Wu shared. "I wanted to study something that was fun for me... In Taiwan I was put into a school for canning. It's very labor intensive, perhaps ceramics has that in common with canning..."

When Wu arrived in the U.S. she began studying English as a Second Language, and looked around for additional classes where language skills weren't the emphasis.



Jenchi Wu



Jenchi Wu at work on the *Sentimental Sentinels*



*Sentimental Sentinels* by Jenchi Wu at Jardin de las Granadas

Photo by Mark Whitehurst / CASA

She settled on art. After taking drawing and painting classes, she took a ceramics class. "The first time I took ceramics I had no idea what it was," Wu explained. As she explored, she thought, "Wow, this is actually a different art form than drawing and painting... By coincidence I went into ceramics."

And ceramics has been a fit for this artist who likes to push boundaries. "Central to the role of ceramics as a contemporary art form is the thought process one instills in their work - whether it is a functional vessel or a conceptual art installation," Wu explained. "My art challenges and provokes people to look at ceramics in a different way. I present the medium in a way that challenges their expectations and preconceptions. *Sentimental Sentinels* endeavors to demonstrate how external forces such as inertia and gravity affect the medium, as well how the work affects the environment and the very space it occupies."

As for that environment Wu feels "Jardin de las Granadas is a welcoming and warm family-friendly space - a reflection of Santa Barbara itself." Her goal was to create a work that worked in harmony with the space and its surrounding environment... the color and texture of the ceramic sculptures finding an alliance with the surrounding architecture. "The concept of *Sentimental Sentinels* is

to watch over those that come together as family and friends. Being in their presence has a calming, contemplative affect on me," the artist shared. "But your experience may vary! That is the beauty of art - each person can experience it in their own way."

Wu is married to freelance photographer and is the mother a nine year old girl.

This exhibition is the direct result of the Santa Barbara community's vision and commitment to placing public art in the heart of the Cultural Arts District. The sculpture installation, *Sentimental Sentinels* by Jenchi Wu, the brochure, and the on-site signage are funded by Santa Barbara Beautiful in cooperation with the Redevelopment Agency, the County Arts Commission, and the Downtown Organization.

The Jardin de las Granadas is a collaboration with the City and County of SB, the Redevelopment Agency and the Downtown Organization. The Jardin is located on Anapamu Street, between state and Anacapa Streets. Each Jardin exhibition will be on view for approximately six months. The second concurrent exhibition will feature the plant-based sculpture works of artist Michael Dawson on October 29th. The City's Visual Art in Public Places Committee (VAPP) and the City Arts Advisory Committee review the recommended proposals of the Jardin Community Panel for the Jardin de las Granadas and give final approval. For information visit [www.sbartscommission.org](http://www.sbartscommission.org).