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Madison LakeWay public art project finalists prepare their visions

By Dauntae Green

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The Madison LakeWay project aims to eventually create a waterfront park district covering 1.7 miles and 17 acres of shoreline downtown.

PHOTO BY MICHELLE STOCKER

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Looking over the work of six artists vying to make public art for one of Madison's highest profile new developments, Madisonian Paul Schneider had a question.

"How about the diverse climate in Madison, where you have winter," Schneider asked. "Is that being considered for the pieces?"

One of the finalists, Thomas Shine from Choi+Shine, immediately exclaimed, "Yeah!"

The Madison LakeWay Skyline public art project has narrowed down 79 applicants to four finalists: Choi+Shine, Jill Anholt Studio, SpY Studio and This Is Loop. This is Loop and Choi + Shine Architects are artist duos. This week, the finalists attended a community meet and greet hosted by the LakeWays partners at the Madison Parks office in Olin Park.

Before a meeting on Wednesday night, the LakeWay project committee and Madison Arts Commission gave the finalists a tour of the city. They took a boat ride, viewed public art around the city, toured the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, attended a wood sculpture competition and went on a hike.

"One of my favorite things to do was have an excuse to drive the city's van and give them a tour," said Karin Wolf, the arts program administrator for the city of Madison.

Background on LakeWay Skyline Project

The Madison LakeWay project has been an idea for the city for more than 100 years, according to Jayme Powers, CEO of Madison LakeWay Partners.

Madison Lakeway Project's main focus is to transform the city's lakefront into a park. The project reimagines 1.7 miles of public lakeshore from Law Park near Monona Terrace to Olin Park, including 17 acres of Madison's public lakefront.

The LakeWay project will link downtown Madison to Lake Monona to give safe lake access, improve the lake's water quality and aquatic habitat, and celebrate Lake Monona's cultural history.

The Madison LakeWay Skyline public art project is funded through Percent for Art, which was established in 2017 and dictates that "1% of city funds committed to a project budgeted at \$5,000,000+ is used for public art." The rest of the funds would be raised by Madison LakeWay Partners, a nonprofit advocacy group.

According to Wolf, the city received 79 applications from artists from around the world as well as locally. The Madison Arts Commission selected the four highest-scoring applicants as finalists, with the help of Madison LakeWay Public Art Selection Committee.



'Emergence' is a place for contemplation. A sanctum within which to consider the dynamic interplay between order and chaos and the momentous role this plays in systems, life, the self, the universe and beyond.

