

ARTIST PROFILE

State of the Art Gallery

Richard Aber's *Stupa*

By JEANETTE CASILLAS / CASA

A RESEMBLANCE TO A STRUCTURE THAT INVOKES PEACE, *Stupa* stands prominently erected in front of Montecito Bank and Trust at the corner of State Street and Carrillo. *Stupa*, by Richard Aber, is one of the eight sculptures taking part in the 5th annual State of the Art Gallery exhibition on State Street through November 15th.

"*Stupas* are focal points of meditation in the Buddhist culture," shared Aber. His design mirrors the form of a *stupa*, the oldest and most prevalent form of Buddhist architecture that is a symbol of enlightenment.



Richard Aber

However, Aber didn't follow the traditional *stupa* form, in which the conical structure sits on its wider base. Aber's *Stupa* balances on its tip, resembling the shape of a torch. "*Stupa's* reversed shape allows for a greater dynamic impact," explained Aber. "It wouldn't have the same effect if I would've kept its traditional shape."

Aber visited the site where his sculpture would be located to gather ideas and to look at the possibilities. "It's a linear place where people walk and drive by on a regular basis," shared Aber. "I wanted to build a structure without a front or back, that had the same effect from any direction. Keeping the size and scale relative to the buildings around it."

Stupa is Aber's second large scale work. After a month's work, *Stupa* stands tall at 18 feet, measures four foot nine inches in diameter at the top, and weighs 600 pounds. Its frame is composed of five inch steel pipe covered with a "skin" of plaster resined canvas. "Finished off with a gold coat of paint, the plaster resin makes for a more durable, weather-proof material," Aber shared. "It's flexible, resilient, and light, making it cost effective to transport."



Stupa by Richard Aber

Photos by Kimberly Kavish

The son of an architect and a painter, Aber couldn't escape his fate as he followed in his parent's footsteps to pursue art. He earned a B.A. and M.A. in sculpture from California State University, Fullerton.

Aber has been sculpting for 40 years and resides in Summerland where he built his home and studio. He received the National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in 1980 and was a finalist in the design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1981. Aber's artistic foundation is in bronze sculpture, however, his current works are 3-D grid-like canvases with raised seams that began as 2-D grid paintings he completed in past years.

"I like to create objects that give meaning to our ideas. Public art allows us to create abstract forms and creates a place where people can view art over time," concluded Aber.

Stupa is located on the corner of Carrillo and State through Nov 15th. For more information call 568-3994.