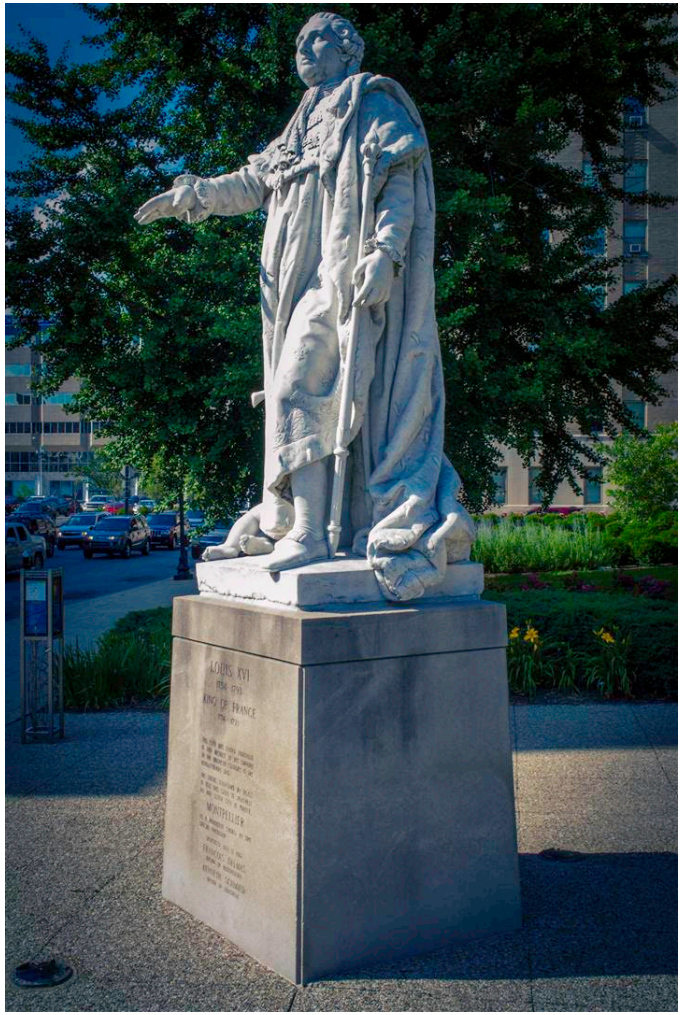
King Louis XVI Update

https://louisvilleky.gov/government/arts-culture/louis-xvi

Title: *Louis XVI*
Date: c. 1816-1827
Artist: Achille-Joseph-Étienne Valois (1785-1862)
Medium: Carrara marble statue, Limestone base
Dimensions: Weight: 6.5 tons (pedestal), 9 tons (statue)
Height: 6’10” (pedestal), 10' (statue)



COMMISSION ON
PUBLIC ART

Date / Timeframe	Action	Status	Actual Costs	Estimated Costs	Notes
9/2020	Statue removed from public space due to safety concerns and vandalism. Relocated to secure Metro storage.	Complete	$27,335		
5/21/21 – 6/30/21	Solicited bids for conservation assessments	Complete			
6/18/21 – 7/15-21	Selected three conservation labs to provide detailed proposals	Complete	$15,020		
8/1/21	All treatment proposals received	Complete			
8/21 – 2/22	Public Art Administrator position vacant from September 3, 2022 – January 24, 2023	----			
2/3/22 – 2/23/22	Students from Speed School of Engineering to produce 3-D scans of the full sculpture	Complete			Beneficial in preserving a historical record of the statue, and/or could be useful if casts need to be made if determination is to repair.
7/6/22 – 7/28/22	Followed up with conservation labs to ask for updated quotes, if different from originally provided due to time lapsed	Complete		$55,000 - $123,500	
7/15/22	Meeting with conservation lab to discuss community engagement strategies and possible treatment approaches.	Complete			Conservators reiterated a need for the statue to be indoors if determined to be put back on view. Alternative presentations could include selective cleaning, or projection mapping.
7/11/22	Presented draft of community engagement survey to Commission on Public Art for review and feedback.	Complete			Received comments, and request for input from Mayor's Office during COPA meeting.
7/22/22	Received reply from Mayor's Office in response to COPA's requests.	Complete			
7/25/22 – 7/31/22	Obtained quote for relocating Louis XVI statue, if determined to put back on view.	Complete		$10,000 - $28,000	
9/8/22	Published status update on King Louis page on Metro Arts & Creative Industries website.	Complete			
9/12/22	Reported Mayor's feedback and provided final copy of survey to COPA. Published survey online, circulated via newsletters, and social.	Complete			
Current	Collecting survey responses	In Process			
Current	Working with LFPL on strategies to address technology access barriers.	In Process			
Current	Printing and installation of notice signs re: community engagement survey	Pending approval			
Current	Scouting appropriate location to site Louis XVI, if determine to reinstall	TBD			Pending results of community engagement survey.

