ALAMEDA CREEK WATERSHED CENTER
SUNOL, CA

PROJECT CLIENT: SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
Muwekma Ohlone Tribe
of the
San Francisco Bay Area
ARTWORK OPPORTUNITY

- Large outdoor sculpture located on a 30’ diameter plaza at the entrance to the Center’s gardens
- Artwork integrated into the Center’s gardens, which may consist of sculpture(s).
Project Goals

• Acknowledges the historical and contemporary presence of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe in the Alameda Creek Watershed.

• Highlights the Watershed’s diverse natural resources and role in the SFPUC water supply system.

• Serves as a focal point, yet is integrated with the site and surroundings.
RUUPAYWA
Songs of the Watershed

A PROPOSAL FOR
THE ALAMEDA CREEK WATERSHED CENTER

WALTER KITUNDU

The Alameda Creek Watershed Center in Sunol is just 16 miles from one of the most significant Golden Eagle breeding areas in the world. These birds are powerful residents of the watershed and surrounding areas. Ruupaywa (the eagle) is a chief, protector, and a creator in the Muwekma Ohlone creation story. This sculpture represents a protector spirit, a guardian of spaces above and below ground. This eagle is a framework, an invitation to the Muwekma Ohlone community to generate imagery and song in a collaborative partnership.

COMMUNITY
Guided walks with the Muwekma community will take place along Alameda Creek and images we collect will appear in the glass panels. We will conduct several “Song Sharing Circles” where bird and animal calls will be interpreted through song using the Chocheño language. The collected sounds, images, and documentation of community workshops will be made into a book and album to be shared with the Muwekma Ohlone tribe and project participants.

SCULPTURE
The Golden Eagle is made from painted square steel tubing and faces Mt. Diablo to the north. All corners and edges will be rounded and smooth to the touch. Its wings wrap around 3 benches oriented to the cardinal directions. Glass panels are printed with translucent images photographed by members of the tribe during “watershed walks.” Shadows of the sculpture will be rich with color and texture projected from the glass on sunny days.

SOUND
The sound installation asserts the tribe’s continued presence and survival despite centuries of erasure and oppression. Slowed bird and animal calls from the watershed are learned by participants. The melodies are then sung using Chocheño phrases. When sped up, the voices of the Muwekma people will ring out as the calls of Sandhill Cranes, White-crowned Sparrows, or frogs in the night. The recordings will be played from speakers hidden in the gardens, and located in the specific watershed habitat where the animals can be found.

ARCHIVE
The Muwekma community will be invited to ceremonially place artifacts and contemporary items in the soil below the sculpture in this place where so many relatives and objects were so recently removed. This is a small gesture to acknowledge indigenous survival and land rights amidst erasure and displacement. Objects placed in the archive will be protected, and the earth beneath the artwork will remain undisturbed.
Walter Kitundu
*Ruupaywa: Songs of the Watershed* (2023)
Steel, glass, sound

Photo: Ethan Kaplan Photography
A GUIDE TO THE IMAGES OF RUUPAYWA

- Shell beads and adornments unearthed here at SS Teuupetelk.
- Much of Ohlone land is also home to Golden Eagles.
- Acorn Woodpeckers have big personalities and can be seen here.
- A close look at the seed stalk of a plantain plant growing near the creek.
- A Golden Eagle perched on an old tree. They keep a close eye on everything in their environment.
- A bird's foot trefoil blossom adds striking colors to the creekside.
- The beautiful song of the Western Meadowlark can be heard in the watershed.
- A view of stones and water at the surface of Alameda Creek.
- Grasses found in the watershed are abundant and beautiful.
- A Golden Eagle soars high over the watershed.
- A pond near the terminus of Alameda Creek.
- Colorful orange lichen on a branch.
- A selection of finely crafted Muwekma projectile points unearthed here.
- A Western Tiger Swallowtail on a California Thistle.
- Mukewma Ohlone hands with a leaf. A reminder to live in relation to the land and to be good stewards of the earth.
- A closer look at some tule reeds.
- Broadleaf Cattail at the edge of Alameda Creek.
- A closeup of Muwekma Ohlone dance regalia.

Angela De Los Celos and José Guzman, Muwekma Ohlone ancestors and Chodhneyu speakers, watch over the garden from the right shoulder of Ruupaywa.

Tule reeds were often used in traditional Ohlone structures. Here they help reinforce the idea of the eagle as a vessel or shelter.
Photos: Walter Kitundu
Adrian Arias

*Traveler* (2022)

Mixed media on paper

Photo: Ethan Kaplan Photography
Adrian Arias
_Traveler_ (2022)
Mixed media on paper

Photo: Ethan Kaplan Photography