

August 27, 2025

Alex M. Smith Katherine Liss The Philadelphia Art Commission One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor Philadelphia, PA 19102

SUBJECT: Request for Approval to Deaccession "Underwater Sunscreen" by Harold Kimmelman at Lawncrest Recreation Center (6000 Rising Sun Ave)

Dear Alex and Katherine,

Creative Philadelphia is submitting this letter request to be added to the agenda for the September 10, 2025 Art Commission meeting, to deaccession (permanently remove) "Underwater Sunscreen" from the City's public art collection due to public safety concerns. Please see summary below.

Description: "Underwater Sunscreen" is a City-owned, site-specific public artwork that was commissioned by the City's Percent for Art program and installed on the pool deck of the Lawncrest Recreation Center in 1969. The piece consists of a stainless steel and bronze abstract depiction of fish swimming under the surface of water, mounted on columnar iron supports on concrete square bases. It is comprised of cut and welded stainless steel strips in a curvilinear pattern with three bronze fish of welded sheet construction bolted underneath. The edges of the stainless-steel strips are designed to be rough cut with sharp edges to mimic the appearance of seaweed.

The City's Rebuild program is undertaking extensive improvements to the Lawncrest Recreation Center, which were approved by the Art Commission at the August 2025 Art Commission meeting. The improvement plans require the City to remove the sculpture from the pool deck during construction. While working with Rebuild on a plan to conserve and reinstall the sculpture, Creative Philadelphia was made aware of ongoing public safety concerns with the hazards associated with the metal canopy. The metal edges of the sculpture's canopy are sharp and present a danger to young people who occasionally attempt to jump from the roof onto the sculpture. In addition to gaining access from the adjacent building, there are also currently concerns that children will climb the poles and access the sharp pieces from underneath.

Creative Philadelphia worked with public art conservators Heritage Conservation Collective, to look for solutions to address these safety concerns. Heritage Conservation Collective presented Creative Philadelphia with a report on August 21, 2025 (attached) stating that they could not identify any viable solutions to mitigate the public safety issues in a satisfactory manner. As per

the City's public art guidelines in Managing Director's Directive 67 (MDD67), this meets the City's requirement to deaccession public artwork that poses a danger to public safety.

However, Creative Philadelphia acknowledges the history and importance of this artwork, and that it is in generally acceptable condition. As such, upon deaccession, we propose to give this artwork new life by repurposing the sculpture's stainless steel and bronze materials to be used by an artist to create a new future public artwork at the Lawncrest site. This new artwork will fulfill the Percent for Art requirement for the Lawncrest site. The art project will be developed by Creative Philadelphia, through a community engaged process, with future Philadelphia Art Commission approval for the artwork at a later date.

As required per MDD67, Creative Philadelphia has notified the estate of the artist Harold Kimmelman, through his son Jonathan Kimmelman. As representative of the artist's estate, Mr. Kimmelman is in agreement with Creative Philadelphia's intent to deaccession the piece from the City's public art collection for safety reasons, and repurpose the sculpture's stainless steel and bronze materials for a new public artwork as noted above.

This letter formally requests the deaccessioning of the artwork only. We are requesting for this to be included on the **September 10**, **2025** Philadelphia Art Commission meeting agenda for approval. Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to call me at 215.686.4596.

Sincerely,

Marguerite Anglin, RA, NOMA

Public Art Director Creative Philadelphia

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(Attachment: Conservator's Report of "Underwater Sunscreen" dated August 21, 2025)

Underwater Sunscreen by Harold Kimmelman (1969) **Lawncrest Recreation Center – 6000 Rising Sun Ave** Deaccession Proposal prepared by Creative Philadelphia **September 10 Art Commission Meeting**

Underwater Sunscreen Background

- This sculpture by Harold Kimmelman is owned by the City of Philadelphia and was commissioned through the City's Percent for Art program.
- It was installed on the pool deck at the Lawncrest Recreation Center in 1969.
- The sculpture consists of a canopy made of stainless steel and bronze abstractions of seaweed and fish swimming under the surface of the water, mounted on iron columns on square concrete bases.
- Cost of original commission was \$3,500



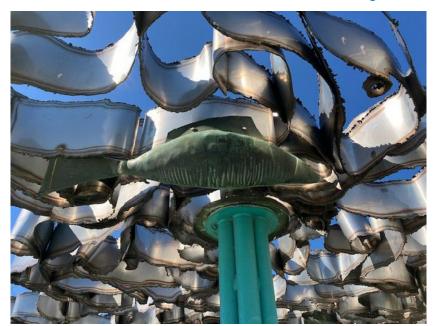
Underwater Sunscreen by Harold Kimmelman – Lawncrest Recreation Center