Requests made in Metro Council Resolution 126, series 2020:

I. Engage a qualified art restoration expert to explore the feasibility and estimated costs for repairing the King Louis statue and returning it to its original location at 6th and Jefferson Streets.

II. Repair the King Louis statue and return it to its original location at 6th and Jefferson Streets.

Result:

Three conservation labs provided full treatment assessments and proposals outlining technical and ethical challenges.

Ethical - In line with standards laid out by the American Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), community engagement and recontextualization are conditions of performing the conservation work, if at all.

Technical - Treatment assessments concluded that certain factors- including previously unaddressed structural issues; lack of routine and/or preventative conservation measures; as well as cleaning attempts by unqualified individuals following vandalism– have all contributed to the object's current condition, which is not conducive to being returned to an outdoor location.

Structural Concerns

1974 - Proper left foot replaced because it has cracked and become loose.

1990's - Long cracks noted in the cloak, chipped areas, two toes missing from cherubs.

2004 - Conservator noted previous unprofessional repair of cracks

Conservator noted structural cracks and recommended **consolidation** repair. This repair was not performed.

Some surface and structural cracks were aesthetically filled, but do not appear to have had consolidation treatment to address structural integrity.

Conservation was recommended to occur every two years. This maintenance was not performed.

Surface cleaned with a solution now known to be too aggressive for marble, which can cause increased porousness and allow more water to soak into the statue and causing damage over time due to freeze/thaw cycles.

Weathering has caused significant loss and **sugaring**.

2021- Proper right hand detached during a protest. This broke off cleanly from a prior **dutchman repair** that had been attached with a mortise joint and bronze pin. The hand can be repaired, but will remain very fragile.

