

SUNDAY A&E



Cool to the max

\$1M IN ART DOUBLES AS TEMPORARY SHADE IN PHOENIX

Meredith G. White Arizona Republic | USA TODAY NETWORK

A new public art project in metro Phoenix will cast some welcome shade during the summer's worst heat. But don't wait too long to see the intriguing shade structures. They won't be there indefinitely. ● The ;Sombra! Experiments in Shade public art project was developed by the Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture to address the city's extreme heat. With a \$1 million grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies' Public Art Challenge, the city put out a call for nine artists to combat heat with art. ● Five local artists and four from other states created nine innovative structures that re-envision shade and enhance Phoenix's livability. See PUBLIC ART, Page 2D

"Botanical Canopy" by Bobby Zokaite is a whimsical, plantlike sculpture featuring leafy canopies made with over 10,000 feet of woven nylon parachute cord. It's at Cortez Park in Phoenix. PROVIDED BY AARON ROTHMAN; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL VAN BLANKENSHIP/USA TODAY NETWORK

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"The artists involved in ¡Sombra! have brought extraordinary creativity to the table, reimagining what shade can mean for our city," Carrie Brown, deputy director of the Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture, said in a press release.

"This project highlights the exciting potential of cross-departmental collaboration, blending art, science and community engagement to tackle urban heat in innovative and deeply impactful ways."

What is the ¡Sombra! Experiments in Shade project?

¡Sombra! Experiments in Shade brought together local and national artists, civic leaders and residents to experiment with cooling and shading solutions in response to extreme heat.

Using heat maps and data collection, the Office of Heat Response and Mitigation identified Phoenix areas especially in need of shade and worked with the artists to develop design concepts and recommend materials and construction techniques to maximize cooling effects.

The shade structures will be in place through September 2025.

Why are the ¡Sombra! art shade structures temporary?

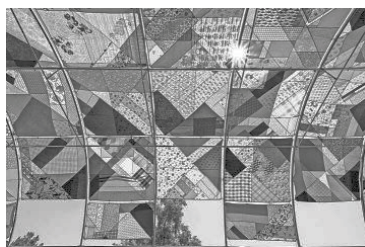
If the goal of these new art structures is to provide heat relief, why are they temporary?

According to Brown, it's simply the nature of the grant they received.

"The grant is specifically for temporary projects, and the idea is that when you remove the permanency, you have a little more flexibility," Brown said. "The artists are encouraged to experiment with materials, experiment with new methods of fabrication, new methods of engagement."

The temporary nature of the structures also makes it easier from a permitting standpoint. Obtaining a permit for a permanent structure would require more time and hoops to jump through.

"But we have always said from the beginning that if we had a project that was particularly successful, or if there was a partner that we had been working with that wanted to give it another home after our installation, we would definitely be open to that," Brown said. "We've identified some funds to make that happen, if



Quilt Architecture by Luke Haynes can be seen at Sereno Park in Phoenix through September.

that comes to fruition."

Who created the ¡Sombra! Experiments in Shade artworks?

There are nine artworks in the ¡Sombra! Experiments in Shade collection. Here's where to see them and what to know about the artists.

Cortez Park: 'Botanical Canopy' by Bobby Zokaite

Where to see it: Cortez Park, 3434 W. Dunlap Ave., Phoenix.

What to know: This whimsical, plantlike sculpture features leafy canopies made with over 10,000 feet of woven nylon parachute cord and is designed to provide much-needed shade while offering a dynamic visual experience.

"Concerning the quality of shade, 'Botanical Canopy' is an attempt to recreate the kind of shade that a tree produces: open, elusive, sun-speckled. We know these benefits, because we know that these spaces are cooler than if we use flat sheets or hard, nonporous materials," said Zokaite, who is based in Tempe.

"We were also inspired by the availability and structure of the bridge, and the idea of a community build allowed us to think that we might feasibly be able to collectively weave dozens of leaves or petals. We had 20 community volunteers and 30 students from New School for the Arts and Academics contribute to this sculpture."

Eastlake Park: 'Chinese Chorizo' by Feng-Feng Yeh

Where to see it: Eastlake Park, 1549 E. Jefferson St., Phoenix.

What to know: Inspired by ancient Chinese shadow puppetry and the history of a lost Arizona delicacy, Chinese chorizo, this large, sausage-shaped um-



"Reflections on Sunnyslope" shade structure by Jessica Arias is inspired by Sunnyslope Mountain. It's at Sunnyslope Park through September.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY AARON ROTHMAN

brella brings hidden tales to light while providing inviting shade.

"The 'Chinese Chorizo' shade sculpture for Sombra is a celebration of the history of resilience of Phoenix's red-lined community to emphasize the importance of community solidarity as a foundation to solve the heat crisis," said Yeh, who is based in Tucson.

