

THERE'S A BUDDHA IN THE BACK

There's a bas-relief sculpture of the Buddha in back of the Tucson Shambhala center. The sculpture is the work of Greg Schoon, who made it to commemorate the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tucson in 2005; it was displayed to His Holiness at a reception dinner at the Marriot Hotel.

The creation process involved sculpting the original in styrofoam and taking a plaster mold of it. Into the mold was cast a mixture of white Portland cement and marble sand, making it basically cast marble.

The piece was shown at the Shambhala Arts Festival in 2006, and then Greg donated it to Tucson Shambhala. Another cast of it exists as a shrine on a public wall at 250 South Arizona Avenue in the Armory Park area of Tucson.

A structural engineer, Bill Richardson, did the plans for the installation. A local mason built the concrete block backing. Greg glued the Buddha sculpture onto the concrete blocks, and surrounded it with lotus tiles made by a friend of his, who wants his gift to be anonymous. Aurore Chabot made and installed the porcelain maroon border tiles.

The meditation garden in front of the Buddha is the combined efforts of Judy Alender, Aurore Chabot, and Phil Muir. The many colored tsas-tsas of Avalokiteshvara and Padmasambhava below the Buddha were made by Jamie Sterhardt. A tsa-tsa is a small image in clay that is offered in a sacred place.

Jay Nichols, a member of our sangha, died in 2008. We held the memorial ceremony for him in front of the Buddha. His family offered us trumpet bushes for the ceremony. We planted them at the side of the Buddha. They bloom with orange flowers, which remind us of Jay's vibrant presence.

We hope you enjoy this kind, gentle Buddha.