

# Artwood **ACRES**

The crown jewel of the Allegheny County Park system, Hartwood Acres is using dramatic sculptures to breathe new life into the former country estate, creating a cultural destination ideal for a brisk walk in the park.

BY TAWNYA PANIZZI

David von Schlegell's newly restored 19-foot-square North Light stood outside of downtown's One Oxford Centre in the 1970s. It was moved to Hartwood Acres in 2017.

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\$5 million effort to restore deteriorating outdoor art at Hartwood Acres and create a sculpture garden is expected to rebrand the Allegheny

County-owned park as a destination for visitors seeking to admire more than just the natural beauty of the space.

The painstaking work of conservators will formally be unveiled at an opening slated for spring. But recent park-goers have likely already seen many of the 13 pieces of decades-old art—some newly relocated—that have been transformed into vibrant masterpieces now dotting the rolling landscape of the 629-acre park in a cohesive fashion.

“They will be connected now in a way that creates an experience,” says Caren Glotfelty, executive director of the Allegheny County Parks Foundation, who is retiring later this year. “Giving the public more opportunities for engaging with these unique works of art, in a setting immersed in nature, has been the guiding force behind this project,” she adds.

The project is the most significant joint undertaking by the county and the parks foundation, which, under Glotfelty's direction, has raised \$4.5 million for initiatives like native plantings, trail improvements, and the



Monumental Holistic Image IV, created by California artist Betty Gold, sits just beyond the main gate of the Saxonburg Road entrance to the park and now wears a new coat of Safety Yellow paint after its restoration.



East Enders may recognize Tower Iron #5 by Joseph Gato because of the nearly 50 years that it stood along Fifth Avenue, gracing the entrance of WQED.

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Coronet, by New York artist Lila Katzen, has been on the grounds of Harwood Acres since 1979.

creation of the Suffragist Grove at Hartwood Acres, which commemorates the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote.

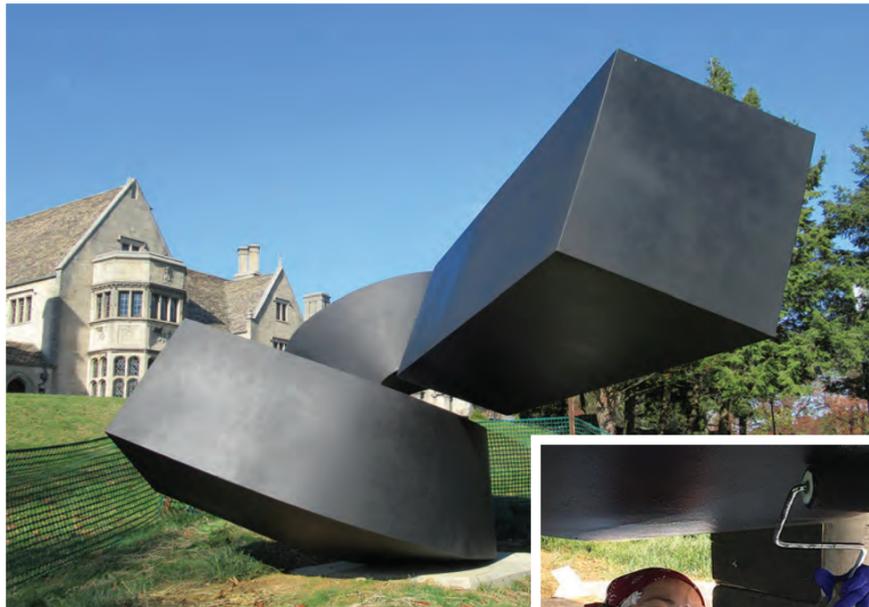
Creation of the sculpture garden was largely made possible by a \$1 million contribution from the RADical ImPAct grant program, launched in celebration of the Allegheny Regional Asset District's 25th anniversary, with the intention of funding bold, forward-looking, creative projects that would have a significant impact on the region.

RAD board member and Fox Chapel resident Jackie Dixon says the sculpture garden aligns perfectly with the large-scale, community-minded projects funded by the program. "This garden [is] a true gift to the residents of Allegheny County and a destination for out-of-town visitors to experience the world-class art and magnificent natural resources our region has to offer," she says.

Other funders include Allegheny County, Allegheny Foundation, Charity Randall Foundation, Citizens for the Arts in Pennsylvania, The Fine Foundation, Fox Chapel Garden Club, The Garden Club of Allegheny County, the Hillman Foundation, Jack Buncher Foundation, Opportunity Fund, and PNC Charitable Trusts, among others.

Twelve of the staggering pieces of art that grace Hartwood Acres were given to the park in the 1980s and one was added years later. All have now been preserved or restored and given new concrete bases. Six works were transported to the McKay Lodge Laboratory Fine Art Conservation in Oberlin, Ohio, where experts brought the pieces back to life in a controlled environment.

One stone piece was restored at the park by conservators from McKay Lodge, and four



**Above:** Hence, a 1977 piece by Clement Meadmore, has been restored and sits on display behind the Hartwood Acres mansion.

**Right:** Teresa Duff of Lineage Historic Preservation Services of Sewickley applies a fresh coat of paint to Hence as part of her restoration efforts.

**Below:** This rendering by LaQuatra Bonci Associates shows the local design firm's vision for using winding walkways to connect one sculpture to another.



huge metal pieces were restored on site by Teresa Duff of LINEAGE Historic Preservation Services of Sewickley.

In June, ground was broken on an extensive makeover of the land near the park's historic 1929 Tudor mansion—the one-time home of John and Mary Flinn Lawrence—and work has continued through the fall, having been slowed by challenging weather conditions and delays in obtaining construction materials. In September, to facilitate a more efficient construction environment, park officials closed the mansion gate to visitors but anticipate reopening to the public by the year's end.

