Care and Maintenance of Your Bronze Sculpture

Keeping the patina newer looking, or letting it darken on its own, is a decision you the owner/collector will have to make. There are many variables that will determine the amount of care and maintenance to apply to your sculpture; whether or not it is an indoor sculpture or kept outdoors and of course the climate and elements it is subjected to, will all play an important role in how to care for your sculpture.

The natural aging process of a patinaed bronze sculpture is to darken with age. With colored patinas, a general rule of thumb is that lighter patinas darken and darker patinas may lighten. With the newer alloys of today, the copper content is about 95%. Over time, the naturally occurring oxidation process will produce a blue green discoloration faster than with the bronze alloys of the past.

**Materials needed for care for both indoor and outdoor patinas:**
- Mild soapy water with detergent such as “Dawn”
- Paste Wax — such as “Johnson’s clear Paste Wax” or clear “Trewax”
- Chip brushes – in-expensive brushes available at hardware stores
- Buffing cloths – non lint type such as knee hi pantyhose, or any soft cotton cloth.

Listing of products that should **Not** come in contact with the patinaed bronze surface.
- Furniture polish
- Glass Cleaner
- Bleach
- All other cleaning solvents
- Never use steel wool or scouring pads
- Vinegar
- Plant food or fertilizers
- Soft drinks, alcoholic beverages, and citrus juices – If contact occurs clean off quickly with warm soapy water and buff dry.

**Scheduled Maintenance:**
Climate will play a role in how often it will be necessary to maintain the patina. Regions where the humidity is higher it will be necessary to maintain more often than in dryer climates.

Simply remove dust, dirt, and fingerprint contaminants by cleaning with a damp cloth and buff dry. If a shiny patina finish becomes dull looking, carefully buff it to a shine using a soft, clean cotton cloth or use knee hi panty hose. If this doesn’t work and the patina is due for maintenance, brush on a **very thin** coating of paste wax using a chip brush and allow it to dry, before buffing off with a clean, non lint type cloth.

**Placement of your indoor bronze:**
To keep your patina from changing coloration, it is best to avoid placing your sculpture near sinks, hot tubs, fish tanks, bathrooms, swimming pools or humidifier vents. Also, keep your bronze sculpture out of direct sunlight. Water and excessive heat are two of the most damaging elements to a patinaed bronze.

**For sculpture kept outdoors:**
If your sculpture is to be kept outside, be sure to notify the patineur ahead of time, so the sculpture can have the proper patina and sealers applied. Sealing the bronze is traditionally done using either wax, or lacquer with two or more additional coats of wax on top. Combined with suggested maintenance, this should help maintain the patina for years to come.
Placement of your outdoor sculpture:

Placement of your outdoor patina is also very important. If maintaining the current look of the piece is important to you, it is recommended that it be kept away from water and other potential contaminants.

A few examples would be:

* Sun
* Acid rain
* Pets
* Ice
* Humidity
* Pollutants
* Birds
* Tree sap or other organic matter

Patinas can be somewhat fragile, so try to keep people and pets from climbing on the sculpture, as this can scratch the surface and also rub off the protective sealant and or the patina itself.

Positioning your sculpture near water sources or sprinklers can cause mineral deposits to build up on the surface, discoloring it more rapidly. This is especially true near swimming pools or hot tubs where other chemicals may come into contact with your bronze. Scheduled maintenance may need to be done more often. In some circumstances, maintenance may not stop discoloration or other adverse reactions from occurring.

For more detail or further information we recommend a book by Patrick V. Kipper

“The Care of Bronze Sculpture” Published by Path Publications in conjunction with Rodgers & Nelsen Publishing Company. Inquiries should be directed to:

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