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Serving: Centereach • Selden • and a portion of Lake Grove

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MCPL dedicates sculpture in reading garden

An interactive water sculpture by the acclaimed Long Island artist James "Slim" Cook was officially unveiled at a November 4 dedication ceremony for the Middle Country Public Library (MCPL) community. The ceremony was held at the library's outdoor reading garden at its Centereach facility.

Assemblyman Steve Englebright and Michelle Isabelle-Stark, director of the Suffolk County Office of Film and Cultural Affairs, joined Amy Hagedorn of the Horace and Amy Hagedorn Foundation at the ceremony.

"Libraries are designed to stimulate the imagination," said Library Director Sandra Feinberg. "By introducing Slim Cook's outstanding work to the Middle Country community, we are proud to enhance the library experience for patrons of all ages."

Feinberg added that public libraries are fast becoming showplaces for local artists, filling a void in opportunities to exhibit Long Island talent.

The sculpture by Cook — whose work is included in permanent exhibits at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and New York City's Museum of Modern Art — represents the latest example in the growing trend of using the region's public libraries as venues for "public art."

The reading garden sculpture project was largely underwritten by the Middle

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— SANDRA FEINBERG

Country Library Foundation and the Friends of MCPL. The Centereach library itself has won praise for its innovative architecture and distinctive design features.

Cook, who lives in Shoreham, has large-scale public sculptures that are now on view at the North Shore Public Library in Shoreham, the Riverhead Free Library, Sachem Public Library and the Village of Greenport. The sculptor's other Long Island installations are in Rocky Point and in two additional Riverhead sites.

A pioneer in developing new library programs and building networks between libraries and communities, the Middle Country Public Library has developed a national reputation for innovation. Its programs are modeled across the country. MCPL's two buildings — in Centereach and Selden — provide more than 100,000 square feet of combined space, the largest on Long Island.



MCPL Director Sandra Feinberg, State Assemblyman Steve Englebright, and artist Slim Cook congratulate Eugene Auer Elementary School Principal Linda Bard and her students whose poems and stories inspired by the new sculpture were published in a special book distributed at the dedication. Students include Emma Agostini, Melanie DiPalma, Kaitlyn Eyester, Kerrin Kallmann, Jacob Quinn, and Chris Weiman.