
CARE AND MAINTENANCE FOR STAINLESS STEEL SCULPTURES

Preventative Measures: Try to limit exposure to any foreign elements. When placing a sculpture outdoors, think about exposure to water. Stainless steel is one of the most durable materials for sculpture. However, municipal or well water from lawn sprinklers can leave unsightly deposits on your stainless steel sculpture. Also pay extra attention to sculptures under trees, which can drop sap or pollen, or in areas that receive salty ocean air. If your stainless steel sculpture is exposed to salt spray in the air, you must wipe it off with distilled or non-hard water on a regular basis.

Cleaning: Stainless steel sculptures need to be cleaned regularly for aesthetic considerations, and to preserve corrosion resistance. Stainless steel is protected from corrosion by a thin layer of chromium oxide. Oxygen from the atmosphere combines with the chromium in stainless steel to form this passive film that protects the material from further corrosion. Unlike some other materials, it is impossible to “wear out” stainless steel by excessive cleaning.

Your sculpture should be kept clean on a regular basis by simply dusting the piece with a clean, soft, lint-free cloth, and washing with a mild liquid soap and water as needed. We recommend washing on at least a bi-annual basis. Cleaning with a mild soap or detergent should always be immediately followed by rinsing with clean water, and wiping the surface completely with a dry towel. If your hose water is hard, use distilled water or water from indoor plumbing. For more stubborn dirt or stains (most commonly bird droppings), use mild, non-scratching abrading powders such as typical household cleaners. Bon Ami is the most reliable product we can recommend. These can be used with warm water, plastic bristle brushes, sponges, or clean, soft cloths. Carbon steel brushes and steel wool should **NOT** be used, as they may leave particles embedded in the surface, which can lead to rusting and damage the finish pattern. Dry all surfaces completely before applying any wax, if applicable (see next step).

Clean off bird droppings as soon as possible, as they are acidic and can damage the finish.

Waxing: Some surfaces with contrasting texture may be waxed and buffed with a self-cleaning wax. We recommend Citrus Shield by Howard. Once your sculpture is clean, completely dry, and cool to the touch, apply a thin, even coat over the entire piece using a soft, lint-free rag. Try to avoid streaking and build-up. A very thin coat is all that is necessary. 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.

How often a piece should be cleaned and waxed depends on the location and environmental factors. Generally speaking, an outdoor stainless steel sculpture should be waxed 2 times per year. We recommend at least every six months. A dry but shady

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day or earlier in the morning is best, and the temperature should be warm but not hot. Too much sun makes the wax dry too fast and makes it 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. Always try a small area first.

Instructions for Rust Deposits: Although your sculpture is carefully crafted with stainless steel, it is possible that some rust spots can appear on the surface. Gently scrub the rust spots directly with a pad of green Scotchbrite (from the hardware store, not the grocery store) using circular motions. The rust should disappear easily if it has not been allowed to remain too long.

If the rust persists, first thoroughly wet the deck or patio around the sculpture to pre-dilute any possible drips. Then place a plastic drop cloth to further protect the surface of the patio. Place a few drops of full strength Ospho on a sponge and apply to the stainless steel surfaces. Be very careful not to drip Ospho onto the deck or patio below, and wear plastic or latex gloves during the application, avoiding contact with your eyes or skin. Let the Ospho sit on the stainless steel for an hour or two and watch the rust disappear. If a bit of rust remains after a few hours, scrub it with a green Scotchbrite. It will be more easily removed after letting the Ospho loosen the rust deposits. Then rinse with abundant clean, non-hard water. If you apply a light coating of Ospho to the entire stainless steel surface and then rinse it with abundant non-hard water, it will act as a protective coating and retard future rust. Please note that Ospho will discolor wood, concrete, and stone so it is important to wet the surrounding surface and place a drop cloth.

If the rust is very heavy, make a paste with Bon Ami or baking soda and water or lemon juice. Apply with a sponge or rag, and then scrub off the rust deposits with a green Scotchbrite using circular motions. Rinse with clean, non-hard water.

Protective Coating for Stainless Steel (Alternative to Wax): Applying a layer of Ospho as detailed above will provide some protection, but to increase the protection (especially in areas with salt air exposure), you can use LPS Premier Rust Inhibitor on the stainless steel surfaces 2-4 times per year. After applying and rinsing off the Ospho, make sure the sculpture is completely clean, dry, and free of salt. Spray a small amount of LPS on the sculpture and wipe off the excess so as not to dull the surface. Use a brush around any tight areas or hardware as needed to control the amount of product.

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