



## **GUIDELINES FOR DONATING WORKS OF ART TO THE CITY OF NEW YORK/PARKS & RECREATION**

### **Introduction**

The city contains 26,000 acres of public parks--valuable open spaces preserved for both passive and active recreation, as natural areas, and as designed landscapes. Situated within our parks are some 1,000 monuments, including commemorative tablets, historic markers, decorative fountains, memorial flagstaffs, statuary and architectural ornament. Most of these have been acquired as gifts over the last 150 years.

Because of the large number of works of art entrusted to the care of Parks & Recreation, we now work carefully with potential donors to find suitable locations for new monuments. With a limited number of available sites, subject to a variety of competing uses, not every proposed project is approved. In general, legally designated scenic landmarks, such as Bryant, Fort Tryon, Central, Prospect and Riverside Parks, parks located within historic districts, and parks in which there are already a considerable number of monuments (examples include Madison, Tompkins and Union Squares, and Battery Park) are not recommended for new permanent works.

To assist potential donors we have prepared a guide to answer common questions about the approval process.

### **1) Where to begin?**

Contact Parks & Recreation, Director of Art & Antiquities at (212) 360-3410 or the Monuments Coordinator at (212)-360-8143. Parks will verify whether a site for which you propose a work of art is a park property. If the site is not parks property, Parks will refer you to the proper agency or authority. If the site is deemed inappropriate, Parks may suggest sites which might be more feasible.

### **2) What factors does Parks and the City consider when reviewing the proposed installation of a work of art?**

Many factors must be taken into account when the City considers the acceptance of a new permanent work of art. The process is two-fold. Projects designated for public parks must first receive the endorsement of Parks. The Public Design Commission (formerly the Art Commission) of the City of New York, a non-partisan design review board established in 1898, then reviews all projects and retains the legal right to approve or disapprove the proposal.

Parks reviews the appropriateness of the subject as relates to the site, the compatibility of the work of art with the landscape, the impact on a park and its use, aesthetic merit, as well as safety and maintenance issues.

a) Appropriateness:

Most effective outdoor public art is sited in spaces which bear a particular relevance to the subject of the piece. With commemorative monuments, historical associations between the subject or artist and a community are a traditional mechanism for the selection of an appropriate site (e.g. the statue of the Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazano in Battery Park, facing New York Harbor; Cuban patriot Jose Martí on the Avenue of the Americas.) Thematic associations of a subject and site are another way in which to determine appropriateness (e.g.. placing a composer in a concert grove). Consideration should also be given to the long-term impact of permanent monuments, and subjects should be of a stature able to weather the vagaries of time, changing attitudes etc. In general, the City does not permit the installation of monuments to living persons, and usually a minimum of five (5) to ten (10) years between an event and its commemoration is recommended, to allow for sufficient historical perspective.

In no instance, either past or present, have permanent monuments, which depict subjects that are trademarked or commercially licensed, been installed on public property.

b) Compatibility

Most permanent artworks are likely to be situated within existing landscapes, and consideration must be given when designing the work of art to integrate it with the natural environment. In certain instances the work of art and landscape may be designed in tandem, thus increasing their compatibility. Donors are encouraged to consider alternatives to traditional monuments, such as "living" memorials consisting of trees, shrubbery and other landscape elements.

c) Impact on Park Use

It is important to keep in mind the necessity for unencumbered open space within the city. Works of art which interfere with or prohibit existing park functions may be cause for the disapproval of a proposed monument.

d) Aesthetics

Though conditioned by a range of subjective considerations, aesthetic merit is primary determinant in the acceptance of permanent works of art. Proposed monuments must show evidence of the artist's mastery of the medium in which he or she is working (stone carving, bronze casting etc.). Works of inferior workmanship will not be approved. As stated above, works which show a sensitivity to their surroundings are given preferred status. Art works most likely to receive approval are those which consensus opinion deems successful in its impact on the viewer. The Public Design Commission ultimately decides upon aesthetic grounds.

