



January 29, 2025

Alex M. Smith
Katherine Liss
The Philadelphia Art Commission
One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

SUBJECT: Request for February 2025 Art Commission Administrative Review of *Hephaestus* Public Artwork Conservation

Dear Alex and Katherine,

Creative Philadelphia is submitting this letter to the Art Commission for administrative review and approval of conservation work for the *Hephaestus* statue by Robert Lasus at Pelbano Playground (8101 Bustleton Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19152).

The sculpture of *Hephaestus*, the Greek patron god of fire, blacksmiths, and craftspeople, was commissioned by the City of Philadelphia's Percent for Art Public Art program. It was installed at Pelbano Playground in 1980, however it was temporarily removed in 2023 during the Rebuild renovations to the playground. The original sculpture was made of reinforced concrete with a resin coating that was painted black. Over time, the exposure to the elements caused a significant amount of weather-related damage, including cracking that exposed the metal rebar that supports the sculpture.

Upon deinstallation in Fall 2023, the conservators, Kreilick Conservation, LLC, advised Creative Philadelphia that the sculpture, due to the inherent flaws of the original materials and fabrication method, was not suitable to be reinstalled outdoors since further degradation could not be mitigated to prevent future and significant weather-related damage to the sculpture. Creative Philadelphia has been working with Kreilick Conservation, LLC and the original artist, Robert Lasus, to recast the sculpture in aluminum. The recasted sculpture will match the shape of the original sculpture exactly, while making the sculpture much more durable and less vulnerable to the elements. The next step in conserving *Hephaestus* will be to bring color to the sculpture by using a powder-coating, which is more durable than conventional paint.

From January 2 – January 27, Creative Philadelphia partnered with Rebuild and Pelbano Recreation Center to gather input from the community around Pelbano Playground on the color selection for the recast sculpture through a board in the lobby of the recreation center with a QR code to an

online survey which was translated into Arabic and Russian to reflect the diverse needs of the community. The survey was also sent to Rebuild's Community Engagement email distribution list, which includes community members who attended community meetings related to Rebuild's renovations at the site and posted on the Next Door application. The majority of respondents choose the Copper Rose Glitz color for the powder-coated finish that will be applied to the recast sculpture, which was one of the original artist's selections.

We are requesting for this to be included on the **February 12, 2025** Philadelphia Art Commission meeting agenda as an item for administrative review.

Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to call me at 215.686.4596.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marguerite Anglin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "M" and a long, sweeping tail.

Marguerite Anglin, RA, NOMA
Public Art Director
Creative Philadelphia



Hephaestus by Robert Lasus (1980)

Pelbano Playground – 8101 Bustleton Ave

Prepared by Creative Philadelphia for the
February 12 Art Commission Meeting
Administrative Review

Hephaestus Background

- This sculpture of Hephaestus, the Greek patron god of fire, blacksmiths, and craftspeople, was commissioned by the City of Philadelphia's Percent for Art Public Art program.
- It was installed at Pelbano Playground in 1980.
- It was temporarily removed in November 2023 during the Rebuild renovations to the playground.



Hephaestus Sculpture Before Renovations

Hephaestus Art Commission Administrative Review

- Due to the emergency nature of the stabilization treatments and de-installation required in advance of the start of renovations, some conservation treatments have already been performed by Kreilick Conservation, LLC.
- Creative Philadelphia seeks administrative review for Art Commission approval of the sculpture's new power-coat paint color (see slides 8 - 10).



Hephaestus Sculpture Before Renovations

Hephaestus Conditions Assessment (performed by Kreilick Conservation, LLC)

- After conducting their conditions assessment in March of 2023, Kreilick Conservation, LLC advised us that the sculpture was in poor condition due to inherent faults in the materials and fabrication that made the sculpture vulnerable to repeated damage, which would continue to require excessive maintenance. The sculpture, in its original condition, was found to be unsuitable for exterior reinstatement.
- The original sculpture is made of reinforced concrete with a resin coating that was painted black. Over time, the exposure to the elements caused a significant amount of weather-related damage, including cracking that exposed the metal rebar that supports the sculpture.
- Kreilick Conservation identified at least twelve locations where the sculpture's concrete substrate had failed, caused cracks that exposed the ferrous reinforcing rods.



