

“I Want to Clean Your Sculpture.”

Guidelines for Response



Save Outdoor Sculpture!

These guidelines are intended specifically to help SOS! coordinators better articulate special concerns about and treatment needs of outdoor sculpture: why, when, how and by whom. Others who take responsibility for the care of outdoor sculpture will also benefit. Guidance was provided by members of the SOS! Professional Advisory Group: Arthur Beale, Terry Drayman-Weisser, Dennis Montagna, Virginia Norton Naudé and Nick Veloz. Nancy Heller, a professional sculpture conservator and consultant, authored the “What questions should you ask?” section.

Have you heard this one?

An agency with responsibility for caring for your community's outdoor sculpture intends to contract with a company that does not have employees with the proper training or experience in treatment and maintenance of outdoor sculpture.

You get a call from a local company with experience in maintenance of brass railings in office buildings that is interested in expanding its services to include maintenance of outdoor sculpture.

A newspaper reports the garden club plans to scrub the town square's sculpture.

If these are familiar, this pamphlet, “I Want to Clean Your Sculpture,” will offer guidance.

Why this information?

As you know, the ultimate goal of SOS!, beyond compiling the Inventory of American Sculpture, a national database of sculpture, is to generate enthusiasm and support for appropriate and responsible ongoing care of the works. To no one's surprise, the project's visibility has prompted a number of inquiries to local project coordinators about treatment of outdoor sculpture. Inquiries come from individuals who want to locate appropriately trained conservators to perform the work and from well-meaning individuals who want to perform the treatment but whose experience and training are inappropriate or whose credentials fall short of professional standards. The seemingly easy and cheap alternative method might lead to long-term damage and added costs.

These guidelines for response are intended primarily to assist SOS! coordinators in replying helpfully and responsibly to those inquiries or similar scenarios and to trigger their thinking about how to identify resources close at hand, regionally and nationally.

How should you handle this situation?

1. *Learn more about the owner/administrator:* Who has ultimate responsibility to and for the work(s)? Is it the board of directors of an organization? A city, county or state agency? Or even an individual, such as the curator of a university museum or director of a university physical plant department? Does the administrator understand the ramifications of maintaining a positive public image and legal and moral responsibility issues? Individuals who have ultimate fiduciary responsibility for care of a public trust can be your most effective ally.

2. Apply the "sunshine law" and open the topic for wider public discussion. Is the issue appropriate for discussion in a public forum, such as the newspaper, cable television, a radio interview or talk show, or city council or town meeting? The discussion could explain why it is necessary to use a professional conservator who is trained and experienced in outdoor sculpture conservation. Research can often uncover the artist's intent, information about a missing piece or the original color of the patina. In Georgia, a vandalized *Spirit of the American Doughboy*, by E. M. Viquesney, was missing a hand and rifle. Because of publicity, the missing part was returned anonymously.

These facts apply to both historical and contemporary works.

3. Enumerate some ill-conceived efforts to "help." The choice of treatment methods can be extremely complex and varies according to a number of factors, including medium of sculpture, original patina, previous kinds of treatment, geographical siting of the piece, etc. Treatments must be appropriate and come from those professionally trained to care for outdoor sculpture (see page 5). Overly abrasive cleaning or treatment can erase surface details, diminishing the artist's intent. Chemical treatments can cause damage or problems that will emerge over time.

Regular, routine maintenance is significantly less expensive and a more responsible alternative to a cycle of neglect followed by a single or occasional treatment. Further, correcting initial improper treatment is often expensive and, of course, improper treatment can be irreversible.

A number of well-meaning treatments by untrained individuals or firms have gone awry. In Seattle, a cab driver cleaned the bronze *Chief Seattle* with muriatic acid, an overly aggressive solution that ultimately cost the city thousands of dollars to repair. In West Virginia, a construction firm whose workers were inexperienced in restoring outdoor sculpture, but under contract to perform the work, sandblasted a number of bronze sculptures on the Capitol grounds, destroying sculptural details and patinas, then applied coatings that left the works an unsightly mustard color. Yet another firm, working on the same grounds and inexperienced in the care of outdoor sculpture, used the wrong type of cleaner, resulting in acidic damage. In Virginia, prison inmates used electric drills, buffing wheels, and brass polish to "clean up" a statue. What could have been a \$3,000-4,000 maintenance job became a \$30,000 restoration with irreparable damage.

