

## Proposal for a Public Art Donation to the City of Madison



### History of the Art Piece

The owners of this art piece that has exceptional Madison roots would like to donate it to the City of Madison. The origin of this piece was a contest sponsored by the Memorial Union in 2003 as part of its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Fifteen local artists were selected from over 100 applicants to 'decorate' giant versions of the famed Memorial Union Terrace chair. A young graphic designer, James Bourne, who worked for the piece's current owner, was one of the selected artists, and this is the chair he designed and created. This chair won the 'People's Prize' award (most popular votes) in the Memorial Union judging contest, and it was exhibited on State Street and at the Memorial Union for several months during the spring of 2004.

The chair now resides with its owners, Dr. Peter and Meredith Spear, in Tucson, AZ. Dr. Spear is the former Provost of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Meredith is my former business partner. Meredith and Peter bought the chair at a charity auction that concluded the Memorial Union contest. They are now moving to Boulder, CO and wish to donate the chair to a receptive Madison organization, since it is such a Madison-specific piece of art.

### Proposed Location

Since the seated figure is reading a book in a well-known Madison setting, and since the city is currently in the process of re-developing its central library, the most thematically logical target for permanent location of this art piece would be the new downtown library. A location at any branch library in the Madison system, such as the new south side branch, would be equally desirable if issues of condominium ownership could be addressed to allow for outdoor installation

## **Civic Purpose**

This Madison-themed art piece celebrates and reinforces the strong link between the city's recreational lake-side setting, as personified by the Memorial Union Terrace, and its love of culture, as embodied in the act of reading. Seeing these two themes linked in such a playful yet easy-to-grasp fashion makes this art piece particularly well-directed to the multi-generational, multi-cultural users of Madison's library system. To associate reading with pleasure and fun is an excellent message for all Madisonians.

As an additional civic objective, this art piece could be dedicated to a specific individual that has helped foster the objectives of the Madison library system. It has been suggested by a current library board member, David Wallner, that it would be highly appropriate to dedicate this art piece to John Ailes 'Jack' Taft, Jr., the recently deceased long-time library board member. In October of 2006, Mr. Taft received a Mayoral Proclamation from Mayor Dave Cieslewicz honoring his numerous contributions to the Madison Public Library system, including his 10 years of library board membership, his presidency of the Friends of the Madison Public Library, his founding of the Friends of the Alicia Ashman Branch Library, his tenure on the Madison Public Library Foundation Board, his lobbying efforts on behalf of the library system, and his many other endeavors in support of civic literacy. The donors would welcome such a personal dedication if deemed appropriate.

## **Transport, Installation and Maintenance**

It is my understanding that the donor of an art piece to the city must accept certain responsibilities and obligations. In that regard, on behalf of the owners, I propose and commit to the following:

- I will personally undertake the transport of this piece from Tucson, AZ to Madison. However, I would request that the City of Madison provide a reasonably secure and protected storage space for the piece until such time as it can be permanently installed.
- I will personally agree to refinish the piece if necessary. The owners have reported that the Arizona sun has been hard on the original paint finish and the piece may need to be repainted. The original painters and assemblers are located here in Madison, and I will work with them (with input from the artist, James Bourn) to restore the piece at my expense. Authentic Union Terrace chair colors were used in the original paint scheme and would be faithfully replicated in any re-painting.
- The piece does not currently sit on any base – the chair rests on its own legs. To insure that folks don't try to sit on the chair (at 91" in height, it's climb-able), it may need to be installed on and secured to a simple plinth base and even roped off if deemed necessary. I am open to discussing a contribution to installation costs, once the installation design and costs are determined.
- I understand that the donator of an art piece must provide for its maintenance. I am willing to provide for a maintenance fund for this piece, assuming that the primary maintenance, once properly and safely installed, will be occasional re-painting. If the installation is indoors, as opposed to outdoors, maintenance should be minimal, at best.

*Submitted to the Madison Arts Commission on June 6, 2010 by Thomas A. DeChant, on behalf of former Madison residents, Dr. Peter and Meredith Spear, now of Tucson, AZ.*