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Sculpture will be a key feature of Madison's new Imagination Center

By Dauntae Green

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A rendering shows "The Passage of Being" by artist Nate Page that will be located at the back of the Imagination Center in Reindahl Park on Madison's north side.

NATE PAGE

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When the Imagination Center in Reindahl Park opens this fall, it is going to turn a lot of heads, and its centerpiece public art project will be one of the reasons why.

The 17,500-square-foot center on Madison's north side will be the city's first library branch within a public park. Just behind it will be a 16-foot sculpture titled "The Passage of Being" by artist Nate Page, who is originally from Wisconsin.

Page said in an interview the sculpture is “about the imaginative space and the possibility between nature and civic space. I wanted to create a kind of portal that brings together places that are usually separate, the library in the park, the body and the mind. I want it to allow people to physically engage with it and see themselves inside of it.”

Still under construction with the assistance of Milwaukee-based Gallas Metalworks, the completed sculpture will be a two-sided triangular prism. In its center is empty space in the shape of a human head with colorful planes radiating out from it on one side. The colors will be drawn from the national flags of many of the immigrant communities represented in north Madison. The opposite side faces the park and is reflective, so viewers will be able to see the natural world in it.

“This new project will help connect the library to the park and greater neighborhood, creating a destination,” said Ald. Julia Matthews, whose City Council district includes Reindahl Park, in a statement.

Raised in Waukesha, Page now lives in Los Angeles and has about 15 years of experience with public art projects. His past commissions include works for the city of San Diego, Miami-Dade County, and the Getty museum's Pacific Standard Time initiative, now known as PST ART.

Page's first career inspiration was his grandfather, who was a sign painter and illustrator. The younger Page loves building big visual pieces to create shared experiences for viewers.

"Our experience of everyday spaces, I've always felt like they can feel predictable," Page said. "You ignore them, and they have a subtle effect on us whether we're aware of it or not."

"It was that effect of place that I wanted to use as a creative medium — to create an experience, to create art — that is living with us in our daily life rather than a separate object on the wall."



A rendering shows the side of "The Passage of Being" that faces away from the Imagination Center, which will be reflective. Viewers will be able to see the natural world in it.

NATE PAGE

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Multiple city of Madison agencies collaborated on the project that led to “The Passage of Being.” Those include the Madison Public Library and its Bubbler program, the Madison Arts Commission, the city’s Parks Division and the Percent for Art program.

They went through a multistep process to make the choice: requesting bids for artist designs, narrowing down the finalists, gathering over 1,200 responses from residents via online surveys and visiting Sandburg Elementary School, which is very close to Reindahl Park, for feedback.

Some of those who responded to the survey said “The Passage of Being” was “colorful,” “unique,” “speaks to diversity,” “invites interactive for all age levels,” and “offers a humanistic vibe.” The students from Sandburg Elementary were blown away by the colors, saying it sparked imagination.

“We wanted an iconic piece. We want something that would reflect and represent the vibrant community that surrounds the Imagination Center,” Madison Public Library director Tana Elias said. “We want it to be something that speaks to everybody.”

“This piece will beautifully reflect the park surroundings while also acting as a portal for visitors to move through,” added Bubbler program coordinator Trent Miller in a statement.

Page said he hopes that “The Passage of Being” will become part of how people experience the Imagination Center and Reindahl Park.

“It'll mean different things to different people, maybe as a gathering spot or a game for kids,” he said. “It can provide a moment of reflection, hopefully go through it, and feel different when you come out of it.”

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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