

Water plays a critical role in a community's quality of life, from public health and safety to recreation and beauty. Knowing what a watershed is and how we can each play a role in preserving its function and value is important but rarely understood. The Public Arts Advisory Commission aspired to use a public art initiative to raise awareness of watersheds and everyday actions our residents and businesses can take to improve water quality in a watershed.



The Commission wants every person who participates in and experiences *Even Water* to be enlightened, empowered, and proud to live in West Des Moines. *Even Water* is an eight-piece cycle suite of permanent sculptures installed in Raccoon River Park in 2019. It is fabricated in mirror polished stainless steel and bronze.

Two other components to the Water Quality Community Service Art Project include a temporary work of art, *Blossoms on the Water*, and a community-sourced sculpture, *Aqua Strata*. Both of these artworks are by artist, Bounnak Thammavong, of Kingston, Illinois.

<p><b>Commission Members</b></p> <p>Diane Boyd          Ryan Crane          Jed Gammell          Tamara Kenworthy          Rita Luther          Jeff Phillips          Brenda Sedlacek</p>	 <p><b>West Des Moines</b>          Public Arts Advisory Commission          515.222.3444  <a href="mailto:parkrec@wdm.iowa.gov">parkrec@wdm.iowa.gov</a>  <a href="http://wdm.iowa.gov/publicart">wdm.iowa.gov/publicart</a></p>	<p><b>Workgroup Members</b></p> <p>Ryan Crane          Diane Goering          Brian Hemesath          Tamara Kenworthy          Cheyenne Raney          Lisa Walters          Brenda Sedlacek</p>
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**EVEN WATER**  
**RACCOON RIVER PARK**  
 WEST DES MOINES  
 PUBLIC ART COLLECTION





## The Water Table

The top reflective surface is the form of Blue Heron Lake. If you look beneath the lake, you will see five small extensions. These are the springs which provide a flow of water through their connection with aquifers deep beneath the earth's surface. Aquifers are layers of permeable rock which hold water

*"Deep beneath the earth, aquifers:  
Mississippian,  
Devonian,  
Silurian,  
Cambrian-Ordovician  
Ancient rivers still fed by rain  
what we see on the surface  
Is a small part of what lies below"*



## A Changing Lake

Blue Heron Lake is not a geologically formed lake but the result of a quarrying operation begun in 1955. The four upright sculptures chronicle the shape of Blue Heron lake in 1955, 1967, 1974, and 1990. The open windows in the sculptures help viewers grasp that Blue Heron Lake was not a part of the landscape 60 years ago.

*"The Shape of Blue Heron Lake 1955  
The Shape of Blue Heron Lake 1967  
The Shape of Blue Heron Lake 1974  
The Shape of Blue Heron Lake 1998"*

## Artist Cliff Garten

Cliff Garten is an internationally recognized sculptor and founder of Cliff Garten Studio in Venice, California. By connecting people to places and infrastructure through sculptural material, social history, and ecology, Garten's work locates the latent potential in every public place and situation to become more than the specific functions it appears to perform. Sculpture and landscape, function and form, like public and private experiences are never distinct, but exchange places throughout the day. Sculpture defines our interaction and movement by creating energy between things, generating interest in public activity, reframing our private lives and creating a sense of place within public and private realms. Garten received a Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design and a Master of Landscape Architecture with Distinction from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.



## The Water Balance

The engineering of the flow of the Raccoon River and creation of a dike between the river and the lake separates the cleaner water of Blue Heron Lake from the murky water of Raccoon River. After flooding, the lake level rises. Four engineered pipes redistribute water from the lake back into the river until equilibrium is once again reached.



*"I saw the river, it was my enemy  
I saw the river, it was my friend  
I pushed the river over there  
It pushed me back to here  
Engineering equilibrium for a lake  
A thread of land and a pipe for balance  
A precarious stable state  
I was thirsty and I drank"*

## The Oxbow

The Oxbow is a slice of the Raccoon River turned on edge to illustrate the form of a meandering river through the landscape. The two sections represent the river's shape in 1955 and the straightened engineered shape in 1998. An oxbow is a u-shaped body of water that forms when a wide meander from the main stem of a river is cut off, creating a free-standing body of water.

*"One can't bend a river like a  
river bends itself  
First it is here, then it is there  
It has its own mind  
We can build a dike  
But the river moves itself  
A constant subtle power"*



## The Well

The Well portrays the tapping of the aquifers for potable water for drinking and other uses. Raccoon River Park contains eight small well houses, each having a pump with piping extending into the earth.

The pump brings water up and into the City's water system where it is piped to the water treatment plant, cleaned, and blended with water from other sources.

*"Tap the earth  
Drink the water  
Fix the pump  
Drought, no Drought"*