Courtesy of This Is Loop

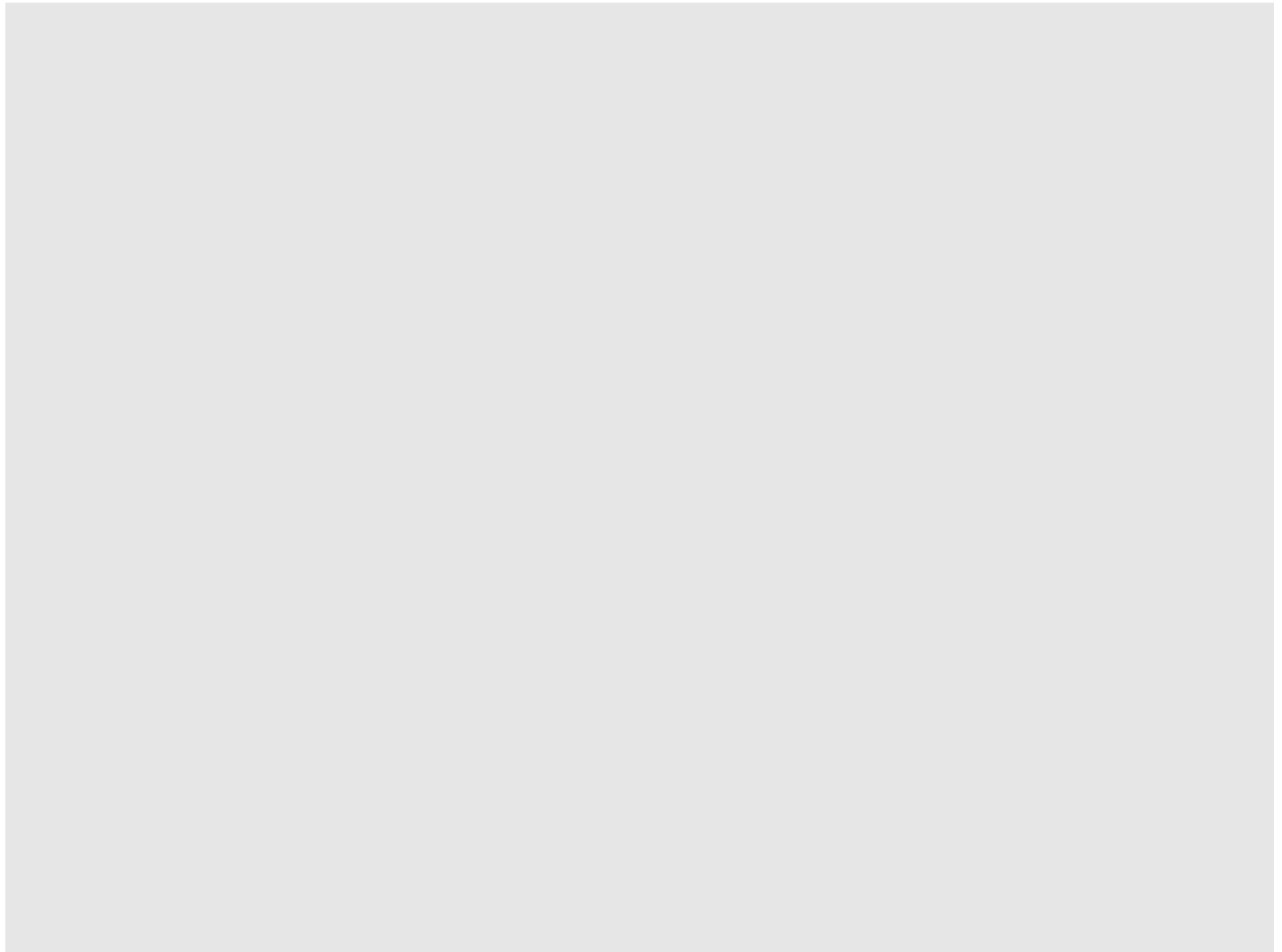
Meet the finalists

This is Loop

This is Loop is a collaborative artistic partnership consisting of Harriet Lumby and Alan Hayes from Somerset, England. They create large scale experiential installations that work with light, sound, tech and data.

The duo treats public art as an opportunity to make moments of wonder in places that people are in everyday life instead of galleries. At the meet and greet, Lumby emphasized that they “prioritize collaboration on all of our projects.”

They highlighted one of their pieces, “Emergence,” created for the Canary Wharf Winter Lights in London in 2024. They described the piece as “a sanctum within which to consider the dynamic interplay between order and chaos,” made of reflective surfaces — mirrors.