#### e) Maintenance

Given the responsibility of preserving and maintaining more than 1,700 existing monuments, the city cannot in good faith accept works of art which present an unreasonable maintenance burden. New works of art will not be accepted unless the donor or sponsor can provide a means of perpetual care. This can take two forms.

The first is the establishment of a maintenance endowment, from which interest is generated sufficient to contract for annual routine maintenance. In the case of typical bronze figural statues the annual maintenance costs have proven to be \$1,000 to \$2,000, requiring endowments of \$50,000 to \$100,000.

In the case of smaller items such as plaques, Parks would negotiate with the sponsor a one-time donation to a general monuments maintenance account whose funds are applied to the cyclical treatment of the collection. In addition, a small city-funded monuments maintenance crew treats works of art on a rotational basis, and removes graffiti wherever possible.

In lieu of a maintenance endowment, in rare cases the City may establish a long-term legal contract which stipulates that donors or sponsors are responsible for the routine care of the work of art.

The use of durable materials, able to withstand the weathering process and potential acts of vandalism, will diminish the long-term maintenance costs.

#### f) Safety

Works of art should be safe to passersby, curious spectators (especially children), and the environment as a whole. Sharp projecting elements, loose parts, and other public hazards will prevent the official acceptance of an artwork.

### **3) What are the procedures to follow when offering a monument to Parks & Recreation?**

Virtually all monuments on public property are paid for through private contributions. The sole exception to this rule are commissions through the Percent for Art Program run by the Department of Cultural Affairs, whereby 1% of the city's construction budget is applied toward art and design projects (for information phone DCA at 212-513-9300).

Should Parks & Recreation, upon review of a proposal, grant its conceptual endorsement, the appropriate staff will work with the sponsors in the refinement of the design and in preparing the necessary design submission documents to the Public Design Commission. Approval from both Parks & Recreation and the Public Design Commission of the City of New York is required for all permanent installations. The separate Public Design Commission review process is described in "The Public Design Commission Guidelines for Donating Works of Art to New York City," and is available upon request.

In certain circumstances, local community board and/or Landmarks Preservation Commission approval is additionally required. Parks monuments curator, capital design staff or borough staffs will advise sponsors and assist with presentations at such public hearings.

**Under no circumstances should donors begin to raise funds or fabricate a monument prior to receiving all the necessary approvals.** (Should sponsors propose the donation of a pre-existing artwork, there is no guarantee of eventual approval.)

Donors should approach Parks with a letter of intent, as well as any preliminary designs. Consultation with Parks and/or the Public Design Commission prior to any artist selection or commission can improve the likelihood of approval, and will prevent any unnecessary and wasteful expenditures.

The two common methods for selecting an artist are to hold a public competition or to consult with the Department of Cultural Affairs which maintains a large slide registry of qualified artists. A representative from Parks & Recreation must be included as a voting member on any competition or design review committee.

Please note that while this early level of consultation will improve the likelihood of approval, there is no guarantee.

#### **4) Are there other ways to contribute to the public art in the parks?**

Individuals or organizations can participate in a variety of ways, from funding conservation projects to contributing to the city's ongoing maintenance programs. Parks & Recreation encourages you to assist with the beautification of our city by sponsoring the care of its existing monuments.

**WORK OF ART  
GIFT GUIDELINES**

I have read Parks' Guidelines for Donating Works of Art, and understand that approval of Parks and the Public Design Commission of the City of New York is necessary to site a work of art on Parks property. I also understand that no work should begin on any piece of art being considered for installation on City property until the work receives approval from the Commissioner of Parks & Recreation and preliminary approval from the Public Design Commission, and Landmarks Preservation Commission where required.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Project \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARKS REPRESENTATIVE

Representative \_\_\_\_\_

(signature and title)

**PLEASE RETURN TO JONATHAN KUHN, DIRECTOR OF ART & ANTIQUITIES,**

**NEW YORK CITY PARKS & RECREATION, THE ARSENAL, CENTRAL PARK, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10065**