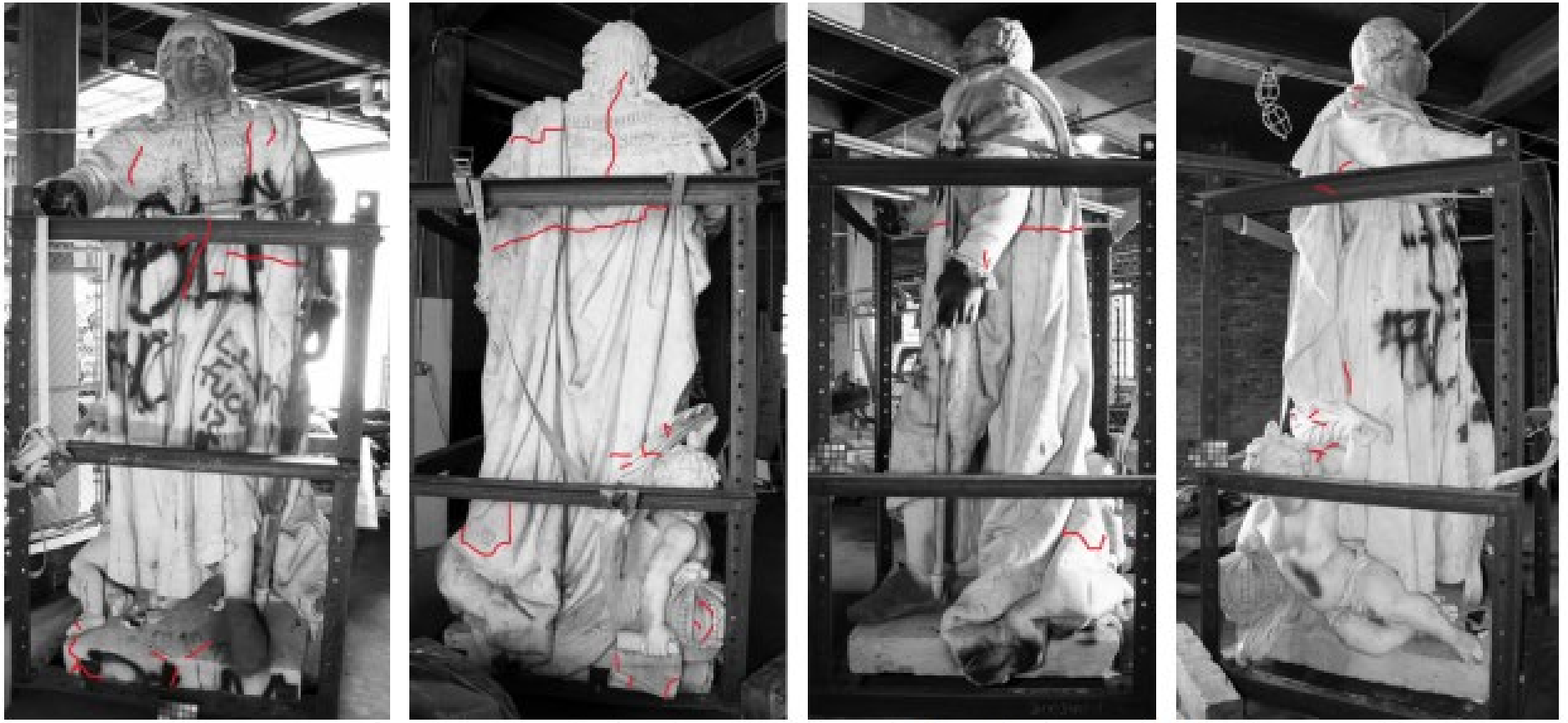
Conservators noted significant cracking throughout the sculpture, specifically along the back. Conservator expressed concern for potential catastrophic failure within the cloak element and potential severe injury to bystanders.

Technical terms:

Consolidation- Treatment to stabilize degraded or weakened areas by introducing an adhesive, also called a consolidant, capable of holding them together.

Sugaring- Granular disintegration of marble due to acidic water intrusion, salt deposits, and freeze/thaw cycles.

Dutchman repair- a piece of stone precisely carved to shape and used to fill a gap or repair a break installed with hardware and a fine mortar.



Red annotations indicate preliminary mapping of cracks and break edges.

Surface Condition Concerns

2004- Surface cleaned with a solution now known to be too aggressive for marble. Resulting in increased porousness and the sculpture more receptive to material subsequently applied to the surface.

Weathering has caused significant loss and **sugaring**.

2021- Conservators noted that the most permanent and irreparable damage to the statue was caused by attempts to quickly and permanently remove spray paint. High pressure water cleaning abrades and opens the surface pore structure of the marble. Power-washing has etched the surface of the marble making it more receptive to paint and other matter subsequently applied to the surface.

Conservators were not in total agreement regarding the treatment approach, specifically whether laser cleaning will be required to achieve complete removal of the spray paint.