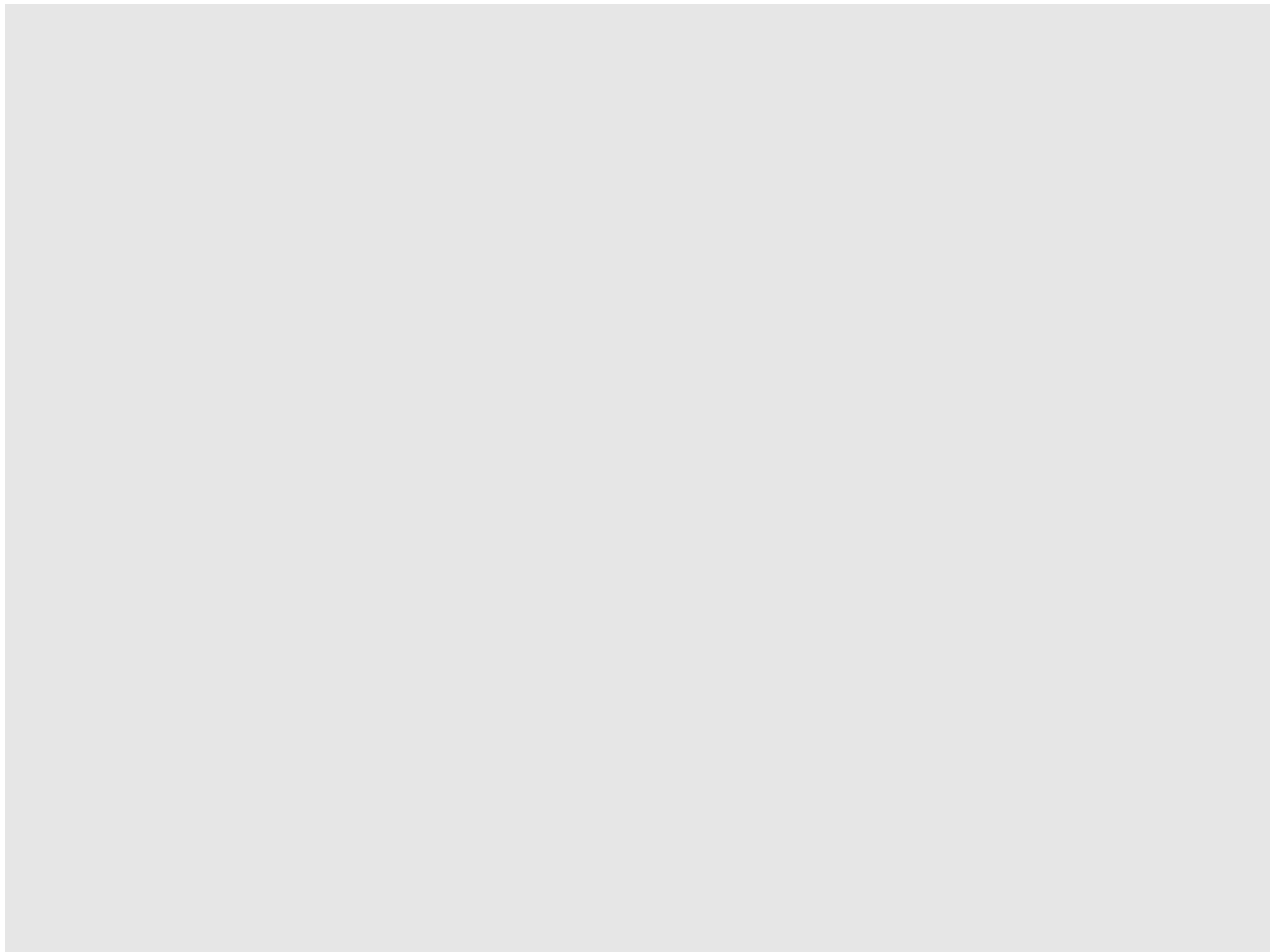
Geist is a new artwork by This is Loop inspired by the elusive Neutrino particle.

Neutrinos are one of the most abundant particles in the universe and in their very nature are minuscule, almost massless particles that are extremely hard to detect but are believed to make up the fabric of the universe.

Courtesy of This Is Loop

The artists collaborated with the electronic drone choir NYX to create the audio.

“They created this piece just with their voices that were electronically enhanced,” Lumby said at the meet and greet. “We feel like it has a real ability to transform. It blends in, but it also changes your perspective.”



"The Flats," installed in 2024 in False Creek, Vancouver, is a work by public artist Jill Anholt. Anholt is among the artists being considered for the Madison LakeWay SkyLine Public Art Project.

