

ARTS BEAT

Art for everybody*The city seeks a sculpture for the south-side spray park**Tom Laskin on Friday 11/16/2007*

If everything goes according to plan, **Cypress Spray Park** on the city's south side will sport a new city-financed sculpture when it reopens next June. On Tuesday night, the **Madison Arts Commission** chose to recommend "1-2-3-Go!" to the Common Council. If approved, **Melanie Kehoss'** metal sculptures of families at play will add luster to the watery recreation area that's already a hit with area children. The project will cost about \$10,000, and **Karin Wolf**, the commission's new program administrator, hopes that it will involve area kids from either Lincoln School (which is adjacent to the park) or the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County.

Wolf says that while the Arts Commission was instrumental in getting the sculpture's selection process off the ground, the city parks department deserves most of the credit for identifying the spray park as an excellent site for a new piece of public art.

"There's been a lot of growth on the south side, a lot of development," notes Wolf. "And the parks department has been doing a lot of work there. When I first got here, **Bill Bauer** in parks told me that this spray park is going to happen and that it would be really great if Madison Arts did something. And we followed up on that."

In fact, Wolf jumped at the chance to get involved in her first major project as a city employee. Among other things, she made a point of attracting as many artists as possible by putting out a "request for qualifications," which served to identify interested artists without requiring them to work up detailed proposals for the park on their own time.

After that, artists **Carrie Fonder**, **Heidi Natura** and **Kehoss** were chosen to submit proposals for the site. Wolf also worked at getting neighborhood residents involved by leaving bound copies of the proposals at the South Madison Branch of the Madison Public Library and scheduling the artists' presentation of their proposals at the Villager Mall. Overall, she feels the process worked well.

But Wolf says that while choosing and erecting public works of art is gratifying, too often people forget about a project once it's been unveiled.

"Conservation of public art is neglected nationwide," she says.

Wolf notes that the south side's most prominent public piece, "Gateway," at the corner of Park and Beld, is one of several sculptures in the city's catalog of public pieces that is beginning to fall apart. Indeed, she figures that one of her favorites, Frederick Clasgen's fanciful Annie C. Stewart Memorial Fountain at the old entrance to Vilas Zoo, requires hundreds of thousands of dollars in repairs.

To put that into perspective, currently the Arts Commission's budget earmarks just \$8,000 a year for the maintenance of all the public works of art under the city's care.

Clearly, the city of Madison won't be able to pony up for major restorations. Instead, Wolf says, the community has to take an interest in a piece to keep it from falling apart under the assault of the seasons.

And it turns out that model of restoration is already in place here in Madison. Last spring, **Harry Whitehorse's** "Effigy Tree" was removed from its site on the shores of Lake Monona and brought to the local artist's studio for conservation, thanks to funds raised by the east-side neighborhood that has enjoyed it over the years.

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That's a good place from which to start, because even shiny new public pieces get old: "They all need special care," says Wolf.

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Wolf and her commission have recommended '1-2-3-Go!'