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'Lament' by Nancy Gifford Is the Santa Barbara Community's Favorite Piece of Public Art

Public Art and Contest Winners Were Celebrated at the 2025 Santa Barbara Beautiful Awards



By [Richelle Boyd](#)

Tue Sep 30, 2025 | 4:07pm



Nancy Gifford in front of "Lament" | Photo: Paul Wellman (file)

When Melinda Mettler, a Santa Barbara Beautiful boardmember, made the Santa Barbara Mural Guide in 2024, she shined a light on more than 100 murals all across the city that were free for the public to enjoy. Impressed and inspired by the overwhelming amount of local art on display, Nathan Vonk, owner of Sullivan Goss Gallery, began a collaboration with Mettler “to heighten community awareness of this under-appreciated cultural legacy.”

Through this collaboration, they have highlighted what is currently about 250 qualifying public murals, mosaics, and sculptures. After a three week contest hosted by the *Santa Barbara Independent*, the winning piece, “Lament,” (2014) by Nancy Gifford, was announced at the 2025 Santa Barbara Beautiful Awards Ceremony to celebrate their 60 years.

The piece was originally commissioned as part of the group show *Requiem for the Bibliophile* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 2015. It features a collage of more than 1,700 altered book covers and was donated to the Santa Barbara Public Library in 2019, though 4-foot panels were removed from each side to fit into the space, as noted in the library’s description of the piece.



Nancy Gifford in front of “Lament” | Photo: Paul Wellman (file)

“‘Lament’ is a final bow to the book as a reverential object,” Gifford said. “Books hold knowledge which expands by a form of accretion and ‘Lament’ mimics that accretion, layer upon unruly layer forming a cacophony of the shreds of a bygone era. My personal Poem of Mourning.”

The Awards Ceremony also announced the three community members who won a prize package after entering the contest: Kathe Hines, Joanne Murphy, and Vanessa Estudillo. The three winners were awarded various prize packages which included a staycation, various tickets and vouchers to local theaters and upcoming performances, and gift certificates to local restaurants.

The mural guide and [interactive google map](#) will continue to be managed and updated by Santa Barbara Beautiful, Vonk noted, adding new murals as they appear and updating previous murals that are changed or refreshed.



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