

Artists are breathing fresh life into Madison's boring old utility boxes

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Professional artists have transformed more than 20 bland utility boxes into vibrant pieces of public art under a project organized by the Madison Arts Commission. "Crop Circles," above, by artist Briony Foy, is at the northeast corner of East Johnson Street and Wisconsin Avenue.

JOHN HART, STATE JOURNAL

Bottom of Form

The snake-like body almost hidden in a sea of vibrant pinks, yellows and greens can still catch an eye from blocks away.

https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/madison-s-dull-gray-utility-boxes-increasingly-taking-on-new/article_2c...

Designed by artist Michael Velliquette, "The Serpent of the Color Source," located at the intersection of South Baldwin and Williamson streets on Madison's Near East Side, is one of more than 20 original creations that have transformed city-owned traffic signal utility boxes into striking art installations.



Michael Velliquette's box, located at South Baldwin and Williamson streets, is titled "The Serpent of the Color Source."

The idea to beautify the plain utility boxes that dot the city came after activist and former Madison City Council member Eve Galanter came across a similar project in Bloomington, Indiana, 10 years ago.

"I thought, 'Why don't we do this in Madison?'" Galanter said. "Just because the green and gray ubiquitous boxes are essential doesn't mean they have to be boring intrusions."



"Tasty Teamwork," by Nate Koehler, is located at the southeast corner of East Johnson and North Paterson streets.

MADISON ARTS COMMISSION

After asking the Madison Arts Commission if it would be possible to replicate the project, the commission eventually voted to pilot the Utility Box Art Project by wrapping four utility boxes near Capitol Square in 2016, Madison Arts Program Administrator Karin Wolf said.

The original four boxes were used to test the durability and effectiveness of the vinyl material they were wrapped in. After withstanding all four seasons, including a cold Wisconsin winter, the material proved itself worthy of beautifying more of Madison's utility boxes.

While some public art is controversial, this project has met with "universal approval," Galanter said.



"Waiting to Ride," an aerial image of bike racers by kite photographer Craig Wilson, adorns a box at West Washington Avenue and North Carroll Street.

JOHN HART, STATE JOURNAL

A similar art project, spearheaded by the North Side Planning Council in 2013, transformed ordinary bus stop shelters with vinyl stickers of artwork, designed by Daniella Echeverria, that celebrated the city's North Side.

“People respect art and are less likely to impose their graffiti on it,” Galanter said. “I’m so excited that we in Madison are able to transform these ugly essential boxes into works of art, not only because they are pleasant to look at but (because) they deter defacement.”

Subtitles

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Captions

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Artists for the Utility Box Art Project must consider themselves professional artists and be selected by the Arts Commission to have their work showcased.

Each artist selected is compensated for the licensing of the image submitted.



A typical utility box before being wrapped.

CITY OF MADISON

The project aims to highlight professional artists who live in Madison, but there are opportunities for non-professional artists to submit artwork to be displayed on some utility boxes. These “community boxes” would be placed near libraries and community centers, according to the city.

The project is just starting to cover 240 above-ground traffic signal boxes owned and managed by the city of Madison, with 15 more of the boxes scheduled to be wrapped before winter.

“I feel like it helps make Madison a happy city, and that makes me happy,” Wolf said, adding that one of the priorities of the Arts Commission is to provide opportunities for local artists to showcase their work.

“That’s the goal and I feel we’ve met it,” she said.



A similar art project, spearheaded by the North Side Planning Council in 2013, transformed ordinary bus stop shelters with vinyl stickers of artwork designed by Daniella Echeverria.

DANIELLA ECHEVERRIA

In an effort to expand the project, the Arts Commission is calling for professional artists 19 and older who live in Madison to submit their artwork for summer 2019 installations.

“I think (the program) is just one more on the scoreboard of the quality of life in Madison that continues to make us one of the best places to live,” Galanter said.

To learn more about the guidelines for submitting artwork to be included in the project, visit go.madison.com/call4artists.

“Abundant Love”



“Abundant Love” by Helen Klebesadel at the northwest corner of Dempsey and Cottage Grove roads.

MADISON ARTS COMMISSION

“Tasty Teamwork”



"Tasty Teamwork" by Nate Koehler at the southeast corner of East Johnson and North Paterson streets.

MADISON ARTS COMMISSION

“Birds as Poet’s Paint”



“Birds as Poet’s Paint” by Scott LeDanse at the southeast corner of University Avenue and Charter Street.

COURTESY OF MADISON ARTS COMMISSION

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“The Arising and the Passing Away”



“The Arising and the Passing Away” by Michael Velliquette at the northwest corner of West Johnson and State streets.

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“Waiting to Ride”



“Waiting to Ride” by Craig Wilson at West Washington and Carroll streets.

JANE LEE

“Flower Blanket”

