

# ENERGETIC & ELEGANT

By Devon Pettengill / CASA

**P**LAYFUL SHAPES IN EXPRESSIVE COLORS rise from the terraced Jardin de las Granadas with an energy and elegance not often found in steel structures. These are Aris Demetrios' sculptures, which were chosen for first exhibit in Santa Barbara's newest public park. Demetrios' art will remain on display through March.

"This is one of the most cultured communities in the United States. There is a philanthropic ambience in the air," shared Demetrios, whose sculpture *Mentors*, on the SBCC campus, won the 2002 Santa Barbara Beautiful Award for most beautiful work of public art. "I've never been in a place where so many people have bought my sculpture."

Demetrios was raised in Massachusetts, son of classical sculptor George Demetrios and award-winning children's book author and illustrator Virginia Lee Burton. After graduating from Harvard College and serving in the Navy, Demetrios attended George Demetrios School for sculpture in Boston for three years.

He soon moved to San Francisco, where he held a number of odd jobs before getting his break as an artist.

"I worked as a cabinet maker, sold encyclopedias, washed floors as a janitor," Demetrios shared. "Then I started entering competitions, and the only way I could go from nothing to something was to win one."

After losing 200 art competitions in a row, Demetrios won two national competitions within a day of each other. Commissions for his work followed soon after and he has made a living from his artwork ever since.

Demetrios sculpture can be found around the country and around the world, from *Wind Harp* in South San Francisco to *Peirine* in New York, and *Flame of Freedom* on the Island of Corregidor in the Philippines. In recent years, he has turned his focus to creating smaller scale pieces for private collectors.

Demetrios wants his work to convey joy and positivity, especially the sculptures selected for the Jardin de las Granadas, which he believes will bring smiles to people's faces. The bustle of shapes



*Inner City* by Aris Demetrios

that form the *Inner City* sculpture feel appropriately placed in the bustle of downtown, as does *Aura of the Book*, a dance of book-like shapes and a ribbon that resembles film, perhaps expressing the spirit of the public library across the street.

The four sculptures in the exhibit were selected through a collaboration between designer Katie O'Reilly, Mayor Marty Blum, County Arts Commission Executive Director Ginny Brush, City Agent Jeanette Candau, and Sullivan Goss: An American Gallery's Curator of Contemporary Art Susan Bush.

"I want people to feel that it's a good thing to be alive," Demetrios shared. "I've had a very good life, and I think my art reflects that."

Demetrios creates sculptures in bronze and patinaed steel, sometimes in abstract shapes and bright colors. Part of his creative process comes from learning what time of the day will foster his most creative moments.

"I shape my day around the fact that if I sit down around three-thirty in the afternoon with a block of wood and a band saw, that in a few hours something will come of it," Demetrios shared.

One of the reasons that Demetrios creates art is because of his interest in the

human condition and the universals that all of us share, such as experiences of hope, joy, and loss. At this point, he cannot imagine doing anything other than what he loves.

"At the age that I am now, I'm almost like a machine that makes sculpture," he shared. "It's certainly a profession that I have because I could do it until the day I die."

Jardin de las Granadas is located at 21 E. Anapamu St and is open to the public. For more information on Aris Demetrios, visit [www.arisdemetrios.com](http://www.arisdemetrios.com).



*Aura of the Book* by Aris Demetrios