San Francisco Japantown Sensu

The Japantown History Walk Sensu (hira) is a modern interpretation of traditional Japanese forms, integrated with the unique Japanese American culture that has existed, persisted, and grown in San Francisco's Nihonmachi since 1906.

Invented in Japan 1300 years ago, the sensu is a palette for artists, an instrument of dance and drama, a graceful and practical part of everyday life. It is an important link to our Japanese culture and continues to be used in the Japanese American community.

Elements of the Design
The design of the Sensu incorporates key elements from Japantown:
- Peace Pagoda – Designed by Yoshihito Tsuzuki, the Pagoda was donated by the people of Osaka, San Francisco's Sister City, in 1965.
- Origami Fountain – One of the two sculptures inspired by Japanese paper folding, designed by Ruth Awana for the Buchanan Mall.
- Mountain stream motif – Architect Rudi Okamoto designed this pattern as the setting for the Buchanan Mall.

The four seasons are represented by traditional Japanese plant motifs:
- Sakura – The springtime cherry blossom is a symbol of the beauty and impermanence of life.
- Ayame (Shoiku) – The summer iris flower symbolizes feminine beauty, its leaves masculine strength and courage.
- Momiji – The autumn maple leaves evoke the flow of time.
- Matsu – The evergreen pine symbolizes strength and longevity.

Original concept and Sensu Design by Tony Kuzumoto, Grace Morikuki and Nomi Kai of NDD Creative.


SIGN 15