

## Public Art Consultant for Mifflin & Carrol Plaza Redesign

### Overview

The City of Madison Planning Division is redesigning the plazas at the top of State Street on Mifflin & Carrol. This highly visible crossroads represents one of Wisconsin's most significant public spaces, requiring thoughtful integration of art, placemaking, and urban design.



City planners developed initial design concepts for the State Street plazas that emphasize placemaking, pedestrian safety, and community activation. The project includes:

- Pedestrian plazas on Mifflin & Carroll where State Street meets Capitol Square
- Integration with ongoing redevelopment projects including Wisconsin History Center, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, and Churchill Building Hotel
- Consideration of the existing Forum of Origin art pavilion (1993, artist Brower Hatcher)

### Location

100 State St, at the intersection of State St, W Mifflin St and N Carrol St.



## **Process**

Staff identified 3 artists from the approved Existing Art Database whose submittals showed experience in public art & working with municipalities. Staff invited **Actual Size Artworks, Michael Burns, and Kristin Thielking & Keven Brunett** to submit letters of interest explaining how they would approach the project.

## **Recommendation**

Planning staff managing the redesign reviewed the letters of interest and recommended **Actual Size Artworks** be awarded the consultant role.

## **Next Steps**

The public artist consultant will be paid \$9,500 for a minimum of 100 hours of consultation. They will provide the following expertise:

1. Overall Site Design
  - Review and provide artistic input on plaza design concepts
  - Recommend approaches for cohesive visual identity
  - Advise on materials, colors, and aesthetic elements that complement the historic and civic context
2. Design of Specific Art Elements
  - Conceptual design guidance for integrated public art features
  - Recommendations for seating, lighting, and wayfinding elements with artistic merit
  - Design input on programming spaces that support art and community activities
3. Fabrication and Installation Guidance
  - Technical expertise on materials suitable for the Wisconsin climate
  - Recommendations for fabrication methods and installation processes
  - Consultation on maintenance and durability considerations
4. Relocation of Existing Work
  - Assessment and recommendations regarding Forum of Origin
  - If relocation is necessary, guidance on preservation and reinstallation options
  - Coordination with the Madison Arts Commission

## **Timeline**

The design process is expected to take one year, and public meetings will be held as follows:

- Q2 2025: Concept design meeting (complete)
- Q3 2025: Design revisions meeting
- Q3-4 2025: Programming meeting
- Q4 2025: Final design meeting



**To the Madison Arts Commission:**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our qualifications for the Mifflin/Carroll plaza redesign project. We would be excited to work on this with the City of Madison.

**Approach:** Gail Simpson and Aristotle Georgiades are sculptors who work individually and as Actual Size Artworks, a collaborative team. We believe in the transformative potential of artwork in the community. As we move about our days, deep in thought or looking at a screen, the experience of engaging with our surroundings and our community can fade. Artwork can recharge this connection, waking us up and reminding us that we are bodies in space, sharing that space with others, not alone. Artwork can surprise us, pique our curiosity and our wonder. It creates a destination and embeds a place in our memory. Public spaces that contribute to the common good seem more important than ever today. These are our goals; we try to meet them with work that has a strong profile, a light touch, and excellent craftsmanship. In this way we help create a space for imagination and possibility.

**Local understanding:** We have lived and worked in the area for 25 years and are familiar with the space and community. We are always interested in the built and natural environment as setting, inspiration and subject matter for our work. Artwork can visualize and interpret the character of a place in a way that nothing else can; helping to create a sense of rapport is a strength of ours. **This project speaks to us for several reasons:** First, we are interested in the opportunity to rethink a busy urban space where many different activities occur, sometimes all at once. We have created many artworks that act as gathering places and a cohesive visual identity, as cited in your RFP. Second, this site is compelling because of the many assets it already has – its central location near the Capitol, the diversity of businesses and people, the high level of activity and ambient sound, the dense urban texture. Instead of challenges, these seem like potential artistic prompts.

We also have some ideas about relocation of the Brower Hatcher sculpture on site, which is one of our favorites.

**Relevant Experience:** We have had design team experience working with engineers, architects, planners, fabricators and landscape architects, and our communication skills are strong. We work with a wide variety of weather-permanent materials and are attentive to matters of durability and maintenance. Making sure we do not create additional work for the client is a priority for us. We are knowledgeable about safety and universal accessibility. All of our previous work has been completed on time and within budget. We also both create and exhibit our individual studio work. Our long track record of successful projects, including municipal works, can be found on our CV.

**Collaboration style:** Many of our projects have had strong participation and input from the communities being served by the project, and we are committed to developing projects

that are integrated through dialogue with those involved with the site. We are comfortable working in the format of charettes, open houses, public meetings, and in small groups. Working with people from other disciplines and backgrounds has strengthened our work over the years.

**Budget:** We have worked in a large budget range and understand how to estimate projects. This includes not just the expenses of art fabrication but also the infrastructural aspects of foundations and engineering. Our network of suppliers, contractors and fabricators is mainly Wisconsin-based. There are many ripple effects of working in a dense urban area and disrupting the site; we try to minimize these as much as possible.

**About Actual Size Artworks:**

[www.actualseartworks.com](http://www.actualseartworks.com) [www.gailsimpsonsculpture.com](http://www.gailsimpsonsculpture.com) [www.arisgeorgiades.com](http://www.arisgeorgiades.com)  
Gail Simpson has an MFA in Sculpture from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is originally from Chicago. Her individual work uses salvaged objects to address the intersection between the built and natural environment. Aris Georgiades is originally from Pittsburgh, PA and has an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BFA from University of Michigan. His sculptures use salvaged building materials and objects, related to issues of adaptability and the changing nature of work, usefulness and ambition. His work can be seen at Carl Hammer Gallery in Chicago and Abel Contemporary in Stoughton WI.

