

PUBLIC ART IS DECAYING

Madison's inventory of sculptures is in a bad way



PHOTO BY [unreadable]



Photos by STEVE APPS - State Journal

The face in "Hieroglyph" by O.V. Shaffer, the copper sculpture in front of the main Madison Public Library, is weathering.

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The city of Madison's looking for an artist — or maybe a team of artists — to build a playful fountain at Frances and State streets to "affirm the character of Madison and celebrate Madison's famed State Street."

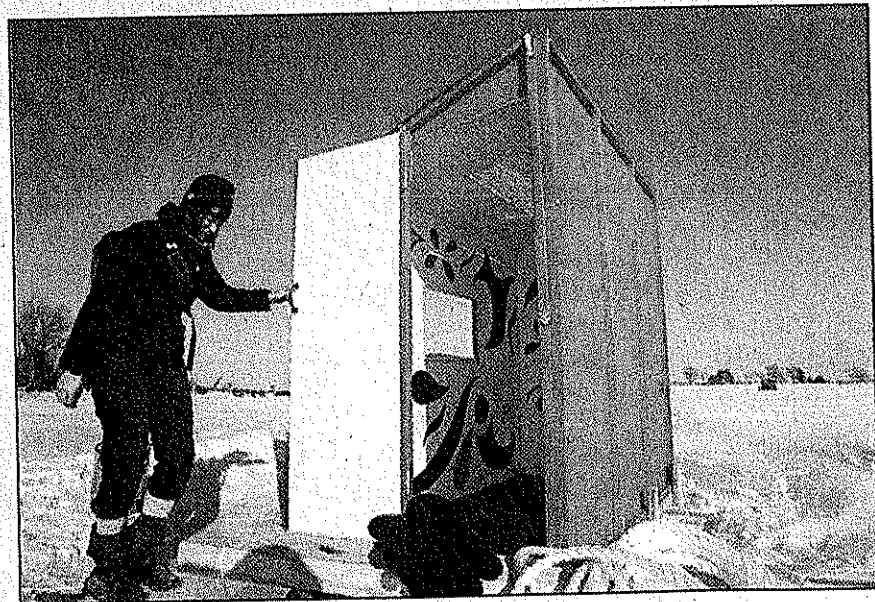
At stake is what could be a \$300,000 project, the latest piece of permanent public art in the city and part of the State Street redesign project for the 500 and 600 blocks.

But even as the city welcomes the visions of seven artists selected to compete for the Frances Plaza fountain project, the city's public art inventory of 37 sculptures and one mural is decaying and vulnerable, a survey of city-owned art last September reported.

One piece, the Richard Haas mural, is hidden beneath Monona Terrace.

"These works are in peril from neglect, vandalism and pollution, vulnerable regardless of material," said inventory author Anton Rager, former conservator of the state Capitol.

"Bronze art works, only a few



INSIDE

- Christine Olson received an \$850 temporary arts grant from the city for her "Hot Shanty" on Lake Monona this winter. The interactive shanty, one of several temporary works to with a BLINK grant, closed for the season last Saturday. **A4**
- Where to find Madison's public art. **A5**

millimeters thick, can suffer irreparable loss of their surface due to acidic depositions. That acidic pollution can subvert solid stone structures, too. Modern materials like fiberglass and painted alumi-

WEB EXTRA

Interactive map: A look at the location and condition of all of Madison's publicly owned art.

Go to: madison.com/wsj

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Art

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num can crack, split and peel, as we have in the Gateway project in Madison. Gateway was repaired by the artist in the past but continues to degrade."

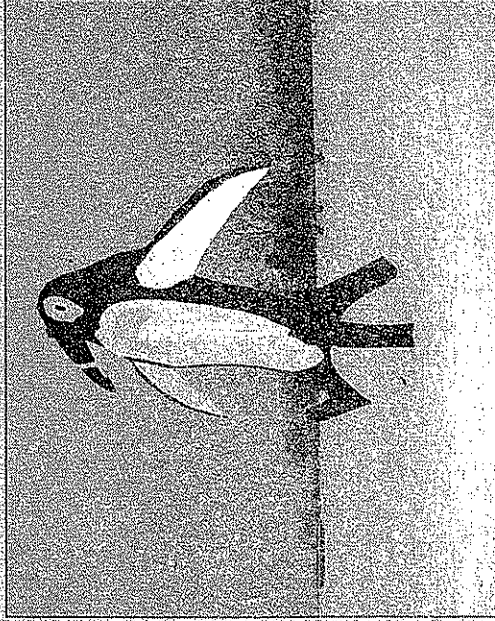
Madison public arts administrator Karin Wolf said she's been encouraged to address the problem and remedy it as soon as possible. Last summer, she said, the city worked on the Martin Luther King Jr. statue in front of the Madison Municipal Building, painted the gates at Goodman Pool, worked on sculptures donated by Sid Boyum and began work on the "Effigy Tree," a statue by Harry Whitehorse that was removed from its location at 2930 Lakeland Ave. and taken to the artist's studio because of its deterioration.

