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Last Chance to See "Steel Bodies" Sculpture Installations Along the Schuylkill River!

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Have you noticed some new sculptures along the Schuylkill River Trail between Boathouse Row and the Girard Ave Bridge? Created by NYC-based artist **Maren Hassinger**, they're part of *Steel Bodies*, a temporary exhibition **presented by the Association for Public Art** (aPA). This week is your last chance to see these ten works before they leave us on November 12th!

Steel Bodies is all about juxtaposition. The exhibition is on display at the **Ellen Phillips Samuel Memorial**, a sculpture garden completed in 1960—and this is the first time anything else has been on display there since it opened. So the combination of new works against this backdrop of works 65+ years old is interesting.

Furthermore, though Hassinger's sculptures were originally created for an entirely different location, they've been carefully placed here to emphasize this conversation between new and old. She describes how her sculptures "encompass" the older works because you can see right through them. How perfect, since each piece in her series is based on an iconic archetype of ancient vessel design. Visually, these vessels hold the other sculptures (and people, trees, etc.) within them.

But the history of the Ellen Phillips Samuel Memorial is also part of the juxtaposition. This sculpture garden was expressly designed to represent the history of America. Yet who do you think created the original sculptures that have been telling that story on this site since 1960? Yep, mostly white men.

The resulting view of U.S. history is narrow. The aPA's own website acknowledges that the Memorial "lacks an authentic Indigenous perspective, presents an enslaved Black person in shackles, and highlights primarily white European immigrants."

So the introduction of ten sculptures by a Black woman, even if only temporarily, serves to begin balancing out the sculptural voices and depictions in this space. I think it's a perfect way to literally reframe some of these historical works, while acknowledging that they have their own historical importance and artistic integrity. As the artist herself said of this series, "we are ALL vessels capable of compassion, and we are all equal. We share our humanity."

You can see *Steel Bodies* through November 12th and hear from the artist via QR codes onsite linked to Museum Without Walls audio clips.