Spot testing was conducted and was mostly successful, though the level of success that will be achieved in cleaning may differ as there are a number of different paints and materials on the surface (acrylic paint, alkyd paint, egg, etc .) Residual stains, or ghosting, from previously removed graffiti already exists, and may remain after treatment.

Technical Terms:

Ghosting - an outline or shadow that is lighter than the overall color of a surface after graffiti paint has been removed

Ethical & Conceptual Concerns

Conservators consider this statue a contested monument **“due to its depiction of a monarch, its presence in a community space, community calls for its removal, in addition to it bearing witness to the Breonna Taylor and Black Lives Matter protests of 2020.”**

AIC Position Statement on Contested Monuments- October 2020:

“It is imperative that anyone involved in decision-making about a contested monument consider the history and context of the work in question and encourage, if not insist upon, the inclusion of stakeholder communities.”

“Regardless of the decisions made about a contested monument, conservation professionals have a responsibility to design a course of treatment in keeping with community consensus and according to best conservation practices. The preservation of a monument may include preserving damage such as vandalism done in the name of social justice, since historical precedent indicates that defacement often becomes part of the meaning of the work.”

Community Input Survey

Questions modeled on Public Art and Monuments Advisory Criteria

1. How familiar are you with the history and legacy of King Louis XVI (the person)?
   - Very familiar
   - Somewhat familiar
   - Not so familiar

2. Do you believe the principal legacy of King Louis XVI (the person) is fundamentally at odds with Louisville's community values?
   - Yes
   - No

3. Do you believe King Louis XVI is a potential rallying point for bigoted groups?
   - Yes
   - No

4. How familiar are you with the history of the *Louis XVI* statue – who made it, where it came from, how long has it been on display in Louisville, etc.?
   - Very familiar
   - Somewhat familiar
   - Not so familiar

5. Do you believe the *Louis XVI* statue celebrates a part of history that you believe is fundamental to who you are and what you value?
   - Yes
   - No

6. What would you like to see happen to the *Louis XVI* statue?
   - Repaired and kept in storage
   - Not repaired and put back on view
   - Repaired and put back on view
   - Not repaired and not put back on view

7. If you selected an option indicating *Louis XVI* statue should be put back on display, where and how do you think the statue could be presented and contextualized?
   - [open response]

8. Cost estimates for repair and reinstallation of the *Louis XVI* statue range from $71,000 to $113,500. Do you support the use of Louisville Metro funds to cover the expense of conservation at this amount?
   - Yes
   - No

9. What is your zip code?
   - [open response]

Requests made in Metro Council Resolution 126, series 2020:

III. Pursue philanthropic, federal, and/or other third-party funds for these repairs.

IV. Provide an estimate of the Metro funds to be used, if any.

Result:

Philanthropic, federal, and/or third-party funds were not identified.

Estimates of Metro funds to be used, if repaired, were provided during the FY23 budget cycle.

V. Monthly updates regarding any restoration and reinstallation of the King Louis statue.

Costs

Expenses to date:	$49,985
High-end estimated costs:	
Conservation	
Paint removal and repairs	$44,500
Consolidation	$10,000
Conservator Travel	NTE $10,000
Contingency	$10,000
Rigging and relocation	$27,500
New interpretive signage	$10,000
New stone base	~$50,000
Total	$211,985

Next Steps

- Continue to collect survey responses and community comments.
- Opportunity to incorporate further community engagement into strategic planning process.
- Determination on whether the statue will be reinstalled, where, and in what context, will be informed by responses to the community input survey and continued conversation with conservators.

Future Siting Considerations

Metro has been advised that placing the statue back outside is a potential safety hazard and is not in the interest preserving the statue.

“The combination of the previous outdoor location and continued cycle of graffiti, damage, and subsequent cleaning and repair will reduce the longevity of the piece, which will continue to succumb to the resultant surface erosion and structural damage…the sculpture is very vulnerable to irreparable damage if returned to the same site.”

There are few indoor, publicly accessible locations capable of accommodating the size and weight of the statue.