

2024 Sculpture Maintenance Overview

Los Alamos County

Presented by Pacific Coast Conservation

Pacific Coast Conservation conducted conservation maintenance and treatments on Los Alamos County's Outdoor Sculpture Collection during the weeks of August 19–23 and 26–30, 2024. Work was performed by Director Alison Leard, Senior Conservator Lucinda Linderman, Assistant Conservator Joy Carlsen, Conservation Technician Karah Binkowski, and Conservation Technician Patrick Lee.

The following is a summary of the work that was performed on Los Alamos County's Outdoor Sculpture Collection. For detailed notes on the condition, maintenance, and/or treatment of individual artworks, see the attached spreadsheet. Specific detailed photos are included in the summary below. A complete set of all the treatment photos for each artwork is accessible through the links in the spreadsheet.

Overall, the sculpture collection remains in good condition. All pieces had accretions and soiling that required routine cleaning, but very little new damage was noted.

The largest ongoing issues with the collection are cracking that has occurred in *The Clowns* and vessels in The *White Rock Pottery Project*, some failing clear coats (i.e. *Oppenheim* and *Brown Trout*), and the failing paint on *Solar Tree* and *Nexus*. While these are ongoing issues, no significant change was noted between 2023 and 2024 on these sculptures. PCC is currently developing proposals for repainting both *Nexus* and *Solar Tree*. Both will require extensive work and will need to be considered aside from yearly care in order not to diminish the budget so much that the rest of the collection goes uncared for.

Who Me? has significant patina loss and will need to be re-patinated in 2 years, when funding allows.

Prior to this year's visit PCC met virtually with Los Alamos County staff and discussed the needs and expected work to be performed on each piece. From this meeting, a priority list was created for conservation needs and what PCC would be able to focus on while continuing to perform maintenances.

All of the artworks received a priority designation when originally assessed. These designations include consideration for stabilization needs and appearance. As time allows, PCC is focusing on conservation treatments that stabilize sculptures and surfaces over appearance, unless the appearance has changed significantly from the original intended appearance.

The following sculptures were treated as priority during the 2024 maintenance. In addition to regular maintenance on the collection, 15 artworks in the collection received additional necessary conservation treatments or testing to prepare for future conservation treatments.

Treatment:

1. *Table Fountain with Rock* (25) had unstable paint and paint loss. It was important to stabilize the paint on the surface to keep more paint from coming off. The bottom of the sculpture was clear coated after inpainting to help stabilize the original extant paint. For treatment, the edges of lifting paint were adhered, then the areas of loss were painted using an airbrush to blend with the surrounding areas. Once dry, three layers of Golden brand MSA varnish in matte were applied to the surface.



Detail: Before Treatment



Detail: After Treatment

2. *Pinon Maze* (41) had separated from the wall. The sculpture was repaired. However, if the wood is warped, the epoxy repair may not hold. The sculpture will be assessed and if it is not stable, a new treatment protocol will be created in 2025. For treatment, old adhesive was removed from the previous repair. The edges were cleaned, then glued back together with an architectural epoxy and clamped overnight.



Detail: Before Treatment



Detail: After Treatment

3. *The Clowns* (10) had significant cracking throughout the concrete. The larger cracks, wider than 1/32" were filled to prevent water intrusion, as water intrusion will cause faster degradation of the work. Next year, the fills will be assessed on the larger cracks. Smaller cracks will be injected as time allows during maintenance. *The Clowns* - Cracks were injected with Cathedral Stone® M31 as possible. The injected areas were then repainted with Golden brand acrylic paint.



Detail: PR Before Treatment



Detail: PR After Treatment

The following artworks needed conservation that pertained to the visual appearance and not for stabilization. Some of these we were able to address entirely or in part during the 2024 maintenance cycle.

4. *General Leslie R. Groves* (23) and *Robert Oppenheimer* (24) have a coating on them that is blanching. Some of this coating was removed last year to reduce the larger areas of white. Removing the inappropriate coating and replacing it with a lacquer coating will help the sculpture not blanch so significantly between maintenances. During 2024, additional coating that was failing was reduced. Depending on how the sculptures look in 2025, we may continue to reduce failing coating instead of removing all of it and reapplying it. There are areas on the sculptures that will need patina work and should be prioritized for treatment by the end of the contract.
5. Both *Lucky* (04) and *Corky* (03) had inappropriate black coatings on the surface that needed to be removed. *Lucky* was mostly treated during this round of treatment. *Corky* was not treated and will be treated in 2025 or 2026. Include details from below. Additional patination and a clear coat is needed, this will be applied in 2025. *Lucky* – The paint or lacquer layer that had been inappropriately applied was removed with paint stripper. The entire piece was then repatinated to reintegrate the surface appearance. The sculpture was then waxed to protect the surface from damage. This is a very loved sculpture with visitors and children climbing on it. Repatination of high touch areas may need to be done annually. While removing the paint, the original patina was noted to be blue gray tones on top of a black base.



