



## News Release

August 16, 2022

For Immediate Release

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### **Tsutakawa Memorial Gates Public Celebration: September 14**

*Come Salute the Return of the Arboretum's Iconic, Sculptural Entry Gates,  
Stolen and Destroyed at the Start of the Pandemic*

**Seattle, WA**—You are invited to attend a [free public celebration at Washington Park Arboretum](#) for the installation of the refabricated Tsutakawa Memorial Gates. Please join us at the Graham Visitors Center (2300 Arboretum Drive East, Seattle, WA 98112) from **3:30 to 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 14**, for an afternoon of fun and festivities. Enjoy live music, taiko drumming, food trucks, and more.

“This will be a special occasion for everyone who loves the Arboretum,” said Arboretum Foundation Executive Director Jane Stonecipher. “Stolen and destroyed at the start of the pandemic, the original Memorial Gates were a symbol of endurance and of humanity’s connection to nature. They marked the entrance to the Arboretum for more than 40 years, and their loss was a cultural and artistic tragedy. The story of their re-fabrication and return is an inspiring one of generosity, resilience, and community—truly a story for our times.”

Made from patinated bronze and featuring an intricate design reminiscent of the plant foliage, flowers, and fruits found in the Arboretum, the original Memorial Gates were created in 1976 by internationally renowned Pacific Northwest artist [George Tsutakawa](#) (1910–1997). Commissioned by the Arboretum Foundation and the University of Washington, the gates were placed at the north entrance to the park in honor of all those who have loved and supported the Arboretum. That same year, the gates were officially gifted to the city of Seattle and came under the management of the [Seattle Office of Arts & Culture](#).

In mid-March, 2020, just two days after the pandemic-related closure of the Arboretum’s Visitors Center, the beloved Memorial Gates were stolen and cut up for scrap. Though quickly recovered by Seattle Police Department detective Mark Jamieson, they were found to be damaged beyond repair.

The news was greeted with frustration and sadness by many who appreciated the gates’ unique artistry and representation of place. Shortly after the theft, a number of donors contacted the Arboretum Foundation offering to help to recreate the gates. The Tsutakawa family still had the design blueprints for the gates, and fortunately George’s son, sculptor [Gerard Tsutakawa](#)—who fabricated the original gates for his father—agreed to rebuild them for the Arboretum.

“The Tsutakawa Memorial Gates at the Washington Park Arboretum represent the legacy of community building and welcoming spaces we strive to build in One Seattle,” said Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell. “Gerard Tsutakawa’s faithful interpretation of his father’s design speaks to the importance of generational artistic wealth and encouragement, represented once again at one of our city’s favorite gathering places. Thank you, Gerard, for preserving the integrity of this artistic treasure.”

“We are so grateful to Gerard and the entire Tsutakawa family for their involvement in and support of this public-art restoration project,” said Stonecipher. “Thanks also to our generous donors, [King County’s 4Culture](#) for their additional funding, and our partners at UW Botanic Gardens and Seattle Parks and Recreation for their support in returning the gates to the Arboretum. And special thanks to the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture for partnering with us by contributing public art conservation funds to this collaborative effort.”

“The new gates will be installed at a more secure and visible location beside the Graham Visitors Center,” continued Stonecipher, “and they will continue to welcome visitors to the Arboretum for generations to come. They will also become part of our city’s official public art collection.”

**Event parking and transportation:** Event parking will be limited. To help reduce traffic, please consider coming by bike or on foot, or using public transportation.

**Event questions:** Contact our Events and Corporate Sponsorship Manager Tess Forte at [tforte@arboretumfoundation.org](mailto:tforte@arboretumfoundation.org) or 206-325-4510.

**About the Washington Park Arboretum:** Founded in 1935, the Washington Park Arboretum is cooperatively managed by the University of Washington Botanic Gardens and Seattle Parks and Recreation, with major support from the Arboretum Foundation.

**Background on George Tsutakawa:** George Tsutakawa’s legacy runs deep in the fabric of the Pacific Northwest. His work is recognized as a unique merging of Japanese and Puget Sound aesthetic traditions into a unified expression. He is remembered not only for his permanent bronze sculptures, fountains, and dramatic paintings, but also his positive humanistic outlook. For more information, visit <https://georgetsutakawa.com/>.

**Background on Gerard Tsutakawa:** Gerard Tsutakawa (born 1947), son of artist George Tsutakawa, is an accomplished Pacific Northwest sculptor. A studio apprentice for his artist father for 20 years, Gerard created his first, commissioned public art sculpture for the International Children’s Park in 1979. In the same studio where his father worked, he continues to design and fabricate everything from small studio bronze pieces to large public art fountains and sculptures. His work reflects a confluence of the cultures and traditions of the Pacific Rim. For more information, visit <https://www.gerardtsutakawa.com/>.



*PHOTO: George Tsutakawa next to the original Memorial Gates in 1976.  
(Josef Scaylea / The Seattle Times)*



*PHOTO: Gerard Tsutakawa refabricating the Memorial Gates in spring 2022.  
(Tess Forte/Arboretum Foundation)*

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