City maintenance funds covered the cost of the King statue, the gates at Goodman Pool, and the "Effigy Tree." And because the Public Art Plan requires that donated work be accompanied with an endowment for their care, the Sid Boyum sculptures, which were donated after the plan was in place, have a separate fund for their maintenance, she said.

The oldest piece

But the cost of repairing or restoring other works could be intimidating.

Wolf said the Annie C. Stewart Fountain at the old entrance to the Vilas Zoo, the oldest piece in the city's collection, is in terrible disrepair. "There are those who have tried to save the fountain in the past and say it can't be done, that it



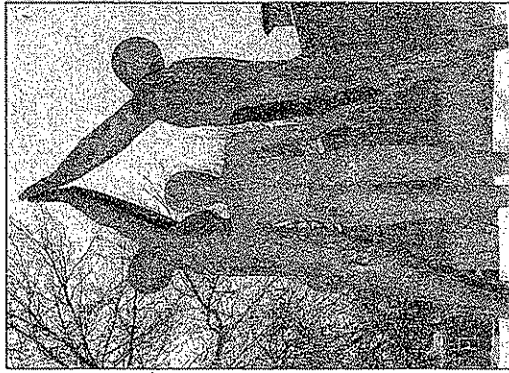
Madison artist Timothy Browning received a \$150,000 temporary art grant for his marching penguins on Lake Monona this winter. Photos by STEVE APPS, State Journal

BLINK funds temporary works

The last day for Madison weather artists, five of whom received small amounts of money from the city to installing, who got \$150 to install marching plywood penguins on the ice of Lake Monona, Saturday.

Since it opened Jan. 20, OLSON received \$850 as a BLINK grant, a city program that distributes about \$9,000 in art installations. The Madison Arts Commission (MAC) describes BLINK as "an opportunity for on-shore neighbors, people on the ice, and people jogging by, as well as other Madisomians," she said. She's one of what arts coordinator Karin Wolf calls "cold-is-next."

Olinger said the city is making great progress in implementing a "Public Art Framework and Field Guide," created six years ago with the help of a St. Paul, Minn., arts consultant. The guide emphasized building public art into other city projects. "The idea is to move from people's perception of public art as a stand-alone sculpture to integrating art and a higher level of aesthetic into everyday life," Olinger said. "Since that plan was adopted, projects have included the bus shelters on State Street, the granite and bronze forms (Philosopher's Grove) at the intersection of State Street and West Mifflin Street, the fountains and planters on Capitol Square, a sculpture ("Under Flow") at the Water Utility Building, the entry gates at the Goodman Pool and silhouetted forms integrated into the fencing around the Cypress Spray



The Gateway Project sculpture stands at the corner of Beld and South Park streets in South Madison.

mountain, Wolf said. "If you know anyone with an extra \$150,000 and a passion for history and art, it would be the cable car ride to the top," she added.

In the meantime, Rajer suggested that the city have the collection appraised and develop a plan for conserving the pieces, among other things. Have them lit at night, move some to a safer location and create walking tours for the public, he said.

But in its current \$265,500 annual budget, the Madison Arts Commission -- formerly CitiARTS -- provides only \$8,000 annually for preserva-

tion of the current stock, according to commissioner Patty Elson.

"Our budget is already in place," said Elson, who's chairwoman of the MAC Public Arts Standing Committee. "We wouldn't want to be taking that money, already designated, and reallocate it. That doesn't seem quite fair."

Wolf said in 2008 the city will spend:

- Up to \$78,000 on annual grants, including \$12,000 for the summer concert series and \$20,000 for artworks.
- Up to \$9,000 on BLINK grants.
- Up to \$8,000 on maintenance and repair of the city's public art collection.
- Up to \$150,000 on public art projects, not including projects that come from different funding sources, like Frances Plaza.
- Up to \$15,000 on a cultural plan.

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Elson said money for maintenance is something the commission could ask the city to cover in the future, and Madison Ald. Mike Verveet, 4th Dist., said neighborhoods could take ownership of their public art.

A 1981 eyesore
The new fountain in the plaza at Frances and State streets -- which garnered 44 responses to the arts commissioner's January request for proposals to create a "water feature" -- will be across the street from a fountain built in 1981 that quickly became an eyesore.

"It contained three pools and because people at bar time would often play in these, it became a big safety and liability concern for the city, and the lower two pools were filled in," Planning Department Director Mark Olinger said.

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THE FINALISTS

A Madison Arts Commission committee last week narrowed the 44 applicants to five finalists and two alternates.

The finalists, who are being asked to prepare full designs, are:

Actual Size, Stoughton

Tom Askinian, Cheney, Wash.

Myklebust + Sears Studio, Stockholm, Wis.

Stoller Studio, Portola, Calif.

Howard Ben Tre, Pawtucket, R.I.

The alternates are: Archie Held, Point Richmond, Calif., and Design Workshop, Aspen, Colo.

To view the work of the finalists in the competition to design the Frances Plaza water feature, go to www.cityofmadison.com/MAC/public/openportunities.cfm

Continued from previous page

Olinger said people sometimes dumped soap in the fountain, causing suds to run down the slope of Frances Street onto State Street.

