



PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NOVEMBER 13, 2023**

“ZENITH” SET TO RISE IN MULBERRY ROUNDABOUT

Installation of sculpture to close most of roundabout Thursday morning



MUSCATINE, Iowa - With the installation of the sculpture, Zenith, on Thursday (Nov. 16) a project launched in November 2020 will be brought to fruition. Artist Nathan Pierce, of Cape Girardeau, Missouri, will be in Muscatine Thursday to place the stainless-steel and acrylic piece on its concrete base located in the center circle of the Mulberry and East 2nd Street roundabout.

The sculpture will reach nearly 12 feet in height and serve as a gateway marker into Muscatine’s historic downtown district and to the beautifully maintained Muscatine riverfront.

The abstract form of the sculpture “takes a contemporary view of the relationship between the community and the river,” Pierce said.



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Zenith is intended to honor the Mississippi River as part of Muscatine's local history while also capturing the "entrepreneurial spirit of tomorrow." The sculpture also pays homage to the river as a natural resource that has enabled commerce, growth, and positive change to occur in Muscatine.

The Mississippi River also holds special meaning for Pierce who was born and raised on its banks.

"Pierce may not be a Muscatine resident, but he deeply understands the river's role in shaping Muscatine and its importance for the community today and in the future," Melanie Alexander, City liaison to the Public Art Advisory Commission, said. Alexander is also the director of the Muscatine Art Center.

Pierce, who received his BFA in Sculpture from Southeast Missouri State University and has been awarded public art commissions throughout the Midwest, was one of 17 artists to respond to a Request for Qualifications to be considered for the public art project. The Advisory Commission reviewed applications with an emphasis on evidence of past success in carrying out large-scale, three-dimensional projects.

The Advisory Commission also consulted with City departments to ensure that the three artists selected to develop full proposals produced work that would be appropriate for the site and could meet the project goals. In addition to Pierce, Daniel Miller of Iowa City and Greg Mueller of Lutsen Mountain, Minn., were selected to develop a concept and full proposal. All three artists had successfully completed multiple public art projects.

Each artist provided a detailed proposal including the inspiration for their concept, concept drawings, a detailed budget, dimensions and materials for the piece, and a list of other concerns such as lighting and mounting. In November 2021, the concepts were publicly presented with online and in-person voting showing a strong preference for Pierce's Zenith. At



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the January 20, 2022 City Council meeting, the Council voted to proceed with Zenith.

After securing numerous funding sources including grants and donations from private individuals, the Council voted to enter into a contract with Nathan Pierce on June 15, 2023. Since that time, Pierce has been fabricating the sculpture while the Public Works Department oversaw the installation of the concrete foundation.

The placement of Zenith Wednesday will involve Pierce, members of his team, the Public Works Department, and a crew from Muscatine Power and Water to operate its mobile crane. Gage Huston, General Manager of MPW, views MPW's involvement as another example of how collaboration in Muscatine makes it possible to accomplish projects of all sizes for the community.

"MPW is thrilled to be able to assist with this public art project," Huston said. "I love the fact that the residents of Muscatine had a direct hand in deciding the final design."

Interruptions to traffic flow at the roundabout are expected to be minimal with installation taking approximately one hour and beginning around 9:00 a.m. Thursday. Traffic flowing from east to west on East 2nd Street will be directed up Mulberry to East 3rd Street and down to Iowa Avenue. Traffic flowing from west to east on East 2nd Street will be directed south on Walnut to Mississippi Drive. Traffic flowing west to east on Mississippi Drive will not be affected.

Excitement in Muscatine is building as details pertaining to the sculpture's arrival are falling into place. With the origins of the project dating to 2020, this is among the first to be undertaken by the Public Art Advisory Commission.

"Communities of all sizes are using public art to create cultural vibrancy and spark creativity," Alexander said. "We are seeing a growing interest in using art to build identity, community pride, and attract visitors. While everyone is entitled to an opinion about individual public art



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installations, the important piece is that the body of public art is able to be expanded, growing into a mosaic that collectively adds to Muscatine’s sense of place.”

A public dedication of the new public art sculpture will be held at a later date.

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