

around town | SID BOYUM HOUSE AUCTION

Art lovers working to save East Side home, sculptures of Sid Boyum

NICO SAVIDGE nsavidge@madison.com, 608-252-6147 Aug 30, 2015



Photos by NICO SAVIDGE — State Journal

Several large, concrete sculptures created by Madison folk artist Sid Boyum sit in the backyard of his former East Side home. Neighbors and fans of Boyum's work are hoping to preserve the pieces of art as the house goes up for auction September.

Dane County is planning to auction off the former home of Madison folk artist Sid Boyum, a sale that could include countless sculptures and pieces of art found in and around the decaying East Side house.

A group of neighbors and fans of Boyum are rallying to postpone the auction or stop it altogether, though, with hopes they can preserve his unique work and perhaps improve the house that holds them.

Several of Boyum's concrete sculptures — examples of what is known as “outsider” art — dot Madison's East Side, such as a polar bear in Elmside Circle Park or the smiling mushroom by a bike path on Atwood Avenue.

His home at 237 Waubesa St. has mostly been unoccupied since Boyum died in 1991, and over the past five years it has racked up more than \$18,000 in unpaid property taxes and penalties, according to county records.

Dane County has seized the house, and plans to sell it at auction on Sept. 15.

Whoever buys Boyum's home also will get whatever items are in it or on the property.

In the backyard, that includes more than a dozen large concrete sculptures, including a 7-foot-tall Buddha head, a similarly massive sphinx and several nude female figures.

Many of the concrete sculptures weigh 2 to 3 tons, said Andy Kranshaar, a Wisconsin Historical Society curator who visited the home on Sunday.

Photos show the home's interior

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1432918730370569/permalink/1448823788780063/>), which few have seen in recent years, is crowded with prints, paintings and more sculptures, some of which are built into the walls.

But the house also has sustained serious damage from animals and water. Along with the sculptures, the backyard has large chunks of concrete, piles of old bricks and in-ground reflecting pools full of murky water.

“The house is full of stuff — it's also full of mildew right now,” said Gretta Wing Miller, a filmmaker involved in efforts to preserve Boyum's work. She estimated it would cost \$100,000 to restore the house.

Several hundred people have joined a Facebook group

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1432918730370569/>) dedicated to saving the house and art. Their ideas include renovating the home and turning it into studio space for artists, or moving the sculptures and other art to new homes or public spaces and letting the house be sold.

Many of the members hope they can delay the auction until they figure out the best way to preserve the art.

The group will meet Tuesday night

(<https://www.facebook.com/events/1486463441671506/>) at the Goodman Community Center, just down the street from Boyum's house, to discuss its plans.

Brad Hinkfuss, chair of the Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Yahara Neighborhood Association, wrote to Mayor Paul Soglin

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1432918730370569/1455138444815264/>) earlier this month, asking the city to buy the home or help pay for the cost of moving the art.

Ald. Marsha Rummel, 6th District, said that while she is not certain the city should get involved in the project, Boyum's work is worth saving.

"It's part of our history," Rummel said. "He was known and kind of a beloved character in our neighborhood for all of his life."

If you go: Sid Boyum house meeting

Fans of Madison folk artist Sid Boyum will meet Tuesday to discuss their plans for preserving his art and his Waubesa Street home. The meeting starts at 7 p.m. in the mezzanine of the Goodman Community Center, 149 Waubesa Street.

More information can be found in the "Save the Sid Boyum Art House!" Facebook group.



(/wsj/news/local/100-objects/madison-in-objects-sid-boyum-sculptures/article_e53e997a-3a07-5f12-8697-a158da35e56d.html)

Madison in 100 objects: Sid Boyum sculptures (/wsj/news/local/100-objects/madison-in-objects-sid-boyum-sculptures/article_e53e997a-3a07-5f12-8697-a158da35e56d.html)

CHRIS RICKERT crickert@madison.com, 608-252-6198 Jul 20, 2014