

# GO FIND ART

BY MARGARET MILLER

## Are you a collector?

People of all ages enjoy collecting coins, figurines, autographs, baseball cards and works of art. You may be surprised to learn that the City of Houston has an art collection of more than 350 paintings, murals, statues and sculptures, all available for our community to enjoy. Many pieces owned by the City were created by artists who are no longer living, making our collection of art priceless.

For many years, the City has worked with Houston Arts Alliance, a non-profit organization that specializes in the care and management of civic art, to conserve, repair and restore most of the pieces in the collection so that they will remain in excellent condition, just as the artist intended.

You'll find many interesting and unusual works in places you might not expect to see art—along Buffalo Bayou, in airports and libraries, even at fire stations! To begin, here are a few works in our civic art collection that families can find around Houston. Remember that these are Houston treasures and should be treated with respect so that they can be enjoyed for generations to come. Now...go find art!

**1** The **African Elephant**, by artist **Robert Fowler**, stands in front of the west entrance of the Houston Zoo. Fowler studied for eight years to understand the way an elephant walks and communicates before constructing this piece. To build the elephant, the sculptor welded together strips of steel that would last a long time—even in Houston's hot, rainy weather. Isabell and Max Herzstein gave this sculpture to the City for everyone to enjoy—"For our children, grandchildren and all the young at heart." That means you! Does this elephant look imaginary or real? (Another sculpture by Robert Fowler, *Pair of Horses*, is located in the garden on the lower level of Jones Hall. You will recognize his distinctive style!)

**2** If you've been to the Houston Zoo, you've probably seen one of our city's favorite works of art, **The Great Adventure (Dolly's Ride)** by **Ann Armstrong**. Members of The First Houston Doll Club presented this sculpture as a project of love for dolls and children, for all children to enjoy. "Children do enjoy *Dolly's Ride*," says Brian Hill, Director of Public Affairs at the Zoo. "In all the years *Dolly's Ride* has been at the Houston Zoo, it has never been defaced or abused – it has only been treasured, revered, and loved." What kind of clothes did Armstrong dress the girl and her doll in?

**3** Houston is fortunate to have **Portable Trojan Bear** by **Jim Love** in its collection. This sculpture is especially valuable because the artist, whose work is exhibited in museums throughout the country, died in 2005. It's not clear why Love gave his piece this name, but he may have imagined something being hidden inside. A Greek myth tells the story of a Trojan horse that was secretly filled with soldiers who took control of a city. Perhaps the artist imagined something hiding inside. You can see this sculpture from the Hermann Park Mini-Train as it rounds a corner near Miller Theater. Why do you think Love put wheels on the sculpture? Does it look like a bear to you? (If you want to see another sculpture by Jim Love, visit the Menil Collection, where you will find a giant red *Jack* on the lawn!)



All photos by Blake Miller