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Artist Austen Brantley unveils 'Mother and Child' sculpture in Darbo-Worthington neighborhood

By Omar Waheed - Jul 15, 2025



Artist Austen Brantley unveils his 'Mother and Child' sculpture in the Darbo-Worthington neighborhood. (Photo by Omar Waheed.)



A new statue unveiled on Madison's East Side on July 8 marks the culmination of an eight-year-long effort to encourage the city to invest in empowering neighborhoods through cultural and community development.

The installation comes from the [2017 Darbo-Worthington-Starkweather Neighborhood Plan](#). In the plan's formation, it called for the city to make meaningful investments in its development. Now, around eight years later, a new statue at the foot of the Starkweather Creek/Bike Bridge off Darbo Drive shows a culmination of efforts between the neighborhood and the City of Madison's Arts Commission.

The statue, created by Detroit artist Austen Brantley, is titled "Mother and Child." Made of bronze, it depicts a mother sitting cross-legged, cradling her child in her arms.

"For me, this piece is about serenity," Brantley said. "What I really find beautiful about the energy of the sculpture is that we've all been touched by what it means to be a mother."

Inspiration comes from the love and support that Brantley felt from his own mother and the ubiquitous feeling everyone has experienced with their own. He describes it as "not a forceful energy" but a powerful one that makes people feel loved and protected.

Efforts to bring the piece to life come from a strong community drive. Will Green, executive director of Mentoring Positives, has been a central piece in bringing the community together.

Initially, Green worked with a group of moms with what was formally called the Darbo Council. It predates the Worthington Park Neighborhood Association, with eight area moms giving their voice for what they wanted to see in an art installation for the area.

"Austen was able to talk with them about giving inspiration about what they thought the neighborhood was about, all the things they go through," Green said. "It's giving the neighborhood a voice."

Finally, seeing the finished project brought excitement for the area's residents. Area Alder Dina Nina Martinez-Rutherford was brought the project for approval

shortly after she was elected.

Alder Martinez-Rutherford recalled seeing the spec drawings and plans and thought it was going to be “stunning,” but she wasn’t prepared for its actual unveiling.

“It’s breathtaking, beautiful and feels very poignant now,” she said. “There’s so many things that we have to witness right now that are heartbreaking and unjust. Being able to walk by this, or drive by this, or stop and walk over here and just touch it, means that there’s good in the world.”

“Mother and Child” is readily available along the bike path tucked near the pedestrian bridge near Starkweather Creek and viewable from East Washington Avenue.

*‘Mother and Child’
(Photo by Omar Waheed.)*

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