

MADISON'S



ARNOLD GENTHE

WH19566

Muse



Model Audrey Munson, opposite page, poses with Buzzer the cat in 1915. Daniel Chester French's gilded bronze Wisconsin statue, left, is raised at the Wisconsin state Capitol before being installed atop the dome.

The woman behind one of the city's most iconic statues was a legend in her time before being almost entirely forgotten. With renewed attention from another Madison landmark, Audrey Munson is sparking inspiration again and regaining her spot in the city's history.

by KATIE VAUGHN



(Clockwise from left)
Wisconsin from her perch
above the city. Munson in her
second film, "Purity." Munson
posing at the American "Flying
A" Studio in Santa Barbara
circa 1916-1917. Bronze door
to Greenhut Mausoleum by
sculptor Robert Ingersoll
Aitken features Munson's form.



ti's Three Graces, sculptures which debuted in the Hotel Astor's new grand ballroom in 1909. She modeled for all three graces in the hotel, set in Manhattan's Times Square.

Munson posed for Daniel Chester French, who sculpted Wisconsin in 1913 and 1914 for the top of the State Capitol dome. French had already created the statue of President Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and made the gold-gilded bronze Wisconsin, measuring 15 feet, 5 inches tall, and weighing more than 3 tons, in honor of the state motto of "Forward." French also used Munson's form in roughly a dozen other works, including sculptures at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Museum in New York.

The following year brought a career highlight for Munson. When famed artist

Quick Fact:

The statue named Wisconsin isn't Audrey Munson's only presence in the state Capitol. **Liberty Supported by the Law**, completed in 1910, is a granite sculpture by Karl Bitter set in the east pediment, while **The Learning of the World**, a granite work by Attilio Piccirilli from 1915, is part of the north pediment. Why not try to find all three on your next visit to the Capitol?

Alexander Calder was chosen as the director of sculpture for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, the World's Fair held in 1915 in San Francisco, he brought along his favorite model. Munson posed for three-fifths of the sculptures made for the event, earning the new nickname of "Panama-Pacific Girl."

As Munson's fame soared, she returned to acting, this time in California for the emerging motion picture industry. She starred in four silent films and shockingly appeared fully nude in "Inspiration," in which she played a sculptor's model. Then Munson moved back to the East Coast and became part of high society, but her good fortune soon took a sharp turn.

In 1919, the owner of the boarding house where Munson and her mother were living murdered his wife with the intent to marry Munson, with whom he was obsessed. While Munson denied any romantic involvement with the man, who was sentenced to death but hanged himself in his prison cell, the boarding house scandal coincided with the abrupt end of her modeling career.

The following years were tough for Munson, who sought the limelight but was no longer awarded it. In 1922, at the age of 31, Munson attempted suicide by drinking bichloride of mercury. Nine years later, her mother had her committed to a psychiatric asylum, the St. Lawrence State Hospital for the Insane, in Ogdensburg, New York. Munson remained there for 65 years, until her death in 1996 at the age of 104.

In the year before her suicide attempt, Munson revealed the anguish of being so beloved and then abandoned. In a series of articles published in Hearst's Sunday Magazine's newspaper supplements, she shared stories of her career and reflections on her experiences.

"What becomes of the artists' models?," she wrote. "I am wondering if many of my readers have not stood before a masterpiece of lovely sculpture or a remarkable painting of a young girl, her very abandonment of draperies accentuating rather than diminishing her modesty and purity, and asked themselves the question, 'Where is she now, this model who was so beautiful?'"

INTERTWINED HISTORIES

1891: Audrey Marie Munson is born in Rochester, New York.



1909: The Three Graces by Isidore Konti, Munson's first acknowledged modeling credit, is unveiled in the new Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Astor in New York City.

1914: Wisconsin, the sculpture for which Munson posed, is completed for the top of the Wisconsin state Capitol dome.

1919: Conrad Hilton purchases his first hotel in Cisco, Texas.



