



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Art Commission
State House
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

www.mass.gov/orgs/state-house-art-commission

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Annual Report

I respectfully submit the *Annual Report* of the State House Art Commission for the year ending June 30, 2023. As a volunteer board committed to preserving and interpreting the past to better understand the present and prepare for the future, we strive for greater access and appreciation of the State House Art Collection. To that end, we seek more inclusion and better representation of the people of the Commonwealth.

We are grateful for the support and encouragement we have from Tammy Kraus, Super-intendent of the State House, and her staff for their help in carrying out our policies and activities this past year. We also appreciate the collaboration we have enjoyed with the Bureau of the State House (BSH), the Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAMM) and the State House Rangers while working for the care of the historic building, its collections and contents. Our mandate has always been challenging because the State House Art Collection is not installed in a museum setting, but rather is displayed in the halls and corridors of a public building that enjoys a constant flow of visitors, legislators, administrators and staff.

Transition for new administration

On January 3, 2023, Maura Healey was inaugurated chief executive of the Commonwealth. Each change of administration calls for the State House Curator to assist the departing executive team and prepare to welcome the new. A transition report, submitted in advance, outlined the responsibilities of the Art Commission and described the art and artifacts currently on display in the Executive Suite. Loans from the State House Art Collection and other institutions were considered for possible rotations. On the evening of the inauguration, photographs of the governor and Lt. governor were placed on display in the Hooker/Main Entrance to welcome staff and visitors the next day.

Governor Healey took exception to the long-standing tradition of selecting a portrait of a former governor for display in her ceremonial office. Instead, in April, she unveiled a large, empty gold frame over her mantle, on the suggestion of Julian Hynes, Ja'lyyah Santiago and Adniley Velez whose winning student essays informed her choice. As Governor Healy explained:

The State House is the People's House — and symbols matter. . . This frame serves as a reminder of those who aren't always reflected or heard in the halls of power. When people come into this office, I want them to envision themselves in that frame.



At the same ceremony, Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, inspired by former Governor Jane Swift, announced that she had chosen Sarah Belchetz-Swenson's 2005 portrait of Swift to hang in her office.

Collections

Sculpture care. Daedalus Art Conservation, Inc. of Watertown completed the last year of its five-year contract for the continuing maintenance of the bronze monuments and sculpture installed on the grounds. Inclement weather, however, postponed our usual June maintenance of the Joseph Hooker statue to autumn 2023.

The annual care of the exterior bronzes, which suffer continuously from the threat of acid rain in an urban, coastal environment, was initiated in 1987 and has proven to be a most rewarding program. With routine cleaning, and inspection and renewal of protective coatings, these public monuments remain among the best-preserved in the Commonwealth. Based on Daedalus' exceptional performance, we will exercise both of two additional contract option years, extending the agreement through 2025.

Door restoration. At the request of BSH, the interior swinging doors that lead from the Brigham



extension to Mount Vernon Street were restored in November 2022. The late 19th-century doors, with brass tacks and rare copper hinges, were covered with a cotton-backed vinyl that had suffered from tears, punctures, dirt, hand oils and improper cleaning. The doors also had experienced multiple re-wrappings for over one hundred years and required extensive infilling before replacement tacks could be installed. A new vinyl covering, European Pub "Oxblood," was selected to resemble the previous dark red

covering. Original brass push and kick plates were cleaned. All work was performed by South Shore Upholstery, Weymouth, Mass.



Liberty Bell. In 1952, the Department of the Treasury gave to each of the states a full-size bronze replica of the Liberty Bell. Sometime in the 1970s, the bell was moved from its original installation in Doric Hall onto the Bulfinch porch of the State House, which has been closed to all since 2001.

When plans for the restoration of the porch and portico under the Water Infiltration and Repairs Project necessitated the bell's removal in November 2020, the Curator and BSH worked with DCAMM to have the bell, with its original wood yoke and wishbone supports, restored and prepared for return to Doric Hall. The Art Commission has long advocated the removal of the bell to an interior location that would provide protection from the elements and be viewable year-round for the public. A new base will be designed and engineered for the over 2000 lb. bell assembly, with a marble veneer to complement the room. Reinstallation is anticipated in late summer 2023.