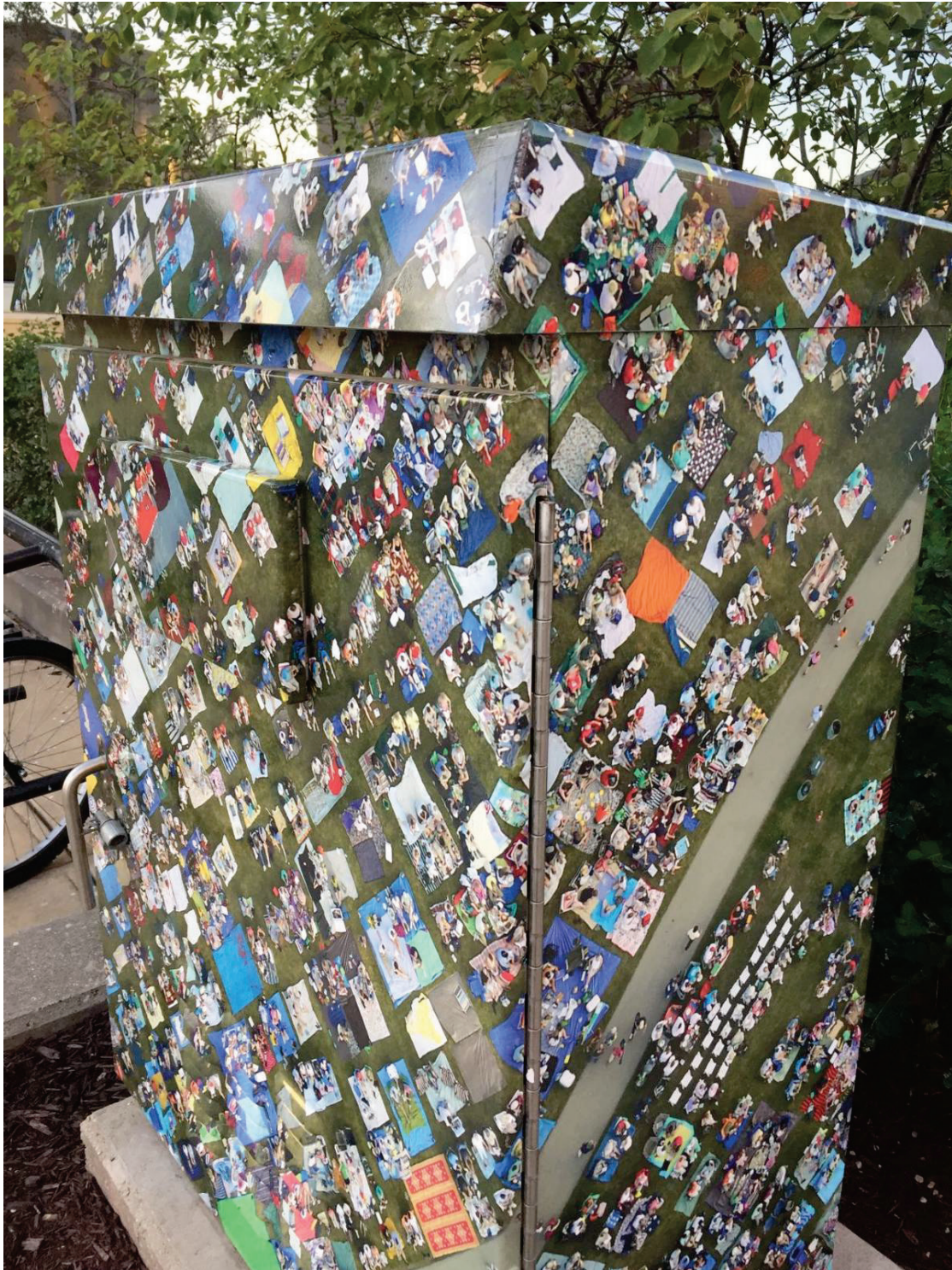


“Flower Blanket” by Caroline Hoffman at the northeast corner of University Avenue and Gilman Street.

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“Choice Seats”



“Choice Seats” by Craig Wilson at the southwest corner of King and Pinckney streets.

CRAIG WILSON

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“Building Red Crab Factory” & “Wonder Eye”



“Building Red Crab Factory” & “Wonder Eye” by Derrick Buisch at North Livingston Street and East Washington Avenue.

MADISON ARTS COMMISSION

"Prairie Grass"



"Prairie Grass" by Peter Patau at 1600 Emil St.

MADISON ARTS COMMISSION

"Prairie Flowers"



"Prairie Flowers by Peter Patau at 1600 Emil St.

“Pockets”



“Pockets” by Briony Foy at the northeast corner of Williamson Street and Riverside Drive.

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“Crop Circles”



“Crop Circles” by Briony Foy at the northeast corner of Johnson Street and Wisconsin Avenue.

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“Kites and Clouds”



“Kites and Clouds” by Craig Wilson at the southeast corner of East Mifflin and North Hamilton streets.

CRAIG WILSON

“Yellow Lilies”



“Yellow Lilies” by Helen Klebesadel at the northeast corner of Mifflin Street and Wisconsin Avenue.

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“Prairie II”



“Prairie II” by Helen Klebesadel at the northwest corner of the intersection of Regent Street, Proudfit Street and West Washington Avenue

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“Leo Virgo Cusp”



“Leo Virgo Cusp” by Sandra Klingbeil at the southeast corner of East Johnson and North streets.

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“The Serpent of the First Hands”



“The Serpent of the First Hands” by Michael Velliquette at the northwest corner of South Hamilton and West Main streets.

MADISON ARTS COMMISSION

“The Serpent of the Color Source”



“The Serpent of the Color Source” by Michael Velliquette at South Baldwin and Williamson Streets.

MADISON ARTS COMMISSION

“Crammed Kayaks”



“Crammed Kayaks” by Craig Wilson at the northeast corner of East Washington Avenue and Pinckney Street.

DONNA COLLINGWOOD

Top of Form

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More information



East Side Madison folk artist's home to be sold, his art to get new life

Sid Boyum is probably best known to Schenk-Atwood residents through his concrete sculptures in local parks and other public spaces.

- [Madison Arts Commission set to select poems to be stamped on Monroe Street sidewalks](#)
- [Fun and dysfunction in 'Little Miss Sunshine'](#)