Led by the local design firm LaQuatra Bonci Associates, this phase of construction is seeing wheelchair-accessible walkways created to wind through the estate and provide a continuous connection among the sculptures.

"The pieces are connected more closely now so that they are within sight of each other," Glotfelty says. "You can follow the path and see the next piece off in the distance, and they begin to look like a group. Visually, it looks like a collection rather than just coming upon one while you're walking."



LaQuatra Bonci Associates

LED lighting will illuminate the walkways, and thousands of brightly colored perennials and grasses will be planted along the paths. In addition, more than 250 trees and 100 shrubs, all natives to southwestern Pennsylvania, will be put in the ground to enhance the natural ambience.

County Executive Rich Fitzgerald says that in the five-plus decades since Hartwood Acres was acquired, there have been ongoing investments in the park and development of its natural resources, but none as large as this project. "By placing the bulk of these pieces of art center stage, the public has more opportunity to engage with this art than ever before," he notes, describing the sculpture garden as "another uncommon component to our parks system."

Glotfelty says an original desire to merely preserve the artwork quickly grew into a multi-faceted plan to create a destination.

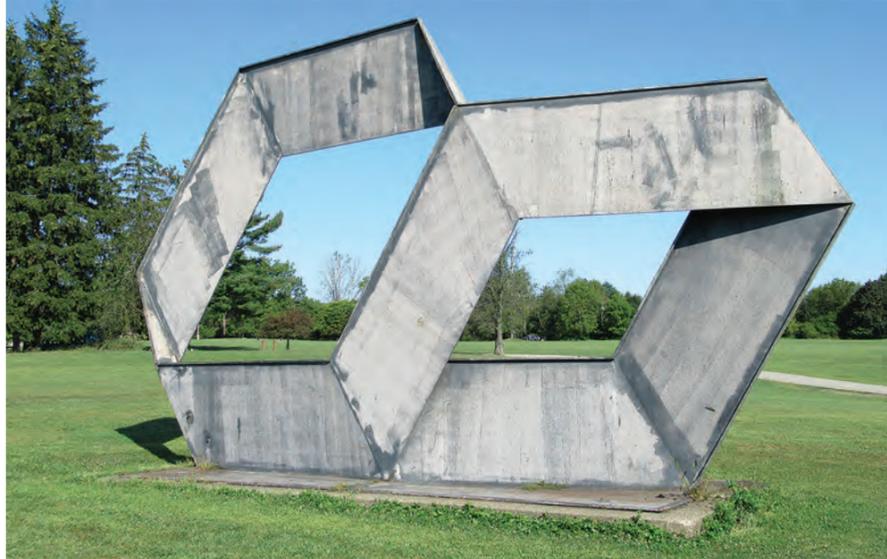


During the restoration of Manly, a 1980 work by Lyman Kipp, paint layers were excavated down to the primer and original paint colors were matched.

"After so many years, the paint had started to peel or fade and the welded joints were starting to come apart. This all needed to be repaired, but it became clear that we ought to think about more than just conserving the pieces in the places where they were," she explains. "The hope is that [the sculpture garden] will bring a whole new set of visitors to the park or create an interesting new feature for current park users."

At the entrance off of Saxonburg Boulevard, visitors might recognize the hallmark piece "Ring Series," created by acclaimed artist Fletcher Benton. The monumental steel sculpture features two black and red rings balanced on top of each other. The work, according to county literature, "dominates the landscape as it hoists its circles skyward."

Not too far beyond is the bright yellow "Monumental Holistic Image IV" created by California artist Betty Gold. Nestled in the



**Above:** These before and after photos of *Stretch* by Charles Ginnever show that paint was removed to allow the surface of the 1980 piece to develop the patina of rust the artist originally intended.

**Right:** *Large Escargot* by David Hayes—also shown before and after, although from different angles—is one of six pieces sent for restoration to McKay Lodge Laboratory Fine Art Conservation in Oberlin, Ohio.



hillside above the gatehouse, Glotfelty says the once-faded piece, “just pops now. It’s lovely.”

Newer pieces to the collection include David von Schlegell’s “North Light,” the 19-foot-square white abstract sculpture that stood outside of downtown’s One Oxford Centre in the 1970s until new owners donated it to Hartwood, and the 16.5-ton “Tower Iron #5” by Joseph Goto, which graced the entrance of WQED in Oakland for nearly 50 years and is on long-term loan from the Carnegie Museum of Art.

A provision of the RAD grant stipulated that the parks foundation commission a new work of art for the Hartwood grounds.

Wilkinsburg artist Dee Briggs, who studied at Yale University and taught at Carnegie Mellon University, earned the distinction. With displays locally at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens and the Dollar Bank Three Rivers Arts Festival, Briggs was previously named Pittsburgh Center for Arts and Media’s Artist of the Year.

The Hartwood piece will be her first large-scale work in the region.

“I’m thrilled,” says Briggs, who was chosen by an 11-member panel from among a group of more than 80 artists for the commission. “I have pieces all over, in New York and Atlanta. It’s great to be making a piece for home.”

Briggs says she’s wandered through Hartwood Acres many times to admire the sculptures. She couldn’t divulge too much about her addition, other than to say it will likely be a

vertical sculpture about 15 to 20 feet tall and that it will be positioned near the mansion.

“It will rely on understanding the power and expertise of the region but use my own unique tools,” Briggs says. “I’m delighted to join the legacy there.”

*For more information about Hartwood Acres or the sculpture garden visit [acparksfoundation.org](http://acparksfoundation.org).* SA