Flag display. The Curator worked closely with the Massachusetts National Guard Historical Services Team in developing a rotating display of Civil War colors from the State House Battle Flag Collection for Memorial Hall. The first flags will be placed on view in time for the anniversary celebration of the Massachusetts National Guard's founding in December 2023.

Storage. Stacy DeBole, newly appointed State Librarian, and the Curator met often to discuss mutual concerns and interests related to the care of their respective collections. This included security protocols and the coordination of the maintenance of the HAVC and fire protection systems for shared secure storage.

Loans



Notable Women of Boston by Ellen Lanyon (1926-2013) was loaned to the State House Art Commission from the Gwen Ifill College of Media, Arts and Humanities, Simmons University, Boston. The Workingmen's Cooperative Bank of Boston commissioned the mural in 1980 to commemorate its 100th anniversary. In 1985, Simmons acquired the two-panel painting and, until recently, it was displayed in their central library, which is now under renovation. Rather than store the artwork, Simmons asked the Art Commission to accept the mural on long-term loan so that it could remain on public view. On December 15, 2022, the 13 x 7 ft. painting was installed on the Fourth Floor outside the House Gallery where it will remain on display until December 2025.

The mural honors nine women who were trailblazers in their respective fields and important contributors to American - and particularly - Boston culture: Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643), Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784), Sister Ann Alexis (1805-1893), Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), Ellen Richards (1842-1911), Mary Morton Kehew (1859-1918), Anne Sullivan (1866-1936) and Melnea Cass (1896-1978).

For more information, please see <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/state-house-art-commission>

We also continue to monitor loans of artworks to the administration from other cultural institutions.

Proposed Additions

The Coast Guard Memorial Committee continued their planning of a memorial to honor the U.S. Coast Guard. Its long history of service and sacrifice began in Massachusetts at Newburyport with the launching of the U.S. Revenue Service cutter *Massachusetts* in 1791 and continued with the U.S. Lifesaving Service and the heroism of station keepers like Joshua James of Hull.

The State Police Association of Massachusetts K-9 Memorial Committee met with the Commission to present their plans for celebrating the passage of Nero's Law in 2022 with a sculpture to be located near the Law Enforcement Memorial in Ashburton Park. This law allows emergency personnel to tend to animals as well as officers who are wounded while on duty and honors such sacrifices. Matthew Glen of Provo, Utah has created a life-size bronze of Frankie, a Belgian Malinois K-9 police dog who was killed in the line of duty in Fitchburg in July 2022.

Curator's Tours and Research Requests

An interdisciplinary team of professors of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Rhetoric invited the Curator to give tours to approximately sixty students from the Boston University College of General Studies. As they walked around the building, she talked about the ways the democratic process is reflected in the architecture of the State House. They studied the original layout of one of the first state capitols, and learned how successive additions and improvements have provided greater access to state government. The display of portraits illustrates the peaceful transition of leadership through the free election process, while ideals of liberty, freedom and service can be understood through memorials to prominent military and civic leaders. She was joined by the State House ADA Coordinator who described recent activities to provide universal access for an even wider range of employees and visitors.

The GAR Room is open for both research and drop-in visits on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1-4 p.m. We also continue to address the numerous requests we receive for images and information on the art, flag, and GAR Memorial Room collections for publication and scholarly research.

Art Commission

Fortunately, we have returned to meeting in person. The good cheer in evidence when we get together is surely an added bonus. Responsive to my requests, Alison Nolan agreed to serve on the Coast Guard Memorial Committee and L'Merchie Frazier to the Women's Rights Trail Task Force.

The members revised and updated the Art Acquisition Guidelines, clarifying the process by which proposals are submitted, reviewed and evaluated. In particular, we addressed proposals of gifts of artworks that are not state commissions. If they are works in progress, their acceptance into the State House Art Collection requires special guidance and collaboration with the Art Commission to ensure that all expectations are met. In general, the Art Commission prefers public competitions with preference given to artists from Massachusetts.

Curator

Another year gives me the privilege of speaking for the board in commending Susan Greendyke Lachevre for her tact and diplomacy in working with the various agencies and departments of the Commonwealth. She has been a pleasure to know for her wit and for her wisdom. I have no doubt that, after thirty-eight years in this position, she knows more about the history of the Massachusetts State House and its collections than anyone else could possibly have.

Paula Morse
Chair