Hephaestus Conditions Assessment (performed by Kreilick Conservation, LLC)

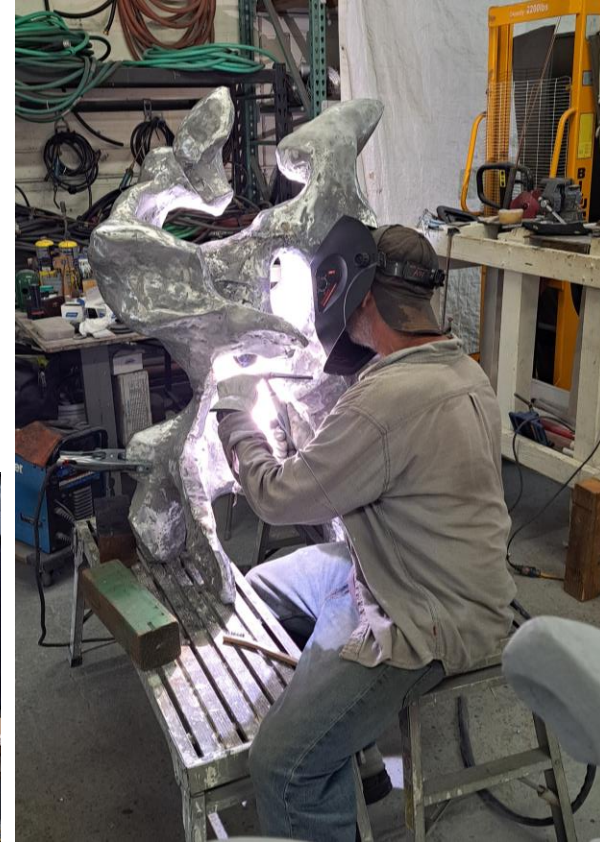


Hephaestus Deinstallation – November 2023 (performed by Kreilick Conservation, LLC)



Hephaestus Conservation (performed by Kreilick Conservation, LLC)

- Creative Philadelphia and Kreilick Conservation, LLC have been working with the original artist, Robert Lasus, to recast the statue in aluminum, which will make the sculpture much more durable and less vulnerable to the elements.
- After deinstallation, Kreilick Conservation, LLC restored missing components of the original sculpture and scanned the sculpture to create a digital 3D model printed in plastic, from which an aluminum replica of the sculpture was cast.
- The next step in conserving Hephaestus will be to bring color to the sculpture by using a powder-coating, which is more durable than conventional paint.



Hephaestus Community Engagement

- From January 2 – January 27, Creative Philadelphia partnered with Rebuild and Pelbano Recreation Center to gather input from the community on the color selection for the recast sculpture.
- A board was displayed in the lobby of the recreation center with a QR code to an online survey which was translated into Arabic and Russian to reflect the diverse needs of the community.
- The survey was also sent to Rebuild's Community Engagement email distribution list, which includes community members who attended community meetings related to Rebuild's renovations at the site. The survey was also posted on the Next Door app.



Survey for Public Art Conservation & Relocation of *Hephaestus* sculpture at Pelbano Playground

City of Philadelphia Percent for Art Program administered by Creative Philadelphia (Formerly the Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy)

About "Hephaestus" by Robert David Lasus (1980)

This sculpture of Hephaestus, the Greek patron god of fire, blacksmiths, and craftspeople, was commissioned by the City of Philadelphia's Percent for Art Public Art program. It was installed at Pelbano Playground in 1980, however it was temporarily removed in 2023 during the Rebuild renovations to the playground. The original sculpture was made of reinforced concrete with a resin coating that was painted black. Over time, the exposure to the elements caused a significant amount of weather-related damage, including cracking that exposed the metal rebar that supports the sculpture. Creative Philadelphia has been working with the original artist, Robert Lasus, to recast the statue in aluminum, which will make the sculpture much more durable and less vulnerable to the elements. The next step in conserving Hephaestus will be to bring color to the sculpture by using a powder-coating, which is more durable than conventional paint.

We Want to Hear from You!

We invite the community at and around Pelbano Playground to vote on their favorite color for the new finished sculpture and share any observations or comments they have about the sculpture with Creative Philadelphia.

Arabic Translation

[الرأفة الترجمة العربية لهذا الاستطلاع، انقر هنا](#)

Russian Translation

[Для перевода этого опроса на русский язык нажмите ЗДЕСЬ](#)

Submit feedback by January 27, 11:59 p.m.

creativeph@gmail.com [Switch account](#)

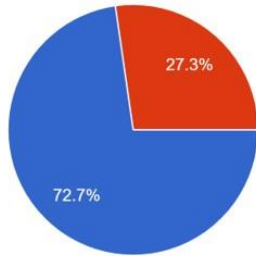


* Indicates required question

Hephaestus Community Engagement (continued)

- The majority of respondents chose the Copper Rose Glitz color for the powder-coated finish that will be applied to the recast sculpture, which was one of the original artist's selections.