Underwater Sunscreen - Safety Issues

Based on prior discussions with Parks & Recreation and Rebuild, Creative Philadelphia became aware of ongoing concerns regarding these public safety hazards:

- The sharp jagged edges of the metal strips on the sculpture's canopy present a hazard to unsupervised children who climb on the recreation center roof to enter the pool area after hours
- Children and recreation center users can climb up the supporting pillars to grab and/or hang from the sharp edges of the canopy
- Prior documentation suggests this has been a concern dating back to 2003

Underwater Sunscreen - Safety Issues (continued)



Details of the metal canopy showing jagged, sharp stainless steel ribbons meant to emulate seaweed and bronze fish



Underwater Sunscreen - Conservator's Assessment (August 20, 2025)

Creative Philadelphia worked with one of its on-call Conservation consultants to identify and research potential treatments to address these safety issues.

Options considered to mitigate *Underwater Sunscreen* safety concerns:

- 1. Creative PHL and HCC considered raising the canopy on new taller support posts.
- > Conservator's Assessment: While that may mitigate the safety issue of people accessing it from the adjacent roof, it seems there is still a considerable risk of people potentially trying to climb the posts.
- 2. Creative Philadelphia asked HCC if a rubberized coating could be applied to the sharp edges of the stainless steel to make them safer.
- > Conservator's Assessment: Conservator could not identify a viable material for this type of application and does not recommend it due to how it may alter the appearance of the piece and the difficulty of maintaining it.
- 3. Creative PHL and HCC discussed smoothing or filing the sharp edges.
- > Conservator's Assessment: Conservator does not recommend altering the piece in this way. The stainless-steel strips are designed to mimic seaweed and removing the jagged edges would alter the original intent of the design of the installation.

SUMMARY: Conservator could not find a feasible and sustainable treatment that mitigates the current safety concerns without significantly altering this site-specific work of art from its intended design.

Recommendation for Deaccessioning

<u>Deaccessioning of Underwater Sunscreen is recommended due to the following:</u>

- The work continues to present a public safety risk in its current form and location.
- Creative Philadelphia and its conservators could not identify viable treatments to mitigate the safety risks without significantly altering this site-specific artwork from its intended design.

This recommendation aligns with the City's criteria for deaccessioning public art per Managing Director's Directive 67 for the following reason:

✓ The artwork endangers public safety

Intent to Repurpose Underwater Sunscreen

- Creative Philadelphia acknowledges the history and importance of this artwork, and that it is in generally acceptable condition, despite the safety hazards it poses.
- As such, upon deaccession, we propose to give this artwork new life by repurposing the sculpture's stainless steel and bronze materials to be used by an artist to create a new future public artwork at the Lawncrest site.
- This new artwork will fulfill the Percent for Art requirement for the Lawncrest site. The art project will be developed by Creative Philadelphia, through a community engaged process, with future Philadelphia Art Commission review and approval for the artwork at a later date.

Process for Deaccessioning Public Art

Steps Taken, per Managing Director's Directive 67:

- August 2025: Assessment and Recommendations from Professional Conservation consultant;
- ✓ August 2025: Approval from Creative Philadelphia Public Art Director and Executive Director;
- ✓ August 2025: Notification and approval of deaccession and intent to repurpose from Artist's estate/next of kin (Jonathan Kimmelman)

Next Steps:

- Philadelphia Art Commission Review of Deaccession Proposal (TODAY)
- ☐ Remove sculpture from pool deck and store metal canopy at conservator's secure storage location (Fall 2025)
- Repurpose Underwater Sunscreen metal canopy and bronze fish components for a future
 Percent for Art public artwork at Lawncrest Recreation Center (TBD)

SPECIALIZING IN MASONRY, WOOD, ARCHITECTURAL FINISHES, METAL, PLASTER, ANALYSIS

Located at 1621 McKean Street

PHILADELPHIA, PA

FINDINGS SUMMARY

August 20, 2025

Marguerite Anglin, RA Public Art Director Creative Philadelphia City of Philadelphia City Hall, Room 116 Philadelphia, PA 19107

Re: Underwater Sunscreen by Harold Kimmelman 1969
Lawncrest Recreation Center, Philadelphia, PA

Dear Marguerite:

Heritage Conservation Collective, LLC (HCC) is pleased to present this summary regarding *Underwater Sunscreen* by Harold Kimmelman installed in 1969 located in the Lawncrest Recreation Center in Philadelphia, PA. The sculpture is located on the pool deck which is currently part of a Rebuild project. The following summarizes our findings.

