



The lanterns represent each belt color from white to brown. The light that exudes from each represents the awareness and guidance that each belt journey provided me. The impression of the lantern seen in the middle of the others represents the future, future belt, future guidance and awareness.

The tassel represents one of the most humbling moments in my life. The honor for my art and for how it has transitioned me has never been felt more than when a small item was bestowed to me by a very special martial artist.

The gates of karate represents the entrance into a world I never knew was possible or available to me. As my journey has continued, the gates represent a protection and strength I now feel within myself; a mental state that goes beyond the Dojo, touching my family and all that I come in contact with.

The teachings of Sensei Pena and Gichin Funakoshi I hope to always have in the shadows of my actions. A base of knowledge in which to live by. As my journey continues, I hope to build upon this knowledge giving strength to my "gate" and creating a larger shadow to be seen.

The rocks represent the strength and base of 3 important characteristics: Patience, Discipline, and Humility. Through my Karate training and journey, I have grown much in these traits, becoming more natural and beautiful.

There is an inner peace within me with Karate in my life. As I sat in my gi for the final time, during my blackbelt test, a calm came over me. To have endured everything and persevered up to that moment, it will never be forgotten.

The front kick on top of the hill represents the first struggle felt as I started my martial arts journey. I "never gave up" and now, I feel like a bird in flight. The birds represent the freedom from the hesitations in me that kept me from doing what I wanted. The confidence gained over the last 5 1/2 years has allowed me to soar more freely...

*Dylan Park* 1-22-12