

Rabinowitz Courthouse Artwork

Alaska Court System



Pub - 32 (White) 1/05



Rabinowitz Courthouse Main Entry

The Rabinowitz Courthouse, designed by local architectural firm, Charles Bettisworth and Company in cooperation with McCool Carlson Green Architects, is a dynamic assemblage of three interlocking architectural forms located next to the Chena River in downtown Fairbanks.

Alaska Art, in a variety of media, is an integral part of the Rabinowitz Courthouse. Commissioned as part of the Alaska Court System's 1% for Public Art Program, the artwork incorporated several criteria and themes. Pieces were selected to complement the architectural design themes of the building - namely, to blend classical and contemporary forms, to reflect the natural environment of the region, and to express the concept of justice and dignity of the court.

The blending of old and new is a repeated theme, and it is especially evident in Sitka artist, Teri Rofkar's "Tlingit Raven's Tail Weavings". Several traditional and contemporary masks by Alaskan artists continue this theme.

The natural environment of Fairbanks is characterized by the proximity of the Tanana River valley, the Tanana Yukon uplands, and views of the Alaska Range. Situated at the 65th parallel, Fairbanks is marked by extreme contrasts of seasons and light. These factors are reflected in several artworks.

Todd Sherman's paintings depict the natural environment in three seasons. Bill Brody's "A Wilderness of Mystery" depicts the untamed wilderness just beyond Fairbanks. Kes Woodward's "Higher Ground I & II" show us a glimpse of northern interior winter. Keith Appel's "Arctic Sonata" responds to the preponderance of short days and low light conditions by the use of fiber optic illumination. Ron Senuungetuk's "Sila" is reminiscent of the aurora borealis.

Expressions of justice and the dignity of the court are found in Evgeny Baranov's portrait of Justice Jay A. Rabinowitz. The movement of Wanda Chin's hanging sculpture, "Crossing Over" evokes the energy and works of the courts.



“Arctic Sonata”

Keith Appel with Doug Morris and Nelson Gingerich



Located on the exterior wall of the courthouse to the right of the main entrance, “Arctic Sonata”, a 3-dimensional sculpture by well-known Alaskan artist Keith Appel, is an integral part of the building’s architecture. The angles of the sculpture complement the strong angles and dynamic assemblage of the building’s architectural forms. Like the courthouse itself, the sculpture’s appearance changes dramatically from varying perspectives.

During the dark winter days and nights, the sculpture’s appearance under reflected lights from fiber optic sources takes on a warm and welcoming glow. The colors and movement of lights on the sculpture’s surface enhance its dynamic nature and strong lines. The overall effect of the piece in low light conditions is reminiscent of the aurora borealis, a common phenomenon at this northern latitude.

The title of the piece, “Arctic Sonata”, is taken from the musical composition that can be a movement in four distinct but related parts. Like a sonata, each distinct segment of the sculpture relates to the whole just as the distinct functions carried out within the building contribute to the official business of the court.