COURTESY OF JILL ANHOLT

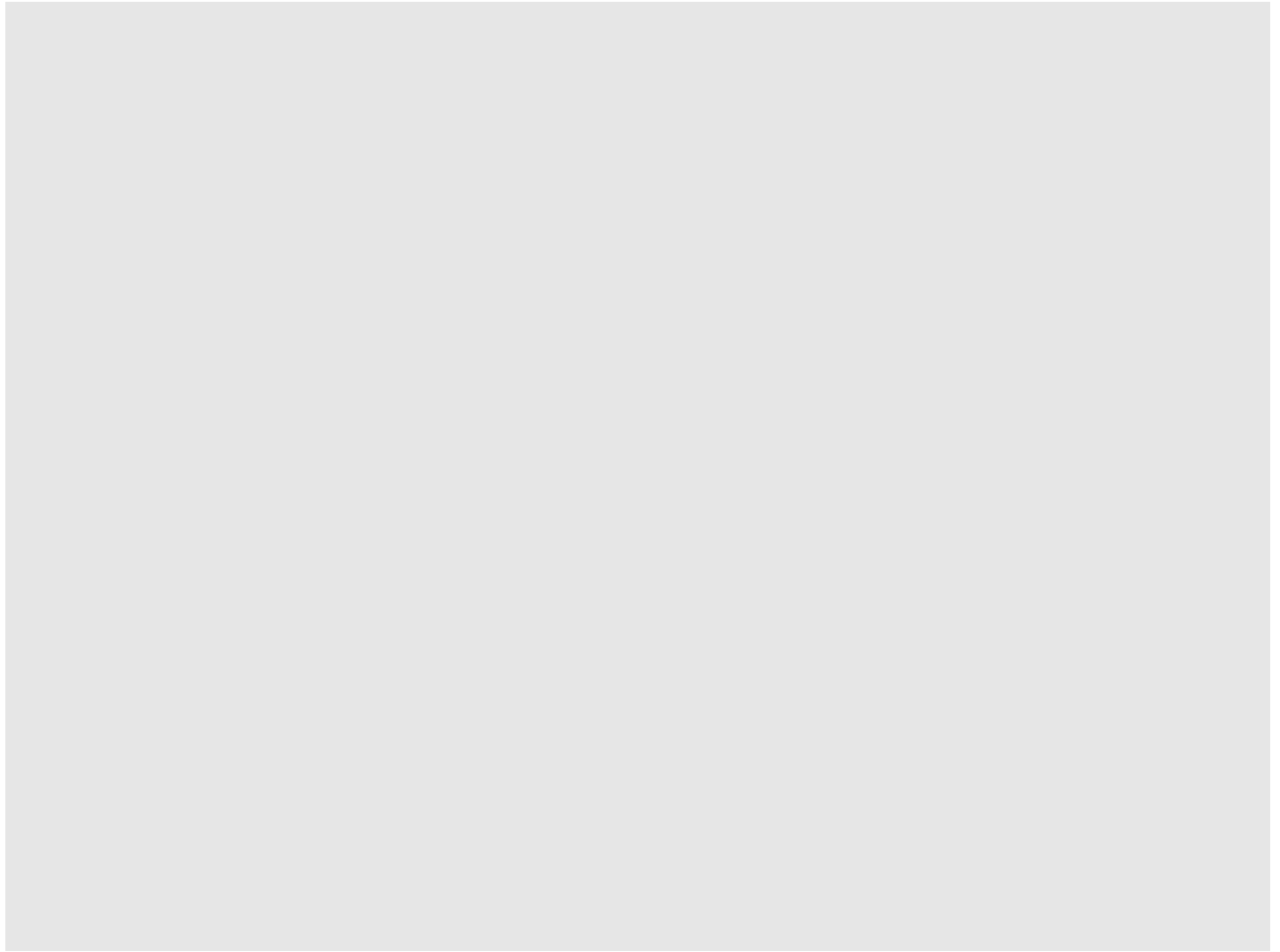
Jill Anholt Studio

Jill Anholt is an artist from Vancouver, British Columbia, who uses her skills in sculpture, public art and architecture education to create large scale installations. Her work involves finding hidden stories in places. When making public art, she's interested in sustainability, engagement with the community and collaboration.

One piece she created, "Light Showers," was installed 15 years ago in Toronto on the waterfront.

"It was another sort of industrial space that had been reconverted," Anholt said. "We decided we wanted to do something more innovative in terms of sustainability and water treatment.

"We had the idea to collect water and treat it with UV and put it into the lake, but it was all going to be happening underground where no one saw it. It was my idea to create these large, scaled sculptures that participate in the cleaning process."



From the artist: "'SubSupra' brings the undulating depth and shape of the Willamette River's underwater terrain to shore where it becomes a dramatic and iconic gathering space at the river's edge."

Courtesy of Jill Anholt

“Light Showers” has an interactive component, with screens that, when touched, trace the movement of the person touching them.

“It’s this idea that a single little person could be important in sustainability and taking care of the world.”



Choi + Shine Architects in Brookline, Massachusetts, created this piece, "Lace," for the Amsterdam Light Festival in 2016. The pair is being considered to create public art for the Madison LakeWay Project.

COURTESY OF CHOI & SHINE

Choi+Shine

Choi+Shine are an artist duo consisting of Shin Choi and Thomas Shine from the Netherlands. Their work can be seen in museums, galleries, and worldwide. At the meet and greet, explaining community empowerment is important to their work.

