

Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002) was a French-American artist. She spent most of her childhood in New York City. She moved to Paris as an adult and was amazed by the work of famous artists such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse.

Niki was a self-taught artist. She experimented with different ways of making art. She used bold colors, organic shapes and it was said that “she was always doodling”. She also made sculptures. She made many statues of colorful women she called “Nana”. She enjoyed making sculptures so much, she wanted to make an entire garden filled with giant sculptures. Her sculptures can be quite large and are very colorful. She used both paint and mosaic tiles including pieces of mirrored glass.



Her first monumental public project was playground in Jerusalem. After that, she spent 20 years making 22 large sculptures for a sculpture garden in Italy. She wanted it to be a place of joy for everyone where they could experience art and nature together.

In 1993, she moved to La Jolla, California where she lived the last 8 years of her life. In 2000 she started to plan her last outdoor large sculpture garden. She called it *Queen Califia's Magical Circle* and it is located in Escondido. It was completed a year after she died. The sculpture garden contains mythical, magical creatures made of mosaic tiles, mirrored glass and stone.

You can visit many of her sculptures in San Diego. Besides *Queen Califia's Magical Circle* at Kit Carson Park in Escondido, there are three sculptures by the County Administration building in downtown San Diego, another sculpture by the convention center, two more in Balboa Park and one on the UCSD campus. Her work is easy to spot-it is large, colorful and has bold colors, mosaic tiles and mirrored glass.