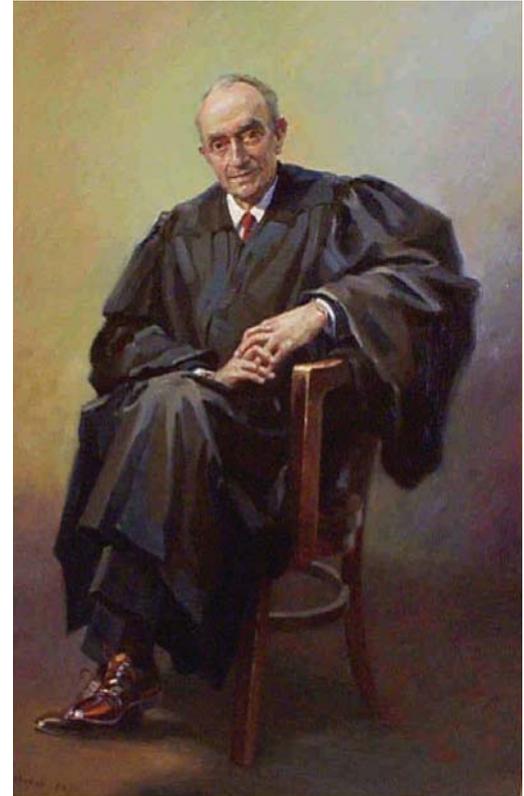
First Floor Lobby

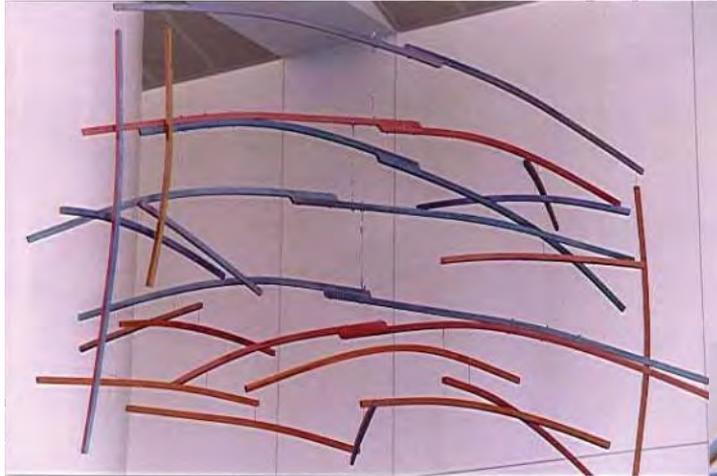


Main Lobby

The entry lobby with its two-story columns and ceiling, formal staircase, and second floor balcony reflects the gravity of court business while the warm earth tones of the finishes and the generous use of glass enhance and provide a welcoming entrance. The large volume of the entry lobby accommodates three substantial artworks. A portrait of Justice Jay A. Rabinowitz, for whom the courthouse is named, is a focal point at the head of the stairway leading to the second floor. "Sila", a mobile sculpture by Ron Senungetuk, is suspended from three points. "A Wilderness of Mystery" copper mural hangs below the second floor balcony.

Former Chief Justice Jay A. Rabinowitz from Fairbanks served the people of Alaska as a judge and then as a supreme court justice for thirty-two years. This oil portrait, painted while Justice Rabinowitz was still alive, is devoid of auxiliary elements to depict him not so much as a symbol of judicial power but as the multi-faceted human being he was. Evgeny Baranov, a classically trained portrait artist, has painted royalty in Europe.



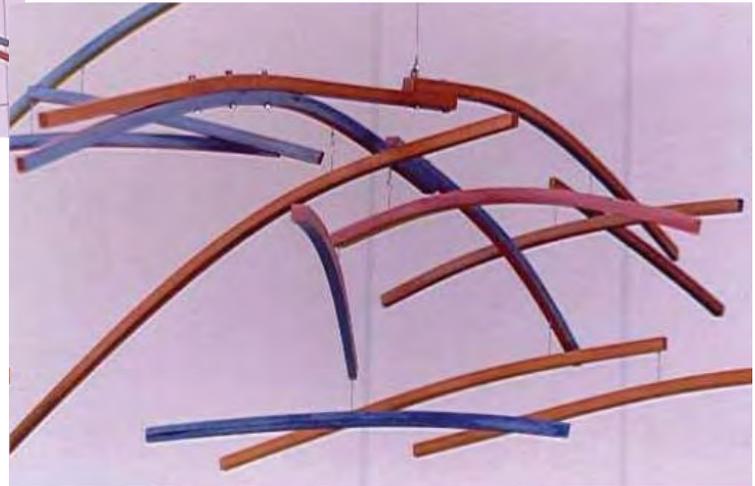


“Sila”

Ron Senungetuk

The term “Sila” is an Inupiaq term for cosmos. The sculpture is constructed of tapered laminated silver maple strips in a variety of lengths and with stainless steel components. The artist, Ron Senungetuk, is formerly of Fairbanks and now resides in Homer.

This three-cluster sculpture is suspended from the second story ceiling above the main lobby and softens the formal feeling of the lobby with its asymmetrical design and wash of warm colors. The slow movement of the mobile is intended to mimic the aurora of the northern hemisphere.





“A Wilderness of Mystery”
Arthur William (Bill) Brody

Fairbanks artist, Bill Brody created this 30' x 4' mural that shows a panoramic view looking up American Creek to Mount Prindle, the tallest mountain in the White Mountains. The autumn colors of the dwarf birch, berries, and lichen counterpoint the cooler tones of the mountains, granite tors, and blowing sky. The mural is intended to foster the connection between the enduring beauty of the Alaska wilderness and the people who live and work in Fairbanks, on the verge of the untamed outdoors. The copper panels are carved by techniques derived from printmaking, and the painting was done with small, soft brushes using transparent colors.



Law Library, First Floor

The library space is enlivened with eight vividly colored photographs of Alaska wildflowers, plants, and trees. These are a representative sample:



Devil's Club photographed
by Rick Urion of Juneau



Wild Iris photographed
by Patrick Endres of Fairbanks



Forget-Me-Not photographed
by Robert Olson of Anchorage

Rick Urion finds photography a greatly rewarding outlet and for a number of years has gained creative satisfaction from his endeavors to capture Alaska nature. Lured to Alaska in the pursuit of adventure and education, Patrick Endres has spent 20 years photographing Alaska's interior and coastal areas. Robert Olson enjoys the scenery in the Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions. He is accomplished in wildlife ecology and is dedicated to preserving nature. He hopes his photographs will inspire us to protect our natural environment.

Two additional items in the Library:



Dietrich River Valley photographed by Myron Wright of Anchorage

Shown here is one piece of a triptych which spans across the east wall, above the customer service counter.

As a self taught artist, Ernest Robertson portrays the mood and memories of Alaska with his paintings.



McKinley Evening Solitude by Ernest Robertson of Sitka

Second Floor Lobby

“Tlingit Raven’s Tail Weavings”

This collection of woven wall hangings in black and white is a contemporary rendition of traditional Tlingit designs woven by Tlingit artist Teri Rofkar. The designs are taken from a Raven’s Tail Robe.

