

FAIRMOUNT PARK ART ASSOCIATION

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ANNOUNCEMENT***PUBLIC ARTSCAPES PROGRAM AWARDED MAJOR GRANT FROM THE
WILLIAM PENN FOUNDATION FOR THREE YEAR INITIATIVE***

The Fairmount Park Art Association, with the generous support of the William Penn Foundation, announces the development of a new community arts program that will engage artists and community organizations in the exploration of creative approaches to the public environment through innovative, responsive, and enduring public art projects. A three-year grant of \$691,000.00 will enable the Art Association to assist and support the development of fifteen project proposals and to commission at least three permanent works as part of a long-term commissioning process.

The program will create models for public art which support both the artistic and community perspectives in neighborhood revitalization and development. *Public Artscares* will unite the energy, vision, craft, and imagination of artists with the knowledge, experience, and commitment of the community. This will be an inclusive program that supports and reflects the cultural diversity, geographic variety, and social richness of Philadelphia's neighborhoods. *Public Artscares* will encourage projects that express community distinctiveness, commemorate "untold" histories and public memory, reflect responsibility toward the natural environment, and invigorate our public spaces.

Why public art? Art Association Executive Director Penny Balkin Bach sums it up in *Public Art in Philadelphia* (Temple University Press, 1992), “Public art is part of our historic continuum, part of our evolving culture, and part of our collective memory. It reflects and reveals our society and . . . our cyclical longing for public expression.”

The *Public Artscapes* program will be introduced to the public in 1997 through city-wide presentations to community leaders and artists. Those who wish to participate (community organizations, artists, or artist teams) will each apply by submitting a special RTP (Request to Participate). From those who express interest, approximately 15 diverse community-based organizations will be selected to work with 15 artists or artist teams to develop, over a six month period, proposals for public art projects. Monthly workshops will be held for participants—artists and community representatives—to enhance proposal development and maximize the probability of outstanding proposals. All of the proposals will be presented at a *Public Artscapes Symposium*, followed by an exhibition and publication. At least three projects will be commissioned initially, as part of a long-term process to identify the support necessary to carry out as many proposals as are feasible.

Speaking for the Board of Trustees, Art Association President Charles E. Mather III noted that the organization “has had a very long-standing commitment to working with various cultural groups in Philadelphia, from the French community in 1890 toward the installation of *Joan of Arc* along the Parkway, to the 59th Street Baptist Church’s *Martin Luther King Freedom Memorial* in the late 1960’s, to the Korean community’s involvement in the International Sculpture Garden at Penn’s Landing during the Bicentennial—to name just three varied examples.”

The Fairmount Park Art Association has supported public art in Philadelphia since 1872, when it was chartered by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to commission and purchase sculpture and to “promote and foster the beautiful in Philadelphia, in its architecture, improvements and general plan.” It is the nation’s first non-profit public art organization dedicated to the integration of art and urban planning.

To be placed on the *Public Artscares* mailing list and to receive more information as it becomes available, please call the Art Association at 215/546-7550.

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