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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PHILADELPHIA'S OUTDOOR SCULPTURE GETS SPRING CLEANING

Philadelphia boasts one of the largest and finest collections of outdoor sculpture in the nation, but it also suffers from harmful concentrations of "acid rain." Concerned about the condition of the city's outdoor sculpture, the Fairmount Park Art Association took action in 1982, initiating a pilot sculpture conservation program and establishing an ongoing maintenance program. Now a familiar sight that signals the advent of spring, this year's conservation maintenance program will begin on April 5th and will include work on the *Washington Monument* (1897) by Rudolf Siemering in front of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Frederic Remington's *Cowboy* (1908) along Kelly Drive, and the *All Wars Memorial to Colored Soldiers and Sailors* (1934) by J. Otto Schweizer along Lansdowne Drive near Memorial Hall.

Weather permitting, maintenance of twenty five sculptures will continue through early May, predominantly in Fairmount Park. Please call Laura Griffith at the Art Association to determine the work site for any given day.

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The maintenance procedure—which has its origins in the Renaissance—involves an inspection of the general condition of the sculpture, removal of surface grime and graffiti, washing, and renewed application of a special wax coating by trained professionals. The sculptures are cleaned, protected, and stabilized to protect them from further corrosion.

Acid rain, snow, or fog occurs when sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide (primarily from coal-burning factories and car and truck emissions) mix with moisture in the atmosphere, forming an acid solution. This can create uneven corrosion on the surface of bronze sculptures (giving the works an unsightly streaked and/or pitted appearance), cause marble to eventually dissolve, and increase the risk of structural failure.

In her recently published book, *Public Art in Philadelphia*, the Fairmount Park Art Association's Executive Director Penny Balkin Bach reflected, "Philadelphia's outdoor sculptures are visible victims of a changing environment. Pollution, vandalism, and neglect threaten our irreplaceable artistic and cultural inheritance." Constructed of what were once considered durable materials, today many outdoor sculptures are rapidly deteriorating.

Steven Tatti is the consulting conservator for the conservation maintenance program, and he has been attending to many of Philadelphia's public art treasures through the Art Association since the program's inception. Tatti has had extensive experience in the treatment of outdoor sculpture, working at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,

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the National Museum of American Art, the City of Baltimore (where he treated over forty large bronze monuments), and in New York where he assisted in the restoration of the torch of the *Statue of Liberty*. He is a member of the National Institute for Conservation, the American Institute for Conservation, and the Washington Conservation Guild.

In addition to this project, the Art Association, in cooperation with the city's Art Commission, will coordinate the local portion of a national project intended to raise public awareness: Save Outdoor Sculpture! (SOS!). Nationally, the SOS! program is administered by the National Museum of American Art (Smithsonian Institution) and the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property. As the largest cultural volunteer program in the country, SOS! involves a survey of all outdoor sculpture in the United States which will form the basis of a computer inventory in Washington DC. Volunteers may contact Margot Berg, SOS! Project Coordinator at (215) 545-6734.

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 planning.

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