HCC was consulted regarding the safety concerns relating to the installation of *Underwater Sunscreen*. The piece consists of a stainless steel and bronze abstract depiction of fish swimming under the surface of water, mounted on columnar iron supports on concrete square bases. It is comprised of cut and welded stainless steel strips in a curvilinear pattern with three bronze fish of welded sheet construction bolted underneath. The edges of the stainless-steel strips are designed to be rough cut with sharp edges. The pedestal consists of gadrooned painted iron columns welded to square plinths below. It is currently located on a pool deck immediately adjacent to a recreation center building.

Safety Concerns

It has reportedly been a concern for many years that the sharp edges of this piece are a hazard. A survey completed in 2003 notes that the sculpture is in good condition, but children attempt to enter the pool area after hours by climbing the adjacent building and using the sculpture to gain entry. The edges of the metal strips of the sculpture's surface are dangerous should the children attempt to jump from the roof onto the sculpture. At that time, it was noted that the sculpture was covered for the entire swimming season with a heavy tarp to protect children who may attempt to gain entry via the sculpture. In addition to gaining access from the adjacent building, there are also currently concerns that children will climb the poles and access the piece from underneath.

Options Considered:

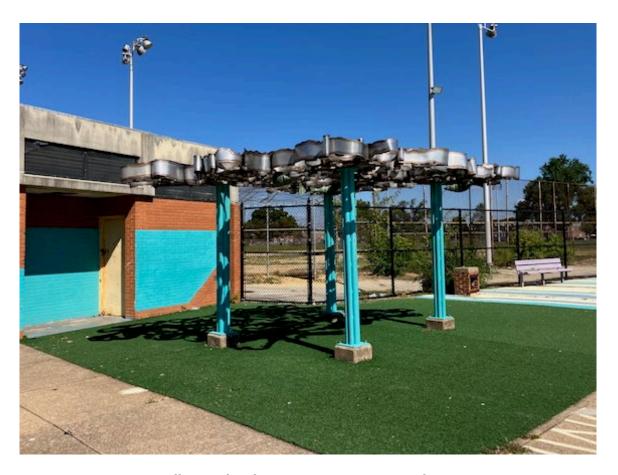
1. HCC was asked if a rubberized coating could be applied to the edges of the stainless steel. This would alter the appearance of the piece and would need continual maintenance to be effective if it's



possible. HCC has not identified a viable material for this type of application and does not recommend it due to how it may alter the appearance of the piece and the difficulty of maintaining it.

- Creative PHL and HCC considered raising the canopy on new taller support posts. While that may mitigate the safety issue of people accessing it from the adjacent roof, it seems there is still a considerable risk of people potentially trying to climb the posts.
- 3. Finally, Creative PHL and HCC discussed smoothing the sharp edges. HCC does not recommend altering the piece in this way. The stainless-steel strips are designed to mimic seaweed and removing the jagged edges would alter the original intent of the design of the installation.

HCC has not found a feasible and sustainable treatment that mitigates the current safety concerns without significantly altering this site-specific work of art.

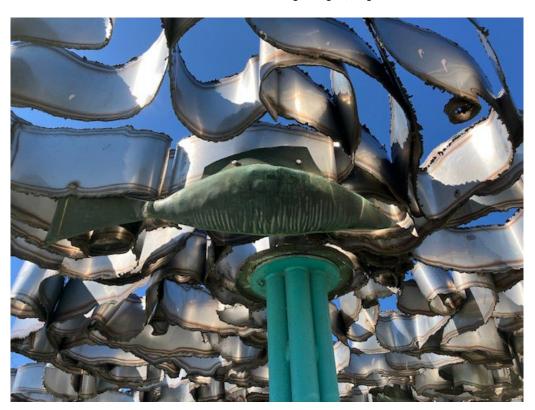


Overall view of Underwater Sunscreen, September 2024.





Detailed view of stainless-steel rough edges, September 2024.



Detailed view of bronze fish, September 2024.







Detailed view of posts and concrete footings, September 2024.





