
Lupe, 2015

Artist: Greenmeme Studio - Freya Bardell and Brian Howe

Guadalupe River Trail at W. Trimble Road, San Jose, CA 95131 / Council District 4

ABOUT THE PROJECT



Lupe the Mammoth sculpture by Greenmeme Studio

A monumental work of public art now greets trail users and commemorates a significant archeological discovery.

One July Saturday in 2005, a San Jose resident took a walk with his dog along the Guadalupe River, just north of the San Jose International Airport. After monitoring the river's watershed for many years, he knew that the objects poking out of the ground that day were clearly unusual. He had discovered the tusks and skeleton of a mammoth.¹

Such was the inspiration of the artwork by Greenmeme Studio for the Guadalupe River Trail when they were selected to create the artwork in late 2010. The Guadalupe River Trail was developed

between downtown San Jose and Alviso in April 2012. The 6.4-mile paved trail includes interpretive elements, decorative gateways and a continuous alignment for recreation and bike commuting. In support of the City's commitment to placemaking and memorable spaces, managers of the Trail Program and Public Art Program considered opportunities to create a noteworthy experience near the mid-point of the trail. A monumental piece could serve as a destination, a point of interest and an encouragement for more exploration along the waterway.

The City of San Jose boasts an expanding network of commuting and recreational trail systems. The public art project was inspired by the discovery and a parallel timing of upgrades to the trail that were designed to increase usage on the already popular and formerly gravel trail. Additionally, the Children's Discovery Museum was planning a major exhibit to display some of the pieces of "Lupe"; the juvenile Columbian mammoth that had been discovered.

Greenmeme began their investigations on how to represent this important piece of the region's natural history and attract people to the trail. They met with Children's Discovery Museum staff, scientists at UC Berkeley who did the excavation of the bones, and trail users to get a sense of what would work for this site. The result is a technology-driven design with hand-crafted sensibilities. While the actual mammoth was a juvenile and about 8' tall, the sculpture measures 12.5' in height and is made of galvanized steel. The artwork was painstakingly fabricated at

Paramount Roll & Forming; bent piece by piece and fit into a notched support structure after which it was galvanized for its final finish. The artwork is titled “Lupe,” but has quickly assumed the nickname Lupe the Mammoth as a popular post on social media; #LupeTheMammoth.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Greenmeme is the vision of artists Freya Bardell and Brian Howe. Together, they have been creating site-specific public artwork since 2005. Qualities of material, context and form begin anew with each project. Their investigations into the history of both the surrounding culture and environment reveals unique ways in which each project can work to raise awareness of the qualities through sculpture, performance and community engagement. Since coming together, their work has continued to range from smaller locally-focused commissions to creating projects on a national and international scale.



Lupe sculpture at the fabricators

More about the artists may be found at www.greenmeme.com

ABOUT THE PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

The City of San José Public Art Program seeks to build community identity by initiating artworks and exhibitions that enhance the civic landscape and experience. Through active community engagement, public art strives to reflect the City’s diversity, historic richness, and envision its present and future.

The Public Art Program is part of the City’s Cultural Affairs, a division of the Office of Economic Development. The Public Art Program was established by a 1984 municipal ordinance that provides public art through funding from City capital improvement projects and eligible private development.

For further information and photos, please contact the San Jose Public Art Program.

1. “Metropolitan Mammoth: One Fossil’s Journey from Riverbed to Museum Exhibit.” Nick Pyenson. [Berkeley Science Review](#). 7/25/2009