

# MIETRO

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Pavel Efremoff applies a layer of wax to the statue of Gen. George B. McClellan along Connecticut Avenue. Restorative work on the sculpture of the Civil War leader began in the spring.

## For D.C. Statues, a Fresh Coat of TLC

### Sculpture of Civil War General Is Among Public Artworks Getting a Facelift

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The general sat motionless as the man with rubber gloves and tattooed legs gently brushed wax across his nose.

Gen. George B. McClellan sat, as he has for a century, with clenched hand and stern visage, while technician Pavel Efremoff dabbed the gooey wax from a plastic tub and spread it over the Civil War figure's moustache and cheeks.

The equestrian statue of McClellan, which has stood along Connecticut Av-

enue NW since 1907, had never had such lavish treatment from conservators, experts said. And the general, flawed in real life, has scarcely seen such kindness from historians.

But this week, scaffolding will come down from around the bronze McClellan, and it will be unveiled as the latest of Washington's outdoor artworks to undergo rehabilitation.

As officials have lamented the shabby conditions of public places in Washington such as the Mall, there has been an effort to conserve public sculptures in the city.

As workers prepare to reveal the McClellan statue, which has been shrouded in nylon mesh since spring, the towering granite and gold First Division Monument near the White House is undergoing a \$1.6 million facelift. The Boy Scout Memorial along 15th Street is getting \$550,000 in repairs in the final part of a three-year rehab of the Ellipse and its environs south of the White House, which had not received any major attention since 1947.

Last year, many of the statues in Lafayette Square were cleaned and waxed and

the fountains repaired, officials said. In the fall, the square's 15-ton bronze equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson and its marble base will get some attention.

National Park Service officials said the projects have been in the works through maintenance initiatives and predate the \$750 million in Park Service funding in this year's economic recovery legislation. "This was already in our pipeline," said Ann Smith, Park Service liaison to the White House. "There's a long lead time on these."

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T. Scott Kreilick checks out the nearly restored 1907 bronze statue of Gen. George B. McClellan in the District. Kreilick's company is leading the \$114,000 restoration project, which is expected to be completed this week.

## D.C. Statues Get Fresh Coat of TLC

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Still, many repairs were overdue, officials said.

The statue of McClellan, who commanded the Union's Army of the Potomac during part of the Civil War, had not undergone major conservation since it was dedicated by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907.

When crews began the project, they found the belly and legs of the general's horse filled with water that had seeped in over the decades. Someone had once spray-painted a globe on the statue's base gold. And one of the bronze shields around the base had disappeared.

At the 45-year-old Boy Scout Memorial, which will reopen next month, the marble floor of the fountain was cracked, and officials said they can't remember when the fountain last worked.

The pioneering 1853 Jackson statue in Lafayette Square — the first of a person on horseback ever cast in the United States — has been corroded by bird droppings and air pollution, and the stirrups have been missing since the 1990s.

Smith said such outdoor art-scapes are crucial.

"Beauty is important to a city," she said. "In a city where there are so many of us together, it's particularly important for there to be places that are open, that are green,

that are restorative, that say this is a wonderful place."

Work on the 37-foot tall McClellan monument, on a landscaped island at Connecticut Avenue and Columbia Road, began in earnest in the spring, said T. Scott Kreilick, president of Kreilick Conservation, which is doing the rehabilitation. He said the project is costing about \$114,000.

The 14-foot statue, by sculptor and painter Frederick MacMonnies, depicts the dapper commander on horseback gazing toward the distant Potomac River — clad in uniform, sash, sword and gauntlets.

The general, known as Little Mac and Young Napoleon, is often credited with creating the Army of the Potomac, although he was later fired by President Abraham Lincoln because of incompetence. He remained popular with his soldiers, though, and the Society of the Army of the Potomac pushed for the monument after McClellan died of heart disease in 1885 at the age of 58.

At the dedication, Gen. O.O. Howard, for whom Howard University is named, said McClellan cared for his soldiers "as a father cares for ... his children."

A century later, those soldiers are long gone, and care of their monument has passed to posterity.

Last week, that took the form of the bearded Efremoff, 32, a sculptor

and foundry instructor at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. He was wearing brown camo shorts and rubber surgical gloves as he coated McClellan's coat buttons, cap bill and epaulettes with the protective wax.

"I don't think I have ever studied a sculpture as much in depth as I have this one, just because I've spent so much intimate time with every square inch of it," he said.

The bronze had been power-washed, scrubbed with a special detergent, heated with a blow torch and treated with a solution of cupric nitrate. The solution was applied to restore the luminous green patina that conservators think MacMonnies used after the statue was cast in Paris more than 100 years ago.

Such art "connects us to our past," Kreilick said last week as he stood in the scaffolding overlooking Connecticut Avenue. "It's a visible reminder of where we came from. Without a connection to our past, I think we tend to be a bit boring."

Alas, he said of the statue, "most people don't know who this is."

"We're the custodians of what came before," he said. "If we don't take care of our heritage, it's going to be forgotten. ... McClellan was an interesting figure in history. Some may not like him. Some love him. But he deserves to be remembered."