4. Cite ways in which citizens can support responsible stewardship and safeguard their town's outdoor sculpture. Volunteers can help document, photograph, fund raise and work with the media to bring issues to the public's attention. Scholars and conservators can lecture and write about outdoor sculpture and the need to care for it, thereby increasing public awareness.

Conservators are trained in chemistry, studio arts and art history and have both theoretical knowledge and practical experience in conservation treatments. Over the last two decades, scientists and professional conservators have dedicated countless hours of research to developing and identifying the proper cleaning materials and techniques for outdoor sculpture of various mediums. Although conservators should carry out treatments, it is possible to train those who are not professional conservators, such as city maintenance workers, sculptors and other artists, to administer some types of routine care. But training of conservation technicians should always be provided by professional conservators of outdoor sculpture. This is emphasized by the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), the national membership association for professional conservators, in its *Guide to the Maintenance of Outdoor Sculpture* (1993): "...The term conservation technician describes a person trained by a conservator to carry out much of the routine maintenance..." (8-9). This message is emphasized throughout the book. SOS! policy is guided by members of AIC and other professionals in the conservation field.

Local corrosion engineers who are members of NACE International and other scientists can advise about causes of corrosion but should not carry out treatment of artistic works.

Businesses can donate equipment or supplies to be used by a conservator or conservation technician during maintenance activities. Metalworking companies might contact conservators and offer support services such as welding, casting replacement parts, etc. Food contributions can make a press visit festive. Cash contributions are particularly helpful.

Students in elementary or secondary school can help improve a sculpture site by picking up litter, and can create and perform in skits about local artists and works. Teachers at all grade levels can use outdoor sculpture as an inspiration for activities in math, science, geography, history and performing and visual arts.

All can enhance their image as good citizens and good businesses.

5. Consult with individuals whose experience with outdoor sculpture is broad. SOS! coordinators can call members of the SOS! Professionals Advisory Group for counsel. They may be willing to speak with local media or officials about a specific issue or direct you to other resources in your area. Some of these resource people have special knowledge of the variety of treatment practices; others have expertise in commissioning new art and/or creating adopt-a-sculpture programs.

Everyone can seek information or counsel from a regional conservation lab, a major museum with a conservator on staff, a university with a conser-

vation training program, local conservators in private practice and your state historic preservation office. Local and state arts agencies with public art programs may also be able to help you.

6. *Refer reporters, owners/administrators and decision makers to the literature.* Prepare a brief bibliography using selections listed in this pamphlet. Make copies available of some of these publications. A well-informed local reporter can be very helpful.

When an owner or care-taking agency is ready to think about conservation, reinforce the responsible step of selecting a professional and qualified conservator who is experienced with outdoor sculpture through a Request for Proposal. (See chapter 7, *Guide to the Maintenance of Outdoor Sculpture*.) Conservators have the advantage of looking at treatment methods over time and assessing what procedures are most appropriate given a specific situation. One source for names of conservators is the AIC, 1717 K Street, NW, Suite 301, Washington, D.C. 20016; (202) 452-9545.

Use the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property (NIC) Directory of Members to locate appropriate individuals and national or regional organizations.

SOS! coordinators can distribute copies of SOS! videotapes. Others can contact NIC for copies.

What questions should you ask?

Individuals responsible for the care of outdoor monuments often need to select the conservator(s) who will carry out treatments or maintenance work on a sculpture or group of sculptures. Referral lists are a good beginning, but should be supplemented with detailed information directly pertinent to your situation. Remember, too, to investigate the skill level, training and experience of employees and subcontractors who may assist the conservator(s) with various aspects of the project.

The questions below will help you gather the additional information needed to evaluate conservators for your project. These questions should be viewed as an initial step in the communication process. As with other disciplines, open, honest communication is the basis for a successful working relationship. Since good communication is a two-way street, remember to do essential background research. As the client, you should know what your goals and priorities are and if they are reasonable. Bear in mind that a low bid priority may be in conflict with selecting the most qualified and appropriate conservator for your job.