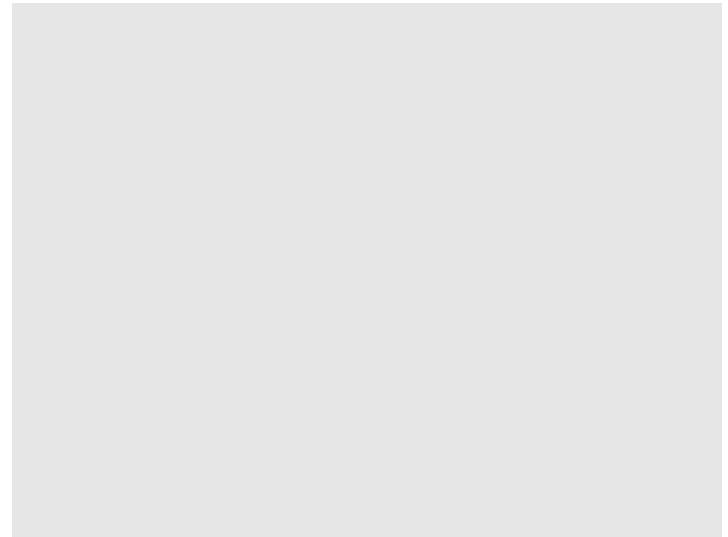
One piece they designed for Iceland in 2008, “The Land of Giants,” is a large-scale project that looks like giant human figures, made from transmission pylons. Power lines and transmission towers become monuments.

“It was creating an iconic, site-specific, meaningful artwork for Iceland,” Shine said. “You take mundane objects in the landscape and you make them meaningful and enduring.

“Also functional as well,” Choi added. Choi and Shine said they were drawn to Madison’s infrastructure.

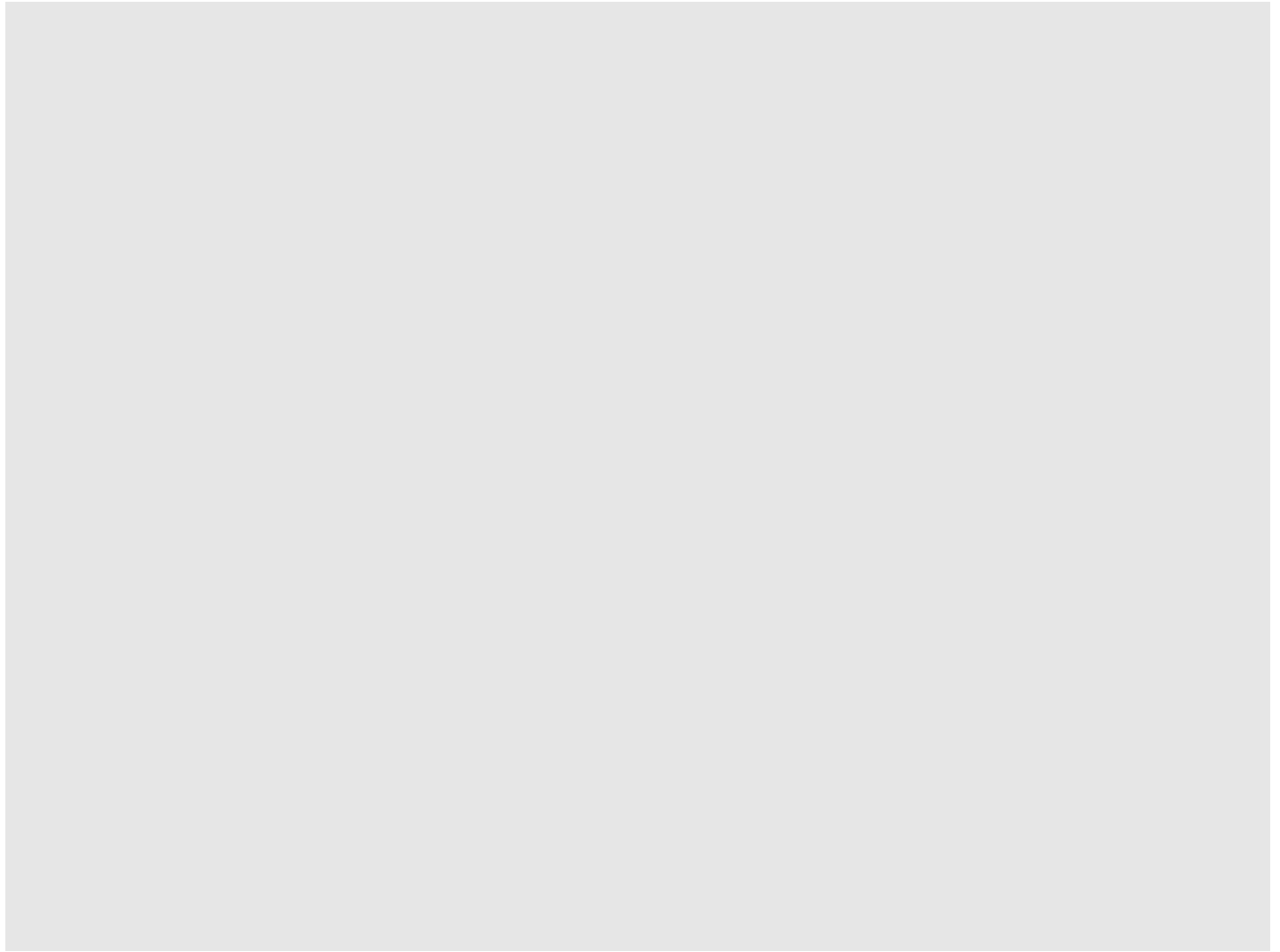
“The experience of transforming the infrastructure of necessity into the functional public artwork would reinforce our belief that what we encounter every day in everyday places can be beautiful and can be enduring,” said Choi.

