

Artist's Statement: Catherine Melina

The Garden of Peace is a memorial that commemorates the lives of those lost to homicide. It is a public gathering place that acknowledges grief, offers consolation, raises awareness, and symbolizes hope. Located at the seat of the Commonwealth's government, the Garden appeals to the Governor, the Legislature and the Judiciary for just laws and active leadership.

The design is based on the concept of a dry streambed welling up from a wound in the earth, and wending its way across the site between a black granite lens and the sculpture, 'Ibis Ascending'. The granite lens, 'Tragic Density' represents the visible surface, a mere sliver, of the huge stone of sadness and grief buried in the hearts of those who have suffered the loss of a loved one to homicide. A stream is typically full of water, the life-giver, but this stream is dry, containing only the names of victims inscribed on river stones, reminding us of the lives lost. Each stone is different, representing the uniqueness of each individual, yet united they create their impact through the number of names inscribed. The streambed ends at a pool fed by a waterfall, the re-emergence of water reminding us of the possibilities that still exist. Judy Kensley McKie attempts to deal with the pain, anger, and grief caused by her son's murder through her sculpture, 'Ibis Ascending', an expression of hope for the future. Thus, the Garden culminates with an emblem of the spirit of hope, transcendence and rebirth.

Along the pathway running through the Garden, seat walls provide a place where we can sit and meet with friends and family, or quietly contemplate. The paths lead us to a gathering space that can serve as a focal point where emotive energies can coalesce and activities begin. It is a viewing point as well, allowing the visitor to look at both sculptures and the length of the streambed that connects them. The crosswalk across the dry streambed connects the paths and symbolizes the point at which our paths and those of victims are coincident, where we and they meet together not in a collision as their meeting with fate was, but as a union of pathways, of winding footsteps.

The Garden plant material will be a combination of deciduous and evergreen plants. The bark of the River Birch changes color with each season and with ongoing maturity. These trees grow best in groups, each tree drawing strength from the other, the way we as individuals draw strength from our family, friends, and community. The Yews will be evergreen, unchanging through the seasons, and will only grow so tall, and no taller. Tall and elegant, they will provide shelter from the winter wind. The ground covers will be evergreen, reflecting everlasting hope.

The Garden of Peace will serve as an urban space that can be used by people working and living in the area. Access to the Garden from Somerset Street is via two entry points: a handicap accessible path that also will serve as the 100 Cambridge Street accessible entrance, and a stairway adjacent to the main South Plaza stair. There is also an entrance into the Garden from the Plaza itself. It will be flanked by a wall on which donors will be acknowledged for their generosity in funding the construction of this significant addition to the public open space of the city, and the commemoration of the hundreds of citizens of Massachusetts who have lost their lives through the act of homicide.