1925: The first Hilton hotel opens in Dallas, Texas.

1996: Munson dies in Ogdensburg, New York, at the age of 104.

1997: The Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center opens.

2001: The Hilton Madison Monona Terrace opens.

2019: The Hilton Madison Monona Terrace unveils its first top-to-bottom renovation, including The Audrey, a restaurant and bar inspired by Audrey Munson.

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She stands stately and elegantly atop the Wisconsin State Capitol. Sun glints off her golden robes as she presides over her city, taller than any downtown buildings that surround her. Madison schoolchildren learn about the statue named Wisconsin, and how she points her right hand eastward toward Lake Monona, holds a globe with an eagle perched atop in her left hand and wears a helmet adorned with grapes and a badger. But few people realize the statue's commanding form was based on a real woman. And even fewer know her glamorous and tragic story.

That's changing.

The inspiration for the timeless image of Wisconsin was Audrey Munson. Considered "America's first supermodel," Munson's graceful form is immortalized in bronze and stone across the country, including roughly two dozen sculptures in New York City and three in Madison.

Munson was born in 1891 in Rochester, New York, and as a teenager moved with her mother to New York City to pursue an acting career. She appeared on Broadway a handful of times, but fate had other plans in store for her.

The story goes that one day while Munson was shopping on Fifth Avenue, photographer Felix Benedict Herzog "discovered" her. He asked her to pose for him and soon in-

troduced him to his art friends, sparking Munson's role as muse and forever changing the course of her life.

For Munson, it was a case of being in the right place at the right time. Long-limbed and classically beautiful, she was a perfect fit for artists and architects who adhered to Beaux-Arts ideals and were prolific during America's building boom.

Munson posed for muralists, painters, illustrators and photographers, often as a goddess or allegorical figure, but her most significant work was with sculptors. Her form appears on coins, as freestanding statues and carved into the walls and façades of libraries, museums, courthouses, state capitols and municipal buildings around the country.

Her first credited work is Isidore Kon-

A NEW VISION

While Munson’s legacy lives on in the works of art she inspired, her story also influenced an iconic Madison hotel in reimagining its future.

Since the Hilton Madison Monona Terrace opened in 2001, next to the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center and in between Lake Monona and the Wisconsin State Capitol, the hotel has brought elegance to the city center.

But this year, on the 100th anniversary of Conrad Hilton’s family’s initial foray into the hotel business, the Madison hotel unveils its first extensive redesign.

All 240 guestrooms and suites, as well as the hotel’s restaurant and public spaces, have been remodeled and reinterpreted, and the results are not only stunning, but also more acutely tailored to the needs and desires of today’s business and leisure travelers than ever before.

The fresh approach is evident from the moment guests step through the revolving front door and into the airy, art-filled lobby. This open space contains the free-standing check-in desk and comfortable places to sit by a fireplace, and flows into a sleek new bar and restaurant.

Gone are the days when hotel guests



Diners at The Audrey, above, enjoy shareable small plates; a lithograph by Barry Roal Carlsen sits behind them. Ceramic buoys by Brian Kluge, right. The Hilton’s reimagined lobby, below, is equally suited for work, conversation and relaxation.



segment their activities — meals, business, networking, relaxing — to specific spaces. The Madison Hilton now flexes with visitors’ needs. Looking for a place to get some work done? Want to mingle with colleagues before a dinner event or grab a bite between conference sessions or excursions in the city? Guests can set up their laptops, chat or order a shareable small plate or round of Wisconsin craft brews in multiple spots over the hotel’s open-concept main floor.

“Everything is free to use however you like,” says general manager Skip Harless.

Indeed, flexibility, convenience and comfort are at the heart of the hotel’s changes. Room service is available 24 hours a day, and a grab-and-go market near the front desk is also open around the clock, meaning guests can pick up coffee and healthy snacks no matter what time their flight gets in or first meeting starts.

