

Brick Column Helps Celebrate Life

A TREE OF
LIFE DESIGN
ON BRICK
SCULPTURE
CELEBRATES
LIFE.

Although many people consider brick a static building material, new and exciting ways to use the product come to light every year. In this new section of *Brick Quarterly*, we will explore one of the most creative uses — sculpture. If you see a unique sculpture utilizing brick, be sure to let us know!

Bloch Cancer Foundation

In 1978 Richard Bloch, co-founder and honorary chairman of the board of H&R Block, Inc., was diagnosed with lung cancer and given very little time to live. He survived his ordeal, and, since then, formed the R.A. Bloch Cancer Foundation in Kansas City, MO dedicated to helping people diagnosed with cancer have the best chance of beating it as easily as possible.

The Foundation offers programs to remind people that cancer does not mean death. Their cancer hotline lets newly diagnosed patients talk to trained volunteers, who have survived cancer, about their experiences with treatment and keeping a positive mental attitude. The Cancer Survivors Rally, held every June in cities around the country, is a visible celebration for cancer survivors and their supporters, and usually brings much needed media attention to the idea of cancer survival.

To keep that spirit alive throughout the year, the Bloch Cancer Foundation began building Cancer Survivors Parks around the country. The parks, strategically located in high-traffic areas of high-population cities, are designed to be a tribute to the living so that a patient that strolls through the park gains strength from its various components. According to Foundation literature, they are “an island of peace and tranquility in a sea of distress.”

Each park contains three common elements. First, a bronze sculpture, designed by Mexican sculptor Victor Salmenes, of eight life-size figures passing through a maze depicting cancer treatments and success. Second, an Apple Macintosh computer contains the names of five-year cancer survivors with their type and stage of cancer, read *out loud* by the computer. And last, 14 plaques that contain maxims on healing and disease and give hope and specific suggestions on fighting cancer available on a “positive mental attitude walk” through the park.



The Cleveland Cancer Survivors Park was designed to remind cancer patients of their innate healing power.

Cleveland Cancer Survivors Plaza

Parks have been established in Kansas City, Omaha, Houston, New Orleans, Columbus, Chicago and Rancho Mirage, each with their own focal point and theme. The Cleveland park is located at the gateway to University Circle, Cleveland's renowned cultural center. The focal point of the 1.8 acre site is a Celebration Column, 50 feet in height, faced in sculpted brick.

When asked why he chose brick for this sculpture, architect Milosav Cekic of MCA Architects in Austin, TX said, "I was excited about brick as an expressive material...it has a wonderfully textured look, and the eyes have more places to rest."

The Celebration Column consists of a concrete core and brick facade, with metal embellishment. It includes

four columns at the base of the 50-foot steeple. All four columns, the roof and the steeple include carvings.

The overall theme of this sculpture is "the tree of life," the brainstorm of Cekic. According to Cekic, "Mr. Bloch believes that by visiting these places [around the country] they can remind people about the mind-body connection to help with the healing process. Mr. Bloch feels strongly from his experience that there needs to be a transformation at the base of consciousness for the healing to begin," he said.

Donna Dobberfuhr of Sculptural Designs in Converse, TX sculpted the "tree of life" design for the Cleveland park. Working with Gary Davis at Endicott Clay Products Co., the organic theme includes, "real and fantasy-like trees and vegetation with wildlife."

Brick sculpture is normally done with special-shaped, green brick which are solid and deeper than a standard brick. The brick are stacked on easels and actually laid in the appropriate coursing using place holders for the mortar. After they have been sculpted, the brick are hand numbered and laid to dry. Once they are fired they are put back on the easel to check the finished product.

Sculpture of this magnitude required some special techniques. The columns presented a unique challenge — Endicott solved the problem by developing a special easel that could accommodate a 90-degree corner turn.

Dobberfuhr supervised the installation in Cleveland, working with mason Frank Berg. Part of her work on site included tooling the mortar joints to make sure they looked like

part of the design.

The Cleveland Cancer Survivors Plaza took a total of two years, from conception to finished product, to completion. For more information, contact Endicott Clay Products at (402) 729-3315, MCA Architects at (512) 326-8300, Sculptural Designs at (210) 590-1635 or the R.A. Bloch Cancer Foundation at (816) 932-8400. **BQ**



The 90-degree turn on the columns created a unique challenge to the sculptor.