



## **FOUR OCEAN-THEMED ARTWORKS DAZZLE IN PACIFIC SEAS AQUARIUM**

*Glass jellyfish, light shimmers and more coming to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, thanks to a program that sets aside money to incorporate public art in large projects*

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TACOMA, Wash. – When visitors walk into the new Pacific Seas Aquarium at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, they won't just see sharks and sea turtles. They'll also walk through light shimmers, dive into an underwater mural and gaze up at giant glass jellyfish.

Three artists are creating four marine-themed artworks for the new aquarium, opening this summer at the Tacoma, Wash., zoo – and each has a unique, imaginative take on the animals that will wow aquarium visitors.

Kait Rhoads is making three giant glass jellyfish. Gordon Huether is creating an overhead installation of metal fish, and a projection of shimmery light along the walkway ramps. And Maria Jost's watercolor mural of Puget Sound tidal zones is beautifully rendered on panels as a digital collage.

"These are exactly the kinds of works that we envisioned when we created our [Percent for Art](#) program," said Metro Parks Tacoma Commissioner Aaron Pointer. "Metro Parks highly values public art. It inspires people and fits well with our mission of creating healthy opportunities for people to play, learn and grow."

The works are funded through the program, adopted in 2014, which devotes 1 percent of any capital project budget over \$100,000 to public art. The artists were chosen in 2017 following a competitive public submission process.

"These art installations will complement the animals in the new Pacific Seas Aquarium and provide our guests with an additional element of interest as they explore the exhibit spaces," Zoo Deputy Director John Houck said. "The art in the Pacific Seas Aquarium helps tell the story of how we relate to nature."

### **Kait Rhoads, "Salish Nettles"**

Imagine walking past swirling jellyfish – then gazing upward and seeing three giant ones suspended mid-air, made from thousands of pieces of glass.

In "Salish Nettles," Seattle glass artist [Kait Rhoads](#) combines her love of the ocean (she grew up on a boat, and is passionate about ocean conservation) with her unique "hollow murrine" technique of weaving cut pieces of blown glass into basket-like shapes.

Using red, orange and pink glass inspired by the coloring of sea nettle jellies, Rhoads weaves giant “bells” with copper wire, and threads hundreds more glass pieces onto spiraling steel “tentacles.”

The result is a stunning sculpture that plays with light, structure and scale, visible from underneath and above.

The glass tubing was blown at Tacoma’s Museum of Glass, with help from the Hilltop Artists youth organization.

Rhoads is very much inspired by the natural world. She has shown ocean-inspired work at the recent “Into the Deep” at Tacoma’s Museum of Glass, as well as exhibiting nationally and internationally for three decades. Rhoads has been artist-in-residence at museums around the country, with work in collections at the Corning Museum of Glass in New York, to the Seattle Art Museum, to the Shanghai Museum of Glass and more.

### **Gordon Huether, “Shoal,” “Shimmer”**

As guests walk down the ramps inside the Pacific Seas Aquarium, multicolored shimmers light will play around them, as if they’re descending to the depths. Overhead, a school of metal fish glints and flutters.

California artist [Gordon Huether](#) has created two installations, each playing on the sensation of being underwater.

The first, called “Shoal,” is inspired by a shoal of herring. Using hundreds of metal fish waterjet-cut in the artist’s studio and suspended overhead, the installation depicts the silvery schools of herring that are abundant in the waters of Puget Sound – and which will be featured in real life in the aquarium. Colored LED lighting will cast a revolving spectrum of colors.

The second installation, “Shimmer,” is inspired by the play of light on water in the zoo’s former North Pacific Aquarium. It was captured on video and will be projected along walkway ramps in the Pacific Seas Aquarium for an immersive, floating experience.

Huether, from Napa, Calif., has made more than 70 public art pieces from Austin, Texas, to the Bay Area, New York and Germany. He works to create a dialogue between the art and architecture of a site, enhancing people’s experience of a space with new perceptions.

### **Maria Jost, “Where Land Meets the Sea”**

Gaze at the mural “Where Land Meets the Sea,” and dive into a watercolor world of wavy anemones and rippling water in gradients of blue and purple.

Artist [Maria Jost](#) doesn’t just paint delicate, dreamy watercolors – she’s also a science teacher at Tacoma’s Science and Math Institute, right on the zoo’s campus. So the 6-foot-by-15-foot mural she’s created for the Pacific Seas Aquarium isn’t only beautiful – it’s also biologically accurate, showcasing the animals and plants found in the intertidal zone of Puget Sound. Jost painted the mural section by section in ink and watercolor, working with zoo staff on species details, and finally combining them into a digital collage that could withstand the humidity of the building.

Even better, Jost's mural will stand just near the real creatures that live in the aquarium's Tidal Touch Zone.

Jost's whimsical yet calculated artwork shows a scientist's take on nature's beauty, most recently seen in her interactive "Sea Creature Scavenger Hunt" around West Seattle. This mural is her largest work to date.

The 35,000-square-foot Pacific Seas Aquarium will be home to sea animals that inhabit the Pacific Ocean, from the cold waters of Japan, Alaska and Puget Sound to the somewhat warmer seas off of Central California, and on down the coast to the sub-tropical waters of Baja California

The animals of the Pacific Seas Aquarium will inspire visitors to care about them, while state-of-the-art digital graphics will tell the story of the ocean and its challenges. Interactive kiosks and hands-on activities will help visitors make greater connections between themselves and the waters we all share.

For more information, go to [www.pdza.org/pacificseasaquarium](http://www.pdza.org/pacificseasaquarium).

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*Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).*

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