Detail: PR eye and face of Lucky Before Treatment



Detail: PR eye and face of Lucky After Treatment

6. *Brown Trout* (02) has a blached coating that if removed and replaced will look significantly better. Testing was done with lacquer and varnish over the failing clear coat to determine if the sculpture may be coated without removing the flaking clear coat. The testing is being allowed to sit for a year to see if any issues (lifting, flaking, discoloration) may occur over time. If successful, the sculpture will be coated in 2025 with the appropriate coating. If unsuccessful, the old coating will need to be removed prior to applying a new coating, this may be done in 2025 if time allows.



Detail with failing coating before treatment.



Detail after application of lacquer.

7. *Touch the Sky* (06) still has some coating left on the surface that should be removed for the appearance of the sculpture. Some coating was removed during maintenance but there is still extant coating that needs to be removed. This will be removed as possible during future maintenances.
8. *Solar Tree* (19) has paint that is flaking and not adhered to the sculpture. Some stabilization and inpainting was done during this maintenance cycle. A full repainting is needed on the sculpture, a separate formal proposal will be submitted for full treatment of the sculpture.



Detail: Area of failed paint pulled back to a stable point prio to painting



Detail: Area of failed paint pulled back to a stable point and then painted.

Additionally, several other sculptures had some form of conservation treatment or testing to prepare for later conservation treatment.

9. *The Scale of Justice (01)* Testing that was conducted last year to determine the appropriate clear coat, this year the test areas were examined. All of the coatings tested were successful in minimizing rust. An acrylic varnish was chosen as the most appropriate because it is the most retreat-able of the options. The sculpture was cleaned. Some of the figures were coated with the acrylic varnish to see how they weather over the next year. A full coating will be applied in 2025.



Detail: Front face of Base of The Scale of Justice Before Treatment



Detail: Front face of Base of The Scale of Justice After Treatment

10. *Multiverse (05)* Once the sculpture was cleaned, using a soft copper brush, green corrosion was gently reduced along the bottom edges of the panels. Permalac was brushed along the edges where corrosion was reduced.

11. *Odetta* (12) The surface was tested to determine future cleaning recommendations. A 5% Oxalic acid mixture was applied to the surface, allowed to dwell and rinsed thoroughly. No change was noted in the surface. No treatment was performed, only testing and then cleaning.
12. *Grandmother's Joy* (18) The clear coat on the plaque was reduced. The raised letters were sanded to remove corrosion and reintegrate the appearance. The plaque was then coated with G.J. Nikolas Lacquer ® to protect the surface.



Detail: Plaque of Grandmother's Joy Before Treatment



Detail: Plaque of Grandmother's Joy After Treatment

13. *Pollyanna* (13) The clear coat on the plaque was reduced. The raised letters were sanded to remove corrosion and reintegrate the appearance. The plaque was then coated with G.J. Nikolas Lacquer ® to protect the surface.
14. *Nexus* (20) Testing was done on the upper swoosh surface with Golden® MSA varnish in an attempt to save some of the remaining paint. Loose paint chip samples were taken so the paint can be matched.



Detail: Top Curvilinear Face of Nexus Before Treatment



Detail: Top Curvilinear Face of Nexus After Treatment

15. *White Rock Pottery Project* (33) Pot #6 was heavily cracked. Cathedral Stone Jahn Injection Mortar M30-#31 was injected into cracks that were larger than a hairline fracture. The fills were consolidated with clear potassium silicate then painted to match with Golden® acrylic paints mixed with microballoons to matte the surface sheen.



*Detail: Backside of White Rock Pottery Project Pot #6
Before Treatment*



*Detail: Backside of White Rock Pottery Project Pot #6
After Treatment*

In order to create more time for conservation treatments, a few sculptures in the collection that were deemed stable and in excellent/good condition were slated to be skipped this year as long as they were indeed in good condition once assessed onsite. This allowed for more time and funding to be allocated across the collection for critical maintenance and conservation. There are six artworks that did not receive any form of conservation or maintenance this year, but were assessed during the maintenance cycle. These are:

Tranquility (07) by O.K. Harris- This sculpture requires too much time to clean, as waiters need to be picked up and dropped off, the bird poop must be sterilized prior to removal, and 3 staff must be present for 2-3 hours to complete the work. With the hours set aside to do this sculpture, it should only be cleaned every other year.

The Runaways (08) by Carrie Quade – these were in very good condition and can be treated every other year.

Golondrina (32) by Michael Masse – this was in excellent condition and can be treated every other year.

Strange Trio by Tom C. Hicks – This sculpture is stable. time set aside for this sculpture only allows cleaning every other year.

Flying Folds (35) by Kevin Box and Dr. Robert J. Lang – this sculpture is in excellent condition. No new rust was noted coming out of the pinholes. It can be cleaned every other year if no new rust is noted.

Perspective (42) by Greg Robertson – This is a small pristine fountain. It should be assessed every year but if it remains in excellent condition it can be cleaned every other year.

These pieces will be treated again in 2025 so that they do not go more than 2 years without maintenance. Please see “Ongoing Treatment” section at the end of this document for details.



Conclusion

Overall, the collection looks significantly better after maintenance and treatment. The collection will continue to improve with annual maintenances and treatments, ensuring the greatest longevity possible for each artwork.

Thank you for allowing us to continue caring for the collection, and we look forward to next year!

Signed,

PCC Conservation Team: Alison Leard, Lucinda Linderman, Joy Carlsen, Patrick Lee and Karah Binkowski.