

## Bronzeville's "Life's Garden" newest artwork and great history lesson

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Artist, designer, and glass fabricator for the mosaic "Life's Garden," Catherine Lottes (left), is congratulated by assisting artist, Evelyn Patricia Terry (right), for a job well done. Ann Wilson (not pictured), Hillside Family Resource Center Manager, served as Mistress of Ceremonies for an unveiling ceremony, which took place the afternoon of Friday, October 21, to kick off Milwaukee's 24th year of celebrating Gallery Night and Day. The Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Arts Board sponsored this public artwork, located at Lapham Park Senior Citizen Apartment Building on 6th and Reservoir. Photo is courtesy of Diane Yokes

Barbara Plouff, consultant for the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM), initially contacted Catherine Lottes, over a year and a half ago, with funding provided by the Wisconsin Arts Board (WAB) and the Housing Authority, to initiate the public art piece, "Life's Garden." Tony Perez, HACM executive director, was instrumental in making a commitment to incorporating art as part of good design and good development.

Lottes invited the multifaceted visual artist, Evelyn Patricia Terry, to work with seniors from Lapham Park and youth from the Pieper-Hillside Boys and Girls Club. They created watercolor images "of their favorite things." Tom Miller and the Art Corps at Milwaukee Community Service Corps also contributed important images of a Bronzeville "tree of life," and all the images provided inspiration for Lottes' design. Lee Callewaert, of Dragonfly Tile & Stone, masterfully installed the final artwork on the corner of 6th and Reservoir, at the Lapham Park senior development.

Lottes began her career as a professional artist creating paintings for the City of Milwaukee, now installed at Wilson Park Senior Citizen Center on 27th and Howard Avenue. She went on to work with children in schools and community centers as an artist-in-residence for the WAB in the early to mid-1980s.

For the last 15 years, Lottes has been working with recycled glass as an artistic medium for public art, in addition to creating products for designers and architects. Her kiln-fused recycled glasswork can be seen along the Hank Aaron State Trail in the Menomonee Valley and a variety of other places throughout Milwaukee and beyond.

The process Lottes developed and expertly utilizes is unique in that it fuses recycled glass with graphic and photographic

images into the mosaic tiles. She developed this process through a grant from the State of Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources Waste Reduction and Recycling Program. Participants' names, poems, photos, and drawings, such as the monarch butterflies, sunflowers, a turtle, were scanned. A plethora of striking images on glass mosaic tiles resulted.

Music notes incorporated into the piece reflect the strong history of Walnut Street – now known as Bronzeville – as the hub of Black social life. In the 30s and 40s, Jazz clubs frequented the area. Presently, the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, Roosevelt Middle School of the Arts, Elm Creative Arts School, and Days Inn – Milwaukee’s art hotel, reflect a strong neighborhood connection to the arts.

There is also a history of incorporating art into public housing beginning with “Parklawn,” Milwaukee’s first housing development. Several sculptures were created specifically for Parklawn during the Great Depression by Federal Arts Program artists. These sculptures were located and restored a decade ago and are once again on display in Parklawn’s Monument Park.

“Life’s Garden” is an effective collaborative effort of Wisconsin’s resources and cultural capital. State and city government, artists, craftspeople, and several generations of residents all came together to create this great work of art that celebrates the history of the Lapham Park neighborhood.

Visit Lottes website at [www.lucidglassind.com](http://www.lucidglassind.com) and Terry’s website at [www.evelynpatriciaterry.com](http://www.evelynpatriciaterry.com).