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## CARE AND MAINTENANCE FOR BRONZE SCULPTURES

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**Preventative Measures:** Try to limit exposure to any foreign elements. With indoor pieces for example, move the sculpture before spraying Windex or any other cleanser on nearby surfaces, and do not set objects like drinking glasses on them. When placing a sculpture outdoors, think about exposure to water. Rainwater will wear down a patina over time (it is best to dry your bronze sculpture with a clean rag after any rain has passed), but municipal water will react much more quickly with bronze so more detailed maintenance is required. Sprinklers are the worst offenders, as they sometimes draw from heavily mineralized well water. If you cannot avoid lawn sprinklers, any sculptures exposed to sprinkler spray should be cleaned with a microfiber cloth and a small amount of distilled water after every exposure before the droplets dry. Hot sun will burn wax off more quickly, saltwater will wear it out, and either condition makes waxing more often a requirement to keep the patina protected. Also pay extra attention to bronze sculptures under trees, which can drop sap and pollen.

**Cleaning:** Your sculpture should be kept clean on a regular basis by simply dusting the piece with a clean, soft, lint-free cloth or very soft brush (like a car washing brush). If residue has built up but has not yet eaten through the patina, you can use a mild liquid soap and a rag moistened with distilled water or water from indoor plumbing (not garden water) to clean your sculpture. If new hard water deposits have begun to settle on the bronze, rub more vigorously with the soft cloth until they come off and the surface of the bronze feels smooth again (these deposits can start to form after only a day or two of sprinkler exposure if the preventative measures above are not followed). Clean off bird droppings as soon as possible, as they are acidic and can damage the patina. After any cleaning with water, dry your sculpture with a cotton rag or chamois, and allow it to thoroughly air-dry before applying paste wax (see next step).

**Waxing:** Once your sculpture is clean, completely dry, and cool to the touch, apply paste wax with a natural hair-bristle brush or clean rag. The key to waxing is to apply a thin, even coat of wax over the entire piece using a light stippling motion. Try to avoid streaking and build-up. A very thin coat is all that is necessary. You will notice that when the wax is applied, the color of the patina may darken or look wet. Once the wax has dried, the patina should return to its original color. The wax should dry in about 20-30 minutes, depending on the weather. When dry, buff the sculpture to a satin finish using a clean, dry, lint-free rag or chamois. If in a more difficult environment for bronze, apply a second thin coat then buff to desired sheen.

How often a piece should be cleaned and waxed depends on the location and environmental factors. Generally speaking, an indoor bronze should be waxed 1-2 times per year, and an outdoor bronze should be waxed 2-4 times a year. We recommend before and after the winter or rainy season, and once mid-summer at minimum. A dry but shady day or earlier in the morning is best, and the temperature should be warm but

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not hot. Too much sun makes the wax dry too fast and it becomes hard to buff. The temperature of the sculpture should not be too cold or too hot to the touch, and it must be completely dry before any wax can be applied.

The wax should be carnauba based, “clear”, and of very good quality. Renaissance is our preferred brand, as is used by museums worldwide. It is expensive, but you use a very small amount and it dries very hard but perfectly clear. Trewax Clear Paste Wax or Johnson’s Clear Paste Wax (readily available in most hardware stores) are also excellent options used by many sculptors and foundries. Do not use a car wax, as it will most likely include additives that may harm your bronze in the long run. Always try a small area first.

**Renovation Instructions for Water Mineral Deposits:** If hard water deposits have been allowed to build up on the bronze, wash the surface with a soft, lint-free cloth and warm distilled water. Allow the bronze to dry completely. Take a green Scotchbrite pad from the hardware store (not the supermarket kind) and place about a teaspoonful of high quality carnauba wax on one area of the pad. Rub the mineral deposits on the bronze patina firmly, using only the area of the pad where you applied the wax. The pad will become dirty and the patina area you waxed will darken slightly, which is normal. Take a new, clean area of the pad and repeat in a different area of the patina. If the patina has a definite “grain”, follow along this apparent grain with your rubbing motion. Otherwise, use a small circular motion. Every 10-15 minutes, go back to a previously done area and check. If there is still some white deposit present, repeat the waxing with a new area of the pad and fresh wax, this time scrubbing a bit harder. When the desired result has been achieved, buff all areas to a satin sheen with a clean, lint-free cloth.

Always try a small area first. Do not use this treatment when the bronze is hot to the touch. A dry but shady day or earlier in the morning is best. The temperature of the sculpture should not be too cold or too hot to the touch, and it must be completely dry before any wax can be applied.

**Misc. Notes:** Your new bronze sculpture has been waxed before it was shipped or delivered. Please note that bronze patinas will keep evolving over time, especially when placed outdoors. With proper care, the patina on your bronze will last for many years. Follow the above suggestions to minimize potential damage and the need for future restoration, but please note that sometimes sculpture will need repair or restoration even with the proper care over many years.

Feel free to call the gallery if you need additional information or if you have any questions.