But hotel guests — and Madison resi-

TIMOTHY HUGHES (ALL PHOTOS)



dents alike — won’t regret lingering over a meal at The Audrey Kitchen + Bar. The bank of tall windows creates a light-filled restaurant and that luminance is carried out in radiant shades of blue, from patterned rugs to cozy banquettes to velvety sapphire-hued chairs. And the menu takes a similar contemporary-meets-classic approach to breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks.

With The Audrey’s menus, executive chef Jeff Orr emphasizes small plates and shareable dishes. And Linda Snyder has done the same with the hotel’s interior design. Inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright’s connection to the city and Madison’s natural environment, Snyder has created a beautiful backdrop for showcasing art — featuring more than a dozen works by Wisconsin artists.

“Absolutely I consider the artwork to be the focus and the highlight of the public spaces,” Snyder says.

Art Spotting

More than a dozen works by Wisconsin artists grace the walls, shelves and even ceilings of the revamped Madison Hilton. Keep your eyes open for:



Two original fine art prints by Dale Chihuly in the lobby



Sculptural buoys by Brian Kluge in The Audrey restaurant



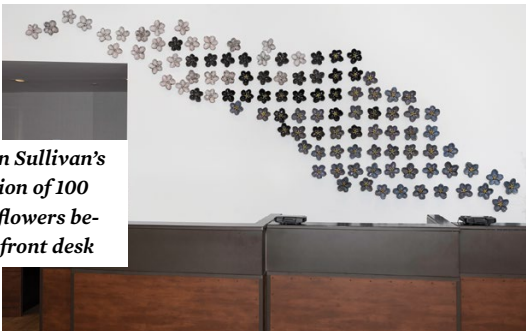
Eric Thomas Wolever’s abstracted boats on the ceiling of the lobby



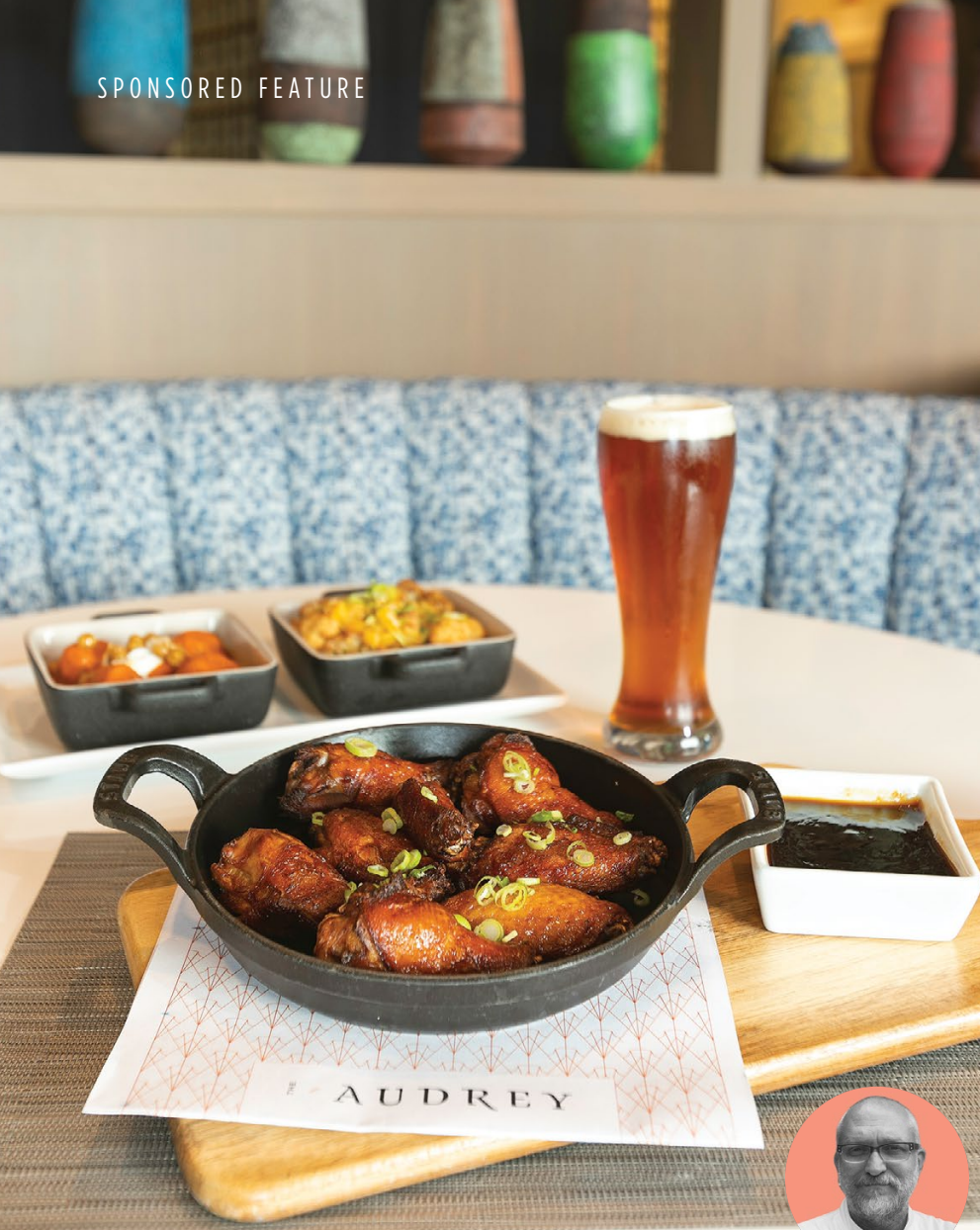
Emily Arthur’s depiction of cranes on the ceiling of The Audrey