Which color/finish pictured above do you prefer for the new Hephaestus sculpture at Pelbano Playground?



- Color Option 1 - Copper Rose Glitz
- Color Option 2 - Bronze Metallic

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Scan the QR code to vote
Which color pictured below do you prefer for the new *Hephaestus* sculpture?



امسح رمز الاستجابة السريعة (QR) للتصويت
ما اللون المفضل لديك، من الألوان المعروضة أدناه، فيما يتعلق بتمثال هيفايستوس الجديد؟

Сканируйте QR-код, чтобы проголосовать
Какой цвет из показанных ниже кажется вам более подходящим для новой статуи Гефеста на площадке Pelbano.



COPPER ROSE GLITZ
(Color Option 1)



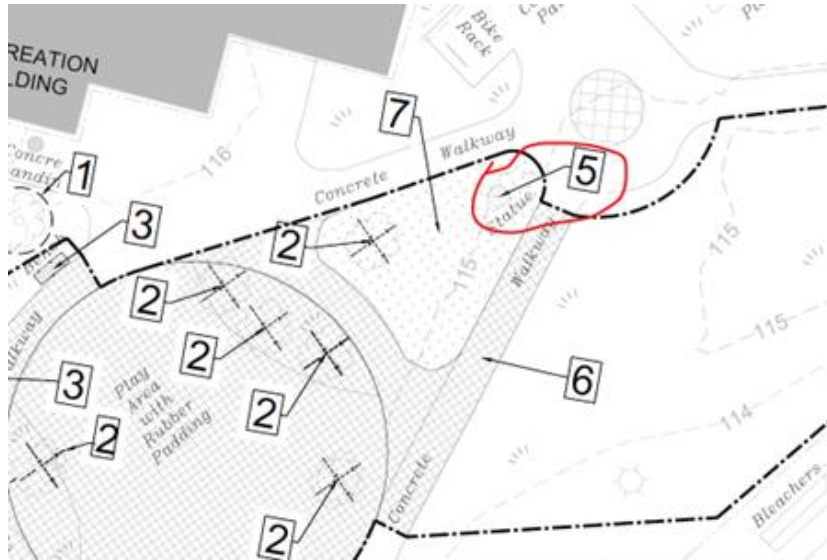
BRONZE METALLIC
(Color Option 2)

Hephaestus Copper Rose Glitz Rendering

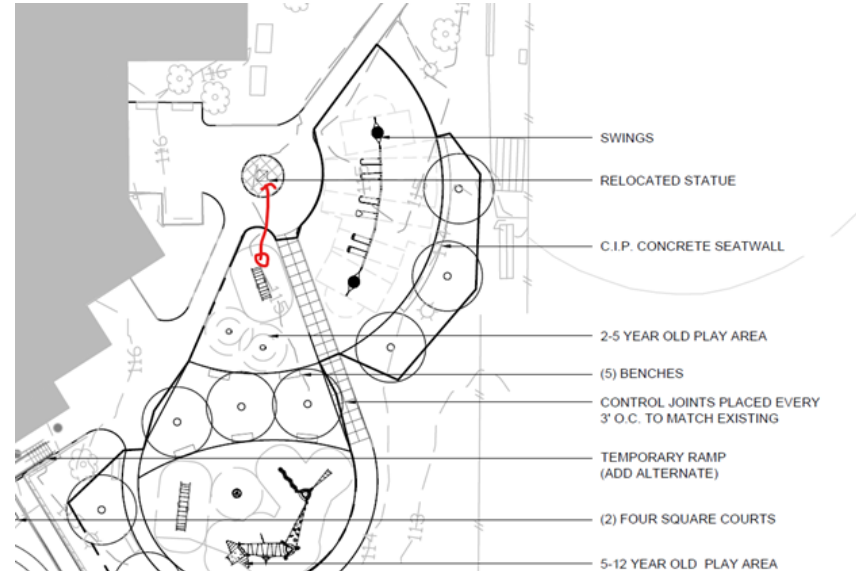


Hephaestus Background (continued)

The recast sculpture will be reinstalled at a new location at Pelbano Playground



Site Plan and Statue Location - Before Renovations



Site Plan and Statue Location - After Renovations