

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

BOSTON · MASSACHUSETTS · 02115

Department of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture

January 6, 1976

Mr. Philip J. McNiff, Director
Boston Public Library
Copley Square
Boston, Massachusetts 02117

Dear Mr. McNiff,

The Hyde Park Historical Society has brought to my attention their efforts to preserve two stone heads of Mercury which were salvaged during the demolition of the Hyde Park Railroad Station in 1974. Apparently the Historical Society is interested in installing these heads in the Hyde Park Branch of the Boston Public Library. In the meantime, they are looking to store them in a safe place until funds can be raised and arrangements made for their installation.

While I am not familiar with the specific circumstances of negotiations as they presently stand, the Hyde Park Historical Society has requested that I submit a professional opinion as to the merits of preservation of these figures. This I am able to do whole-heartedly. At a time when the past is being levelled all too quickly to make way for new development, the value of objects such as these is often overlooked. In my opinion these heads are significant documents of an architectural aesthetic and an historical tradition of ornament which should not be underestimated. On this basis alone the Hyde Park Historical Society's efforts merit consideration. Further, while it is difficult to project the monetary value that objects of this kind will accrue over the years, there can be no doubt but that their value will increase, as will the historical impact and cultural significance that they bear.

I understand that presently these figures are being stored by Mr. Edward Gonski, a member of the Hyde Park Historical Society, in his yard. While I am in no position to offer an opinion as to the suitability of the Hyde Park Branch of the Boston Public Library as a site for permanent installation, I support their efforts to arrange suitable storage until further action can be determined.

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In my opinion these images do indeed merit consideration in light of their historical and cultural significance, and I thoroughly endorse the efforts on the part of the Hyde Park Historical Society to preserve them.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Fairbanks
Curator

JF/bel

cc: Mr. E. Gonski
Mrs. Reed Freeman
Mrs. Nancy H. Hannon