“It’s (also) Madison’s openness to the definition of public art.”



Choi + Shine Architects in Brookline, Massachusetts, created "Power of One" for the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum in 2023. The pair is being considered to create public art for the Madison LakeWay Project.

COURTESY OF CHOI + SHINE



"Earth" (or "Tierra"), a luminous red sphere within a structure made in 2022 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, was created by a Madrid-based artist named SpY. SpY is among the artists whose work is being considered for the Madison LakeWay Project.

COURTESY OF SpY

SpY Studio

Spanish artist SpY, who works anonymously, makes ambitious large-scale urban art to create engagement and reflection. Those installations question the reality of human relations, disrupt daily routines and tap the space in to a field of endless possibilities.

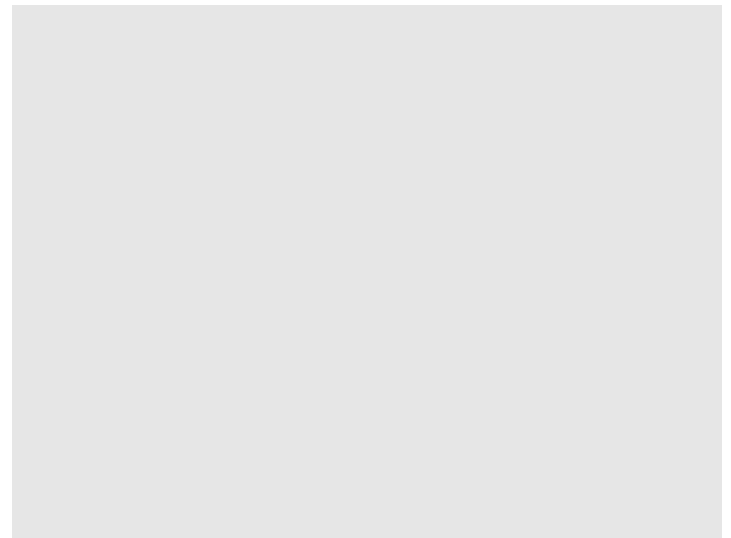
SpY explains that they are always looking for new original methods for their public art pieces to interact with the environment and invite engagement from the public.

One installation they created, “Earth,” in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in 2022 looks like a large red orb and was created to encourage audiences to reflect on their home.

SpY asks the viewers who observe this piece “to reflect on the way in which our home makes up a whole of which we form part, and in which everything is connected as if it were a living creature.”

“There have always been changing climate conditions and the Earth has always been constantly evolving,” SpY said. “However, as a consequence of human activity, these changes are happening over a very short period of time and have resulted in worrying alteration.

“The challenge we all face is to take small individual steps to improve and contribute to our sense of shared responsibility.”



"Disclocation" in Madrid is a kinetic sculpture made by a Madrid-based artist named SpY. SpY is among the artists whose work is being considered for the Madison LakeWay Project.

COURTESY OF SpY

Next steps

The finalists will have this summer to brainstorm a design or a “napkin sketch,” and submit them by Sept. 14. The city will then reveal designs to the public with a presentation from the finalists. City officials will also issue a community survey to get feedback.

On Oct. 19, the LakeWay committee will have reviewed surveys, staff comments and the proposals. They will then decide who they recommend to do the design for the project. The city will send out press releases to update the community on the process. For more information, visit cityofmadison.com and madisonlakeway.org.

Dauntae Green is reporting for the Cap Times in 2026 as a David Maraniss Fellow. He is pursuing a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Email story ideas and tips to Dauntae at dgreen@captimes.com.

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