A selection committee chaired by Elson whittled the 44 proposals down to five finalists and two alternates, each of whom will get \$2,000 to put together a model of what they would do, Elson said.

The Frances Plaza fountain will be different, Olinger said, built on a site that is more level and more flexible. "The new fountain is envisioned as a low-

volume fountain that will be a year-around piece of public art, not just during the months when it is warm enough to have the water turned on," Olinger said.

Artist comments

But looking forward, some in the city's arts scene say the Frances Plaza fountain, which is managed by the arts commission but not financed by public money, is just a drop in the bucket.

"The (public arts) program in my opinion is underfunded for the size of the city and for a city as 'sophisticated' as Mad-

CRAIG SCHREINER
- State Journal

The city has selected seven artists to compete for the fountain project at Frances Plaza.

"son likes to think it is," said Aris Georgiades, a Madison artist who unsuccessfully applied for the Frances Plaza project.

"Most of the significant pieces of public artwork in the area are not owned by the city but rather belong to the state or are privately funded."

In a perfect world, said Verveer, Madison would also require that percentage of every construction project be set aside for public art.

Public art in Madison

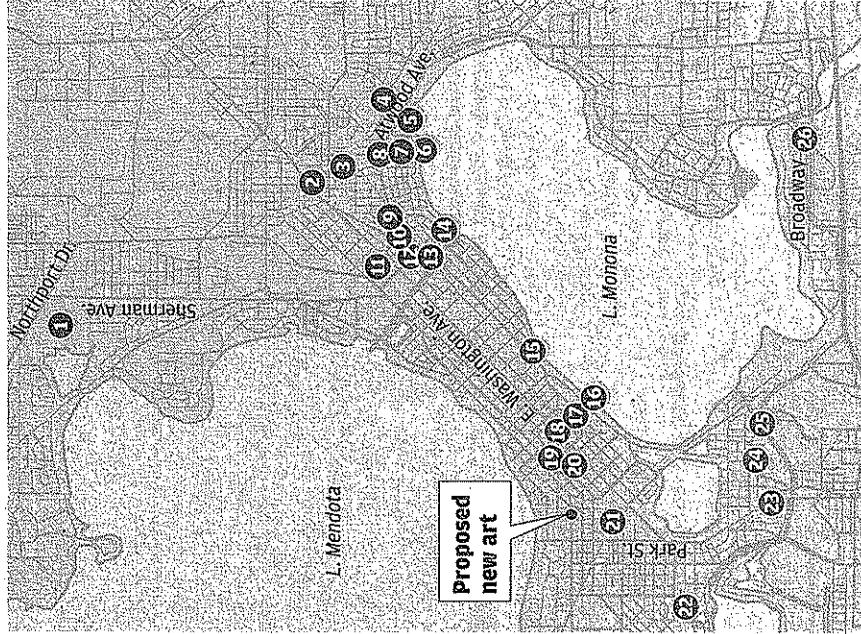
The city of Madison lists 37 sculptures and one mural in its most recent inventory of publicly-owned art works. Many are deteriorating and in need of repair, with only a small city budget for maintenance. There is a proposal for a new piece of artwork at Frances and State Streets.

1. Statue of Liberty
2. Six-Sided Red Lantern
3. Hippopotamus
4. Fiddleheads Unfit
5. Act
6. Sunbathers
7. Multi-tiered Pagoda/Pyramid
8. Great Spirit (removed)
9. Dignified Figure with Tablet
10. Easter Island Sculpture
11. Mushroom
12. Small Mushroom
13. Polar Bear Chair
14. The Blue Dragon Urn
15. Smiling Mushroom
16. Tree, Spirits and Faces
17. Creature Abstract Head
18. Blue Lantern on Tripod
19. James A. Graaskamp
20. Tall White Lantern
21. Geometric with Round Window
22. FuDog Lantern
23. Alexa
24. Untitled Mural
25. Otis Redding Memorial Benches
26. Timekeeper

SOURCE: Madison Arts Commission

the plate and champion public art efforts.

"Public art in Madison is not ubiquitous," said Bartell, who is also a member of the UW Board of Regents. "You could travel around this city for weeks and not notice any. It needs a little



17. Living the Dream
18. Capitol Square Fountains
19. Forum of Origin (Amphitheater)
20. Hieroglyph
21. Spirit of Greenbush
22. Annie C. Stuart Memorial
23. Gateway Project
24. Ripple Effect
25. Under Flow
26. Madison Gateway

WEB EXTRA

Interactive map: See an online version of this map with photos and descriptions of the art.
Go to: www.madison.com/ws/

State Journal

higher profile."

Wolf acknowledges the expectation for public art in Madison doesn't measure up to the reality. "Maybe one obstacle... is a hesitation on behalf of all parties to choose to invest in public art projects,"

she said. "People want the art, but maybe they don't want to pay for the art. And the kind of monumental art projects that people are excited about — like Millennium Park in Chicago — have a very steep price tag."