

November 2025
ANNUAL REPORT

The background of the slide is a photograph of a park. In the center, there is a large equestrian statue on a pedestal. A person is walking on a path in the foreground. There are many trees, some with green leaves and some bare. In the distance, a city skyline is visible. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

The Association for Public Art (aPA) commissions and preserves public art in Philadelphia, while advancing the pivotal role art can play in creating and enhancing public space and civic life.

Dear aPA Members and Friends,

This year has been one of intense reflection and action at the Association for Public Art (aPA), as it has also been across our city and country. Our staff and Board of Trustees have been developing a new strategic plan together—a plan that will consider our past, respond to the present, and envision the future. We will continue to build community with you as we stand united in support of the arts with inspiring and thought-provoking public art and programs.

This past summer, we were thrilled to welcome art lovers, families, and fellow Philadelphians to the unveiling of *Bar None*, our 2025 *Art on the Parkway* commission by artist Nicolo Gentile. This poetic tribute to public assembly transformed metal barricades into a compelling sculpture with historic imagery etched onto colorful panels. Experiencing it together was truly energizing!

As we look ahead to *Art on the Parkway* in 2026, the aPA will also present two important projects alongside a robust calendar of programs:

HOUSE POST (Atelier Gallery, Brewerytown)

Originally part of the 1976 Bicentennial International Sculpture Garden, this First Nations House Post will be returned to its ancestral land in British Columbia. As part of the repatriation journey, House Post will be exhibited with contextual history and programming in partnership with the U'Mista Cultural Centre, which will receive the totem from aPA on behalf of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation.

LET FREEDOM RING (June - September 2026, Cherry Street Pier)

Coinciding with the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, artist Paul Ramírez Jonas' sculpture, *Let Freedom Ring*, will be installed along the Delaware River waterfront. *Let Freedom Ring* is a powerful reimagination and reactivation of our nation's founding ideals. Conceived as an enormous interactive bell tower, it will play all but the final notes of the song "My Country 'Tis of Thee," inviting public participation to complete the song and reflect on our shared voice.

The power of public art to tell complex stories, inspire dialogue, and connect people is undeniable. It is now more important than ever that aPA continues to activate spaces, engage local and international artists, and bring people together.

With best wishes,



Charlotte Cohen
Executive Director



Photo by Constance Mensh

“At a moment when the digital can feel more real than the physical, *Bar None* asserts the irreplaceable nature of in-person gatherings.”

- Jeff Joseph Katz, *WayOut*

Bar None - Art on the Parkway

by Nicolo Gentile

July - October, 2025

Bar None honored the Benjamin Franklin Parkway’s legacy as a site of collective assembly and action. It offered a testament to the overlapping movements and voices that have surged through this civic spine in pursuit of justice, celebration, and change. The installation was interspersed with colored acrylic panels etched with images sourced from historic archives. The manipulated images reflect moments of protest, pride, and public gathering.

[Read more here.](#)



Photo by Constance Mensh

Public Art Decoded

Public Art Decoded is aPA's annual series of walking tours that look in-depth at the sculptures and installations that exist in popular Philadelphia locations. The tours explore how and why the artworks exist, the artists behind them, the untold stories, and provide both a historical and contemporary contextualization.

Icons and Myths: Ellen Phillips Samuel Memorial tour led by curator Brittany Webb.



Old City: Public Art in the Birthplace of America tour with Old City District Executive Director, Job Itzkowitz.

Rittenhouse Square: Urban Design & Visual Art tour with Friends of Rittenhouse Square.



Horticulture Center: Art Meets Nature in an Urban Park tour with the Shofuso Japanese Cultural Center.

Art on the Parkway

Art on the Parkway is a juried open call organized by aPA in partnership with the Parkway Council and Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR). It invites artists, designers, and other creatives to propose a temporary public art installation in Maja Park on Philadelphia's Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Proposals are asked to explore the ways in which art can engage with audiences and respond to the site. *Bar None* by Nicolo Gentile was the 2025 commissioned artwork.



Bar None installation in Maja Park at 22nd street on the Parkway.