Paintings of nature scenes by Deb Gottschalk and digital prints showing scenes of Wisconsin by John S. Miller flank the Audrey restaurant fireplace



Meghan Sullivan’s installation of 100 ceramic flowers behind the front desk



Inspired Dining

LEGENDARY MODEL AUDREY MUNSON SPARKS A MENU OF SHAREABLE DISHES AND MODERN FLAVORS.

Chef Jeff Orr (pictured, inset) is no stranger to Madison's thriving culinary scene. He has helmed such local standouts as Harvest and Osteria Papavero, and trained some of the city's best chefs. But at The Audrey Kitchen + Bar, he gives Hilton guests a compelling reason not to go out on the town for dinner.

The restaurant, which replaces the hotel's longstanding Capitol Chophouse as the in-house eatery, opened in May with a fresh and more flexible concept to satisfy what modern travelers crave.

"There are more opportunities for guests to eat on their own terms," says Orr, who is classically trained in French cuisine.

That plays out in a contemporary menu of snacks and small plates, sandwiches and salads that draws flavors from around the world. Diners can choose from fried cauliflower with lemon and green olives, ale-marinated chicken wings with yakitori sauce and a house-smoked brisket sandwich, or opt for fried cheese curds or an elevated grilled

Whether dining solo or with friends, small plates paired with a local brew, left, are a winning choice.

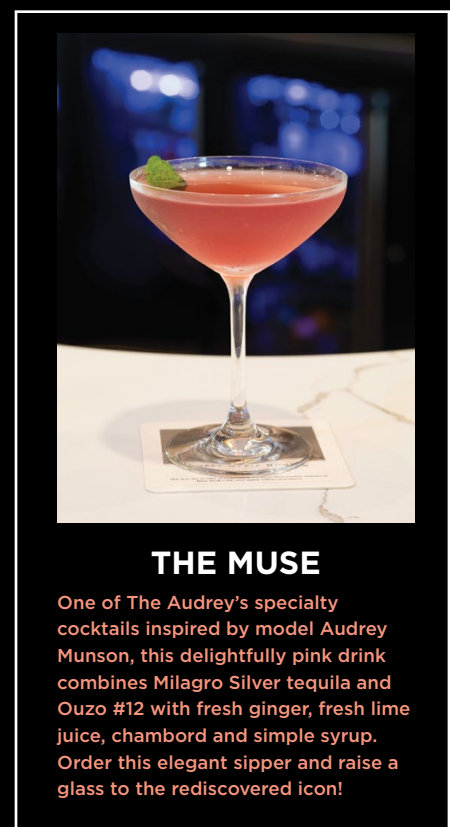
cheese with butterkase, gruyere and sarvecchio — this is Wisconsin, after all.

