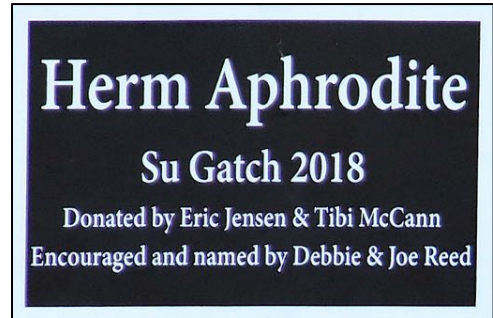


Herm Aphrodite Unveiled

On Saturday October 26, 2019, Herm Aphrodite, a giant banana slug outfitted in glittering yellow, orange, and iridescent purple glass tiles, was officially welcomed to the UCSC Arboretum.



Herm is the whimsical creation of local graphic artist and ceramicist Su Gatch (su@sugraphics.com). Her family moved to Santa Cruz in the 1960's and, though she left to attend college in Los Angeles, Su returned soon after—Santa Cruz is home. As a child, she loved designing and sewing her own clothes and working with clay; in high school, theater became her focus and her plan was to be a costume designer in Hollywood. But after taking a calligraphy class in college, she was instantly employed by friends to design invitations and posters and that ultimately lead to her twenty plus year career as a graphic artist. Currently, Su is the one-person graphic arts “department” at JourneyWorks Publishing in Santa Cruz.

As the profession transformed from a handmade craft into a computer-based art form, Su's need to create tangible items resurfaced. Jewelry making was her first foray, but mosaics soon became her chosen medium as it is totally “hands-on” and allows limitless creativity. Yes, she did start with picassiette (smashing colorful dishware into bits and pieces) but now uses primarily foraged or purchased glass and stone tiles for her creations, such as *Eva's Hat* and *Cowboy Boot 1*, two of her favorites.



The idea for Herm arose when Su shared a photo of a large (12 feet tall) mosaic octopus on her Facebook page. Her friend and artist Susana Arias, who curated several *Art in the Arboretum* exhibitions, suggested Su create a similar piece, a giant slug, and they worked on the maquette together. Once the model was done, the work on Herm could begin.



The project ("in progress" above) took far more time than Su anticipated—a year and a half—so Herm missed the deadline to be featured in the Arboretum's 2016 ***Color in the Garden*** exhibition. The piece finished in time to debut at *Sculpture IS 2018* hosted by Sierra Azul Nursery and Gardens in Watsonville.

After Herm was placed beneath a large tree in the Arboretum's South African Garden back in July, Su was thrilled to hear from Executive Director Martin Quigley that "slug rides" are *the* popular activity with children visiting the Arboretum: "I feel incredibly honored Herm's generous donors made it possible for this sculpture to live at the Arboretum, and being a magnet for children matches my original idea for Herm to become a playground sculpture."



Before and after the unveiling of the donor plaque, friends of Su's gathered to enjoy food and beverages while listening to music of the Poor Carters, who often play in Santa Cruz at Lulu Carpenter's. The Oct 26 event was held to thank the people involved in bringing this unique sculpture to the Arboretum as part of its permanent art in garden collection. It was a perfect day for a beautiful banana slug to be celebrated.



From left: artist Su Gatch, donors Tibi and Eric McCann, friends Debbie and Joe Reed