

HARD BOP

by John Atkin

from concept to unveiling



a collaboration -

JOHN ATKIN
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FILLMORE CENTER
AOS architecture + design
SCULPTURESITE GALLERY
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LUSAD, Loughborough, UK



Long heralded as the capital of the West Coast jazz scene, the Fillmore Jazz District stands as the cultural heartland of San Francisco. "This is a vibrant and social neighborhood. As such, community regeneration must begin at the ground level, an evolution the Fillmore Center Plaza as an inspirational center of municipal activity - live music, art, entertainment - and a step towards greater things for the Fillmore District," says Steve Boyack, VP of Asset Management for The Larsen Group, LLC, and one of the original founding members of the Community Benefit District.

John Atkin's jazz-inspired stainless steel "Hard Bop" stands as the crown jewel of the 15,000 sq. ft. Fillmore Center Plaza. It was selected from a pool of twenty-five invited artists, through a rigorous request for proposals. Securing its place as the city's flagship new outdoor playground, the plaza - designed by AOS Architecture + Design - is ideally suited for public celebration. It's wired to accommodate the audio and visual needs of public events, with seating options for 300+ people. Paramount for day-to-day enjoyment, the plaza incorporates a seamless mixture of low and high-density seating to account for a variety of public uses. San Francisco's historic Fillmore District can now jump and jive into the future with this vibrant new street-level public space.



"The regeneration of Fillmore Plaza through its new architecture and new sculpture meshed with my deep-rooted interest in the benefits that art within the community can offer people outside of the rarified atmosphere of the gallery or museum. My main interest is in integrating a space into a place where friends and the community can meet and socialize, reinforcing the notion of Fillmore Plaza as a signature site in San Francisco, while celebrating its unique identity as the home of West Coast Jazz. Researching the historical precedents of the site and experiencing the neighborhood's diverse population and vibrancy first-hand during two visits allowed me to discreetly infuse the sculpture with ideas resonant of the identity of the locale, particularly West Coast Jazz, as well as the cadence of pedestrian traffic associated with the passage of time.

The concept of movement in Hard Bop was derived from the notion of musical rhythm and in particular the movement of a conductor's baton, as it flows its way rhythmically through the air. Initial studies also suggested that those "shivers" were associated with written musical notes, a collection of sound. These "snaps" were then converted by the vertical poles, which were metaphors for the structure of written music (staves), as well as the strings of several musical instruments. The concept of musical instruments became more significant and the overall form evolved in such a way that it became a blend of several intrinsically linked factors, a non-specific instrument, rhythm, printed music structure, and essence of human interaction. (As expressed through the use of general template shapes). Later on, I used specific imagery, such as machine head keys, elegant forms used to correct the sound generated from instruments.