From
fabrication to
community
programs



The opening celebration of *Bar None*.



In studio with Nicolo Gentile.



Artist Talk with Nicolo Gentile, Charlotte Cohen, Suzanna Urminska, and John Petitt.



Assemblage: Exploring Social Change Through Collage with Collage Philadelphia at the Free Library.

Conservation

Each year aPA evaluates and conserves approximately 30 works of public art throughout the city of Philadelphia as part of its annual Conservation Program. Additionally, aPA hosts a number of educational programs related to artwork preservation, including the event series *Material Matters*.



Night (1872) by Edward Stauch received a new granite base.

University of Pennsylvania's Preservation class on wood visits Martin Puryear's *Pavilion in the Trees* with aPA Deputy Director, Laura Griffith.



Material Matters: Symbiosis and Steel



Material Matters is aPA's ongoing public event series related to conservation and preservation. This event featured aPA consulting conservator Adam Jenkins.

Symbiosis (2011) by Roxy Paine receives once-in-a-decade conservation treatment thanks to the generous support of Daniel W. Dietrich II Foundation.



Community Engagement: Events and Partnerships



Exhibition of aPA archival slides at PhotoLounge's PL130 Gallery. The show featured pictures of public art and architecture taken by Edward H. Shwartz.



Charlotte Cohen, aPA Executive Director, participates in a panel at the Mural Arts Institute Spring Artist Forum.



Tabling at Shofuso Cherry Blossom Festival at the Horticulture Center.

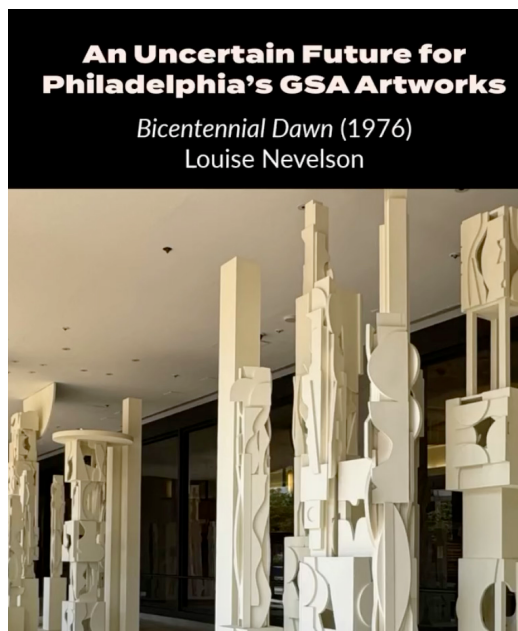
Standing Up for Public Works Under Threat

The aPA has a long history of advocating for the safe-guarding of public art work both here in Philadelphia and across the country. This year we spoke out a number of times about the challenges facing the federal government's Fine Arts Collection.



"I am particularly worried about the artwork's maintenance and upkeep and figuring out where things are...It's the legacy of the people of the United States."

—Charlotte Cohen, *The New York Times*



The Washington Post

National

White House slashes staff overseeing 26,000 art pieces



"If the [GSA] Fine Arts Collection is left to exist on its own without a staff to oversee or maintain it, or if the collection is broken up, it's an enormous loss for the history and legacy of our country."

—Charlotte Cohen, *Washington Post*

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Special thanks to Daniel W. Dietrich II Foundation for their generous support of the conservation treatment of Roxy Paine's *Symbiosis*.

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***Let Freedom Ring*, a monumental artwork
by Paul Ramírez Jonas, is coming in
summer 2026!**

Front photo: *Bar None* by Nicolo Gentile (2025). Photo by Constance Mensh.

Back photo: *Let Freedom Ring* on the National Mall in Washington, DC. Photo by and courtesy of the artist, Paul Ramírez Jonas. Support for aPA's 2026 presentation of *Let Freedom Ring* is provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage and the Philadelphia Funder Collaborative for the Semiquincentennial.



Let Freedom Ring was originally commissioned as a part of *Beyond Granite: Pulling Together*, an exhibition curated by Monument Lab.