"It features stories of a community and place that was vibrant and highly symbiotic. The storytelling method, inspired by Chinese shadow puppetry, comes alive through red laser-cut out papel-picado-esque shade sails supported by red powder-coated steel Chinese chorizo-shaped frame. The sun travels through these sails revealing these ephemeral stories as shadows cast on the ground.

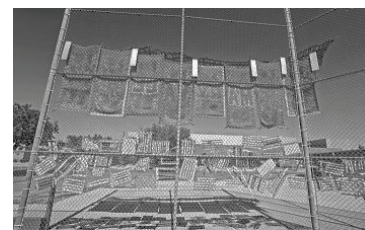
"Prominent and some not so well known community leaders are featured on the sails, along with a few of the many Chinese grocery stores that once supported the predominant Black and Hispanic neighborhoods in segregated Phoenix."

Maryvale Park: 'Nana's Garden' by Kira Dominguez-Hultgren

Where to see it: Maryvale Park, 4420 N. 51st Ave., Phoenix.

What to know: Escape the heat with a fusion of culture, tradition and innovation at "Nana's Garden," which draws from the vibrant legacy of Mexican tejidos, or crocheted granny squares. The colorful 7-foot by 20-foot fabric wall offers shade at the Maryvale Park baseball field with a geometric-floral crochet awning woven with UV-resistant polyester and nylon threads.

"Nana's Garden' is a celebration of colorful handcraft. Woven and sewn from industrial UV bonded polyesters



"Nana's Garden" shade structure by Kira Dominguez-Hultgren draws from the legacy of Mexican tejidos, or crocheted granny squares. It's at Maryvale Park in Phoenix through September.

and kitchen stovetop bioplastics, this fabric was made in my home, on my looms, with my hands. It's a story many are familiar with: watching their grandmothers, nanas, mothers, aunts create the artwork, the tejidos, that fill our homes," said Dominguez-Hultgren, who is based in Chicago.

"Blankets and shawls we can wrap around ourselves. Tablecloths and shade curtains. These stitched, crocheted, woven fabrics become a second skin, a marker for generational and communal love. This handcrafted textile love legacy is what I wanted to give back to Maryvale in this piece. Now go hug your nana!"

Sereno Park: 'Quilt Architecture' by Luke Haynes

Where to see it: Sereno Park, 5702 E. Sweetwater Ave., Phoenix.

What to know: This structure is a series of fabric sculptures crafted from over 200 quilts made from recycled thrift store clothing and bedding that invites interaction and curiosity while highlighting the importance of shade and the endless possibilities in repurposing fabrics and textiles.

"I work with reclaimed textiles and have a history in architecture, so this project scale and environment is really taking my work to the next level. Working with the city of Phoenix has been a great learning experience," said Haynes, who is based in Asheville, North Carolina.

Sunnyslope Park: 'Reflections on Sunnyslope' by Jessica Arias

Where to see it: Sunnyslope Park, 802 E. Vogel Ave. Phoenix.

What to know: This shade structure

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creates a unique gathering space where visitors can find relief under a canopy that mimics Sunnyslope Mountain and is adorned with colorful drawings from local residents.

"Reflections on Sunnyslope' is a space to contemplate our interactions with the natural environment," said Arias, who is based in Brooklyn, New York.

"The canopy shape mimics the surrounding mountainscape, and the banners below it are filled with drawings and words by members of the community. They answer questions like 'What do you do to protect yourself from the sun and heat?' and 'Who do you want to share the shade with?'"

"The piece is meant to inspire us to remember that nature represents a collective memory and resource, in addition to shared environmental challenges."

"The making of this project was a collaboration among neighbors, and the space underneath it provides a place to retreat together from the heat this summer. The mesh is a swimwear fabric used in an experimental application. It's a cool refreshing color that reflects the heat."

Cielito Park: 'Rincón de Color' by Jose Benavides and Joe Ray

Where to see it: Cielito Park, 3402 W. Campbell Ave., Phoenix.

What to know: Featuring eight giant alebrijes, mythical Oaxacan folk-art animals, holding up an awning, this sculpture is painted with intricate designs and has an innovative solar-powered misting system equipped with motion detection technology.

"Rincón de Color' means Colorful Corner, so we wanted the color to be a big part," said Ray, who is based in Scottsdale. "The alebrijes served as the primary inspiration, with the concept that each corner of the shade canopy would be held up by an alebrije. We worked with the MEChA Club at Alhambra High School to paint the alebrije panels and bring them to life; this was inspirational and part of the community engagement component of the project. It was rewarding to work and engage with the students in a classroom studio setting."

