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Brent George presents an incredible inedible egg

David Medaris on Wednesday 05/07/2008 4:12 pm , (3) Recommendations

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You've heard that story about Humpty Dumpty, who sat on the wall, had a great fall and so forth. This is not the story of Humpty Dumpty. This is a short tale about Harry Dumpty and how he came to be perched on a wall outside the Madison Municipal Building's west entrance overlooking Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Given the cautionary tale of that other Dumpty fellow, this sort of behavior might strike you as inadvisable at best, or perhaps even reckless. But not to worry. Harry Dumpty is an inanimate egg-shaped figure cast in cholesterol-free bronze.

The sculpture is the work of Brent George, who moved to Madison about a year ago from DeKalb, Ill. An artist for more than a decade, George, now 35, modeled the figure back in 1997. This is the third copy of Harry Dumpty in an edition of nine. It was cast by Pardeeville artist David Stott.

Perched outside the Madison Municipal Building, Harry Dumpty announces "The Cast Bronzes of Brent George," an exhibition of works ranging from representations of the moon and the sun (both with faces) and a work titled "Trip on a

Brick" to animals both domesticated and wild: a cow, a pig, a hippo, a silverback. Also including a slide show that illustrates the demands of the casting process, the show is on view in the Madison Arts Commission's ARTspace gallery in the Municipal Building's first-floor lobby -- along with an impressive exhibition of portrait and scene drawings by the self-taught artist Levi Williams.

Both exhibitions are on display through June 30. The irreverence of Harry Dumpty leads me to wish the sculpture could remain sitting on the wall indefinitely: It's the sort of unobtrusive, fanciful figure that sneaks up on you and causes first a double-take, then a smile. You see this kind of public art with some frequency in Europe and other civilized cities where people who have a sense of humor live with gusto.

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