

MCMA Celebrates Return of Wounded Indian Sculpture 65 Years After Theft

QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS, USA, August 9, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association](#) ("MCMA") today announced the impending return of the monumental Wounded Indian sculpture to its native Boston 65 years after its theft. The celebrated life-sized statue carved from a single piece of marble has been the subject of a decades-long [ownership dispute](#) between MCMA and the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia. The Chrysler now agrees that MCMA owns the Wounded Indian and will return it promptly and permanently, with MCMA ensuring its public display in the Boston area.



The "Wounded Indian" on display at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, VA. Photo by Stewart Gamage.

The story of the statue's disappearance from MCMA's collection in 1958 and reappearance on prominent display at the Chrysler in 1988 went public this May with a [front-page expose](#) by the Washington Post. The case has also been reported in The Art Newspaper and is under investigation by the FBI's Art Crime Team and the Department of Justice.

Peter Stephenson sculpted the Wounded Indian in 1850, inspired by the famous Roman sculpture from antiquity Dying Gaul. According to Google Arts & Culture, the Wounded Indian "ranks among the most beautiful and affecting works of American neoclassical sculpture." In 1893 James W. Bartlett gifted the statue to MCMA, which proudly displayed it in its exhibition hall for 65 years. When the hall was sold in 1958, MCMA was told that the sculpture had been accidentally destroyed during the move and discarded.

The nonprofit had no reason to doubt this report until the statue reemerged decades later, fully intact and on public display in a new wing at the Chrysler. The wing is named for the New York art collector James "Jimmy" Ricau, who was controversial for having little concern for documenting how or where he acquired objects. Ricau obtained the Wounded Indian by 1967 from sources unknown, and donated the statue in 1986 to the Chrysler, whose leaders initially

took Ricau at his word that it was lawfully obtained, but later developed doubts.

Founded in 1795 by patriot and silversmith Paul Revere and other artisans, MCMA provides grants to local Boston nonprofits that train people for mechanical trades, focusing on physically, mentally, and economically challenged individuals who need assistance to support themselves. Current MCMA Trustee and General Counsel Paul Revere III stated, "In the 24 years since we first stated our claim to the Chrysler, we have reminded ourselves often of our motto: 'Be Just and Fear Not.' It has paid off. The Wounded Indian is coming home."

Greg Werkheiser, founding partner at Cultural Heritage Partners, PLLC, legal co-counsel for MCMA, concluded, "When museums scrutinize the history of art before they acquire it or even while it is present in their collections, they deny a market for thieves and looters while preserving an object's true history. The positive outcome here strengthens all cultural institutions."

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Assets of photos, MCMA's Statement of Gratitude, and additional background and prior coverage available at: <https://www.culturalheritagepartners.com/mcma-celebrates-return-of-wounded-indian-sculpture-65-years-after-theft>

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