Heartier entrées — fried chicken, pan-roasted Alaskan halibut, grilled hanger steak — are offered after 5 p.m. And all dishes complement the restaurant's thoughtful beverage menu, which features more than 70 beers, many from Madison-area brewers like New Glarus, Karben 4, One Barrel Brewing and Ale Asylum.

The bar nods most specifically to its inspiration, Audrey Munson, with its specialty cocktails. The "Miss" Manhattan, Panama Pacific and The Gilded Lady pay homage to the model through creative and flavorful concoctions.

But if you ask Chef Orr for recommendations, he'll point to his personal favorites — the North African spiced lamb meatballs and the chilled soba noodle salad with grilled shrimp.

"People are tuning into the small plates," he says. "They're trying a little of this and a little of that. The experience is great on your own and even better with a group."



THE MUSE

One of The Audrey's specialty cocktails inspired by model Audrey Munson, this delightfully pink drink combines Milagro Silver tequila and Ouzo #12 with fresh ginger, fresh lime juice, chambord and simple syrup. Order this elegant sipper and raise a glass to the rediscovered icon!

Rows of sculptural ceramic buoys, crafted by Madison artist Brian Kluge, add color, texture and interest to the restaurant, while Appleton artist Meghan Sullivan's installation of 100 ceramic flowers behind the check-in desk subtly suggests how memories change with time. And a pair of prints by Dale Chihuly, the internationally acclaimed glass artist and University of Wisconsin-Madison alumnus, hangs over two chairs in the lobby.

Even the ceiling is gallery space. Set into the coffer of the lobby and restaurant are large-scale works including abstracted boats by Eric Thomas Wolever and colorful cranes by Emily Arthur.

While the hotel's new public spaces are energizing, changes to the revamped guestrooms emphasize relaxation and ease. Everything is new and fresh, with soothing gray walls, crisp white bed linens and upgraded bathrooms with walk-in tile showers in king bedrooms and bathtubs in rooms with two queen beds.

Technology is also a focus — guestrooms now feature a multitude of power outlets and charging stations, and 55-inch smart TVs allow guests to stream their own content on the big screens. It's small changes like these that make all the difference to travelers.

TIMOTHY HUGHES (ALL PHOTOS)



The Hilton standard king-bed room, above, boasts all the comforts of home—plus a stunning view of Lake Monona. The Liberty Room, below, offers a beautiful new way to gather and celebrate in Madison.

"Guests want their hotel rooms to feel like their house," explains Harless. "And the new Hilton provides an experience that can rival the comforts of home."

A SPECIAL SPACE

The last-but-not-least component of the Hilton's revamp is the Liberty Room, which replaces the Capitol Chophouse in location but presents an entirely new concept in spirit.

The space on the northeastern corner of the hotel, which still boasts the historic façade of the Madison Catholic Diocese building from 1938, is now an elegant gathering space full of potential — for weddings, private dinners, meetings and events that deserve a special touch.

The 1,900-square-foot space opened in August and can accommodate up to 120 guests, with a private street entrance and pre-function area for privacy and exclusivity, plus an outdoor patio to enjoy in the warmer months.

This private event space is named for another Wisconsin work that Audrey Munson inspired. Carved in Bethel Vermont granite on the east pediment of the State Capitol, Karl Bitter's Liberty Supported by the Law scene rests below Wisconsin's eastward gaze.

For more information on the Hilton Madison visit our website at www.hiltonmadison.com