Qualifications

1. What is the conservator's previous experience with the care of outdoor monuments of similar media (e.g., bronze, stone, wood)? Does the conservator specialize in the conservation of outdoor monuments?
2. Can the conservator provide a list of similar sculptures treated and a brief synopsis of the work performed?
3. Can the conservator provide a list of clients who can attest to the quality, timeliness and cost of the work performed?
4. Is the conservator affiliated with any professional organizations such as AIC and at what level (associate, professional associate, fellow, etc.)? Is the conservator familiar with and does he or she adhere to the AIC Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice?
5. Is the conservator insured? What types of insurance are listed on the policy—public liability, workmen's compensation, etc.—and at what values? Can the client be listed as co-insured on the existing policy?

Employees

1. How large is the firm or private practice?
2. How many employees and subcontractors will participate in the project?
3. What types of training have these individuals received and what is their experience with similar projects? Can résumés be provided for all employees?
4. Who will supervise the work?
5. How often will the principal conservator be on site?

Documentation

1. What types of documentation will be provided—written, photographic, etc.—and at what stages of the treatment?
2. Will the documentation include specific information about the types of materials used and how they are applied? For example, will the conservator provide patina and wax formulas, brand names of commercial products and names of suppliers? Are daily work logs available if requested? (Claims of "secret recipes" or "trade secrets" are not acceptable.)

Time frame

1. What is the time frame for the treatment from start to finish?
2. Does the conservator(s) have other commitments during this time period that might conflict with the proposed project?
3. Will the treatment be ongoing or intermittent?
4. Is the schedule reasonable and beneficial for both client and conservator?

Client involvement/responsibilities

1. What is required of you, the client, in terms of utilities, equipment, scaffolding, parking permits, security during off hours, etc.?

2. Will the client be informed of changes in staff for the project?
3. Is the conservator willing to meet with the client to discuss treatment work as it progresses, and how often?
4. How will unforeseen treatment problems be handled? Will the conservator's cost estimate include allowances for potential problems or will the client be expected to absorb all additional costs?

Future involvement

1. Will the conservator be able to monitor and evaluate work in the future?
2. Does the conservator perform maintenance work?
3. Will the conservator train local employees or volunteers to carry out agreed-upon maintenance activities, if appropriate?
4. How much time is the conservator willing to devote to training?
5. Will the conservator return to correct any deficiencies in the work performed without extra cost to the client?

Safety

1. What safety precautions does the conservator take to protect the public and employees from hazardous chemicals and noxious materials?
2. Will the conservator provide Material Safety Data Sheets for all chemicals used? Will appropriate OSHA requirements be followed?
3. How will equipment and supplies be stored to prevent injury from accidental contact with chemicals or tools? What precautions will be taken to prevent intentional acts of vandalism, which can be facilitated by enhanced access via scaffolding, ladders, etc.?

Remember to inform IAS, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20565, about condition assessments, treatments, maintenance, relocations and new commissions.

Selected Resources

Videotapes

"Business and Community Partnerships to Save Outdoor Sculpture," National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property, 1994 (10:00). Contact NIC, 3299 K Street, NW, Suite 403, Washington, D.C. 20007; (800) 422-4612.

Business people speak in support of professional treatment and maintenance of sculpture because it is responsible and good for business and community.

"Legacy at Risk: Strategies to Save Outdoor Sculpture," National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property, 1993 (29:40). Contact NIC.

Ways in which private and public partnerships in five U.S. cities have raised money to hire professional conservators to care for local sculpture.

"Preservation of Outdoor Monuments," National Park Service, Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (in progress). Contact NPS, Dennis Montagna, (215) 597-5824.

Lectures and demonstrations about preservation theory and technology of stone and metal outdoor monuments, intended for people who manage and maintain monuments.

"A Video Guide for the SOS! Volunteer," National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property, 1992 (30:15). Contact NIC.

Conservator of outdoor sculpture shows SOS! volunteers surface clues of deterioration to watch for when completing an SOS! Survey Questionnaire.

Print

Cruikshank, Jeffrey L. and Pam Korza. *Going Public: A Field Guide to Developments in Art in Public Places*. Amherst, Mass.: Arts Extension Service, University of Massachusetts, 1988. Contact AES, Division of Continuing Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass. 01003.

Workbook with case studies and annotated sample documents about the administration and preservation of public art including outdoor sculpture; includes chapters about collection management, documentation, conservation and funding models.