"The experimental (and excitingly unique) part of the project is the motion-activated misting system, which is solar powered. This serves as a colorful oasis where people can take respite during the hot summer months, when it can be well over 100 degrees in the shade. The misting system will help cool the shade environment nicely. The shade canopy is a 95% UV-blocking fabric material. The Phoenix Parks Department ran a water line from a drinking fountain to our structure to supply the water for the misting system."

"Additional color touches are supplied along the top of the structure on all four sides with colorful banners. This was produced by taking detail photos of the painted alebrijes and producing vinyl banners that we installed on each of the four sides."



"Standing Wave" by Shomit Barua transforms urban heat into captivating sonic art. It's at Los Olivos Park in Phoenix through September. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY AARON ROTHMAN



"Rincón de Color" by Jose Benavides and Joe Ray features eight mythical Oaxacan folk-art animals holding up an awning providing shade, plus an innovative solar-powered misting system at Cielito Park in Phoenix.

Steele Indian School Park: 'Shades of Resilience' by AZ(LAND)

Where to see it: Steele Indian School Park, 300 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix.

What to know: This structure celebrates Indigenous and Mexican American cultures while providing heat relief and education inspired by the wisdom of Indigenous ancestors and their ability to harness the abundance of the desert.

"The design celebrates the cultural resilience of Indigenous and Mexican American communities through storytelling and sacred geometry. Inspired by traditional basket weaving, wind patterns, and desert plant forms, the project highlights both the urgent need for heat relief and the power of community-centered design," said Dushawn John, who is based in Phoenix.

"The structure was collaboratively built using traditional materials found in the Sonoran Desert, such as adobe bricks, fibers from agave and yucca, and corn husks — used as a special feature within the Heat Index Tunnel."

"Shades of Resilience' serves as a space for reflection and dialogue, honoring the stories of those impacted by the Phoenix Indian School era while reima-

gining a future rooted in healing, shade and cultural connection for building and planning."

Los Olivos Park: 'Standing Wave' by Shomit Barua

Where to see it: Los Olivos Park, 2802 E. Devonshire Ave., Phoenix.

What to know: This installation transforms urban heat into captivating sonic art. Woven with flexible wood, the canopy immerses visitors in a solar-pow-

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Happy Retirement, Lynn Emerson!

After 26 years of service with Gilbert Public Schools, Lynn is retiring!

What began as a part-time librarian role blossomed into a remarkable career supporting students, principals, and administrators as GPS's Testing Coordinator. Her work ethic, heart, and quiet impact have made a lasting difference in every school in the district.

Congratulations, Mom! We are so proud of you and excited for the next chapter of rest, travel, and fun! We love you, JRTECEM



“The Burrow” shade structure by Josie Davis and Jenny Boehme is inspired by the desert tortoise that burrows underground to escape the heat. It’s at Roesley Park in Phoenix through September. PROVIDED BY AARON ROTHMAN

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ered soundscape. Using “circuit-bending,” or repurposing of simple electronics, the solar-powered modules convert heat and sunlight into sounds that evoke the flow of water, the chattering of insects and the chorus of birds.

“Honestly, I was tired of running cables. So much of the tech-based art that I do requires massive amounts of computing and always requires access to power and a messy tangle of wires. I designed these little sonic critters to be super expressive with very little power, and to be very sensitive to fluctuations in energy,” said Barua, who is based in Phoenix.

“They sound just like birds, and I liked the idea of a bunch of simple circuits just chirping away someplace, and that a person could accidentally stumble upon them ... kind of like wandering in somewhere and overhearing some juicy gossip.

“This was also an opportunity to learn some new software, stuff that architects use. I wanted to become familiar with the process of making public art, from start to finish, from the bottom to the top. So, I worked with just one fabricator for the big physical structure that these little sonic critters were going to live in, and we built this entire thing

in his front yard.

“Well, he did most of the manual work, but by bootstrapping this project we were able to control the process and be very precise about realizing my designs.”

Roesley Park: ‘The Burrow’ by Josie Davis and Jenny Boehme

Where to see it: Roesley Park, 4205 S. 15th Ave., Phoenix.

What to know: Inspired by the desert tortoise that burrows underground to escape the heat, “The Burrow” offers a shady retreat while also being a playful, interactive space.

“We were inspired by the desert tortoise, whose ability to adapt to the extreme climate of the Southwest created the perfect opportunity to bring a whimsical, airy and creative solution to Phoenix residents looking for reprieve from the summer heat,” said Boehme, who is based in Circleville, Ohio.

“‘The Burrow’ follows in the footsteps of the desert tortoise — sharing the shade while encouraging people to ‘think outside the shell’ when it comes to climate adaptation and community-based, heat-ready solutions.”

Meredith G. White covers entertainment, art and culture for The Arizona Republic and azcentral.com. She writes the latest news about video games, television and best things to do in metro Phoenix.