

Public Art Brightens Jacksonville

Jaxoscope is a Community Kaleidoscope



The Jaxoscope, an illuminated interactive sculpture created by Buffalo, NY artist, Shasti O'Leary-Soudant, is a striking addition to the city of Jacksonville, Florida.

The project was made possible by Florida's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and Jacksonville's Downtown Investment Authority (DIA), whose Urban Art Program includes painted murals, bike racks and sculptures.

Upon being awarded the project, O'Leary-Soudant was contracted to create a sculpture for the City of Jacksonville. The Jacksonville Electric Authority contributed, offering to illuminate the art, which she incorporated into her plan to maximize interest, especially at night.

Her inspired idea came from a member of the Jacksonville community, who referred to Jacksonville's people as a kaleidoscope. But the inspiration began long before that comment. The city of Jacksonville Public Arts Program and their forward-looking perspective should be recognized, as well as the insight of Rick Smith, President and CEO of Rigidized® Metals Corporation, in Buffalo, New York.

Jaxoscope: A Community Kaleidoscope

Rick Smith has established an Artist-in-Residence program at Rigidized® Metals that explores uses for stainless steel that might otherwise not come to the forefront. “When the line between industry and art began to blur, it occurred to me that Rigidized® should begin to collaborate more formally with the design community,” Smith explained. “The program really began in 2006 when we commissioned an artist to create a sculpture out of Rigidized® Metals stainless steel. The sculpture was a fantastic success and has resulted in a 13 year partnership with artists culminating with Shasti O’Leary-Soudant becoming our first Artist In Residence.”

O’Leary-Soudant’s partners in developing the Jaxoscope were Tom Schunk, Rigidized® Metals Project Manager, and her husband, Jethro Soudant.

“My design was very ambitious, and developing the concept was a challenge throughout the process as the potential for error even to 1/3000 of an inch caused issues that resulted in redesign with my collaborators,” O’Leary-Soudant explained.

Once her vision solidified, O’Leary-Soudant created a paper model and then approached Schunk at Rigidized® Metals. A prototype was then created of one outer shell to determine best practices. It was bent, welded, grinded, cleaned, painted and fabricated.



Artist renderings of the Jaxoscope during the day, and illuminated at night.

“The cantilevered design was my biggest concern because of the stress it creates,” Schunk explained. “So much so that we originally planned to assemble the sculpture in Florida. It was built in Buffalo, however, because we needed our equipment and the resources to create it.”

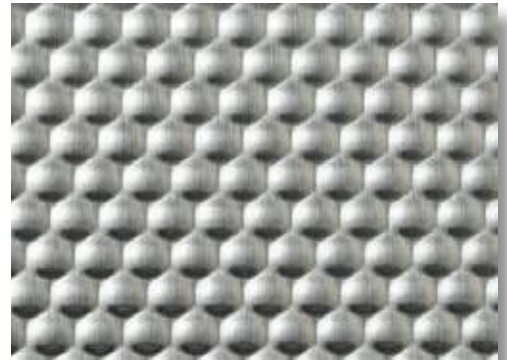
When the time to ship the sculpture came, a special 8’ x 8’ base was built for transportation to Florida, where a crane was used to lower it onto the concrete foundation, while still protected by packaging.

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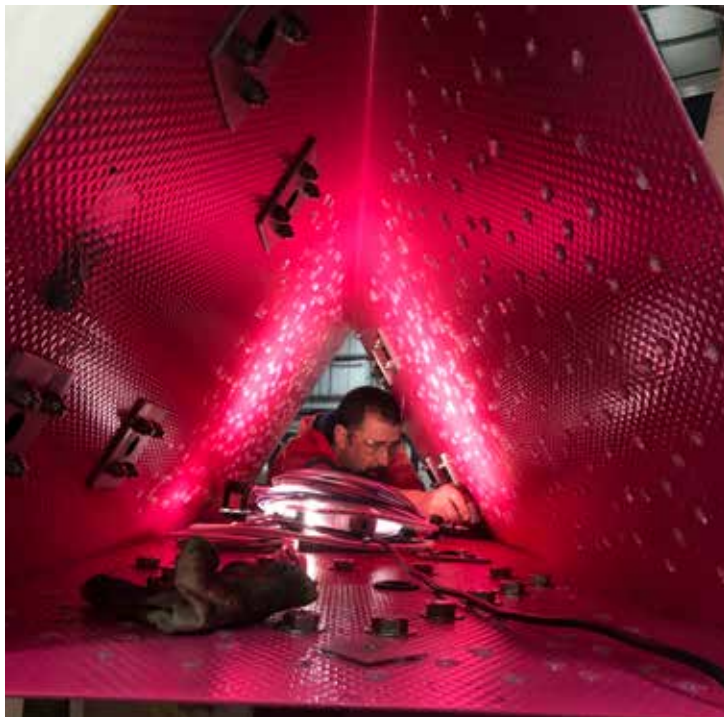


The view inside the Jaxoscope.

A honeycomb textured stainless steel pattern, 6HC, was chosen for the project. A powder-coated colored enamel was applied, through a baked on process. A UV clear coat was applied afterward to protect the color.



Rigidized® Metals pattern 6HC in stainless steel



Tom Schunk working on Jaxoscope at Rigidized® Metals' facility.

A fiber laser system was used to cut the holes for the 10,000 lights, and that process proved immensely challenging. Installing the lights required extraordinary patience and O'Leary-Soudant's husband, Jethro Soudant, helped her install them.

"The pieces are held together with bolts and plates. It wasn't possible to use a drill in some cases due to the shape and I had to climb into the sculpture to construct it," Schunk added.

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Shasti O'Leary-Soudant looking up into the Jaxoscope.

O'Leary-Soudant's first chance to see the 10 x 10 x 10 foot Jaxoscope illuminated was at the Lighting Ceremony, December 18, 2019, in Jacksonville. The sculpture is located at the Jesse Smith Memorial Plaza at 133 East Forsyth Street.

"The Jaxoscope has been very well received and we are adding steps to ease access to an area of the kaleidoscope's function that was high and therefore less accessible to the public," Glenn Weiss, Director of the Public Art Program, explained. "Shasti has agreed to this addition and it should be in place in about a month. Children enjoy crawling underneath to look up," he added.

More information on Shasti O'Leary-Soudant can be found at shastiolearysoudant.com

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