Drayman-Weisser, Terry, ed. *Dialogue/89-The Conservation of Bronze Sculpture in the Outdoor Environment*. Houston: National Association of Corrosion Engineers, 1992. Contact NACE, 1440 South Creek Drive, Houston, Tex. 77084-4906.

Papers (23) presented by conservators, curators, environmental scientists and corrosion engineers at a symposium, July 11-13, 1989, Baltimore.

Malaro, Marie C. *A Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1985. Contact American Association of Museums, 1225 Eye Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Written for non-lawyers, a practical, jargon-free guide for museum administration with direct application for outdoor sculpture collections.

Montagna, Dennis R., Susan K. Nichols and Rebecca Shiffer, eds. "Preservation of Outdoor Monuments (17:9). Contact Editor, CRM, (400), U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127; (202) 343-3395.

Focuses on interpretation and care of public sculpture and monuments.

National Committee to Save America's Cultural Collections. *Caring for Your Collections*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992. Contact National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property, 3299 K Street, NW, Suite 403, Washington, D.C. 20007.

Written for a lay audience, practical guide with sound advice about care of collections, including sculpture, with information about preventive maintenance and selection of suitable professional help.

Naudé, Virginia Norton, ed. *Sculptural Monuments in an Outdoor Environment*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1985. Contact PAFA, (215) 972-7600.

Seven papers about deterioration and conservation of bronze outdoor sculpture presented at a Philadelphia conference, November 2, 1983.

Naudé, Virginia Norton and Glenn Wharton. *Guide to the Maintenance of Outdoor Sculpture*. Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 1993. Contact AIC, 1717 K Street, NW, Suite 301, Washington, D.C. 20016.

Clear handbook about maintaining outdoor sculpture, surveying a collection of outdoor sculpture, establishing maintenance plans and contracting for maintenance. From papers presented at a Buffalo symposium, June 2-3, 1992.

Sturman, Shelley G. with Martin Burke and Doris A. Hamburg. "Guidelines for Selecting a Conservator." Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 1991. Contact AIC.

Handy brochure lists selection criteria and sources.

Tarbox, Gurdon L., Jr. "Outdoor Sculpture Maintenance at Brookgreen Gardens." *Brookgreen Journal* 21:3 & 4 (1991). Contact Brookgreen Gardens, U.S. 17 South, Murrells Inlet, S.C. 29576.

Brochure outlines maintenance procedures for outdoor sculpture at Brookgreen Gardens, which have been maintained through a seasonal schedule of washing and treatment since the site's opening in 1931.

Workshops

"Preservation...and Fund Raising for Outdoor Sculpture." National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property and National Park Service, Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (1994-95). Contact SOS!

Nine workshops about preservation theory and technology of stone and metal outdoor monuments, and building or strengthening private/public partnerships to raise funds to support professional conservation treatment.

Adopt-A-Sculpture Programs

With the completion of the SOS! basic survey, civic and business leaders are urged to consider the establishment of adopt-a-sculpture programs in their communities. " 'Adopt-a-sculpture': Innovative private-public partnerships support conservation," *SOS! Update* (5:1), discusses creation and operation of this alternative to fund raising for treatment and maintenance of outdoor sculpture. The following selected projects are underway.

Adopt-A-Monument
2300 Trammell Crow Center
2001 Ross Avenue
Dallas, TX 75201
(214) 969-3773

Adopt-A-Monument
Friends of Lincoln Park
4753 North Broadway, Suite 918
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 275-1000

Adopt-A-Statue
Boston Art Commission
Office of Arts and Humanities
Room 803
Boston, MA 02201
(617) 725-3245

Adopt-A-Sculpture
Cleveland Dept. of Parks,
Recreation and Properties
500 Lakeside Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44114
(216) 664-4194

Adopt-A-Monument
San Francisco Arts Commission
25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 240
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-9671

Adopt-A-Monument
Art Commission
of the City of New York
City Hall, Third Floor
New York, NY 10007
(212) 566-5525

The Bronze Project
Commission for Historical and
Architectural Preservation
Tower Suites, Room 606
118 North Howard Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
(301) 396-4866



Save Outdoor Sculpture!



Save Outdoor Sculpture! (SOSI) is
jointly sponsored by the National
Museum of American Art,
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Conservation of Cultural Property

~~Direct inquiries to NIC:
3299 K Street, NW
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