

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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SOS

"Save Outdoor Sculpture," called SOS!, is a project to survey the outdoor sculptures scattered throughout our country. SOS! has these primary goals:

Complete a national inventory and basic condition assessment of outdoor sculpture, and

Encourage the implementation of strategies to provide for the ongoing care of outdoor sculpture.

Location and documentation of the sculpture, including notation of signatures, inscriptions and other identifying marks, precise location, subject matter or theme;

Observation and reporting of basic conditions of the sculpture, including descriptions of surrounding environment, obvious physical damage, assessment of overall condition based on an objective checklist; and

Compilation of background information about the sculpture, including jurisdiction and maintenance responsibility, circumstances of commissioning and installation.

Save Outdoor Sculpture! is a joint project of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution and the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property. The Cobblestone Society will act as the local coordinating agency.

We need volunteers to fill out forms answering many of the above questions. Training sessions will be given for volunteers on Tuesday, November 10 from 10 - 2 at Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester and again on Wednesday, November 18 at the Strong Museum from 10 - 2. For further information call the Cobblestone Museum at 589-9013. Your work will yield long-term benefits as the information you collect will be added to the Inventory of American Sculpture, a permanent computerized database at the National Museum of American Art. The training session will include information lectures by a conservator with slide or video presentation. These should both be very excellent seminars on the history of outdoor sculpture.

"All over America, everywhere anyone looks, if you care to see, monuments and memorials in the form of statues and shrines of all sizes and kinds abound. Thousands upon thousands of these uncelebrated icons literally dot the landscape throughout the United States, in small towns and large, village and megalopolis. They inhabit every conceivable location; desert, traffic island, village green, concrete plaza, battlefields, national parks, wayside rests, eight-lane superhighways and cow paths. Some are celebrated as national tourist attractions. Others are anonymous and unnoticed. Most are locally commissioned mementoes of contributions to the nation by local persons. Their importance is that they exist. Their meaning is not limited to their worth as works of art ...

"Silent in the din of traffic, clearly observable in the pollution of 10,000 monoxide exhausts, they are also unarmed and vulnerable. In the most joy-



less cityscape or ravaged landscape they are reminders of sharp human fates as fresh as the green blades of grass that spring from highway cracks and crevices. In their persistence they outlast and overcome dedication ceremonies, immediate neglect, patriotic anniversary wreaths, sentimentality, jeers, epithets, graffiti, the vandalism of the establishment and the homages of street gangs. To an unsympathetic eye, the ordinary run of American monuments may appear a form of permanent, three-dimensional graffiti perpetrated upon the landscape, conspired, produced and inflicted upon posterity by the worthy pretensions of patriotism and art. To others, however, their meaning, stark as poverty, is bone true. They are part of the secret treasure poetry discovers and defends ..."

--Leslie George Katz

Locally we have several full relief figural monuments in cemeteries which are considered advisable for inclusion in this survey. Pictured, is the Hart monument at Mt. Albion Cemetery. The figure which is nine feet in height stands on a base of larger proportions. It represents "Hope" as this ethereal or allegorical figure holds an anchor, the traditional symbol of hope and steadfastness. "Hope" is of course, one of the three Christian Graces or theological virtues. The other two being "Faith" and "Charity".

It appears we have around twenty works of art in sculptured form which are eligible and need inventorying, not all of which are in cemeteries.