

Tori Gate with Waiting Bench
By Steve Ashley

While working on a series of Portals, I was introduced to the Japanese Tori and the purpose they serve in framework of that society. My arched gateways serve as portals for passage into a garden or other outdoor spaces. My own studio work space has several archways that offer passage into and out of my outdoor work area. I like to think it is a spiritual passage that occurs each time I go into and out of that area, a positive exchange.

The Tori Gate is a Japanese concept that places a spirit gate in sacred spaces in the landscape, placed there for reflection and introspection. Sometimes, a Tori is positioned in the landscape in proximity to a body of water, to create reflected image of the gateway. I remember seeing a bright red Tori Gate in the Japanese Gardens of the New York Botanical Gardens. I decided to paint my own portals in the sacred red color. Being bright red, they stand out from the green of the natural world.

The Japanese often include a covered sitting area nearby the Tori, I liked that idea and created a metal bench where people can actually sit down and rest and reflect on the entire installation.

A portal into time and space, a passage between past and present, and possible into other dimensions. Take a seat on the bench and reflect on what you see before you, consider your place in the cycle of life, or simply to rest before passing.

Dedicated to the memory of my mother, who passed in August of this year.

Steve Ashley