

The installation of Niki de Saint Phalle's sculpture "Sun God" to be celebrated

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The installation of Niki de Saint Phalle's outdoor sculpture "Sun God" on the campus of the University of California, San Diego, will be celebrated at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, January 27 on the lawn north of Mandeville Center near the Muir Biology Building at UCSD.

"Sun God" is the first sculpture commissioned for the UCSD campus by the Stuart Collection. It is Saint Phalle's first major commission in the United States.

"Sun God" will be substantively complete when the 14-foot-high brightly-colored fiberglass bird form will be placed, by a crane, on top of its 15-foot-high concrete arched base during this celebration. Only the construction of a pathway, the installation of lights and minor cementing work will remain to be done to finish "Sun God."

Live music, refreshments, the releasing of balloons and other events will mark this celebration. It is free and open to the public.

"Sun God" has been funded entirely through the generosity of the Stuart Foundation. The Stuart Collection is a joint effort between the Stuart Foundation and the university which was approved by the UC Board of Regents in September 1980. The purpose of the Stuart Collection is to commission major outdoor contemporary sculptures by internationally known artists for the UCSD campus.

Attending the inaugural ceremony will be UCSD Chancellor Richard C. Atkinson; Stuart Foundation President James Stuart DeSilva; Stuart Collection Director Mary Livingstone Beebe, and the Stuart Collection Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee is comprised of seven internationally recognized professionals in the field of contemporary art. Its members include President DeSilva; art critic Pierre Restany of Paris and Milan; Pontus Hulten, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles; artist George Segal; Jim Demetron, director of the Des Moines Art Center; Anne D'Harnoncourt, director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and artist Allan Kaprow, on the UCSD faculty.

Niki de Saint Phalle will not be present for this celebration, due to her commitment to projects in Paris. However, a reception for the artist will be held when she visits the UCSD campus this spring.

"Saint Phalle's sculpture for the UCSD campus is a large bird form perched on top of an arch," said Stuart Collection Director Mary Beebe. "It appears to have just landed there out of some fantasy world. It's a friendly and embracing bird, with mythological and primordial overtones. 'Sun God' is very colorful, exuberant and certainly joyous, but with a slightly awesome edge."

Saint Phalle was born in the Paris suburb of Nueilly in 1930. She lived in New York from 1933 to 1951, and again in the 1960s. She now resides outside Paris.

Saint Phalle first gained fame in the early 60s in the days of the art happenings, when she used a rifle to shoot at paint-filled balloons. Her giant female figures, called "Nanas," are seen in important collections throughout Europe and the Near East.

The Stuart Collection has also commissioned artist Robert Irwin. His work-in-progress, two V-shaped configurations of stainless steel poles connected by violet cyclone fencing, is located in the eucalyptus grove between Mandeville Center and the Student Health Center. This untitled installation is scheduled to be completed later this spring.

Artists being considered for future commissions by the Stuart Collection Advisory Committee include Richard Fleischner, who will create a work near the Cluster Undergraduate Library on the Reville campus; Walter Demaria; Jim Turrell; Terry Allen; Roy Liptenstein, and Klaus Oldenberg and Cosha van Grugen.

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