

# MCMA Provides Further Insights Regarding Its Claim to Ownership of the Wounded Indian Sculpture

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QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS, USA, May 31, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Following last week's front page [Washington Post article](#), the [Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association](#) (MCMA) issues this statement about its ongoing efforts to reclaim the Wounded Indian sculpture, improperly acquired by the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia after its disappearance from MCMA's Boston premises in 1958.

Acknowledging the Public's Interest:

We appreciate the journalistic efforts of Gregory Schneider and his colleagues at The Washington Post for bringing light to this issue. The flood of supportive messages we have received from across the country affirms the public's deep concern for art, history, and justice.

As a nonprofit organization, we recognize our responsibility to maintain transparency. The current public interest in this story also presents an opportunity to increase awareness about the role of ownership rights in ensuring protection of and access to cultural artifacts. With that in mind, we aim to answer several basic questions about this controversy.

The Wounded Indian rightfully belongs to MCMA, and we want it returned home to Boston for public display.

## 1. What is MCMA?

MCMA was established when the United States was a mere 19 years old. Our founding tradesmen, skilled in mechanical arts, created beautiful things using their hands and machines. Silversmith Paul Revere, MCMA's first president, exemplifies this rich history. Today, 228 years later, we continue the mission of promoting the mechanical arts by offering grants to nonprofits that train individuals for mechanical trades, especially persons with physical, mental, and economic challenges.

## 2. Why has MCMA had an art and objects collection?

MCMA's collection has traditionally served an educational purpose, illustrating the breadth and potential of American craftsmanship, innovation, and creativity. Our artifacts were once

displayed in MCMA's Mechanics Hall in Boston, a city-block-sized civic arena and exhibition space. When MCMA sold the hall and it was scheduled for demolition in 1958, MCMA ensured the collection's continued public access by arranging the display of numerous objects at cultural institutions across America.

### 3. What are examples of objects in MCMA's collection?

Our collection still hosts significant artifacts in addition to the Wounded Indian sculpture. Other notable items are the Franklin Printing Press (circa 1717), a hand-drawn 6x9 foot map of Boston (1795) by cartographer Osgood Carlton, a Leyden Jar used by Benjamin Franklin in his electricity experiments, Jane Stuart's paintings of Paul Revere and George Washington, and an Experimental Steam Engine. These and many more objects are on display at trusted partner institutions.

### 4. What is the history of the Wounded Indian?

American sculptor Peter Stephenson created the Wounded Indian in Boston in 1850. He exhibited it in England before bringing it back home. In 1893, Boston collector Dr. James W. Bartlett donated the statue to MCMA, which restored the piece and exhibited it in Mechanics Hall for 65 years. MCMA sold the Hall in 1958 and hired movers to relocate its contents. After the move, MCMA leaders were told that the sculpture had been accidentally destroyed and disposed of during the move. For decades, MCMA leaders passed the story of the loss of Wounded Indian down to their successors.

In truth, however, the intact statue was stolen during the move and acquired soon thereafter by James Ricau, a New York collector of questionable ethics, who kept it in his private home for more than two decades. The Chrysler Museum received the Wounded Indian from Ricau in 1986 without verifying if he had legally obtained the statue in the first place. In 1999 a researcher saw photos of the Wounded Indian in MCMA's records and informed MCMA that she had just seen the statue, fully intact, on display in Virginia. MCMA immediately contacted the Chrysler, which has thus far been unwilling to return the Wounded Indian to MCMA.

### 5. Why does MCMA own the Wounded Indian?

As the owner of the Wounded Indian in 1958, MCMA never permitted the statue to be transferred to James Ricau or anyone else, so his acquisition was a theft. Under U.S. law, a thief does not acquire title to the stolen object and cannot transfer ownership rights to anyone else. The Chrysler, therefore, never obtained title from Ricau because he never owned the statue.

### 6. Does MCMA sell or trade art or artifacts?

MCMA does not engage in selling or trading art pieces. Instead, we make a serious effort to place art objects in historically appropriate locations where they will be accessible to and can be

appreciated by the public.

7. Will MCMA sell the Wounded Indian when it is returned?

Absolutely not. Selling the sculpture would be inconsistent with MCMA's mission and practices. A sale would also breach the terms imposed by the original donor. MCMA intends to ensure the Wounded Indian's permanent display at a trusted Boston institution.

8. What conditions did Dr. James W. Bartlett impose when gifting the Wounded Indian to MCMA in 1893?

When gifting the Wounded Indian to MCMA, Dr. James W. Bartlett mandated that MCMA restore the sculpture and publicly display it in Boston. MCMA fulfilled these conditions. MCMA meeting notes from 1894 state: "We had a tenant in our building, a sculptor of ability, Mr. Robert Krause, under whose skillful hand the statue has been restored, and now possesses, to all appearances, its pristine beauty and perfection." MCMA built a special display within Mechanics Hall where the public admired this breathtaking sculpture for over six decades, until 1958.

9. Why does the Wounded Indian belong in Boston?

Beyond MCMA's ownership, the sculpture has strong Boston roots – it was created in Boston by a Bostonian and inspired by Woodland Indians, like those living in the area. Furthermore, it was donated to MCMA, a Boston institution, with the expectation that it would be displayed in Boston. Visitors come to Boston from around the world to soak up Boston's history and culture, emphasizing the need for the sculpture to be returned to Boston based on MCMA's rightful ownership, the donor's original intent, and the statue's historical relevance.

To continue reading points 10 - 14, please visit:

<https://www.culturalheritagepartners.com/return-wounded-indian/>.

Greg Werkheiser

Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC

+1 703-408-2002

greg@culturalheritagepartners.com

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