



Trump used to love destroying beautiful statues

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President Donald Trump said Thursday he is “sad to see the history and culture of our great country being ripped apart with the removal of our beautiful [Confederate] statues and monuments.”

“So foolish! Also the beauty that is being taken out of our cities, towns and parks will be greatly missed and never able to be comparably replaced!” **Trump wrote on Twitter.**

But Trump’s appreciation of art and historical significance, if genuine, is certainly newfound — in 1980, he demolished the iconic Bonwit Teller building and reneged on a promise to the Met to save a pair of Art Deco sculptures and metal grillwork from the front of the building so that the museum could include them in its 20th century sculpture collection.

Trump had initially promised to donate the grillwork and the sculptures — two limestone relief panels created by Beaux-Arts designers Whitney Warren and Charles Wetmore and appraised by art dealer Robert Miller at “several hundred thousand dollars” — if the cost was not “prohibitive.”

“The reliefs are as important as the sculptures on the Rockefeller building,” Miller told the Times. “They’ll never be made again.”

Developer Scraps Bonwit Sculptures

By **ROBERT D. McFADDEN**

Two stone bas-relief sculptures high on the facade of the Bonwit Teller Building under demolition on Fifth Avenue — pieces that had been sought with enthusiasm by the Metropolitan Museum of Art — were smashed by jackhammers yesterday on the orders of a real estate developer.

The destruction of the Art Deco panels stunned some art appraisers and elicited expressions of surprise and disappointment from officials of the Met, where they were to have been installed by the department of 20th-century art. One appraiser placed their value at several hundred thousand dollars.

The sculptures, each about 15 feet high and depicting stylized, partly draped female nudes, were embedded in the facade between the eighth and ninth floors when the 11-story Bonwit building was erected at the northeast corner of 56th Street in 1928-29.

The building, designed by Warren & Wetmore, the same firm that designed Grand Central Terminal, had been known to generations of shoppers, building watchers and Fifth Avenue strollers. It was sold last year by Bonwit Teller, which is moving its flagship store to East 57th Street.

Donald J. Trump, the developer, who is razing the structure to make way for a \$100 million 62-story bronze-colored glass tower of apartments, offices and stores, had said several months ago that he would give the white stone panels to the museum if the cost of removing them did not prove prohibitive.

But John Baron, a vice president of the



Prized Bonwit Teller art deco bas-reliefs: "soon Trump was...boasting that he'd ordered the destruction himself." <https://placesjournal.org/article/post-trump/> ... (Walter Olson Tweet)

“Trump Organization vice president” John Baron — an alias Trump once admitted under oath he uses to feed reporters information about himself — told the New York Times Trump had come to a different conclusion. It would have cost \$32,000 and a week-and-a-half of construction on the \$100 million building to remove them, and “Baron” ultimately decided it wasn’t worth the effort to save the panels because they were “without artistic merit.”

The Met disagreed. “We are certainly very disappointed and quite surprised,” Ashton Hawkins, then the vice president of the Met board, told the Times in 1980. “Can you imagine the museum accepting them if they were not of artistic merit?”

But Trump says he does see artistic merit in the Confederate statues, which were largely erected in the 1920s and 30s — decades after the Civil War — at the behest of Southern activist groups.

“You’re changing history, you’re changing culture,” he said at a press conference Monday, where he also passionately defended the white supremacists at the Charlottesville protest that left one woman dead and 19 injured.

Trump’s chief strategist Steve Bannon offered an alternative explanation for Trump’s newfound appreciation of Confederate monuments

“President Trump, by asking, ‘Where does this all end’ — Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln — connects with the American people about their history, culture and traditions,” he told the New York Times Wednesday. “The race-identity politics of the left wants to say it’s all racist ... Just give me more. Tear down more statues. Say the revolution is coming. I can’t get enough of it.”