Teri Rofkar, Sitka



The smaller pieces are designs from the robe’s borders; the largest, from its center. Each piece represents a traditional story. The weavings are merino wool with sea otter trim.



Design Represents Phases of the Moon

Ancient Design of Unknown Meaning



Design: “Raven’s Tail” and “War Club”



Design: Bear Tracks



Design is the Most Common In Traditional Robes

Jury Assembly, Second Floor



"Autumn Cat"

Todd Sherman

"Autumn Cat" and "Moonlit Wanderer" are interior forest scenes that show two of the forest's inhabitants.



"Moonlight Wanderer"

Todd Sherman

"Summer Interior Valley" is a vista of a valley in summer.



"Summer Interior Valley"

Todd Sherman

These oil paintings by Fairbanks artist, Todd Sherman show two local habitats in three seasons. They illustrate the distinctly different qualities of light characteristic to each season in the North.

Third & Fourth Floor Lobbies

The third floor lobby repeats some of the architectural elements for the main lobby on a much smaller scale. Like the main lobby, a two-story colonnade defines the space and a balcony overlooks the lobby. "Crossing Over", a metal sculpture of painted aluminum sheet and mesh by Fairbanks artist Wanda Chin and her associates, is suspended from the fourth floor ceiling. "Fairway Rock", a ten-panel mural of carved wood by well known Alaskan artist, Ron Senungetuk, adds color and interest to the third floor elevator wall.





The simple geometric human shapes signify the people whose lives are defined and affected by law.

The movement of this sculpture evokes the energy and work of the court, while the light passing through the mesh represents illumination brought forth by judicial proceedings.



“Crossing Over”

Wanda Chin with associates Wendy Ernst Croskrey and T. Michael Croskrey



The double scrolled copper knives signify the traditional people of the area, the Athabascans, as well as commerce - another aspect of life governed by law.

Third Floor Lobby



“Fairway Rock”

Ron Senungetuk

The ten-unit mural depicts a migration route for animals and birds in the Bering Strait. Fairway Rock, located on the International Date Line, was a place for harvesting sea bird eggs. During the Cold War, it was used by the U.S. Navy.

The artist is most well know for carved wood panels such as these.

Fourth Floor Lobby



Created by local artist Kathleen Carlo Kendall, these cedar masks are designed so that light from the windows is reflected by the gold leaf of the eyes and mouths symbolizing the truth to be seen and spoken. The title and the artist are Koyukon Athabascan. The two masks - one male and one female - combine contemporary and traditional Native Alaskan influences. The handprint of a child represents the loss of victims.



“Heneedodeetolggul”
“he shall judge them, decide their fate”

Kathleen Carlo Kendall



Fifth Floor Lobby

The fifth floor lobby is populated with two large oil paintings and a collection of impressive native masks. These masks reveal the beliefs and traditions of the Yupik and Inuapitq inhabitants of the northern regions of Alaska.



This colorful spruce wood “keeper” mask was carved by Dan Mayne and inspired by a Kotzebue elder. The lesson depicts the opposing fate of the hunter. The giant will harbor the considerate hunter and capture the disrespectful one.

Joshua Mathlaw’s Yupik spirit mask is made of wood which is painted, fashioning the snowy owl.





Crafted by Richard Quidvy of Mountain Village, cottonwood, alabaster, and soapstone are melded to create this exceptional loon mask.



Umara Buchea's skin mask mirrors the faces of the Siberian Yupik people. Caribou hide is molded over carved cedar and trimmed with polar bear and beaver fur and adorned with hair beads. The face is decorated with intricate Yupik tatoos.

Fifth Floor Lobby (continued)



Mary Beans Evans' spirit mask titled "Making A Way of Prayer" represents asking for good fortune for the Hunters. The inner ring symbolized earth, land, and sea while the outer ring symbolizes the universe, heavens, and stars. The face is split in two; the cottonwood bark being spirit and the soapstone being man. The hunter encountered a bear, symbolized by the scratch on the bark side of the face. The teardrop on the soapstone side of the face illustrates the loss of traditional hunting practices.



Kes Woodward's dual oil paintings of winter birches portray a window into the northern forest and adorn the elevated site of the fifth floor lobby, while exemplifying the lofty ideals that are enshrined in our system of justice.

Jury Rooms (Not Accessible to General Public)

The jury rooms are enhanced with breath taking panoramic scenes of Alaska's wilderness produced by Alaskan photographer Myron Wright. Two are shown below.



Mt. Sukakpak

Dalton Highway at
Koyukuk Crossing



Myron Wright came to Alaska in 1971. As a pilot, he was fascinated with the beauty and expansiveness of Alaska as seen from the air. Inspired by Alaska he chose photography as his medium to express the beauty of his surroundings. His desire to capture the grandeur of Alaska has led him to specializing in panoramic photography.

Clerk's Office, First Floor



Who Are We? Where Do We Come From? Where Are We Going?

This intricate quilt created by Ruth McDowell after teaching quilting in Fairbanks, was presented to the Court System, in 2002, by the Cabin Fever Quilters Guild.



For more information about this publication, please call the Alaska Court
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