Thank you for your consideration, and please let us know if you need further information.

Gail Simpson & Aris Georgiades/Actual Size Artworks  
673 Center Rd.  
Stoughton, WI 53589  
[info@actualseartworks.com](mailto:info@actualseartworks.com) (608)217-9599

## Madison Arts Community

I was pleased to be invited to provide input and guidance for the redevelopment of the public area at intersection of State, Mifflin, and Carrol Streets. I do not feel that I have the breadth of experience or training to be useful in taking on the role of public planner, urban planning or municipal consultant.

I have had some experience in taking on and completing public art projects on both privately and publicly owned properties. If my experience in navigating these challenges would be useful to the City I would be willing to lend a hand.

Over the past 40 years I have completed a dozen or more works in Dane County and other locations. Most of these are still in place. Durability, safety, budget, appropriateness of materials, accompany designs that appeal, that are approachable, that are visually satisfying. Completing these pieces, which can approach \$100,000, means working with design committees, contractors, architects, engineers, collaborating artists, public officials, funding sources, and the public.

Often there is a protracted ramping up of the project, scrambling for funds, and compromise in some regard. Flexibility, patience, understanding materials and processes, experience in working with contractors are all useful qualities.

I am interested in seeing public art and public spaces succeed in Madison. I appreciate the work of so many people that makes the arts here vital and thriving. The top of State St. will be a success with the City and the public if the structures, the raison d'être, and the added features like stages, hospitality, and art combine to make this location a must-see experience. If I can help in a less formal way please bring me into the process.

Michael Burns

Meri Rose Ekberg  
Community & Cultural Resources Planner  
City of Madison Department of Planning &  
Community & Economic Development  
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Ste. 017  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Dear Ms. Ekberg and the Planning Division for the City of Madison,

Thank you for reaching out to us regarding the position of Art Consultant for the Mifflin and Carroll Plaza redesign project. We are very interested in the project. We reviewed the materials attached to your email and listened to the zoom presentation outlining the three most recent design concepts, goals and feedback.

We have the necessary experience using art, light and aesthetics to help the group visually activate this public space. We can also assist the group in their goal of fostering an inclusive, welcoming, and environmentally progressive space. We have a very active professional studio practice. We have exhibited our work widely both nationally and internationally. We are also educators. We are happy to provide images and CV upon request outlining our experience. We have worked in a wide variety of materials, have experience working with engineers on protocols and safety for outdoor public works. We have worked with lighting designers, including at Olbrich Gardens when we were exhibiting artists for the inaugural Gleam exhibition. We installed a Percent for Art commission for Waukesha's Lee Sherman Dreyfus State Office Building which included kinetic components, language and fiber optics. We also completed two large steel and glass sculptural installations designed to facilitate inviting gathering spaces: one for the Medical College of Wisconsin's Wausau Campus that was integrated into the architecture, and the other for Marshfield Clinic and medical research facility.

We believe the plaza redesign has the potential to become a landmark for Madison amplifying the city's identity as an inclusive community builder. We are also particularly interested in the design team's mention of Silva cells and bioswale in the recent concept discussion and are thinking about the potential for how they could be integrated into the art components. It is also exciting to hear that there is a lighting designer who is already working with the city and think the potential for light integration into the art and the design structures could be transformative for the space. We recognize the challenge of making sure the artistic aspects of the redesign remain relevant and exciting over a long period of time, and believe the connections to art/environment and ambitious lighting integration could have a lot of potential for facilitating the cultural longevity of the redesign. In the zoom call someone mentioned the infrastructure underneath the plaza and the possibility of tapping into that for the lighting. It reminded us of the beautiful park design by Maya Lin located in Grand Rapids, MI. She used lighting underneath the amphitheater and skating rink to illuminate a constellation beneath the skaters.

We have long been admirers of the following artists who have achieved striking contemporary and environmentally relevant goals in their work. Quite a few of their projects make us think of similar possibilities for the space.

Stacy Levy <https://www.stacylevy.com/>

Lillian Ball <https://www.lillianball.com/about>

Land Art Generator: <https://landartgenerator.org/project.html>

Natalie Jeremijenko: <https://artofchange21.com/en/portfolio-items/natalie-jeremijenko-2/>

We have a great love for the City of Madison and everything the city represents. We have a long history of living in Madison and spending time on State St. Keven completed a BFA and MFA at UW Madison's Art Department and Kristin completed her MFA there as well, both focusing on sculpture and installation work. We both taught in the Art Department at UW Madison before moving to Stevens Point where we used to be faculty at UW Stevens Point. We now operate our professional studio in Amherst Junction. Our daughter is currently enrolled in Madison's BFA in Visual Art program and we are delighted to visit her and our Madison friends often.

Collaboration is at the core of our practice and we are very comfortable working with teams and stakeholders. We have collaborated with multiple artists, designers, lighting designers, art organizations, and curators. We also have extensive experience over the last 25 years working with a wide range of city planners, fabricators, engineers, facility managers, project and budget managers, university administrators, and donors. We have managed large budgets, both for our own professional commissions as well as for the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point as program and facility managers. We have experience communicating with professionals and stakeholders at every stage of public art projects and related programming. We are very conscious and dedicated to timely, efficient and productive communication. We are flexible, and very available to meet in Madison, online, or via phone.

We both are highly invested in using art to activate public spaces, and making them more accessible and vibrant for all communities. We hope to have the opportunity to work with your group on this exciting project.

Sincerely,

Kristin Thielking and Keven Brunett  
Brunett Thielking Art Studios, LLC  
715 630-0288; 715 630-0288  
[kthielki@gmail.com](mailto:kthielki@gmail.com)