Definitions:

The Inventory of American Sculpture is intended to be a comprehensive listing of works by American sculptors from the earliest colonial days to the present. Along with sculpture in public and private collections, the Inventory includes outdoor monuments. To be included in the Inventory of American Sculpture, a piece:

- may be sculpted using traditional methods of modeling, carving, casting or construction
- may be sculpted using contemporary materials or techniques such as plastics or neon, assemblage or site construction
- must have been created by an artist who was born in or whose works are identified with the United States

Generally excluded are numismatics, decorative arts, minor architectural ornaments, and gravestones. In a program of the Inventory’s scale perfect assurance of the medium and national origin of every work may not always be possible. It is not necessary that the artist, medium, or subject be surely identified for a sculpture to be recorded in the Inventory. No sculpture should be omitted because of incomplete information or because it is thought to be unimportant or unworthy of consideration. Worthiness is in the eye of the beholder; an object of negligible interest to an art critic may be of vital importance to a historian.

Report Form:

A copy of a sculpture report form is attached. Use of the form is not mandatory, but it provides a guide to the type of information recorded in the Inventory. Please feel free to use alternate means of reporting collections, especially when documentation (such as catalogue cards, collection checklists, etc.) exists that can be easily copied or xeroxed. When requested, copies of the sculpture report form will be provided in unlimited quantity at no charge.
Categories of information to be recorded for each sculpture listed in the Inventory include: Artist, Title, Creation Dates, Medium, Foundry, Version Identification, Cast Numbers, Marks, Owner, Location, Provenance, and Subject (or thematic) Description.

Please type or use a pen and print when filling out a report. Do not feel limited by the spaces provided. You are encouraged to attach additional information such as photographs, newspaper clippings, and articles if available.

Inventoring:

When examining a sculpture you are less likely to overlook details and items of importance if the examination is carried out in a logical sequence. You may wish to work from top to bottom and/or in a clockwise direction, both for an overall evaluation and for a description of individual details.

All observations concerning the sculpture should be made from the point of view of the sculpture itself — as if you were standing on its pedestal or base and looking out in the direction it faces. For a sculpture of a soldier with a rifle in its (your) right hand, “proper right” and “proper left” would be the position of the rifle. The terms “proper right” and “proper left” should be used when describing the sculpture.

If you are reporting works first hand, please be safety conscious both for yourself and the sculpture you are examining. You may want to observe things that distance, accessibility, and other elements will render difficult or impossible to see. Never rest anything against the sculpture. Do not attempt to climb on a sculpture or its base to get a better view.
Owner/Address:

List the specific name and address of the agency, institution or individual that currently owns or administers the long-term control and care of the sculpture.

Location:

If the sculpture is actually located elsewhere than at the owner’s address, list the work’s location with sufficient clarity to enable someone else to easily find the sculpture. For example: “East side of Route 3, two miles north of intersection of State Road 97”, or “Fairmount Park, 100 yards east of Memorial Hall”. It is not necessary to note a temporary absence, such as a short-term loan of the sculpture to a museum exhibition.

Confidentiality:

Owners may choose to “restrict” their names and street addresses from appearing in the Inventory’s public indexes. If you would like to select this option, check the appropriate box.

Primary Artist:

The person who was primarily responsible for the overall conception and creation of the work is the primary artist. Frequently, the artist’s name will appear toward the bottom of the sculpture itself, and is often followed by an abbreviation for “sculptor” (i.e. Sc., Sculp., S.) and sometimes a date. An artist’s name may also appear on the base, an attached plaque, or associated label.
An artist’s name may be qualified by a question mark (e.g., John Rogers?) or by the notation “attrib.” (e.g., John Rogers, attrib.). The addition of the question mark denotes the artist identification is doubtful and unsupported. The addition of the abbreviation for “attributed” denotes some question of the artist identification exists, but is supported by documentary evidence and/or expert opinion.

If the work is stylistically a copy after another artist’s work, that artist should also be mentioned (e.g., John Smith after Charles Marion Russell).

When the identity of an artist is not known or suggested, “Unknown” should be supplied in place of an artist’s name.

Other Artists:

A sculpture may often by the collaborative work of several artists. If known, list additional creators and their roles (i.e. carver, architect, etc.).

Foundry:

Often the foundry or fabricator’s name and city, as well as cast date appear on the base of the statue. Frequently, just a founder’s mark or symbol will appear. Enter this information as found. If a symbol is present, attach a hand drawn copy of the mark. If unknown, leave blank.

Title of Work:

Indicate the complete title of the sculpture as designated by the artist.

Alternate Titles:

Record any other titles by which the work is known. These titles might include popular titles (i.e. Statue of Liberty) or previous titles.
Execution Date:

This is the date that the sculpture was created and is frequently found beside the sculptor’s name. If only an approximate date is known, precede it with the phrase “circa”. If unknown, leave blank.

Other Dates:

Other dates might include the date the sculpture was commissioned, copyrighted, cast (often found beside the foundry’s name) or the dedication date (often located on the pedestal of the sculpture or on an adjacent plaque). Dates may also be found in newspaper clippings or other records. Please be sure to specify the type of date.

Media:

Medium is the material of which the sculpture is made. Please check the appropriate boxes for the sculpture and its base. List the specific medium, such as bronze, red oak, Vermont marble, if known. If the medium cannot be identified, the term “undetermined” should be checked.

Dimensions:

The goal in measuring sculpture is to determine the dimensions of a cubic volume that would encase the object (i.e., the extreme dimensions). Enter height by width by depth and indicate the unit of measure (inches, feet, etc.). Artists’ bases or those integral to the sculpture should be included in the measurements. If the base is separate, enter the base measurements separately.
For circular reliefs and mobiles, give diameter measurements. For mobiles, the diameter should be measured at the widest point when naturally extended. For multipart sculpture, record numbers of the parts and overall measurements.

For example: 2 parts.
Overall 4 x 4 x 6 ft.
Each part 4 x 2 x 3 ft.

Always indicate if measurements are exact or approximate.

Markings:

Check as appropriate if the work is signed, dated or has a foundry mark. In the second section, record the text or form of any markings or inscriptions that appear on the sculpture itself. These may include the artist’s name, date or dedicatory phrases. Indicate location and style of markings (i.e., Roman script, capital or lower case letters, etc.) and use a slash (/) between lines of text. If you require more writing space, attach extra sheets of paper as needed.

Subject:

Please give a brief description of the sculpture, including its theme. In describing the work, start with the main element in the sculpture and answer such questions as:

• Who or what is being depicted?
• How are they depicted? (reference postures objects held, etc.)
• What events are taking place?

For abstract works, you might describe the predominant forms, colors, shapes, sizes or textures.
Additional Information:

Please list any additional information you think would be helpful to a researcher. Such information might include historical notes explaining the circumstances of creation (i.e., commissioned by the city; cast after the artist’s death, etc.), previous owners or locations of the work, artist or sitter biographical information or exhibition history. Conservation notes might include a general statement regarding the condition of the sculpture (i.e., missing parts, evidence of cracks or splits, staining or discoloration, etc.). If information is available, reference past conservation treatments (i.e., cleaned and repaired by H. Smith, 1986; protective coating applied).

Outdoor Sculpture:

A survey and conservation assessment of outdoor public sculpture will be initiated in collaboration with several other national organizations. A separate report will be available for use in recording the more complex historical and conservation data for outdoor sculpture. If your organization is the custodian of outdoor works, and/or you would like to receive additional information about this survey, please contact our office:

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