
Ray Chi's 'The People's Pronouns'

Funding delays caused delayed installation

By:

Steven Potter

Posted: Jun 27, 2019 09:07 AM CDT Updated: Jun 27, 2019 09:12 AM CDT

Ray Chi's public art piece "The People's Pronouns" was scheduled for installation in Pennsylvania Park on East Johnson Street last fall but it hasn't happened yet.

"There's been a bit of a delay," says the Milwaukee-based artist, adding that he and the city have been working out details like "the engineering and, literally, the nuts and bolts of the project," which incorporates large metal letters.

"But I think it's been fortuitous," says Chi of the project's lag. "[Because] since the delay, the site of the Madison Public Market has moved ... [and now] there's an additional chunk of money set aside for art for the public market that can now be applied to my project, which is great news."

First commissioned for \$40,000, Chi says the project should come in under \$60,000. And for the extra money, the city is getting even more art.

Chi's first project proposal at the lesser budgeted amount envisioned "The People's Pronouns" as two large words, "We" and "Our," made from perforated aluminum.

The artist says he wanted to use that material because of its "translucency, so that it wouldn't feel too intimidating or opaque." But he says he may use steel to cut down on the cost. With the additional funding, Chi says he's adding a third word — "Us."

"That was actually my original plan, to have all three words — it definitely makes more sense to have all of the words included," he says.

"It's very direct, the words are very literal and even a child can read them, but it still takes a bit of work by the viewer to interpret the meaning," continues Chi, adding that he's now aiming to install the three-word piece next fall.

"It's not overtly political, but I think it was created with the atmosphere of politics and divisiveness in mind," he continues. "I guess this is my way of trying to address that serious issue without beating people over the head about it."

[For more on Madison's public art scene, click here.](#)